

**DESIGN ACCESS &
HERITAGE STATEMENT
St Pauls Methodist Church
Wilmslow Road
Didsbury
M20 2RW
Proposed link connection
To adjacent Methodist Church
/ Entrance Boundary Gates
& External finishes**

September 2025

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Design, Access and Heritage Statement

**In Support of a Listed Building Consent and Change of Use Application
St Paul's Methodist Church and Adjoining Former Methodist Church Building
Prepared for Atmos International by Hattrell LLP**

1. INTRODUCTION

This Design, Access and Heritage Statement has been prepared by Hattrell LLP on behalf of Atmos International to support a planning and listed building consent application concerning proposed works at the former St Paul's Methodist Church and the adjoining church hall building, both located within the Didsbury St James Conservation Area in Manchester.

The application site comprises two principal elements:

1. The Grade II listed St Paul's Methodist Church, constructed in 1877.
2. The adjoining former Methodist Church hall building, constructed in 1961 within the curtilage of the listed church.

The proposal seeks consent for the change of use of the site and appropriate internal and external alterations in accordance with its historic and architectural significance.

The site is centrally located at National Grid Reference SJ 84786 90710 (Easting: 384786, Northing: 390710) and covers an area of approximately 2,144 square metres (0.214 hectares). It is bounded:

- to the north by Sandhurst Road,
- to the west by Wilmslow Road, and
- to the south and east by residential developments.

The buildings lie within the Didsbury St James Conservation Area, which is a designated heritage asset in its own right. The significance of the heritage assets, both designated and non-designated, has been assessed as part of this statement in accordance with national and local planning policy and guidance.

This statement sets out to:

- Describe the existing character and significance of the heritage assets;
- Outline the design rationale for the proposed alterations and change of use;
- Explain how accessibility has been addressed; and
- Demonstrate how the proposed development complies with the relevant heritage, planning and design policies, ensuring that the historic and architectural integrity of the listed church and its setting is preserved and enhanced

