

Planning

Growth & Development

Delegated officer report for planning application

Application no. 143620/AO/2025

Date registered valid: 1 August 2025

Proposal: Retention of 2no. internally illuminated individual letter signs and 4no. plaque signs.

Address: 17-23 St Anns Square, Manchester, M2 7PW

Ward(s): Deansgate Ward

Applicant: Watches of Switzerland Group Limited

Agent (if any): Mrs Katie Parfett-Bass Savills

Case officer: Jack Naven
Tel: 0161 219 2095
Email: jack.naven@manchester.gov.uk

Recommendation: Approve

Date of recommendation: **12 September 2025**

Application Details

Type of application: Advertisement Consent

Development type: Advertisements

Date of site visit: 1 August 2025

Standard consultations:

Printed: 8 August 2025 Expired: 30 August 2025

Neighbour notifications

Printed: 8 August 2025 Expired: 30 August 2025

Site notice

No site notice has been produced

Press advert

No press advert had been published

Departure from Development Plan: No

Environmental Statement: Not required

Description of Site/Area

Listed building: Not applicable

Conservation area: St Anns Square Conservation Area 1970

Tree Preservation Order: Not applicable

The building is a Grade II Listed Building that dates from the late 19th century. It was constructed as a purpose-built commercial building with shops and storerooms at ground floor and offices above. Built in Italianate style, the St Ann's Square elevation is a prominent ornamented façade. Although a modern intervention, the shopfronts at ground floor are a sympathetic addition to the Grade II listed premises, reflective of the proportions, appearance and materials of the upper storeys, contributing to a cohesive and attractive appearance overall.

The building is located in the St Ann's Square Conservation Area, in the immediate setting of a number of Grade I, Grade II* and Grade II listed buildings, including the Grade I listed St Ann's Church and the Grade II* listed Former Bank with attached Manager's House at 25 St Ann's Street. The building makes an important and positive contribution to these assets in its current form and is a key contributor to the area's distinctive character, sense of place and history.

Internally the ground floor of the building has been significantly altered and has lost a lot of detailing. Features such as columns do however remain and sympathetic cornicing exists within some parts. Past alterations have damaged the space. The basement however is more intact.

The building is within the central shopping and business area of the City Centre and surrounding uses include shops, offices, residential accommodation, bars, restaurants and entertainment venues. St Ann's Square is a hard landscaped public square in Manchester City Centre that accommodates a Grade II Listed statue named Cobden's Statue and the Grade II

Boer War Memorial and other non-listed sculptures and is frequently used for events including the Christmas Markets. It is part of a major shopping area.

Description of Development

The proposal seeks the retention of 2no. internally illuminated individual letter signs and 4no. plaque signs.

Related Applications

139944/LO/2024 - Listed Building Consent for the internal refurbishment, along with the installation of a new shopfront.

Approved July 2024.

143551/LO/2025 - Listed building consent for installation of 2no. internally illuminated individual letter signs and 4no. plaque signs.

Approved in tandem with this application.

Consultations & Notification Responses

Publicity - Neighbour notification letters were sent to surrounding properties. At the time of writing this report, no representations have been received because of this publicity.

Highway Services - Have no objections to the proposal. Requested a condition be attached to control luminance levels.

Environmental Health - Have no objections to the proposal. Requested a condition be attached to control luminance levels.

Policy

Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 2007

The Local planning authority shall exercise its powers under these Regulations in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking into account—

- (a) the provisions of the development plan, so far as they are material; and
- (b) any other relevant factors.

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (1)(b)—

- (a) factors relevant to amenity include the general characteristics of the locality, including the presence of any feature of historic, architectural, cultural or similar interest;
- (b) factors relevant to public safety include—
 - (i) the safety of persons using any highway, railway, waterway, dock, harbour or aerodrome (civil or military);
 - (ii) whether the display of the advertisement in question is likely to obscure, or hinder the ready interpretation of, any traffic sign, railway signal or aid to navigation by water or air;
 - (iii) whether the display of the advertisement in question is likely to hinder the operation of any device used for the purpose of security or surveillance or for measuring the speed of any vehicle.

(3) In taking account of factors relevant to amenity, the local planning authority may, if it thinks fit, disregard any advertisement that is being displayed.

(4) Unless it appears to the local planning authority to be required in the interests of amenity or public safety, an express consent for the display of advertisements shall not contain any limitation or restriction relating to the subject matter, content or design of what is to be displayed.

