

Planning

Growth & Development

Delegated officer report for planning application

Application no. 143279/VO/2025

Date registered valid: 9 July 2025

Proposal: City Council Development - Alterations to retaining boundary wall including rebuilding section of brick wall and brick piers

Address: The Old Parsonage, Stenner Lane, Manchester, M20 2RQ

Ward(s): Didsbury West Ward

Applicant: Mr Robert Hutchinson, Manchester City Council

Agent (if any):

Case officer: Holly Wright
Tel: 0161 219 6381
Email: holly.wright@manchester.gov.uk

Recommendation: Approve

Date of recommendation: 20 October 2025

Application details

Type of application: Regulation 3 Consent

Development type: Minor Other

Date of site visit: 22 July 2025

Standard consultations: Printed: 16 July 2025 Expired: 6 August 2025

Neighbour notifications: Printed: 16 July 2025 Expired: 6 August 2025

Site notice: Posted: 22 July 2025 Expired: 12 August 2025

Press advert: Published: 22 July 2025 Expired: 12 August 2025

Departure from Development Plan: No

Environmental Statement: Not required

Description of site/building/area

Listed building: Grade II

Conservation area: Didsbury St James Conservation Area 1970

Tree Preservation Order: No specific TPO but trees are protected by virtue of their location within the Didsbury St James Conservation Area

The application relates to a portion of the redbrick boundary wall located along the southern edge of Parsonage Gardens in the Didsbury West ward of Manchester, close to Fletcher Moss Botanical Gardens, Wilmslow Road (A5145), and Didsbury Park.

The portion of wall to be rebuilt is constructed of redbrick and lime mortar, features two brick piers at either end and is capped by a loaf top profile coping stone. The portion of wall to the west appears to feature a more modern cast concrete flat top capping.

The boundary wall is not listed, however, is situated within the Didsbury St James Conservation Area and is in relative proximity to a number of listed assets including Fletcher Moss Art Gallery (Grade II), Ye Olde Cock Inn (Grade II), entrance gateway of Fletcher Moss Art Gallery (Grade II), Didsbury Hotel (Grade II), Church of St James (Grade II*), and the sundial within the grounds of the Church of St James (Grade II).





Description of development

The applicant is seeking planning permission for a City Council Development consisting of alterations to retaining boundary wall including rebuilding section of brick wall and brick piers.

Background information

The submitted Heritage Statement indicates that “the boundary wall at The Old Parsonage Gardens located on Stenner Lane adjacent [to] St James's Church has shown signs of significant movement and cracking over the past 18 months. This damage to the wall is due to a conflict of interest between the brick boundary wall and the large Field Maple tree located adjacent the wall. Fletcher Moss Art Gallery is a Grade II Listed Building, and is located in the Conservation Area of St James, Didsbury. All works should have cognisance to the listed status of the building, its grounds and the conservation area.

The boundary wall at Fletcher Moss Art Gallery is a solid free-standing masonry retaining wall built from common brick units arranged in English Garden Wall bond (i.e., 3 or 5 courses of stretchers between header courses). The joints have been finished with a flush mortar joint. Wall thickness varies from 230mm to the parapet and approximately 390mm at retaining lower section. Additional 500mm thick piers have been provided one directly adjacent the tree and one at the location adjacent the gated access. In consideration of the history of the site and condition of the wall it is estimated that the boundary wall position dates to Victorian times (i.e., circa late nineteenth century).

There are visible tree roots growing through the brick joints at various levels, roots are also visible at footpath level up to five metres from the tree position. The leaning of the wall is associated with tree growth where the tree roots and the trunk has impinged the rear face of the wall. Gradual tree movement and growth will have produced adequate force to overstress the brickwork and cause the movement visible

Front Elevation - Immediately noticeable is the differential out-of-plane ‘lean’ of the wall across the two number piers adjacent to the Field Maple Tree. The top of the wall to the left-hand side of the tree is leaning forwards approximately 100mm beyond the bottom of the wall at pavement level.

Rear Elevation - The Field Maple tree growing in the retained earth is located very close to the rear wall face. The tree roots are visible at ground level and stretch up to 5 metres in distance from the tree base.”

Repair and reconstruction works are therefore proposed to the wall under the current application, seeking to preserve and maintain the existing mature tree located adjacent to the wall, whilst also maintaining the wall itself and ensuring public safety in and around the site.

Planning history

137408/VO/2023 - CITY COUNCIL DEVELOPMENT - Rebuilding of section of existing retaining wall – Approved (30.08.2023).

140783/VO/2024 - CITY COUNCIL DEVELOPMENT - Alterations to boundary wall including rebuilding a section of the brick wall to best match the existing materials, finishes and heights and installation of new coping stones – Approved (07.10.2024).

Consultations & Notification Responses

No representations received from local residents.

