

Manchester Centre For Buddhist Meditation, Chorlton Heritage Impact Assessment



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**Manchester Centre for Buddhist Meditation, Chorlton
Heritage Impact Assessment**

**Prepared for Manchester Centre for Buddhist Meditation, Chorlton
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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report was commissioned from Jenny Wetton Conservation in 2024 by the Manchester Centre for Buddhist Meditation, the historic building of which is considered by the Council to constitute a non-designated heritage asset. Its purpose is to assess the impact of proposals to alter the northern part of the former Sunday School building with the addition of a mezzanine storey.

This report has been written by Jenny Wetton, BA MSc (Arch Cons) IHBC, Consultant, based on an existing *Heritage Statement* by Graham Holland Associates which discusses the historical development of the site and its significance, further evidence from documentary sources and a survey of the site.

Section 3 summarises the development of the site. The historic building is dated 1908 and was built as a Methodist Sunday School; the Sunday School is not shown on the 1907 map and the 1896 foundation stone must have been moved. It has since been used as a Methodist church hall, a school annex and, most recently, as a centre for Buddhist meditation, which occupies the southern two-thirds of the building.

Section 4 assesses the significance of the site. The chief aspects of significance are considered to be the survival of part of the historic Gothic revival design externally, although the north gable window has been replaced; the presence of the building within the streetscape and its historic association with the Methodist Church. **The former Sunday School is considered to be of medium/low significance and to constitute a non-designated heritage asset.**

Section 5 outlines the heritage planning policy context. The 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act is the primary legislative document; there is a presumption in favour of preserving and enhancing heritage assets. The NPPF provides national policy on heritage assets and development and sets out a proportionate approach taking account of significance. Policy 209 of the NPPF requires that 'a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.' The *Addendum to the Manchester City Council Core Strategy* Policy JP-P2: Heritage states:

'Development proposals affecting designated and non-designated heritage assets and/or their settings will be considered having regard to national planning policy.'

Section 6 assesses the impact of the proposals. The approach has been to retain as much historic fabric as possible while enabling a new use for this part of the building, which has been mainly used for storage since its acquisition by the Samatha Trust in 1977 and is now in a poor condition. Repair and maintenance are needed to ensure the retention of its historic interest.

Externally, there will be some visible change to the building, with minor alterations to the windows of the side elevations, replacement doors and the insertion of small rooflights to both pitches. Importantly, the proposed mezzanine floor will not be visible on the more important front elevation, as it has been located at windowsill level, and its

impact on the less important north-west elevation reduced by curving the staircase away from the wall. Its impact on the garden elevation has also been reduced by changes to the design of the floor. **This approach is accepted practice in historic buildings and has been used successfully by the present architects in listed churches.**

Although the insertion of the mezzanine floor will result in the subdivision of the space, the building has already been subdivided laterally and the southern part will remain full height.

An alternative design to raise the floor level above the windows to the side elevation was considered following pre-application advice from the local authority. However, a structural engineer has advised that the tie bar across the ceiling cannot be removed and would severely obstruct movement in the space created making this option impractical. It would also considerably reduce the space at the mezzanine level and would be unacceptably visible, running across the gable window of the more important front elevation.

Although some of the work will be mildly to moderately harmful, other work is considered to be beneficial in impact. Important repair work is proposed to the windowsills on both the long elevations and to damaged internal plasterwork, which will help to retain the historic significance of the building. **Significantly, the proposals will provide a sustainable new use for this part of the building by meeting modern requirements.**

This report acts as a record of the historic buildings and could be added to the Historic Environment Record, in accordance with NPPF Policy 199.

With the presumption in favour of sustainable development set out in the NPPF, it is the author's professional opinion that the proposals will 'positively conserve, sustain and enhance' the significance of the historic building. The proposals are considered to comply with national and local planning policy.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background to the Report

This report was commissioned from Jenny Wetton Conservation in 2024 by the Manchester Centre for Buddhist Meditation, the historic building of which is considered by the Council to constitute a non-designated heritage asset. Its purpose is to assess the impact of proposals to alter the northern part of the former Sunday School building with the addition of a mezzanine storey. The NPPF requires significance to be assessed when changes are proposed to heritage assets, and for the impact of proposals to be assessed in relation to significance. This report relates to a withdrawn application, ref. 139416/FO/2024.