Places for Everyone Plan - Joint Development Plan Document, for nine of the 10 boroughs which make up Greater Manchester adopted on 21st of March 2024:

- Policy JP-P1 - Sustainable Places
- Policy JP-Strat2 - City Centre
- Policy JP-P2 - Heritage

The **Manchester Core Strategy** - Development Plan Document 2012-2027 ("the Core Strategy") was adopted by the City Council on the 11th of July 2012:

- Policy SP1 - Spatial Principles
- Policy EN1 - Design Principles and Strategic Character Areas
- Policy EN3 - Heritage
- Policy DM1 - Development Management

The **Unitary Development Plan for Manchester** - For the reasons outlined below the following saved UDP Policies are of relevance to this application:

- Policy DC14 - Shop Fronts and Related Signs
- Policy DC18 - Conservation Areas
- Policy DC19 - Listed Buildings

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- Chapter 6 - Building a strong, competitive economy
- Chapter 7 - Ensuring the vitality of town centres
- Chapter 12 - Achieving well-designed places
- Chapter 16 - Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Shopfront and Signage Design Guide (2024)

Sections 16, 66, and 72 of the Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990

Issues

The main issues for consideration relate to the principle of the proposal, as well as, in accordance with the advertisement regulations, the acceptability of the proposal in terms of its impact upon visual amenity and upon public safety. In judging this, the provisions of the development plan and any other relevant factors, so far as they are material, must be taken into account.

Principle

The principle of the proposal is considered to be acceptable in this case. Signage is considered to be acceptable to advertise and provide wayfinding to such premises.

Visual Amenity

The individual letter signs are sited at fascia level. There are two individual letter signs serving two separate entrances for two different units occupied by two different brands, therefore, it is considered that two individual letter signs is appropriate in this case and will not lead to an undue amount of visual clutter.

Whilst the preference would have been to have fitted the individual letters to be hung behind the glazing, it has been thoroughly demonstrated by the applicant that in order to accommodate this, a further suspension to the ceiling would be required, which would result in this bulkier suspended ceiling overhanging the glazing when viewed from the outside, which would result in an appearance that would seem awkward and incongruous. Therefore, having the individual letter signage placed on the glazing externally is deemed to be an appropriate solution in this particular location compared to hanging internally behind the glazing.

The letters are stainless steel in a matt bronze finish, which will be complimentary in appearance to Mansfield Chambers and to the surroundings signage and buildings in St. Ann's Square.

The plaque signs are small in nature, stainless steel in a matt bronze finish, and set within recesses in the stone base of the pilasters that houses plaque signs in the past. It is not considered that these plaque signs will have a negative impact upon the visual amenity of the building or the surrounding area.

Impact on heritage

Assessment of significance

The significance of Mansfield Chambers centres on the architectural interest of its neo-classical principal facade (although heavily altered), the contribution that this makes to the street scene and character of St Ann's Square and its listed buildings – particularly the Church of St Ann (Grade I) – and its historic interest as a representation of the Victorian commercial phase of the multi-faceted evolution of the St Ann's area.

The shopfronts in place prior to the consented works commencing were entirely modern replacements; a tripartite arrangement with an introduced fanlight and framed by the pilasters which rise from the moulded ashlar plinth to the first-floor moulded cornice.

Individual letter signage

The back-lit individual letter signage within the fanlights above each entrance door to the two outer bays are similar to the location of historic Victoria signs in place on the building.

As the individual letters will be fixed to the glass that forms part of the recently approved modern shopfront amendments, this will conserve the special interest of the listed building by not being directly fixed to any historic material.

There will be no harm created as a result of the signage.

Plaque signs

The four plaque signs will replace plaque signs that historically sat in the same locations, set within recesses in the stone base of the pilasters.

They will be fixed using existing concealed fixing points behind.

There will be a low level of less than substantial harm created as a result of the plaque signs, due to fixing into the historic fabric of the building.

Public Benefits

The signage is the final part of an overall proposal to refurbish the building. The signage will support the businesses in place that have refurbished the building and will provide long term occupation of the building. Occupying historic spaces ensures that such spaces and buildings are preserved and the preservation of historic buildings to be appreciated by the public is considered to be benefit.

Public Safety

The luminance levels of the signage are 300cd/m², which is within an acceptable range to not cause any distraction to passing pedestrians or road users, or to cause a disturbance to any nearby residents or commercial occupiers.

A condition has been added to ensure that the proposed luminance levels are controlled and complied with.

All signage complies with headroom and carriageway clearance requirements.

Overall, there are no public safety concerns with the proposed signage.

Conclusion

Given the above, the proposal is considered to be consistent with the Core Strategy for the City of Manchester, in particular DM1 (Development Management) and SP1 (Spatial Principles), the saved policies contained within the Unitary Development Plan for Manchester, in particular DC14.1 and DC14.5 (Shop fronts and Related Signs), and the National Planning Policy Framework, in particular Section 12 (Achieving Well Designed Places) and Section 16 (Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment).

Other Legislative Requirements

Equality Act 2010

Section 149 (Public Sector Equality Duty) of the Equality Act 2010 requires due regard to the need to: Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act and; Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. The Equality Duty does not impose a legal requirement to conduct an Equality Impact Assessment. Compliance with the Equality Duty involves consciously thinking about the aims of the Equality Duty as part of the process of decision-making.

