

Roof Conversion to Carfax Court, Lower Park Road, Manchester Design and Access Statement and Heritage Statement

June 2025



Introduction

This design and access statement has been prepared in support of a full planning application on behalf of NJoy Student Living Limited to Manchester City Council for a roof conversion to the student accommodation building that forms Carfax Court on Lower Park Road, Victoria Park.

1. Site Context

Carfax Court is situated on Lower Park Road, a predominantly residential area of Rusholme within the Victoria Park Conservation Area. The existing building is a large three storey property constructed from red brick and grey slates with black and white timber panelling to the front elevation. It sits between the large contemporary Birtles building, part of Xaverian College to the North and a cul-de-sac of 1930s semi-detached dwellings to the South. Opposite the site is the Firwood and Maryland buildings, both Grade II Listed, which are also part of Xaverian College. New Carfax Court student accommodation building sits immediately to the rear sharing the access with Carfax Court off Lower Park Road.

Langdale Hall and Langdale Court student accommodation buildings also owned by the applicant are located to the rear of the site.

2. Design

The proposal is for the replacement of the existing roof and chimneys with a new roof that can also accommodate five ensuite bedrooms and two communal areas. The current grey slate roof is in a state of disrepair and in desperate need of replacing. The internal space is currently empty attic space with low head height. The new roof design maintains the current eaves height while raising the ridge by 1 metre to create a useable internal floor space.

The proposal also includes the installation of bicycle parking shelters, an improved waste and recycling storage facility to the rear and a new boundary treatment to the front of the application site facing Lower Park Road.

The new roof proposed provides a series of roof lights to bring natural light into the building, carefully positioned so there are no windows to the front or rear elevations. There are conservation style rooflights to both side elevations and these have been positioned on the internal elevations where possible to prevent any impact on neighbouring properties. A flat section of roof is proposed to the centre of the building also benefitting from rooflights. This cannot be viewed from street level or the surrounding area.

The design of the roof conversion has derived through extensive consultation with Manchester City Council planning department and their conservation team so that there is no impact on the streetscene and the Victoria Park Conservation area. Through Pre-app consultation, the design has evolved and reduced in size considerably from the original design of a full storey roof extension of 12 ensuite bedrooms with 4 communal areas to a very modest roof conversion with only 5 ensuite bedrooms and 2 communal areas proposed.

The roof design aesthetic is very similar to the existing roof, with the hipped gables to the front and back and the prominent chimneys will be reinstated. There will be minimal material change to the existing streetscene.

The current front boundary wall consists of concrete panels and posts which are falling down and unsightly. The applicants are proposing to replace it with black railings which are more in keeping with the conservation area.



3. Layout

Carfax Court is an almost symmetrical H-shaped building and currently accommodates 37 no. student bedrooms across a range of studio and shared flat arrangements with associated kitchen and living facilities over three storeys. Five additional ensuite bedrooms and two communal areas are proposed within a newly formed loft space. Two bedrooms and a communal area are accessed via the main staircase to the north of the building and three bedrooms, and a communal area are accessed from the staircase to the south of the building.

The existing accommodation building has undertaken a program of repair and renovation by the current owners over the last few years, and the applicant is keen to maximise the potential of the site and continue to maintain the property to a high standard.

4. Landscape

There are several mature trees surrounding the accommodation block and information regarding the trees is covered in the accompanying surveys by Bowland Tree Consultancy Ltd and on the Site Plan submitted. The trees are to remain as existing, and a tree protection plan will be adhered to during the construction phase.

The new boundary railings will be constructed sensitively to prevent any potential tree root damage. Railings are proposed as the existing trees along the frontage are very close to the boundary and a wall would not fit within the space available and could cause damage to the trees.

5. Access

The proposal site is located near to a main bus route and is within walking distance of a broad range of local amenities including universities, shops healthcare, sports facilities and green spaces. Main routes into Manchester city centre are nearby and the site is very easy to travel to on public transport or by foot or by bike.

The new secure cycle storage facility will encourage residents to use bikes as a main transport option.

All units will be designed and constructed to Part M of the Building Regulations (Access to and use of Buildings). The proposal has been designed with a focus on inclusive design, providing a safe, welcoming and responsive environment where people want to live and be a part of.

Careful consideration will be given to the site during the construction process to ensure site security, minimise unauthorised access and theft of materials or equipment and ensure the health and safety of existing residents and those within the local area using neighbouring university accommodation. A construction management plan will be in place during the construction period.

6. Heritage

Carfax Court is a three-storey, inter-war block of student flats on the south-east side of Lower Park Road, forming part of Victoria Park's tree-lined promenade. Carfax Court was constructed c.1935 and is considered to be a positive addition to the conservation area. It is built from red brick with a hipped grey slate roof over three storeys with large brick chimneys. It fits well within the local streetscape and reflects the typology of the local architecture. The existing roofline and chimneys add positively to the local skyline. The overall elevational treatment is well-balanced and consistent, despite modern alterations for example uPVC windows and a boiler room. Overall, the building fits well within its context. A communal front garden and boundary railings to the northern site boundary echo private forecourts elsewhere on Lower Park Road. As an unlisted building within the Conservation Area, it contributes through its scale, materials and alignment to the local vernacular.

Victoria Park Conservation Area was designated in March 1972 to protect the ensemble of late-Victorian villas, Edwardian terraces and ancillary structures that cluster around Manchester's oldest public park. Its northern boundary runs along the backs of properties on Daisy Bank Road, extending south to Kent Road East/West, and east-west between Wilmslow Road and Langdale/Anson Road. The area's inter-war apartment blocks, where well designed, are recognised as positive contributors to its architectural diversity.

The proposal comprises a replacement roof with an attic conversion. The significant hipped gable design is retained, and the chimneys would be rebuilt. It is proposed that existing slates would be re-used where possible. The new flat roof section to the centre of the building maintains height within the attic space yet is hidden from view. No enlargement of the building footprint or alteration of the façades is proposed. There will be no damage to significant original fabric of the building.

The grey slate hipped roof design ensures the conversion is largely concealed and screened by mature street trees, resulting in a neutral heritage impact. Any glimpses of rooflights to the side elevations are mitigated by the existing building mass and tree canopy; the attic conversion will read as part of the skyline rather than a new dominant form. The design of the roof conversion echoes the block's original proportions.

The Manchester City Council Victoria Park Conservation Area Appraisal recognises that well-designed inter-war buildings contribute positively to the area's mixed architectural character. To ensure minimal impact on heritage significance, the roof conversion has been designed to be subordinate and hidden from view.

The proposed roof extension at Carfax Court is a carefully considered intervention that respects the building's inter-war character, maintains the existing street-scene, and preserves the integrity of the Victoria Park Conservation Area. Its design will have a positive effect on heritage significance, satisfying statutory and policy tests for conservation and enhancement. The provision of ensuite bedrooms and communal facilities within the roof space will aid improvements to the building as a whole. It will enable the owners of the property to fund continued maintenance of the building and sustain an economically viable business, contributing positively to the local environment and community.