2.2 Purpose of the Report

The report is designed to provide the author's professional opinion of:

- A summary of the history and development of the site;
- An assessment of its significance;
- An assessment of the impact of the proposals.

This report has been written by Jenny Wetton, BA MSc (Arch Cons) IHBC, Consultant, based on an existing *Heritage Statement* by Graham Holland Associates which discusses the historical development of the site and its significance, further evidence from documentary sources and a survey of the site.

2.3 Copyright

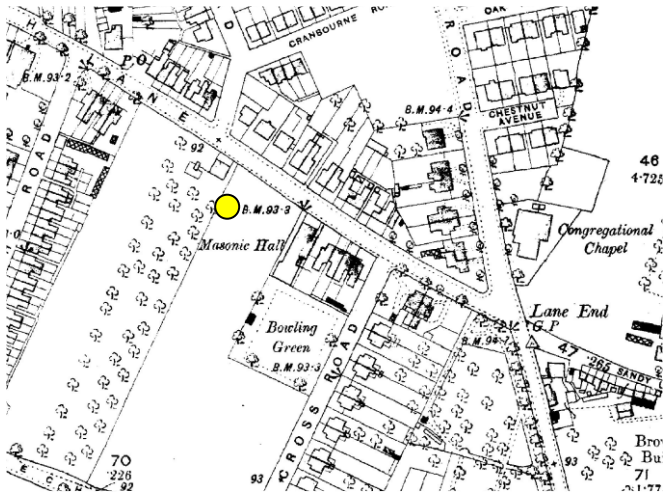
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3 HISTORY AND DESIGN

3.1 History of Site

The application site is shown as a field on the 1894 map, which marks a Masonic Hall to the south-east with a bowling green behind. A datestone on the building is inscribed 'Built 1896/ Enlarged 1908'. The 1907 map shows a chapel to the east of the application site, which is shown occupied by a house. By 1933, the chapel is labelled as a church and the application site is shown adjacent to the west, marked as a Sunday School.



OS 1894 Showing Approximate Site



Date Stone



OS 1907

OS 1933

Graham Holland Associates state that the 'Methodist Church closed in 1960 and was destroyed by arson in 1967'¹. The building on the application site was later used as a Methodist church hall and, for a short time, as an annex to a local school. In 1977, the building was rented from Manchester City Council as a centre for Buddhist Meditation.

¹ Graham Holland Associates. *Manchester Centre for Buddhist Meditation; Chorlton-Cum-Hardy. Heritage Statement* March 2024. Ref: GDH/CT/8094, Section 2

3.2 Architectural Assessment

Exterior

The former Methodist Sunday School is constructed in a Gothic revival style in red brick with sandstone dressings and with terracotta corner and intermediate pinnacles on buttresses to the front gable. This elevation also retains two pointed arched doorways with double-leaf boarded timber doors which may be later replacements; the main gable window has been replaced and the fanlights replaced with plain glass.

Both long side elevations are simple, with paired lancet timber-framed windows with stone sills and brick heads. The south-east elevation retains two foundation stones, but these are badly weathered and the inscriptions are illegible. There are two further foundation stones on the north-west elevation, of which only one is legible with the inscription 'LAID BY JAMES GIBBON STRETFORD _9TH AUGUST 1896'.



Front Elevation



South-east Elevation



Northern End of North-west Elevation



Foundation Stones



Entrance Door

Interior

The interior has been subdivided to provide a meditation space to the south, that to the north being used solely for storage, although the historic hammer beam roof has been retained exposed throughout.

The north part of the building is very plain but does retain a truss and a board floor. The timber cupboard was installed by the building owner around 25 years ago. The walls are plain plastered, and the ceiling is plain and underdrawn.