MCC's Highways Services made the following comments in response to the application:

- The new wall is to be reconstructed to the height of the existing wall with new coping stones.
- The rebuild of the wall will be 220mm into the existing footway.
- Proposed Plans indicate that the adjacent footway will be reduced, with a proposed retained footway width of 1535mm.
- *Highways have some concerns that visibility at the gated access point for Stenner Brow may be impacted by the proposed boundary wall amendments.
- *Highways request that a visibility splay assessment is provided at the gated access point for Stenner Brow.
- *Footway affected adjacent to the new wall should be resurfaced to MCC standards where necessary.
- *For avoidance of doubt, a S278 agreement is required for works to the adopted highway - a deposit is required to begin the S278 application, additional costs will be payable and are to be agreed with S278 team.
- Access to Fletcher Moss Art Gallery and Fletcher Moss Park via entrances on Stenner Lane should be maintained during construction.
- *Should there be any basement excavations proposed adjacent to the highway structural drawings and calculations for the temporary and permanent support works must be submitted for checking (for a fee) and agreed by MCC Structures Team through the Approval in Principle (AIP) process. The applicant is advised to contact highways.structures@manchester.gov.uk.
- *Detail should be sought from the applicant in relation to any proposed construction or fit-out arrangements, where there is an impact on the highway.

The above comments were relayed to the agent of the application, who submitted further information (including a visibility splay assessment) to address Highways' concerns. Following review of these details, Highways made no objection to the proposal.

MCC's Arborist made the following comments in response to the application:

- I have read the relevant documents, and I can confirm that we are happy with the proposed works to commence.
- Whilst the trees roots are exposed, we would expect the rooting area to be covered in hessian sheets and watered during periods of hot weather due to the sun exposure.

Policies

The following policies are considered relevant in the consideration of this application.

Unitary Development Plan (UDP) – The UDP has been superseded by the Core Strategy Development Plan, but certain policies are still considered of relevance:

- Policy DC18 – Conservation Areas
- Policy DC19 – Listed Buildings

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 DM1 – Development Management
- Policy SP1 – Spatial Principles
- Policy EN3 – Heritage

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2024)

- Chapter 12 – Achieving Well-Designed Places
- Chapter 16 – Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment

Places for Everyone - is a long-term plan of nine Greater Manchester districts for jobs, new homes, and sustainable growth. It has been published by the GMCA on behalf of the nine districts and took effect and became part of the statutory development plan on March 21, 2024.

- Policy JP-P1 – Sustainable Places
- Policy JP-P2 – Heritage

Issues

Principle – the principle of undertaking alterations to a retaining boundary wall (including the rebuilding of a section of the wall and its piers) to prevent further damage occurring to the wall as a result of tree root growth and to safeguard the public from harm through preventing the wall from collapsing, is acceptable. However, consideration must be given to the proposal's siting, scale and massing, appearance and impact upon visual amenity, residential amenity, nearby heritage assets, trees, and the adjacent footpath and highway.

Description of works – the proposal involves alterations to and the rebuilding of the retaining boundary wall on Stenner Lane at Parsonage Gardens. In particular, the proposal includes the following:

- Retention of the existing brick pier at the eastern end of the application site (located adjacent to the gated access point to the gardens) in its current location/position.
- Relocation and rebuild of the existing brick pier (located centrally within the application site, adjacent to the mature field maple tree) further westwards by approximately 4.8m to allow for future tree growth and movement.
- Rebuild of the boundary wall between the brick piers in materials (brick, mortar, coping stones) to match the existing wall. The wall would be located slightly forward of its original positioning (approximately 220mm) to allow for future tree growth and movement.

Siting, scale, and massing – the siting, scale, and massing of the proposed works is considered acceptable, as the rebuilt wall and piers would largely replicate the height and thickness of the existing boundary wall. The modest repositioning of the wall and piers is justified on the basis that it is necessary to ensure the long-term health and stability of the adjacent tree, thereby supporting both structural integrity of the wall and the landscape character of the surrounding area.

Appearance and visual amenity – the proposed alterations to the boundary wall and brick piers are considered acceptable in terms of their impact upon the visual amenity of the area. Although the works would be highly visible and immediately perceptible within the street scene and public realm due to their siting adjacent to a public footpath and highway, the proposal's use of matching materials to the existing boundary treatment present on site (including brickwork, coping stones, and mortar) should ensure that the wall's overall appearance would not be substantially different than the existing arrangement and established character of the site. On this basis, the proposal is not considered to result in any undue harm to the visual amenity of the area.