SITE HISTORY

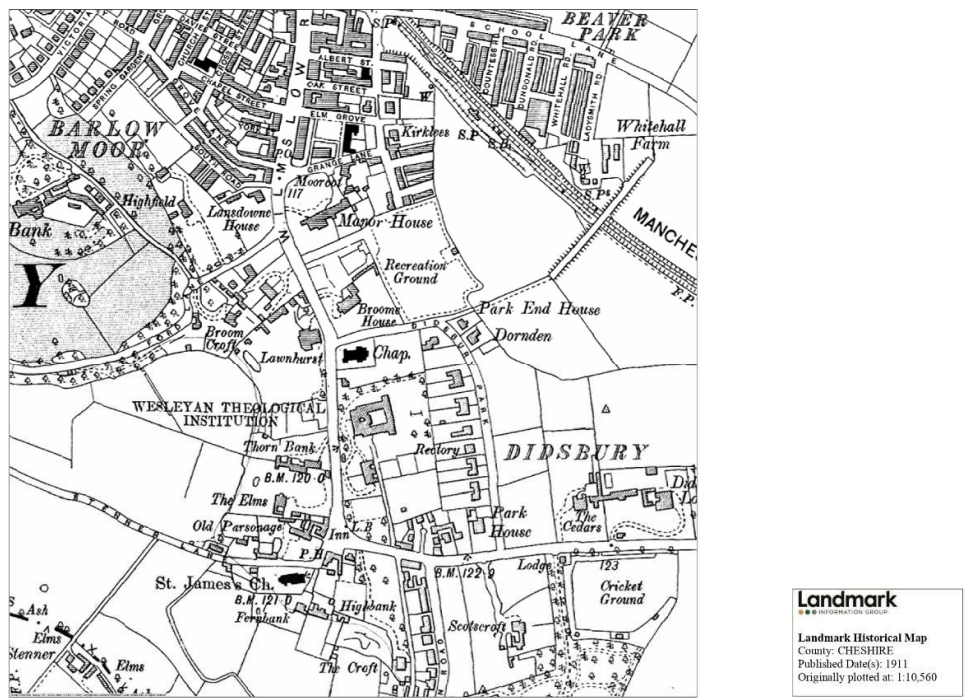


Fig 1 Ordnance Survey plan 1911

Shows the church standing alone in its grounds

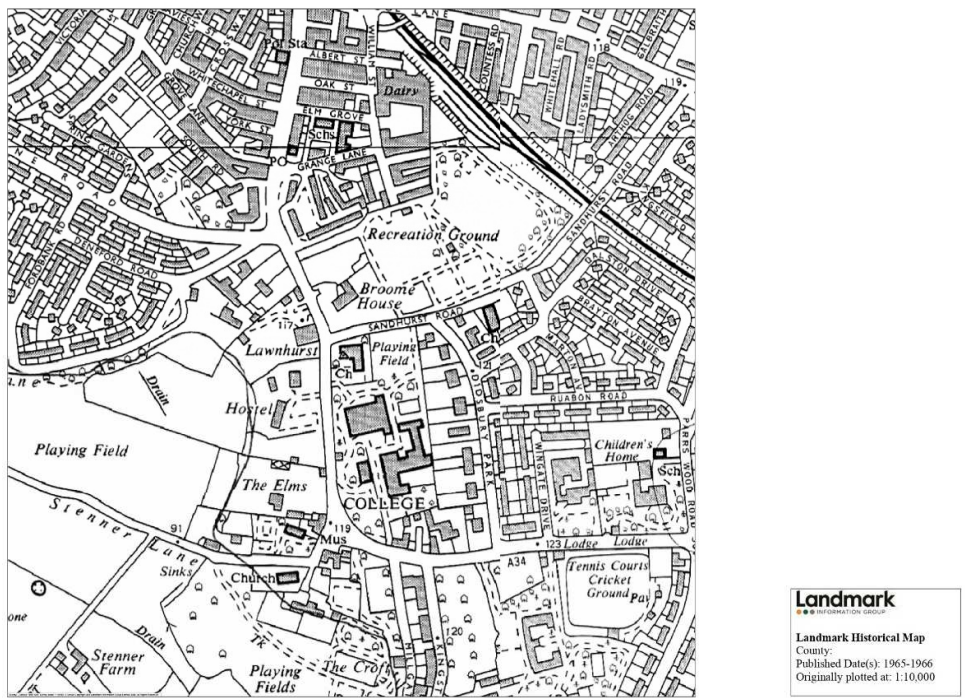


Fig 2 Ordnance Survey Plan 1965

Shows the associated church hall building and the two buildings connected as one

SITE PHOTOGRAPHS : EXISTING



Fig 3 South Elevation



Fig 4 View : Relationship between the two buildings



Fig 5 View to Former Methodist Church (West Elevation)

2.0 Planning History and Policy

PLANNING HISTORY

Application 035405

Conversion of church to offices, demolition of link between church and church hall and formation of a car park for 29 cars. Conversion of the church hall into new Didsbury Methodist building including new pitched roof and glazed entrance porch.

Approved 29th March 1990.

Application : 036631 Listed Building Consent

Conversion of existing to offices and alteration and extension to annexe

Approved 28th August 1990

Application 038678 Listed Building Consent

Instal timber rooflights into roof of transepts

Withdrawn April 1991

Application 056132/FO/SOUTH2/02

Formation of 8No additional car parking spaces within the curtilage of the site

Refused May 1999

Application 064449/LO/SOUTH2/02 Listed Building Consent

Installation of 4 No rooflights

Approved May 2002

Application 081228/LO/2006/S2 Listed Building Consent

Replacement of 6 existing rooflights with 6 conservation rooflights

Approved Jan 2007

LEGISLATION

Legislation relating to the built environment is primarily set out within the Planning (Listed buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, which provides statutory protection for Listed Buildings and Conservation areas.

With regards to development within Conservation Areas, Section 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states

“In the exercise, with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, of any powers under any of the provisions mentioned in subsection (2), special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.”

In addition to the statutory obligations set out within the Planning (listed Buildings and Conservation Area) Act 1990, Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that all planning applications , including those for Listed Building Consent, are determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations include otherwise.

The statements sets out to achieve this using the following key documents:

Historic Environment : good Practice advice in Planning Note 2: Managing Significance in decision taking in the historic environment²

Historic Environment : Good Practice advice in Planning Note 3 : The setting of heritage assets (Second edition), the key guidance of assessing setting

POLICY

National Planning Policy Framework (2024)

Paragraph 131

The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this

Paragraph 135.

Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

- (a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
- (b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
- (c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change;
- (d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit.

Conversely, significant weight should be given to:

- (a) development which reflects local design policies and government guidance on design; and/or
- (b) outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings.

Paragraph 197

“In considering applications for development affecting heritage assets, local planning authorities should have regard to the importance of retaining historic statues, plaques, and memorials. Where appropriate, this should include explaining their historic and social context, rather than removal.”

Paragraph 207

“In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.”

Paragraph 213:

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:

- Grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional.
- 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.

Manchester's Core Strategy (2012-2027) and Extant Unitary Development Plan (UDP)

Policy DM1 "Development Management and Planning Obligations"

The policy sets out criteria that proposals must satisfy, including:

1. Design quality & local character — developments must respond to Manchester's character areas, existing context, and setting.
2. Heritage — taking account of heritage assets (e.g. listed buildings, conservation areas), their significance, and ensuring that development does not harm that significance.
3. Amenity considerations — making sure that developments do not have unacceptable impacts on neighbours, surrounding environment, daylight, etc.
4. High quality materials, detailing, and landscaping — proposals should use high standards of materials and finish.
5. Sustainability — e.g. in terms of environmental impact, possibly including energy efficiency, adaptation, etc. (though some of those aspects may also be addressed in other EN policies).

Policy EN 3 : Heritage

- 1 Safeguard the city's heritage assets, including listed buildings, conservation areas, historic landscapes or features. Development must respect and where possible enhance the setting, appearance and integrity of these assets.
- 2 Ensure that alterations, extensions or new development do not cause harm to heritage assets. Any harm must be justified, minimized, and mitigated.
- 3 Maintain or improve the character, appearance and significance of conservation areas.
- 4 Promote high quality design and materials sensitive to the historic context. Development must respond appropriately in terms of scale, proportions, detailing.

Policy 18 Conservation Areas

Policy 19 Listed Buildings

Policy Compliance

The proposals have been developed with full regard to the statutory duties outlined above. The design approach ensures that no harm will result to the listed building or the character and appearance of the conservation area. As such, the proposals preserve the significance of the designated heritage assets in accordance with Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Furthermore, the development has been designed to align with relevant policies in the adopted Development Plan, including national guidance set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), thereby satisfying the requirements of Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. No material considerations have been identified that would justify a departure from the development plan in this instance.

Policy EN3	The proposals are designed to support the council in preserving historic environments, character and appearance, of the listed building and conservation area.
Saved UDP Policy DC18	The proposals affect only a small element of the listed building. The proposed link will enhance the former Methodist Church by introducing a high-quality design that reflects and complements the character of the surrounding area. The proposed layout and design have been carefully considered to respect the relationship with neighbouring buildings and surrounding spaces.
NPPF Paragraphs 131 & 135	The proposals are visually attractive and have been designed to be sympathetic to the local character and historic context.
NPPF Paragraph 197	The proposals will result in no harm to the listed building or the Conservation Area, thereby preserving their significance in accordance with national and local heritage policy.
NPPF Paragraph 207	This statement provides a proportionate assessment of the site's heritage significance to inform the decision-making process.
NPPF Paragraph 213	Through a heritage-led design approach, the scheme enhances the significance of the Conservation Area.

3.0 Scope of the Proposed Works

3.1 THE LINK

The proposal seeks to create a physical connection between two adjacent former church buildings, both are proposed to be used as part of a single business. The aim is to provide a weatherproof, protected internal route to allow staff to move freely between the two buildings without the need to exit externally. This will significantly improve functionality and accessibility, particularly during inclement weather.

The new link is designed as a lightweight glazed structure with contemporary proportions that take reference from the vertical emphasis and rhythm of the existing church windows. The design intention is to create a visually respectful and subservient intervention that clearly reads as a modern addition, complementing the historic fabric while avoiding pastiche or visual competition with the listed buildings.

The glazed link will be carefully connected to the existing structures in a way that is fully reversible, with no impact on structural elements and minimal alteration to the historic fabric. The intervention will be sensitive to the significance of the listed building, ensuring the character and appearance of the heritage asset is preserved and enhanced through high-quality, contextually appropriate design.