South Part of Interior



North Part of Interior



Northern End of North-west Elevation



Entrance Door

4 SIGNIFICANCE

4.1 Assessing significance

Assessing significance is a key principle for managing change to heritage assets and is embedded within current government policy; NPPF policies 127 and 128 (DLUHC, *National Planning Policy Framework*, 2023). A key objective in the NPPF is 'the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation ...' (NPPF Para. 203). The NPPF advises that the more significant the heritage asset the greater the presumption in favour of its conservation (policy 205).

In 2019, Historic England issued guidance on assessing significance in keeping with the NPPF, *Statements of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets Historic England Advice Note 12*. There are four levels of significance as well as neutral and an intrusive grade:

Exceptional Level of Significance

The element is relatively intact, has a special interest, and makes an important contribution to the wider significance of the site. This would correspond to an individual grade I or II* listing. The NPPF advises that substantial harm should be wholly exceptional.

High Level of Significance

A designated asset important at national and regional level, including Grade II listed buildings. The NPPF advises that substantial harm should be exceptional.

Medium Level of Significance

An undesignated asset important at a local to regional level, including locally (non-statutory) listed buildings and buildings which make a positive contribution to a conservation area. The element has been altered, has less special interest, and its contribution to the wider significance of the site is less important. May include less significant parts of listed buildings. Buildings and parts of structures in this category should be retained where possible, although there is usually scope for adaptation.

Low Level of Significance

An undesignated asset important at a local level. The element has been significantly altered, has a low level of integrity, the special interest has been lost and it makes little contribution to the wider significance of the site. Buildings and parts of structures in this category should be retained where possible, although there is more scope for adaptation.

Neutral

The element is historically unimportant but does not have a negative visual impact on the surrounding buildings. May include insignificant interventions to listed buildings and buildings that do not contribute positively to a conservation area. The removal or adaptation of structures in this category is usually acceptable where the work will enhance a related heritage asset.

Intrusive

The element is historically unimportant and has a negative visual impact on the surrounding buildings. Wherever practicable, removal of negative features should be considered, taking account of setting and opportunities for enhancement.

4.2 Significance of Manchester Centre for Buddhist Meditation

Evidential Value:

The building is dated 1908 and was built as a Methodist Sunday School; the Sunday School is not shown on the 1907 map and the dated foundation stone must have been moved. It has since been used as a Methodist church hall, a school annex and, most recently, as a centre for Buddhist meditation, which occupies the southern two-thirds of the building.

There is no record of the site on the Greater Manchester Historic Environment Record.

Architectural Value:

Externally, the building retains its historic height and massing, and it is constructed in red brick with sandstone and terracotta detailing in a Gothic style typical of the period. The triple window on the front elevation has been replaced with a timber framed window and the fanlights above the doors have been replaced with plain glass. The long side elevations retain paired lancet windows with timber frames. Internally, the building is very plain but does retain a large timber cupboard on the south side.

In a hierarchy of elevations, the front elevation is considered to be the most important as it retains two entrance doors and considerably more detailing than the simpler side elevations. The front elevation was intended to be seen in the street scene, alongside the earlier church, which lay adjacent to the application site and prevented long views of the south-east side elevation.

The building is generally in good condition but many of the windowsills on the long sides are severely weathered and delaminating. At the time of survey for this report, there was evidence internally of water penetration at the northern end including stained and cracked plaster and salt movement. It is understood that major repair work was carried out around two years ago on the gable to address damp problems at high level and that further repair work has been carried out recently to address damp problems on the north-west side. However, the poor condition of the windowsills is having a negative effect on the significance of the building and further work is necessary to ensure the retention of its historic interest.

Historical Value:

The former Sunday School has provided a place of education for local children, a meeting place for local Methodists and additional space for a local school. In 1977, the building was rented from Manchester City Council as a centre for Buddhist Meditation.



Delaminating Windowsills

4.3 Summary of Significance

The chief aspects of significance are:

- Survival of part of the historic Gothic revival design externally, although the north gable window has been replaced.
- Presence of the building within the streetscape.
- Historic association with the Methodist Church.

The former Sunday School is considered to be of medium/low significance and to constitute a non-designated heritage asset.

4.4 Contribution Made by Setting

The NPPF defines the setting of a heritage asset as 'the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral'.

