CAPITA

Albion Wharf, 19 Albion Street, Manchester

Design, Access, Heritage & Planning Statement

November 2015

Ministry of Defence

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Quality Management

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1. Introduction

1.1 This Statement has been prepared by Capita Property and Infrastructure, on behalf of Capita Business Services Limited, in support of a Town and Country Planning Act (1990) Full Application, Listed Building Consent and Advertisement consent for:

> *"Change of use of the ground floor unit to an employment centre (class A2)."*
>
> *"Minor internal alterations and reconfiguration of layout of the ground floor"*
>
> *"Display of an externally illuminated fascia sign measuring 6.8m x 0.72m and 10.3m x 0.72m and an externally illuminated projecting sign measuring 0.9m x 0.6m in conjunction with the ground floor use."*

1.2 The British Armed Forces currently has a recruitment intake of approximately 12,000 personnel per year. The majority of which seek to sign up through visiting the recruitment centres in town centres and on high streets across the country.

1.3 The city of Manchester has a long and rich history of recruitment into the Armed Forces, most notably via The Manchester Regiment, founded in 1881, which is now known as the Duke of Lancaster's Regiment.

1.4 The Ministry of Defence currently operate a recruitment centre at ground floor with ancillary space above at 29-31 Peter Street which is 0.2 miles away from the Albion Wharf. This property serves the city of Manchester, however the unit lacks size, functional space and is part of a set-back frontage and therefore a more appropriate unit is required. The MoD are therefore seeking to relocate the Manchester city Armed Forces Career Office.

Context

1.5 Capita has been awarded a 10 year partnering contract to deliver army recruitment services on behalf of the Ministry of Defence (MoD). The Recruiting Partnering Project (RPP), which became operational in March 2013, is expected to deliver benefits in excess of £300m to the armed forces.

1.6 Capita will deliver army recruitment through a network of Armed Forces Career Offices across the country. In the interest of being accessible to all groups of society, the recruitment centres need to be located in sustainable city centre locations within a short distance of public transport nodes.

The Proposal

1.7 Capita has identified a need to help the MoD work from city centre units that are fit for their purpose. We subsequently submit this planning application for the change of use of the ground floor as an employment centre (Class A2 - Financial and Professional Services), with associated listed building works and signage.

1.8 The Armed Forces Careers Office, which has been operating under 'Crown Exemption, functions as a 'tri-service office'; providing information and guidance to the public on a full range of careers available in the Royal Navy, Royal Marines, Army, and Royal Air Force. Activities undertaken in the office include dealing with information requests from the public, individual briefings, testing and candidate processing.

1.9 This proposal will ultimately allow for the provision of an important national recruitment service and access to career services for those living in the Manchester area, from a building that is suitable for the needs of the service. Albion Wharf is located in a highly sustainable location and its continued operation will not result in any detrimental impacts to existing neighbouring land uses.

The Applicant

1.10 The applicant operates a large number of recruitment centres across the UK. The application site is currently a vacant A1 retail unit.

Submission Documents

1.11 In accordance with national guidance on the requirements for information supporting planning applications, this statement provides a consideration of the relevant planning policies, planning history and all other relevant material planning considerations.

1.12 Accordingly this statement is submitted with:

- Site Location Plan
- Existing and Proposed ground floor plans;
- Proposed ground floor elevations;

- Design, Access, Heritage & Planning Statement;
- Air Conditioning product specifications
- Ventilation plan
- Application forms;
- Paid fee;

Supporting Statement

1.13 The next section of this statement, Section 2, will describe the site, its surroundings and the site's planning history. Section 3 will examine the current planning policy context. Section 4 will set out the design rationale. Section 5 will analyse the key planning considerations. The Heritage impacts will be considered under section 6. The final section, Section 7, will provide a summary of the key considerations.

2. Site Description & Planning History

2.1 This section of the statement will describe the site and its surroundings, and will analyse the site's relevant planning history.

Site Context

2.2 The application site is located toward the South of Manchester City Centre.

2.3 13-17, Albion Street is a grade II listed building located outside of a Conservation Area. The property itself is a large three storey building which benefits from a double frontage along Albion Street and Trumpet Street. The building is of mixed use with retail units (A1) and cocktail bar (A4) on the ground floor and office use (B1) above.

2.4 The site lies within the Regional Centre and the City Centre areas. The nature of the area is predominantly commercial with the provision of car parking being prominent which serves the wider use of the area.

