Middle Warehouse, Castle Quay, Chester Road

Listed Building Consent and Planning Applications

Proposed Installation of Air Conditioning Unit

Heritage Statement

September 2015

1 Introduction

1.1 This Heritage Statement is submitted in support of a Listed Building Consent and Planning application for the installation of an air conditioning unit at Middle Warehouse, Castle Quay.

1.2 Middle Warehouse is a Grade 11 Listed Building dating from 1828-31. The List Entry Summary is submitted with the application documents. It is a five storey brick built former warehouse building, formerly used in connection with the Bridgewater Canal and associated industrial uses in Castle Quay. It was converted in the 1980s to a mix of residential and commercial uses.

1.3 The List entry notes a number of 20th Century additions/changes including fire escapes and a penthouse.

1.4 The air conditioning unit is required to provide modern standards of comfort cooling for the first floor office unit. This will help to maintain an appropriate use in the building and contribute to securing its long term future. The specified unit is highly energy efficient thereby contributing to the overall sustainability of the building.

1.5 It is proposed to locate the unit in an unobtrusive location on the gable wall where other such equipment is already located. This part of the building is screened from wider view by a retaining wall for the service access road and is the most appropriate location for the unit.

1.6 The proposed development will not have any materially harmful effect on the significance of the building or its setting.

2 Proposed Development

2.1 The proposal is for the installation of an additional air conditioning unit on the gable wall of Middle Warehouse, Castle Quay to provide comfort cooling for an upper ground floor office within the building. The installation is necessary to provide a modern standard of accommodation without which it would be difficult to let the office unit.

2.2 This part of the gable wall is the location for 3 existing air conditioning units and it is proposed to site the new unit in between the second and third of these. An extract fan for the ground floor restaurant is also situated on this elevation.

2.3 This part of the gable wall is screened from wider view by the retaining wall of the adjacent vehicle access ramp. Soft landscaping in the space between the gable wall and the retaining wall also softens the immediate impact of the existing units.

2.4 This location was chosen because it is largely hidden from view and is the least obtrusive siting possible on the building. The impact on the character and appearance of the building is therefore minimised. Locating the unit here also enables existing electrical infrastructure to be used and minimised the distance of connecting cabling etc to the office which the Air Conditioning Unit will serve. It is therefore the most efficient and least obtrusive location on the building. No other elevation of the building offers these advantages and all other elevations were rejected as possible locations for the installation of the unit.

Design Principles

2.5 The air conditioning unit is designed to provide comfort cooling to the upper ground floor office unit in an energy efficient way. This helps to maintain the building in an appropriate use which in turn assists in securing the long term future of the building.

2.6 The unit will be located unobtrusively in an area which already accommodates three other similar units as well as an extract fan for the ground floor restaurant. This part of the building is hidden from wider view by the retaining wall of the adjacent vehicular service access road.

2.7 The unit is ultimately demountable and will not permanently alter the fabric of the building.

2.8 The unit will not compromise the character or appearance of the building.

Context

2.9 The proposal fully takes into account the context of the building and its importance to the character and appearance of Castle Quay by making use of an unobtrusive location on a gable wall where there is already a grouping of other similar equipment and which is screened by the retaining wall for the vehicular access.

Access

2.10 The proposed development will have no impact on access arrangements to the building which are already in place and will be unchanged.

3 Impact on Significance

National Planning Policy Framework

3.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires an assessment of significance to be submitted in support of applications affecting heritage assets. Paragraph 128 states that:

In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significant of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the asset's importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary.

3.2 Paragraph 131 of the NPPF requires local planning authorities, in determining, planning applications to take account of:

- the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

3.3 Paragraph 132 states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset the greater the weight should be. It adds that significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification.

3.5 Paragraph 133 goes on to provide guidance in instances where a proposal will lead to "substantial harm or total loss" of a heritage asset. We do not consider that applies in this case.

3.5 Paragraph 134 deals with situations where there will be "less than substantial harm" to the significance of a designated heritage asset:

Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.

