



Heritage Addendum

3-5 St John Street, Manchester

October 2025

Introduction

- I.1 This Heritage Addendum has been prepared by Adapt Heritage on behalf of Satis Group to accompany the Reserved Matters application relating to 3–5 St John Street, Manchester (the 'Site'). It provides an updated assessment of heritage considerations associated with minor design refinements to the consented scheme (the 'Revised Scheme'), originally approved under planning application ref. I 20062/FO/2018.
- I.2 The earlier proposals were accompanied by a detailed Heritage Statement prepared by Paul Butler Associates (January 2017), which assessed the building's significance as a non-designated heritage asset (NDHA) and evaluated the level of impact arising from the approved development. It also considered the potential effects on heritage assets within the wider setting, including several Grade II listed buildings on St John Street and the Castlefield, St John Street and Deansgate/Peter Street Conservation Areas. This addendum should therefore be read in conjunction with that original assessment.
- I.3 This note does not seek to revisit those baseline findings but rather to confirm that the revised design, prepared by CODA Studios, remains consistent with the established heritage position. The revised scheme introduces a limited number of external amendments to improve compliance with contemporary building and fire regulations, to rationalise material detailing, and to deliver modest design enhancements. This note reaffirms the building's significance, summarises the approved and amended proposals, and evaluates the implications of these revisions within the context of national and local heritage policy.

Site and Context

- I.4 The Site occupies a prominent corner position at the junction of Deansgate and St John Street within Manchester's historic core, forming part of the transitional townscape between the dense commercial frontage of Deansgate and the more intimate Georgian terraces along St John Street. The building was constructed in approximately 1958 as the National Library for the Blind, serving as a regional branch of the national charity founded in 1918. As outlined in the 2017 Heritage Statement, it exhibits the functional architectural language typical of post-war civic design, characterised by simple horizontal proportions, red-brick façades, stone dressings, and a parapeted flat roof.
- I.5 Following the Library's relocation, the building was adapted for commercial use at ground-floor level and has since accommodated a retail unit (Richer Sounds) and a physiotherapy practice, with the upper floors remaining largely vacant. It is not statutorily listed but is identified by Manchester City Council as an NDHA. The building contributes to the mixed character of the area and forms part of the transitional streetscape between the commercial heart of Deansgate and the residential terraces of St John Street.

Overview of Significance

- I.6 The following provides a summary of the building's significance as established in the Paul Butler Associates Heritage Statement (January 2017). That assessment remains valid and should be referred to for a more detailed account of the historical development of the Site and the wider heritage context.
- I.7 As outlined in the 2017 Heritage Statement, the heritage significance of 3–5 St John Street as an NDHA derives principally from its architectural and townscape qualities rather than from intact historic fabric or artistic distinction. Architecturally, it represents a modest yet well-proportioned example of mid-20th century civic modernism. Its clean lines, disciplined fenestration, and restrained use of materials provide a visually calm counterpoint to the more ornate 19th century buildings nearby. The building's scale and rhythm reinforce the established grain of St John Street and maintain continuity with the red-brick palette that typifies the area.
- I.8 Historically, the Site is associated with the post-war expansion of the National Library for the Blind and thus contributes to Manchester's broader narrative of social welfare and education. This associative interest, while modest in physical expression, adds a layer of communal value.
- I.9 In setting terms, the building performs a contextual role, mediating between the grander commercial blocks of Deansgate and the finer-grained domestic terraces to the west. It reads as part of a consistent streetscape rather than a visual landmark in its own right.
- I.10 Overall, as outlined in the 2017 Heritage Statement, the building's significance is assessed as low to moderate, derived from its architectural form, materials, and contribution to local character. The building also continues to make a neutral to slightly positive contribution to the setting of nearby listed buildings on St John Street and to the character and appearance of the adjoining conservation areas, as previously assessed.