2.5 The area is rich in industrial buildings, archaeology and sites that are scheduled or listed as being of national importance. Amongst these protected buildings, there are pockets of under developed sites and buildings from the post-war rebuilding of the city.

2.6 Very close to the site is the Whitworth Street West Regeneration Area which has been formally identified as an area for inward investment and development by Manchester City Council; however the site does not make up part of this regeneration area.

2.7 The building is located within a highly sustainable town centre location with excellent public transport links a short distance away, including numerous bus stops, which provide sustainable access to and from the wider Manchester area. The building is also a short distance from several public car parks and town centre cycle lock-ups.

2.8 The ground floor of the property is currently in use as a Class A1 retail unit, but has been vacant for some time, whilst the remaining above floors are in B1 office use.

Site Planning History

2.9 A search of the Council's electronic planning record system has identified the following relevant planning decisions at the application site:

- 078321/LO/2006/C3 - Installation of new air-conditioning units within refuse store at high level, new louvred doors to refuse store on Trumpet Street and installation of new partitions internally - Approved – 2006

- 078322/FO/2006/C3 - Installation of AC, refuse store and louvered doors - Approved – 2006

- 092876/AOH/2010/C1 - Retrospective consent for 1x internally illuminated LED panel measuring 5516mm x 3840mm - Pending Decision

- 096236/AOH/2011/C1 - Retrospective application for the replacement of digital advertising hoarding with a structure incorporating two digital display panels - Withdrawn - 2011

3. Planning Policy Context

3.1 This section of the statement provides an analysis of the planning policy context within which the development proposals should be considered.

Policy Documents

3.2 Planning decisions in England & Wales are to be taken in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. This practice is given statutory force by Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

3.3 The Statutory Development Plan for the purposes of this application comprises the National Planning Policy Framework (2012), the Manchester Core Strategy, the Manchester City Centre Plan, Listed Buildings and Shopfronts and Signage. We make reference to the relevant policies, below.

The National Planning Policy Framework

3.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and these are expected to be applied.

3.5 The NPPF was published on the 27th March 2012 and came into immediate effect replacing all previous National Planning Policy Guidance (PPG's) and Statements (PPS's).

3.6 In Paragraphs 6-7 the NPPF states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of 'sustainable development'. It also states that sustainable development has a social role to provide accessible local services that reflect the community's need and an environmental role to mitigate and adapt to climate change and to move to a low carbon economy. It also states in Paragraph 10 that decisions should take local circumstances into account so that they respond to different opportunities for achieving sustainable development.

3.7 Paragraphs 11-16 introduce the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' as the golden thread at the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework.

3.8 Paragraph 17 lists the twelve core planning principles; and includes delivering sufficient community facilities and services to meet local needs as a core principle.

3.9 Paragraph 23 introduces the promotion of a positive, competitive town centre environment and states that local planning authorities should *'allocate a range of suitable sites to meet the scale and type of retail, leisure, commercial, office, tourism, cultural, community and residential development needed in town centres. It is important that needs for retail, leisure, office and other main town centre uses are met in full and are not compromised by limited site availability'.*

3.10 Paragraph 30 states that *'encouragement should be given to solutions which support reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and reduce congestion. In preparing Local Plans, local planning authorities should therefore support a pattern of development which, where reasonable to do so, facilitates the use of sustainable modes of transport'.*

Local Planning Policy

Manchester Core Strategy

3.11 The only strategic policies that are incumbent for this site are policies CC1 – CC10.

3.12 CC1 - Provision of a range of economic development uses, such as retail, leisure, entertainment, cultural and tourism facilities will be encouraged in the City Centre, in line with Policy C1, to support the development of a vibrant employment location attractive to businesses, employees and visitors to the City Centre.[4]

3.13 CC2 - The Council will promote the growth and improvement of retail provision in the City Centre.[5]

3.14 C1 - The City Centre is also the regional focus for commerce, culture, leisure and tourism. The City Centre has a need for additional convenience retail to meet the needs of a growing residential population, but this role is distinct from its comparison retail function, with a different catchment.[6]

Manchester City Centre Plan

3.15 RC20 Area 23

3.16 Taken as a whole this area offers one of the most important opportunities to bring new activity into the Regional Centre and to improve its environment. Steps toward these primary aims for the area will be given every possible encouragement. Central Station has been redeveloped as the Greater Manchester Exhibition centre (G-Mex).

3.17 Proposals for the regeneration of the area include commercial and hotel development in the Great Northern Railway Warehouse and on the Deansgate and Peter Street frontages. The proposals also provide for the Free Trade Hall to become a hotel and conference facility. The Proposals for redevelopment will be permitted which deliver comprehensive development to respect the character and setting of buildings fronting the high street.