Human Rights Act 1998 considerations

This application needs to be considered against the provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998. Under Article 6, the applicants (and those third parties, including local residents, who have made representations) have a right to a fair hearing and to this end the local planning authority must give full consideration to their comments.

Protocol 1 Article 1, and Article 8 where appropriate, confer(s) a right of respect for a person's home, other land and business assets. In taking account of all material considerations, including Council policy as set out in the Core Strategy and saved policies of the Unitary Development Plan, the Director of Planning, Building Control & Licensing has concluded that some rights conferred by these articles on the applicant(s)/objector(s)/resident(s) and other occupiers and owners of nearby land that might be affected may be interfered with but that that interference is in accordance with the law and justified by being in the public interest and on the basis of the planning merits of the development proposal. She believes that any restriction on these rights posed by the recommendation given is proportionate to the wider benefits of and that such a decision falls within the margin of discretion afforded to the Council under the Town and Country Planning Acts.

Recommendation: Approve

Condition(s) to be attached to decision for approval

1) No advertisement is to be displayed without the permission of the owner of the site or any other person with an interest in the site entitled to grant permission.

No advertisement shall be sited or displayed so as to:

- (a) endanger persons using any highway, railway, waterway, dock, harbour or aerodrome (civil or military);
- (b) obscure, or hinder the ready interpretation of, any traffic sign, railway signal or aid to navigation by water or air; or
- (c) hinder the operation of any device used for the purpose of security or surveillance or for measuring the speed of any vehicle.

Any advertisement displayed, and any site used for the display of advertisements, shall be maintained in a condition that does not impair the visual amenity of the site.

Any structure or hoarding erected or used principally for the purpose of displaying advertisements shall be maintained in a condition that does not endanger the public.

Where an advertisement is required under these Regulations to be removed, the site shall be left in a condition that does not endanger the public or impair visual amenity.

2) The development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with the following drawings and documents, received by Manchester City Council as the Local Planning Authority on 25 July 2025:

- Drawing Ref: 1357.P.00.050 Rev A - 'Location Plan'
- Drawing Ref: 1357.P.00.060 Rev A - 'Site Plan'
- Drawing Ref: 1357.P.02.100 Rev A - 'Proposed Signage Details 01 - Shopfront Lettering'
- Drawing Ref: 1357.P.02.101 Rev A - 'Proposed Signage Details 02- Plaques'
- Drawing Ref: 1357.P.00.300 Rev A - 'Existing Front Elevation'
- Drawing Ref: 1357.P.01.300 Rev A - 'Proposed Front Elevation'
- Drawing Ref: 1357.P.01.310 Rev A - 'Existing and Proposed General Sections'
- Drawing Ref: 1357.P.01.350 Rev A - 'Existing and Proposed Shopfront Sections'
- Heritage Statement, prepared by Donald Insall Associates.

Reason - To ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the approved plans. Pursuant to policies SP1 and DM1 of the Core Strategy and saved policies DC18 and DC19.

3) The maximum luminance of the signage shall not exceed 300 cd/m2 in brightness at any time.

Reason - In the interests of visual and residential amenity pursuant to policies SP1, EN3 and DM1 of the Manchester Core Strategy and saved policies DC14.1, DC18.1, and DC19.1 of the Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester.

Appendix 1 – List of consultees & neighbours notified

Highway Services
Environmental Health

First Floor To Third Floor, 17 St Ann's Square, Manchester, M2 7EF
Third Floor Rooms 46 To 48 And 50 To 56, 17 St Ann's Square, Manchester, M2 7EF
HOLLAND & BARRETT, 22 St Ann's Square, Manchester, M2 7JB
Ernest Jones, 16 St Ann's Square, Manchester, M2 7HQ
Second Floor Rooms 27 To 37, 17 St Ann's Square, Manchester, M2 7EF
McDonald's, 18 St Ann's Square, Manchester, M2 7HQ
Showcase At Entrance To 20, St Ann's Square, Manchester, M2 7HG
PO Box 320, Royal Bank Of Scotland, St Ann Street, Manchester, M60 2SS
17 - 21 St Ann's Square, Manchester, M2 7PW
23 St Ann's Square, Manchester, M2 7PS
15 St Ann's Square, Manchester, M2 7PW

Appendix 2 – Planning constraints

Article 4 Direction - City Centre PD Restriction - Class B1(a) To C3
Article 4 Direction - Removal Of PD Rights Change Of Use From Class C3 To Class C4
Coal Authority - Development Low Risk - Name: DEVELOPMENT_LOW_RISK_AREA
Conservation Area - St Anns Square Conservation Area 1970
Susceptible to Surf Water Flood (Middle) -
Susceptible to Surf Water Flood (Middle) -
Susceptible to Surf Water Flood (More) -
Susceptible to Surf Water Flood (More) -
Area Team Boundary - Name: CENTRAL