Approved Scheme (2017)

- I.11 The consented scheme (approved under planning permission ref. I20062/FO/2018) allowed for the conversion of the upper floors to residential use and the addition of two new storeys above the existing structure. The third-floor extension was designed in red brick to echo the established architectural language of the host building, while the recessed fourth-floor level adopted a lightweight glazed construction to ensure visual subordination and to create a contemporary expression distinct from the historic fabric. The approved development therefore established the principle of a two-storey roof extension comprising a solid brick storey and a lightweight glazed storey above.
- I.12 The previous Heritage Statement (2017) concluded that the proposals would result in less-than-substantial harm to the significance of the NDHA, in line with the policy framework set out within the National Planning Policy Framework. That minor level of harm was found to be clearly outweighed by the public benefits arising from the sustainable reuse of the building and the enhancement of an under-utilised site.
- I.13 The assessment also confirmed that the development would preserve the setting and significance of nearby Grade II listed buildings on St John Street and Deansgate and would not harm the character or appearance of the Castlefield, St John Street or Deansgate/Peter Street Conservation Areas. The 2018 permission therefore established an accepted heritage baseline against which subsequent amendments can be assessed.



Revised Scheme (2025)

- I.14 The current 2025 design, prepared by CODA Studios, retains the fundamental principles of the approved scheme, namely the reuse of the existing building, the two-storey upward extension, and the established massing and height parameters. The revisions are primarily technical and aesthetic refinements introduced during detailed design development and coordination with fire and building-regulation requirements. These amendments remain fully within the envelope and design intent previously approved under the 2018 permission (see **Appendix I**, Figures AI.1 to AI.3).
- I.15 In contrast to the 2018 scheme, which continued the red brickwork to the new third-floor level without additional articulation, the revised design introduces a continuous horizontal stone band aligning with the existing string course. This subtle feature strengthens the vertical hierarchy of the façade and enhances visual continuity between the new and existing masonry. It allows for a better distinction between the original building and newer extensions.
- I.16 The window treatment has also been refined. The 2018 scheme proposed standard-depth aluminium-framed windows of unspecified tone, with simple cills and heads. The revised proposals now incorporate slim-profile aluminium systems finished in RAL 7032 Pebble Grey, set within stone reveals and cills that replicate the depth and proportions of the original mid-century openings. This improves legibility and material authenticity while reinforcing the disciplined rhythm of the façades.
- I.17 At roof level, the lightweight glazed fourth-floor addition is retained but has been refined through adoption of the Senior SF52 zone-drained curtain-wall system, offering improved environmental performance and enhanced transparency. The structure remains recessed from the parapet, maintaining the approved massing and ensuring its continued recessive appearance within the streetscape. The inclusion of modest lift and overruns, necessary for compliance with fire-safety standards, has been carefully managed to remain visually unobtrusive in public views.
- I.18 Additional improvements include glass balustrades positioned behind the parapet line and the introduction of photovoltaic panels, which improve the building's sustainability credentials without altering its external form or silhouette. The overall material palette has also been simplified and unified through the consistent use of red brick, natural stone detailing, and pebble-grey aluminium, replacing the darker cladding elements shown in the 2018 scheme.

Assessment of Heritage Impacts

- I.19 The design revisions described above represent a continuation of the approved approach and have been reviewed in relation to the heritage significance of the Site and its wider context. This section assesses the extent to which the proposed refinements influence the significance of the NDHA and the setting of nearby listed buildings and conservation areas.
- I.20 The Revised Scheme retains the approved architectural composition, preserving the established relationship between the original mid-century building and its later extensions. The refined window detailing introduces greater depth and precision, reflecting the disciplined geometry of the 1950s façade, while the new stone band at third-floor level provides a subtle but effective transition between the existing structure and the added brick storey. These changes enhance legibility and design quality without altering the overall scale or hierarchy of the elevations.
- I.21 The coordinated use of brick, stone and pebble-grey aluminium achieves a more coherent material palette, reinforcing visual unity across the façades when viewed from both Deansgate and St John Street. The glazed fourth-floor addition retains its lightweight and recessive character, ensuring that the upper



levels remain visually subservient in longer views. The small-scale lift and overruns are set back from the parapet and will not be appreciable in key public viewpoints, maintaining the building's roofline and silhouette.