3.18 DC9.1 The Council will require all new commercial and industrial buildings and the environments in which they are set, including car parking areas, to meet high standards of accessibility for disabled people. This requirement will also apply to development which involves the adaptation of existing buildings unless practical considerations dictate otherwise.

Listed Buildings

3.19 DC19.1 In determining applications for listed building consent or planning applications for development involving or having an impact on buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest, the Council will have regard to the desirability of securing the retention, restoration, maintenance and continued use of such buildings and to protecting their general setting. In giving effect to this policy, the Council will:

a. not grant Listed building consent for the demolition of a listed building other than in the most exceptional circumstances, and in any case, not unless it is satisfied that every possible effort has been made to continue the present use or to find a suitable alternative use;

b. not permit a change of use of a listed building, where it would have a detrimental effect on the character or appearance of the building;

c. not permit any external or internal alteration or addition to a Listed building where, in its opinion, there would be an adverse effect on its architectural or historic character;

d. seek to preserve and enhance the settings of listed buildings by appropriate control over the design of new development in their vicinity, control over the use of adjacent land, and where appropriate, by the preservation of trees and landscape features;

e. permit demolition only where there are approved detailed plans for redevelopment and where there is evidence of a firm building contract;

f. not permit alterations to a listed building which would prevent the future use of any part of the building, in particular upper floors or basements, or where poor maintenance is likely to result.

Shopfronts and Signage

3.19 DC14.1 In determining applications relating to these premises for shop fronts, security grilles, advertisement signs, canopies and awnings, the Council will seek to ensure that proposals are in keeping with the character of the building and adjoining buildings, of adjoining shopfronts, where appropriate, and of the area within which the premises are located.

3.20 DC14.5

a. signs should not normally be positioned other than at fascia level;

b. signs should respect the architectural form of buildings and shop frontages;

c. where no obvious fascia level exists, signs above shopfronts should be in keeping with the scale of the frontage of the building and in particular should not fill the gap between ground floor shop windows and first floor windows;

d. projecting box signs, or any other type of sign which projects significantly beyond the shopfront, should line up with the associated fascia board. Where this is not the case, such proposals will not be permitted;

e. the Council will normally permit only one projecting box sign for each shop unit. On listed buildings and on buildings within Conservation Areas, signs consisting of individually mounted letters will be preferred to box fascia signs.[9]

4. Proposed Development

4.1 This section of the report provides a detailed description of the proposed use.

Proposed Use

4.2 The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 states that Class A2 (Financial and Professional Services) includes use for the provision of *'any other services which it is appropriate to provide in a shopping area, where the services are provided principally to visiting members of the public'*.

4.3 The proposed Class A2 use will allow the use of the vacant premises as an Armed Forces Careers Office for the recruitment of armed forces personnel. The floorspace is used as a 'tri-service office', offering information and guidance to the public on the full range of careers available in the Royal Navy, Royal Marines, Army and Royal Air Force. Activities undertaken in the office include dealing with information requests from the public, individual briefings and interviews, group briefings, testing and candidate processing.

4.4 It is anticipated that the centre will continue to employ up to approximately 40 members of staff of a mixture of RAF/Navy and Army personnel who will be based in the office for 48 weeks of the year. The centre will continue to operate 0900-1730, Monday to Friday.

Design Statement

4.5 The proposed development will involve minor internal alterations including the installation of partition walls and the provision of WCs and a staff room, as well as interview rooms and assessment centres.

4.6 Externally, an illuminated fascia sign is proposed, as is an illuminated hanging sign. The hanging sign will be illuminated by a strip light above the hanging sign, whereas the fasia sign will be illuminated by four individual spotlights. The shopfront will be made from timber to be in keeping with the listed nature of the building and painted matte black and shall remain in that colour and condition for the duration of the use of the unit as an AFCO.

Access Statement

4.7 As previously mentioned, policy DC9.1 states that The Council will require all new commercial and industrial buildings and the environments in which they are set, including car parking areas, to meet high standards of accessibility for disabled people. This requirement will also apply to development which involves the adaptation of existing buildings unless practical considerations dictate otherwise.

4.8 It was mentioned during the pre-app site visit that the primary entrance to the ground floor unit would be required to be widened and the small 3 inch step removed and be made to be parallel with the external paving to allow for disabled access.