Impact upon the Didsbury St James Conservation Area and other heritage assets – the works would constitute less than substantial harm to the heritage significance of the Conservation Area and nearby heritage assets, however, are deemed necessary for safety reasons as well as ensuring the long-term health and stability of the adjacent tree and structural integrity of the wall itself, both of which form important features of this part of the Conservation Area. The rebuilt wall and piers would have a similar appearance to that which is being replaced, and appropriately worded conditions are proposed relating to the submission of materials samples and specifications (including brickwork, coping stones, and mortar) as well as method statements. In this instance, the harm is considered to be of a low degree and is outweighed by the safety and structural improvements that the works would bring.

Impact upon trees – due to their proximity to the existing mature field maple tree present to the north of the boundary wall, the works would have the capacity to have an impact upon the tree. This is particularly significant given the tree's protected status due to its siting within a Conservation Area.

However, MCC's Arborist reviewed the planning submission and made no objection to the proposal, subject to protective measures being implemented during tree root exposure (i.e., covering with hessian sheets and watered during periods of hot weather due to the sun exposure). Details of these measures will be secured through an appropriately worded condition requiring the submission of a method statement for the protection of tree roots during the construction period. Further to this, a standard tree protection condition has also been attached to ensure further safeguards are in place during the works.

Residential amenity – the proposal is considered acceptable in terms of its impact on residential amenity. The works would be minor in nature and would be located away from nearby residential properties, with the closest dwelling being Stenner Brow to the west of the site. Given this separation, no issues are anticipated in relation to overshadowing, loss of light, outlook, or privacy. Any temporary impacts associated with the construction phase, such as noise or disturbance, would be short-lived and are not considered material planning considerations that would justify refusal of permission. Should any concerns arise regarding noise or pollution during construction, these would be appropriately managed under separate legislation, such as the Environmental Protection Act.

Impact to footpath and highway – it is acknowledged that MCC's Highways Services initially raised concerns regarding the potential impact of the proposal on highway safety and visibility, particularly in relation to the gated access point serving Stenner Brow. However, following the submission and subsequent review of a visibility splay assessment for this area, Highways confirmed that they had no objection to the proposal, with the works deemed acceptable in principle. Moreover, while the boundary wall is proposed to be repositioned slightly forward of its current location, this adjustment is considered to be relatively modest (approximately 220mm) and would not result in any unacceptable restriction or impediment to the adjacent footpath. Furthermore, Highways Services raised no concerns in this regard. The proposal is therefore considered acceptable from a highways safety and accessibility perspective.

Conclusion – given the above issues, it is considered that the proposal is acceptable in terms of its principle, siting, scale and massing, appearance, impact upon visual and residential amenity, the character of the Conservation Area, trees, and highways and pedestrian safety as it broadly complies with saved policies DC18 and DC19 of the UDP, policies DM1, SP1, and EN3 of the Core Strategy, chapters 12 and 16 of the NPPF, and policies JP-P1 and JP-P2 of the PfE joint development plan document.

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

Article 35 Declaration

Officers have worked with the applicant in a positive and proactive manner based on seeking solutions to problems arising in relation to dealing with the planning application. Issues have arisen during the consideration of this application and the officer negotiated with the agent to reach a satisfactory resolution.

Condition(s) to be attached to decision for approval OR Reasons for recommendation to refuse

1) 3-year time limit:

The development must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of this permission.

Reason - Required to be imposed pursuant to Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2) Specified plans:

The development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with the following drawings and documents:

'Boundary Wall Location Plan', numbered 'FMO-MCC-XX-XX-DR-B-002', received by the City Council as Local Planning Authority on the 23rd June 2025.

'Proposed Masonry Details', numbered 'FMO-MCC-XX-XX-DR-B-004', received by the City Council as Local Planning Authority on the 23rd June 2025.

'Structural Wall Details', numbered 'FMO-MCC-XX-XX-DR-S-005', received by the City Council as Local Planning Authority on the 23rd June 2025.

'AMP/44657.6 - Fletcher Moss Botanical Gardens - Parsonage Gardens / Stenner Lane Boundary Wall. Schedule of Works', received by the City Council as Local Planning Authority on the 23rd June 2025.

'Heritage Statement', received by the City Council as Local Planning Authority on the 9th July 2025.

Reason- To ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the approved plans, pursuant to policies SP1 and DM1 of the Manchester Core Strategy.

3) Method statement – wall dismantling:

Notwithstanding the details included within the documents listed under condition no.2 of this approval, prior to works commencing to dismantle the wall, a method statement for works to dismantle the wall and its stone copings, including their storage on site, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the City Council as Local Planning Authority.

The works shall be subsequently undertaken in accordance with the agreed details.

Reason - In the interests of ensuring the historic nature of the structure to be dismantled is undertaken sensitively and to minimise damage pursuant to Manchester Core Strategy policy EN3 and saved Unitary Development Plan policies DC18 and DC19.