The application site is set behind a timber fence with stone paving along two sides. To the east lies a landscaped and planted garden for meditation use. Although the garden now affords views of the south-east elevation, this was not a historically available view, due to the presence of the church. To the south-east and adjoining the historic building is a new extension designed in a very simple and contemporary style in timber and white render.

Other buildings in the immediate vicinity are Gothic style villas of a similar period, also built in red brick. Adjacent to the south-east is the former Masonic Hall, constructed in a similar style and materials to the surrounding villas.



View South-east Along High Lane



View North-west Along High Lane



View Across Garden

The setting is considered to contribute positively to the significance of the application site.

5 HERITAGE PLANNING CONTEXT

5.1 National Planning Policy Framework (Dec. 2023)

The national legislative framework for development affecting listed buildings and conservation areas is provided by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990; often referred to as the Listed Buildings Act. This sets out the duty on local planning authorities with regard to listed buildings and any buildings or land within a conservation area, when determining applications for planning permission. It is essential that these legal duties are considered, alongside the contents of the NPPF and other planning policies and guidance.

For listed buildings, the planning authority *'shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of architectural or historic interest which it possesses'* (section 66).

Listed building consent is required for alterations which are likely to affect the character and special interest (significance) of the building. It is not required for like-for-like repairs, nor for alterations to modern fixtures and fittings which will not affect historic fabric, such as the removal of a modern partition.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was updated in December 2023 replacing all former planning policy statements (previous editions NPPF etc). *The Planning Practice Guide: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment* should be read in the light of the NPPF and does not comprise policy.

The NPPF states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The Government has three interdependent objectives to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. The latter objective includes contributing to 'protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment.' So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a **presumption in favour of sustainable development**. Chapter 16 is related to conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

The *Planning Practice Guide* states: 'In the case of buildings, generally the risks of neglect and decay of heritage assets are best addressed through ensuring that they remain in active use that is consistent with their conservation. Ensuring such heritage assets remain used and valued is likely to require sympathetic changes to be made from time to time.'

Policy 199 states: 'Local planning authorities should make information about the historic environment, gathered as part of policy-making or development management, publicly accessible.'

Policies 200 and 201 of the NPPF require planning applicants and local planning authorities to assess the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be appropriate to the assets' importance and no more than sufficient to understand the potential impact of

the proposal on their significance. Local planning authorities should take this assessment into account when the potential impact of proposed development to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

Policy 202 states: Where there is evidence of deliberate neglect of, or damage to, a heritage asset, the deteriorated state of the heritage asset should not be taken into account in any decision.

The *Planning Practice Guide* gives further guidance:

'Disrepair and damage and their impact on viability can be a material consideration in deciding an application. However, where there is evidence of deliberate damage to or neglect of a heritage asset in the hope of making consent or permission easier to gain the local planning authority should disregard the deteriorated state of the asset (National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 202). Local planning authorities may need to consider exercising their repair and compulsory purchase powers to remedy deliberate neglect or damage².'

Policy 203 states: 'In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

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

Policy 205 states: '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 (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.'

Policy 206 states: 'Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of:

- a) grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional;
- b) assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, registered battlefields, grade I and II* listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional.

Policy 207 states: 'Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total

² Paragraph: 014 Reference ID: 18a-014-20190723

loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:

- a) the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and
- b) no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and
- c) conservation by grant-funding or some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and
- d) the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.'

The *Planning Practice Guide* gives guidance on how to assess if there is substantial harm:

'In general terms, substantial harm is a high test, so it may not arise in many cases. For example, in determining whether works to a listed building constitute substantial harm, an important consideration would be whether the adverse impact seriously affects a key element of its special architectural or historic interest. It is the degree of harm to the asset's significance rather than the scale of the development that is to be assessed. The harm may arise from works to the asset or from development within its setting.

While the impact of total destruction is obvious, partial destruction is likely to have a considerable impact but, depending on the circumstances, it may still be less than substantial harm or conceivably not harmful at all, for example, when removing later inappropriate additions to historic buildings which harm their significance. Similarly, works that are moderate or minor in scale are likely to cause less than substantial harm or no harm at all. However, even minor works have the potential to cause substantial harm³.'