- I.22 In heritage terms, the amendments represent a modest enhancement in architectural quality relative to the 2018 consent. The building's contribution to the surrounding townscape, acting as a transitional element between the commercial frontage of Deansgate and the domestic scale of St John Street, remains unchanged. The proposals preserve the significance of the NDHA, with no loss of fabric of value or erosion of its architectural character (see **Appendix I**, Figures A1.1 to A1.3).
- I.23 With regard to designated heritage assets, the proposed refinements do not alter the established relationship with the Grade II listed buildings along St John Street, which continue to read as the dominant historic features within the streetscape. The recessed and lightweight nature of the extensions ensures that the setting and appreciation of these listed terraces remain unharmed. Similarly, the proposals preserve the character and appearance of the adjoining Castlefield, St John Street and Deansgate/Peter Street Conservation Areas, maintaining the established scale, materiality and rhythm that define their significance.
- I.24 Overall, the Revised Scheme results in no additional harm to the significance of the NDHA, the setting and thereby significance of nearby listed buildings, or the character and appearance of the surrounding conservation areas. The refinements are considered to deliver a modest enhancement in architectural quality and coherence, thereby reinforcing the positive contribution that the Site makes to Manchester's historic townscape.

Policy and Guidance Context

- I.25 This assessment has been undertaken with reference to Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, which places a statutory duty on local authorities to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting when considering development proposals. Although the Site lies outside any designated conservation area, it is located within the setting of the Castlefield, St John Street and Deansgate/Peter Street Conservation Areas, and the potential effects on their character and appearance have been appropriately considered in accordance with national and local heritage policy.
- I.26 The proposals have also been assessed in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (2024), particularly paragraphs 207 to 213, which emphasise that great weight should be given to the conservation of heritage assets and that any harm must be weighed against the public benefits of a proposal. In this instance, the revisions give rise to no additional harm to heritage significance and deliver tangible public and heritage benefits through design refinement, sustainable reuse of the building and improved environmental performance.
- I.27 At the local level, the scheme accords with Manchester Core Strategy Policy EN3 – Heritage, which supports high-quality design that conserves and enhances the city's historic environment. The proposals also align with the wider policy framework for central Manchester, which encourages contemporary but contextually responsive development that sustains and reinforces the city's historic character. In addition, the approach accords with Historic England's Good Practice Advice Notes 2 and 3, which provide guidance on assessing significance and managing change within the setting of heritage assets.



Conclusion

- I.28 The 2025 amendments to the consented scheme at 3–5 St John Street maintain the established scale, massing and overall architectural intent of the approved development, while introducing refinements that enhance visual quality, material authenticity and environmental performance. The proposals respect the modest significance of the former National Library for the Blind as a post-war civic building and sustain its contextual relationship with the adjoining listed buildings and nearby conservation areas (see **Appendix I**, Figures A1.1 to A1.3).
- I.29 In heritage terms, the revised scheme represents a minor yet positive evolution of the approved design. It introduces no additional harm to the significance of any heritage asset and continues to conserve the character and appearance of the surrounding historic environment. The development therefore accords with the relevant provisions of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) and Manchester Core Strategy Policy EN3.
- I.30 Accordingly, the proposals are considered acceptable on heritage grounds. The conclusion reached in 2017, that the limited, less-than-substantial harm arising from the scheme is clearly outweighed by the public benefits of bringing the building back into active use, remains valid and is modestly strengthened by the improved design quality and sustainability of the current proposals.



Appendix I: Revised Scheme Visuals (2025)





Figure A1.1: View of the Revised Scheme from Deansgate © CODA (2025)



Figure A1.2: View of the Revised Scheme from Deansgate © CODA (2025)





Figure A1.3: View of the Revised Scheme from St John Street © CODA (2025)