4) Materials – samples, specifications and section drawing:

Notwithstanding the details included within the documents listed under condition no.2 of this approval, prior to the rebuilding of the wall hereby approved, samples and specifications of all new materials (including brickwork, coping stones, mortar, and a section drawing of the coping stones) to be used shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the City Council as Local Planning Authority.

The development shall be constructed only using the approved materials.

Reason - To ensure that the appearance of the development is acceptable to the City Council as local planning authority in the interests of the visual amenity of the area, in accordance with policies EN1, EN3, SP1 and DM1 of the Core Strategy for the City of Manchester, Chapter 12 of the NPPF, and saved policies DC18 and DC19 of the Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester.

5) Tree protection during works:

In this condition "retained tree" means an existing tree, shrub or hedge which is to be as shown as retained on the approved plans and particulars.

(a) No retained tree shall be cut down, uprooted or destroyed, nor shall any retained tree be topped or lopped other than in accordance with the approved plans and particulars, without the written approval of the local planning authority. Any topping or lopping approved shall be carried out in accordance with British Standard 5387 (Trees in relation to construction)

(b) The measures for the protection of any retained tree shall be undertaken in accordance with the approved plans and particulars before any equipment, machinery or materials are brought on to the site for the purposes of the development, and shall be maintained until all equipment, machinery and surplus materials have been removed from the site. Nothing shall be stored or placed in any area protected in accordance with this condition and the ground levels within those areas shall not be altered, nor shall any excavation be made, without the written consent of the local planning authority.

Reason - In order avoid damage to trees/shrubs adjacent to and within the site which are of important amenity value to the area and in order to protect the character of the area, in accordance with policies EN9 and EN15 of the Core Strategy.

6) Method statement – tree root protection:

Notwithstanding the details included within the documents listed under condition no.2 of this approval, prior to commencement of works, including the dismantling of the wall, a method statement for the protection of tree roots during the construction period, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the City Council as Local Planning Authority.

The works shall be subsequently undertaken in accordance with the agreed details.

Reason - In order avoid damage to trees/shrubs adjacent to and within the site which are of important amenity value to the area and in order to protect the character of the area, in accordance with policies EN9 and EN15 of the Core Strategy.

Informatives

1) Footway affected adjacent to the new wall should be resurfaced to MCC standards where necessary. For avoidance of doubt, a S278 agreement is required for works to the adopted highway - a deposit is required to begin the S278 application, additional costs will be payable and are to be agreed with S278 team.

2) Should there be any basement excavations proposed adjacent to the highway structural drawings and calculations for the temporary and permanent support works must be submitted for checking (for a fee) and agreed by MCC Structures Team through the Approval in Principle (AIP) process. The applicant is advised to contact highways.structures@manchester.gov.uk.

3) The applicant is advised that any requirements for licensing, hoarding / scaffolding and any associated temporary traffic management arrangements, including Section 50, will need discussion and agreement with MCC Highways Network teams via Contact Manchester (Tel. 0161 234 5004) Email -highwaylicences@manchester.gov.uk and highwaynetworkmanagement@manchester.gov.uk

4) Whilst the trees roots are exposed during works, the rooting area must be covered in hessian sheets and watered during periods of hot weather due to the sun exposure.

Appendix 1 – List of consultees & neighbours notified

Highway Services
Neighbourhood Team Leader (Arboriculture)
Heritage & Urban Design
Didsbury Civic Society
Parsonage Residents Group

801 Wilmslow Road, Manchester, M20 2QR
Flat At, Ye Olde Cock Inn, 848 Wilmslow Road, Manchester, M20 2RN
3 Skylark Close, Manchester, M20 2FQ
2 Skylark Close, Manchester, M20 2FQ
Ye Olde Cock Inn, 848 Wilmslow Road, Manchester, M20 2RN
Didsbury Hotel, 852 Wilmslow Road, Manchester, M20 2SG
844 - 846 Wilmslow Road, Manchester, M20 2RN
Flat At, Didsbury Hotel, 852 Wilmslow Road, Manchester, M20 2SG
Newlands, Stenner Lane, Manchester, M20 2RQ
Stenner Brow, Stenner Lane, Manchester, M20 2RQ
St James Church, Stenner Lane, Manchester, M20 2RQ
1 Philip Godlee Lodge, 842 Wilmslow Road, Manchester, M20 2DS
1 Skylark Close, Manchester, M20 2FQ
20 Stenner Lane, Manchester, M20 2RQ
Fernbank, Stenner Lane, Manchester, M20 2RQ
18 Stenner Lane, Manchester, M20 2RQ
High Bank, Stenner Lane, Manchester, M20 2RQ

Appendix 2 – Planning constraints

Article 4 Direction - Removal Of PD Rights Change Of Use From Class C3 To Class C4
Conservation Area - Didsbury St James Conservation Area 1970
Susceptible to Surf Water Flood (Less) -
Area Team Boundary - Name: SOUTH AREA