Policy 208 states; '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, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.'

Policy 209 states: 'The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.'

The *Planning Practice Guide* defines a non-designated heritage asset:

'Non-designated heritage assets are buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified by plan-making bodies as having a degree of heritage significance meriting consideration in planning decisions but which do not meet the criteria for designated heritage assets.

³ Paragraph: 018 Reference ID: 18a-018-20190723

'A substantial majority of buildings have little or no heritage significance and thus do not constitute heritage assets. Only a minority have enough heritage significance to merit identification as non-designated heritage assets⁴.'

Policy 211 states: 'Local planning authorities should require developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible. However, the ability to record evidence of our past should not be a factor in deciding whether such loss should be permitted.'

Policy 212 states: 'Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites, and within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably.'

5.2 Manchester City Council Core Strategy (2012)

Policy EN 3: Heritage

Throughout the City, the Council will encourage development that complements and takes advantage of the distinct historic and heritage features of its districts and neighbourhoods, including those of the City Centre.

New developments must be designed so as to support the Council in preserving or, where possible, enhancing the historic environment, the character, setting and accessibility of areas and buildings of acknowledged importance, including scheduled ancient monuments, listed buildings, registered parks and gardens, conservation areas and archaeological remains.

Proposals which enable the re-use of heritage assets will be encouraged where they are considered consistent with the significance of the heritage asset.

5.3 Addendum to Manchester Core Strategy 2024

The 'Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan Document for Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan 2022 To 2039' was adopted on 21 March 2024.

The following Core Strategy (CS) policies have been partially replaced by Places for Everyone (PfE) policies. Any part of the policy that is not replaced remains part of Manchester's Core Strategy.

CS Policy EN3 Heritage

Section to be replaced:

- 2nd paragraph

Replaced by PfE Policy JP-P2

Policy JP-P2: Heritage

⁴ Paragraph: 039 Reference ID: 18a-039-20190723

We will proactively manage and work with partners to positively conserve, sustain and enhance our historic environment and heritage assets and their settings. Opportunities will be pursued to aid the promotion, enjoyment, understanding and interpretation of heritage assets, as a means of maximising wider public benefits and reinforcing Greater Manchester's distinct character, identity and sense of place.

Local Plans will set out the key elements which contribute to the district's identity, character and distinctiveness and which should be the priority for conserving and enhancing in the future and demonstrate a clear understanding of the historic environment and the heritage values of sites, buildings or areas and their relationship with their surroundings. This knowledge should be used to inform the positive management and integration of our heritage by:

1. Setting out a clear vision that recognises and embeds the role of heritage in place-making;
2. Ensuring that the heritage significance of a site or area is considered in accordance with national planning policy in the planning and design process and opportunities for interpretation and local engagement are optimised;
3. Integrating the conservation and enhancement of heritage assets and their settings, with creative contextual architectural responses that contribute to their significance and sense of place;
4. Delivering positive benefits that sustain and enhance the historic environment, as well as contributing to the economic viability, accessibility and environmental quality of a place, and to social wellbeing; and
5. Exploring opportunities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions that restoration of historic buildings offer.

Particular consideration will be given to ensure that the significance of key elements of the historic environment which contribute to Greater Manchester's distinctive identity and sense of place are protected from harm. These include historic town centres, places of worship, historic transport routes including the canal network, industrial buildings and structures including textile mills, farmsteads and other sites, buildings, and areas of identified archaeological, architectural, artistic and/or historic value.

Development proposals affecting designated and non-designated heritage assets and/or their settings will be considered having regard to national planning policy.

Where heritage assets have been identified as being at risk, Local Plans should identify specific opportunities for them to contribute to regeneration and placemaking, and they should set out strategies for their repair and re-use. Development proposals which will help safeguard the significance of and secure a sustainable future for Greater Manchester's heritage at risk will be supported in principle, provided they are not contrary to national policy or other policies in the development plan.

Proposals should be informed, as necessary, by the findings and recommendations of the appropriate heritage assessment(s) in the development plan evidence base and/or any updated heritage assessment submitted as part of the planning application process.