4.9 Given that the building is listed and has a uniformed frontage, which is dominantly glazed, the negative impact on the listed building in terms of installing an entirely new shopfront is not considered to be warranted. The negative impact in listed building terms is not greater than the positive impact provided by the disabled access.

4.10 Moreover, the ground floor unit benefits from a disabled access approximately 10m from the entrance to the ground floor unit. Therefore, given that access is already provided and Policy DC9.1 stating that “unless practical considerations dictate otherwise”. This is therefore considered a practical consideration.

4.11 As a result, no modifications to the existing access arrangements are proposed.

Transport & Parking Statement

4.12 It is proposed that all visitors and staff will be encouraged to continue travelling to the building using public transport. The site is highly accessible by various means of public transport including national rail links and local bus services.

Waste Collection & Storage Statement

4.13 The proposed use will not result in the creation of any non-standard waste products. It is therefore proposed that waste collection and storage arrangements remain as per existing. General waste will therefore be collected from the building via the existing facilities.

Ventilation Statement

4.14 It is proposed that additional AC plant is to be installed in an internal plantroom. All new routing will be in existing ductwork and trunking where possible. As a result, louvers are proposed to rear facades. Please see associated plan drawing.

Pre-App Response

4.15 On the 22nd of October 2015, a Pre-application meeting was conducted and arranged between Jonathan Friel (Capita) and David Brettell and Paul Mason (Manchester City Council), Also in attendance was Denise Von Roretz (MoD).

4.16 It was agreed on site that the principle of the development was acceptable in land use, listed building and advertisement terms and that the Council would support this forthcoming application.

4.17 Mr Brettell and Mr Mason were keen to see the property brought back in to commercial use and agreed that the minor alterations that were proposed that allowed the unit be functional for the MoD were acceptable in principle. As a result, the proposals are in accordance with the feedback that the Council offered.

5. Heritage Statement

5.1 This section of the report provides a detailed analysis of the impact of the proposed works on the listed building.

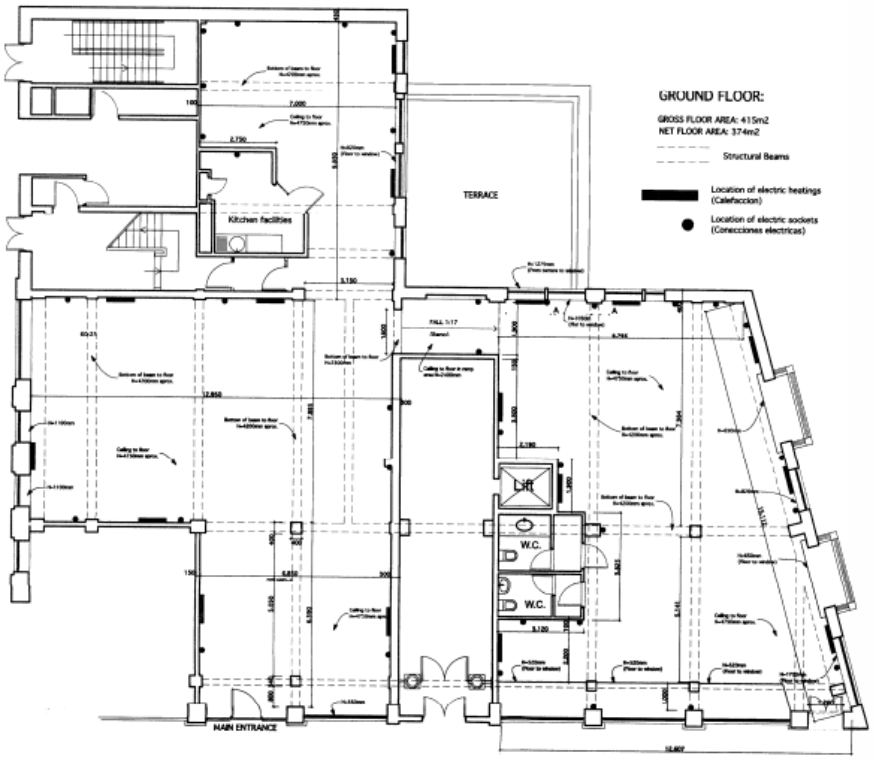
5.2 The word “wharf” is an acronym, which originally stood for “warehouse at river front”. During the industrial revolution as towns and cities began to trade heavy goods via canal, ‘wharfs’ began to be built across the country.