Assessment of Significance and Impact of Proposed Development

3.6 The listing description of Middle Warehouse is submitted as part of the application documents.

3.7 The building is a Grade II listed warehouse building located at the former Castle Field Goods Yard. The warehouse is a red brick five storey building built between 1828 and 1831. The list description is as follows:

Canal warehouse, unoccupied at time of survey. 1828-31; altered in C20. Red brick with some sandstone dressings (and some C20 concrete); roof concealed. Large rectangular plan except for central projection at rear. Five storeys, a 26-window range, symmetrical, with a 10-window centre (probably formerly pedimented) dominated by a giant segmental blank arch containing a pair of segmental arched shipping holes, with a low sandstone pier in the centre and responds at the sides, a blank medallion in the centre of the blank arch and keystones to all arches; windows here and in the outer ranges mostly small and round-headed with raised sills, but those in the outer ranges arranged in pairs between former 5-stage loading slots altered as windows (C20 full-height fire-escapes added near both ends). Plain stone band over top storey, and plain parapet (replaced over the centre by a concrete flat-roofed penthouse). Four-stage loading slot in right-hand return wall. Rear has windows similar to those at front, and added C20 concrete hoppers. Interior: remains of loading hoists visible in shipping holes. History: similar to former Duke's grain warehouse on Bridgewater Canal at Liverpool, built 1811. Very prominent feature of site, enhanced by restoration of basin leading to shipping hole during course of survey.

3.8 The attached photographs illustrate some of the history of the building from 1932 to c1955-c1975, including the fact that it suffered quite extensive damage during WW2.

3.9 The building is within the Castlefield Conservation Area. The Council's web-based information http://www.manchester.gov.uk/info/511/conservation_areas/972/castlefield_conservation_area

describes the Roman origins of the area and its canal-led development from the early 1700s onwards as a key area in Manchester's industrialisation. The canals were followed by large scale investment in railway infrastructure. The information notes that a large number of warehouses were built to supply the needs of the rapidly growing population of Manchester which in the 19th century was the fastest growing city in the world. The Merchants and Middle Warehouses had interchange facilities in which canal arms allowed barges to enter the buildings and be of loaded directly on to horse-drawn carts.

3.10 The information notes the decline of both canal and rail transport in the 20th Century and that in recent years tourism and leisure have become growth industries, transforming Castlefield from a neglected corner of the city into a thriving major attraction with frequent popular events. The older buildings particularly the warehouses have been adapted to new uses including residential, offices, restaurants and bars.

3.11 Middle Warehouse has considerable significance as part of Manchester's industrial heritage and, in its restored and converted state, contributes to the active mix of uses in Castle Quay

and the overall attractiveness of Castlefield. The setting of the building adjoining the Quay and within the Conservation Area is also of considerable significance in underlining the former working nature of the building and its location within an area which was fundamental to Manchester's industrialisation.

3.12 The proposed development will have no material impact on the significance of the heritage asset or its setting for the reasons set out above. In summary these are:

- The air conditioning unit is a small item of plant, particularly when viewed in the context of the overall scale of the building.
- It is demountable and will not adversely impact on either the architectural or historic value of the building or its setting.
- It will be unobtrusively sited among three existing similar units on a part of the building which is hidden from view from most vantage points.
- The unit is necessary to create comfortable office accommodation which matches modern expectations and thus helps to prolong the beneficial life of the building and ensure its long term conservation.

3.13 The proposal will not lead to substantial harm to or total loss of the heritage asset (NPPF para 133).

3.13 We consider, for the reasons set out above that the proposed development will not lead to any material harm to the significance of the heritage asset or its setting.

3.14 However, if there were to be harm it would be minimal and would be outweighed by the benefit of securing a viable and appropriate use which will help to ensure the long term future of the building. The proposal therefore meets the "less than substantial harm" test set out in NPPF.

4 Conclusion

4.1 The proposed air conditioning unit is required to provide modern standards of comfort cooling in a sustainable and energy efficient way for the first floor office unit. This will help to meet office market expectations, contributing to the long term viability of the building as a whole.

4.2 The unit will be sited in the most unobtrusive location possible on the building and is ultimately demountable without damage to the fabric of the building.

4.3 There will be no material harm to the heritage significance of the building or its setting. Even if harm were to occur it would meet the test of “less than substantial harm” set out in NPPF as it would be outweighed by the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.