6 HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

6.1 The Proposals

Graham Holland Associates have drawn up proposals to alter the building with the addition of a mezzanine storey. This statement should be read in conjunction with the associated drawings.

Taking account of the assessment of significance and Policies 203 and 205 of the NPPF, the impact of the proposal on the aspects of significance and is considered below. The application site is considered to constitute a non-designated heritage asset and a 'balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset'.

6.2 Impact of Changes on the Significance of the Non-designated Heritage Asset

This analysis is based on the guidance given within the Historic England *Advice Note 2: Making Changes to Heritage Assets*, which reinforces the approach taken in the Stockport UDP policies HC1.1 and 1.3 and in the *Extensions and Alterations to Dwellings* SPG. In Chapter 3 *Addition and Alteration*, and under *General Points*, the guidance states:

'The main issues to consider in proposals for additions to heritage assets, including new development in conservation areas, aside from NPPF requirements such as social and economic activity and sustainability, are proportion, height, massing, bulk, use of materials, durability and adaptability, use, enclosure, relationship with adjacent assets and definition of spaces and streets, alignment, active frontages, permeability and treatment of setting. Replicating a particular style may be less important, though there are circumstances when it may be appropriate. It would not normally be good practice for new work to dominate the original asset or its setting in either scale, material or as a result of its siting.⁵'

The impact of proposals has been considered in the context of the significance of the building as a whole, and the relative significance of affected fabric and areas. The impact of each principal alteration on the significance of the listed building is summarised below.

Exterior

There are several proposed changes to the exterior of the former Sunday school. The northern entrance doors will be replaced on a nearly like for like basis, in good quality timber but as single-leaf doors. The existing doors are in poor condition and new doors will improve the thermal performance of the building.

The impact of the proposal is considered to be **beneficial**.

⁵ Historic England. *Making Changes to Heritage Assets: Historic England Advice Note 2* (Historic England, February 2016), parag. 41

The fanlights on the north gable will be replaced with clear double-glazed units in the existing frames. There will be no change to the appearance of this part of the building and the new windows will help to improve the thermal performance of the building. The impact of the proposal is considered to be **beneficial**.

A ramp will be constructed at the front of the building, to improve access and will be faced in brick to match that of the building as far as possible, with a stone coping. Although this will alter the appearance of the front elevation, it is required to provide equal access to this part of the building. The overall impact of the proposal is considered to be **mildly harmful**.

The side windows will be replaced on a nearly like for like basis, with double-glazed units in thin profiled timber frames. The proposal will improve the thermal performance of the building, conserve the appearance of the side elevations and is considered to be **beneficial**.

Three small 'conservation style' rooflights and two small vents will be inserted to the south-east roof pitch and two rooflights to the north-west pitch. Although this will result in a limited loss of historic fabric, these are required to provide light and air to the proposed mezzanine level rooms and have been located to minimise their impact in longer views of the building. The impact of the proposal is considered to be **mildly harmful**.

Interior

<i>Proposal</i>	<i>Significance of affected area</i>	<i>Impact</i>	<i>Mitigation</i>
Ground Floor: Insert stud partitions to provide two rooms, a W.C. and meeting room	Low	Moderately harmful – will subdivide the historic height and volume of the space.	Partitioning will be removable.
Insert mezzanine floor to be supported on steel beams spanning between external walls and columns to provide three bedrooms, bathroom and a linen store, accessed by a staircase with winders in north corner.	Low	Moderately harmful – will subdivide the historic height and volume of the space, although ceiling retained at existing height over meeting area.	Stud partitions would be removable. Floor has been positioned and designed to minimise impact externally and located at front windowsill level.

6.3 Overall Impact on Significance

The approach has been to retain as much historic fabric as possible while enabling a new use for this part of the building, which has mainly been used for storage since its acquisition by the Samatha Trust in 1977 and is now in a poor condition. Repair and maintenance are needed to ensure the retention of its historic interest.