5.3 The Albion Wharf building was built circa 1860-1870 and is built from red brick with a Welsh slate roof, materials common in this part of Manchester. The architectural vernacular is of a Venetian Gothic style. The building benefits from four storeys and basement, and a 9-bay facade with pilasters and sill-bands to the upper floors and brick corbelled frieze. The ground floor has a segmental-headed doorway in the centre of the facade and pointed-segmental arcaded windows at ground floor level linked by impost bands. The building has a modest, but imposing presence within the area and is visually interesting.

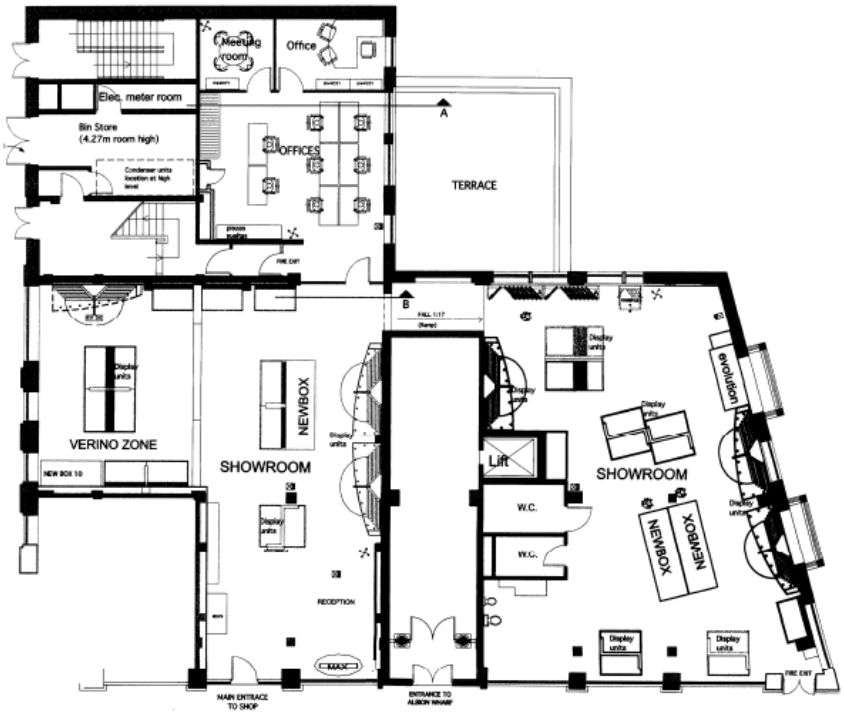
5.4 As previously stated, pre-application advice was sought prior to this application being submitted. From the site visit, it was evident that the property had been extensively renovated internally at the ground floor level, resulting in substantial alterations. There was nothing of architectural merit preserved and several stud walls and artificial walls had been constructed. However, the original high ceilings which add to the historic hierarchy of the building are still in situ. This is a feature which will be retained.

5.5 The Conservation Officer that was present at the pre-application meeting advised that the full-height of the ceiling should remain. However, in order to ensure that the unit sufficiently works for the AFCO, partition stud-walls are proposed. The original floorplan would not have been an entirely open-plan space that wrapped round the main internal stairway but it would not have been a series of partitions either. A system or storage spaces for tea, cotton, and heavy goods that awaited transportation would have existed. The introduction of the stud walls at full height are therefore considered no more damaging to the original footprint than the recent renovations that saw all historic fabric removed, and the installation of an entirely open-plan shop floor.

5.6 The Existing and Proposed drawings from the 2006 application (RN: 078321/LO/2006/C3) are shown below;



EXISTING LAYOUT PLAN



PROPOSED LAYOUT PLAN

5.7 What can be seen is that the 2006 LBC (RN:078321/LO/2006/C3) saw the installation of partition walls that were considered acceptable and not to be detrimental to the legibility of the space.





Images of existing partitions

5.8 In this instance the principle of the change of use of the building, the internal alterations and the improvements to the shopfront were not opposed by the Planning Officer or the Conservation Officer, subject to the extent of the external manifestations (which have been discussed in a previous section).

5.9 As a result of the proposed use, additional air intakes and extracts are proposed with associated louvers, the louvers are placed in locations that minimise the visual impact on modern facades within the cartilage of the listed building, therefore not detracting from the listed nature of the building.

5.10 The external lighting to the signage will be lit at a low level, in order to not detract from the impressive facade of the wharf building. The materials used will be subordinate to the building's overall appearance and will bring order and continuity to the ground floor level. The signage materials used will be black timber and steel and the lettering will be acrylic. The signage on the fascia will be a slim-line individually cut lettering that will appear not overly excessive or fussy. This will not detract from the grandeur of the building.