Externally, there will be some visible change to the building, with minor alterations to the windows of the side elevations, replacement doors and the insertion of small rooflights to both pitches. Importantly, the proposed mezzanine floor will not be visible on the more important front elevation, as it has been located at windowsill level, and its impact on the less important north-west elevation reduced by curving the staircase away from the wall. Its impact on the garden elevation has also been reduced by changes to the design of the floor. **This approach is accepted practice in historic buildings and has been used successfully by the present architects in listed churches.**

Although the insertion of the mezzanine floor will result in the subdivision of the space, the building has already been subdivided laterally and the southern part will remain full height.

An alternative design to raise the floor level above the windows to the side elevation was considered following pre-application advice from the local authority. However, a structural engineer has advised that the tie bar across the ceiling cannot be removed and would severely obstruct movement in the space created making this option impractical. It would also considerably reduce the space at the mezzanine level and would be unacceptably visible, running across the gable window of the more important front elevation.

Although some of the work will be mildly to moderately harmful, other work is considered to be beneficial in impact. Important repair work is proposed to the windowsills on both the long elevations and to damaged internal plasterwork, which will help to retain the historic significance of the building. **Significantly, the proposals will provide a sustainable new use for this part of the building by meeting modern requirements.**

7 CONCLUSION

The information in Sections 3 and 4 of this report provides an assessment of the significance of the former Sunday School building and the contribution made by setting. The building is dated 1908 and was built as a Methodist Sunday School; the Sunday School is not shown on the 1907 map and the 1896 foundation stone must have been moved. It has since been used as a Methodist church hall, a school annex and, most recently, as a centre for Buddhist meditation, which actively uses the southern two-thirds of the building.

The chief aspects of significance are considered to be the survival of part of the historic Gothic revival design externally, although the north gable window has been replaced; the presence of the building within the streetscape and its historic association with the Methodist Church. **The former Sunday School is considered to be of medium/low significance and to constitute a non-designated heritage asset.**

Section 5 sets out the legislative and planning policy framework and gives guidance on the circumstances in which consent may be required. Policy 209 of the NPPF requires that 'a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.' The *Addendum to the Manchester City Council Core Strategy* Policy JP-P2: Heritage states:

'Development proposals affecting designated and non-designated heritage assets and/or their settings will be considered having regard to national planning policy.'

The assessment of impact on the heritage asset is set out in Section 6 of the report. The approach has been to retain as much historic fabric as possible while enabling a new use for this part of the building, which has been mainly used for storage since its acquisition by the Samatha Trust in 1977 and is now in a poor condition. Repair and maintenance are needed to ensure the retention of its historic interest.

Externally, there will be some visible change to the building, with minor alterations to the windows of the side elevations, replacement doors and the insertion of small rooflights to both pitches. Importantly, the proposed mezzanine floor will not be visible on the more important front elevation, as it has been located at windowsill level, and its impact on the less important north-west elevation reduced by curving the staircase away from the wall. Its impact on the garden elevation has also been reduced by changes to the design of the floor. **This approach is accepted practice in historic buildings and has been used successfully by the present architects in listed churches.**

Although the insertion of the mezzanine floor will result in the subdivision of the space, the building has already been subdivided laterally and the southern part will remain full height.

An alternative design to raise the floor level above the windows to the side elevation was considered following pre-application advice from the local authority. However, a structural engineer has advised that the tie bar across the ceiling cannot be removed and would severely obstruct movement in the space created making this option

impractical. It would also considerably reduce the space at the mezzanine level and would be unacceptably visible, running across the gable window of the more important front elevation.

Although some of the work will be mildly to moderately harmful, other work is considered to be beneficial in impact. Important repair work is proposed to the windowsills on both the long elevations and to damaged internal plasterwork, which will help to retain the historic significance of the building. **Significantly, the proposals will provide a sustainable new use for this part of the building by meeting modern requirements.**

This report acts as a record of the historic buildings and could be added to the Historic Environment Record, in accordance with NPPF Policy 199.

With the presumption in favour of sustainable development set out in the NPPF, it is the author's professional opinion that the proposals will 'positively conserve, sustain and enhance' the significance of the historic building. The proposals are considered to comply with national and local planning policy.

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