5.11 Given the altered nature of the property, on balance, the internal works are not contentious. Nevertheless, internal partitions have been annotated on plan to indicate how the change of use would work internally. The legibility or hierarchy of the space will not be impacted by the alterations, as each space will benefit from the original high ceiling.

5.12 On balance, it is considered that the proposed works are not harmful and nor do they damage the integrity of the internal space beyond what has previously been consented and carried out. In addition, the external works are considered a benefit to the setting of the listed building, and the ongoing use of the ground floor unit will also benefit the building in terms of maintenance. It is therefore considered necessary to carry out these proposed works in order to preserve the use and character of the building.

6. Planning Considerations

6.1 This section of the statement will analyse the key planning considerations, which are considered to be as follow:

- Principle of Development;
- Character & Appearance;
- Residential Amenity;
- Highways & Access;
- Sustainability

Principal of Development

6.2 The proposal involves the continued use of the vacant ground floor unit at Albion Wharf as an Armed Forces Careers Office falling within Planning Use Class A2. The suitability of the material changes involved are considered in turn below.

Material change of use to an A2 'Armed Forces Careers Office'

6.3 Capita is pursuing the change of use of a retail unit to Class A2 (Financial and Professional Services) in Manchester city centre. It is considered that the proposed use will facilitate this appropriate Town Centre Use, which will continue to provide employment within a highly sustainable location.

6.4 The Armed Forces Recruitment Centre will continue to be located in a highly sustainable location, and will not result in any detrimental impact upon existing neighbouring land uses. The centre will continue to provide an important employment use; as well as variety, vitality and interest to the high street shopping frontage.

Character & Appearance

6.5 Given the listed nature of the building, it is considered that the use is appropriate and that the internal alterations will not have a negative impact on the hierarchy, legibility or circulation of the building, nor will the proposals have a detrimental impact on the building as a heritage asset in the context of this part of Manchester. It is considered that the proposal is entirely appropriate for the character of the area.

Impact on Amenity

6.6 The operational hours of the recruitment centre are to continue as 09.00 to 17.30, Monday to Friday. It is considered the proposal will not give rise to any detrimental amenity issues and that there will be no impact on amenity over and above that experienced by the existing and previous use(s). The proposed use is not considered to conflict with adjacent land uses.

Highways & Access

6.7 It is not considered that the operation of the facility would result in higher levels in demand for parking when compared to the extent of use of the site. As such, it is considered that the proposal would not cause traffic congestion or road safety problems.

Sustainability & the Environment

6.8 The proposals are located in a highly sustainable location where it could be expected that visitors will continue to arrive on foot, having travelled to the site via public transport. Due to the location of the application site, public transport access is considered to be very good as a variety of modes of transport are within close proximity of the site.

7. Summary and Conclusion

7.1 The unit at 13-17 Albion Wharf has been vacant for the last 5 years. As a result, this proposal will ensure that the ground floor unit will provide vibrancy and vitality to the City Centre, where commercial uses are encouraged. Morover, the addition of approximately 30 new jobs will become permenant in Manchester, and by the very nature of the 'Armed Forces Careers Office', new avenues of employment in the armed forces will be available to greater Manchester.

7.2 The impact of the proposed change of use and associated works will not result in the loss of amenity to any local residents and the continued occupancy of the ground floor unit will ensure that the Grade II listed building will be maintained and the proposed shopfront will benefit the listed nature of the building.

7.3 There is no alteration to the historical fabric of the listed building and the proposal represents a sensitive approach to modernising the unit in order to provide higher occupancy levels, a more vibrant high street and will ensure a vacant listed building unit will be occupied for the foreseeable future. It is therefore considered necessary to carry out these proposed works in order to preserve the use and character of the building.

7.4 The proposals are therefore in accordance with the NPPF; CC1, CC2 and C1 of the Manchester Core Strategy strategic objectives; RC20 of the City Centre Plan and; DC19.1 and DC14.1 of the Citywide Development Control Policies.

References

1. UK Armed Forces Quarterly Personnel Report, gov.uk, 1 April 2014
2. http://www.manchester-regiment.org.uk/
3. National Planning Policy Framework
4. Manchester Core Strategy Development Plan adopted 2012
5. Manchester Core Strategy Development Plan adopted 2012
6. Manchester Core Strategy Development Plan adopted 2012
7. Manchester Area 5 Action Plan
8. Manchester Citywide Development Control Policies
9. Manchester Citywide Development Control Policies