The proposed glazed link has been designed with careful consideration of the historic proportions present in the former church buildings. The vertical rhythm and spacing of the glazed panels in the link reflect the proportions of the existing lancet-style windows and architectural bays of the original church elevation. While contemporary in execution, the height-to-width ratio of the glazed modules has been informed by the slender, vertically-oriented windows and structural elements such as buttresses and pilasters, ensuring a complementary relationship. This proportional referencing allows the new link to sit comfortably within the historic context, maintaining visual coherence while remaining clearly legible as a modern and subservient addition.

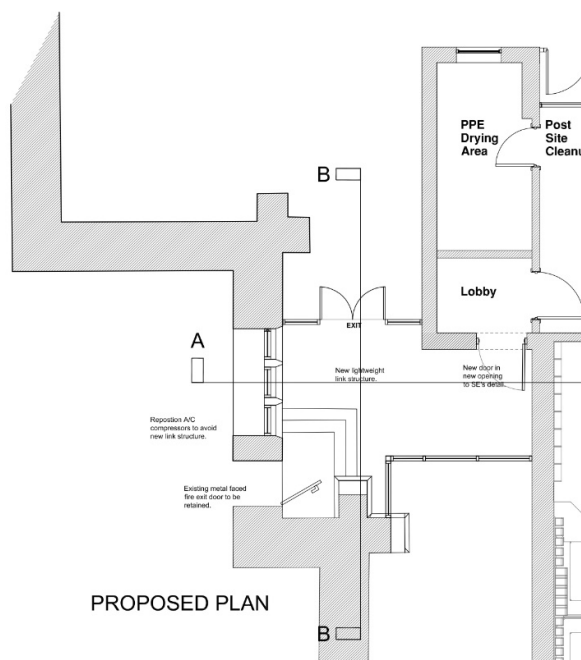


**Fig 6 : Proposed link
floor plan**

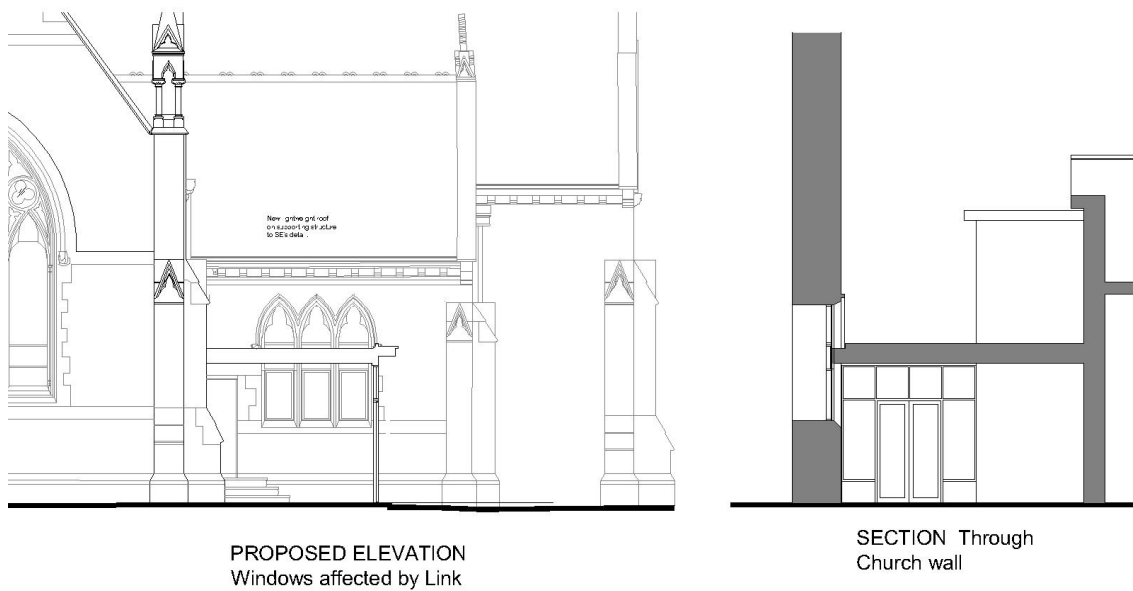
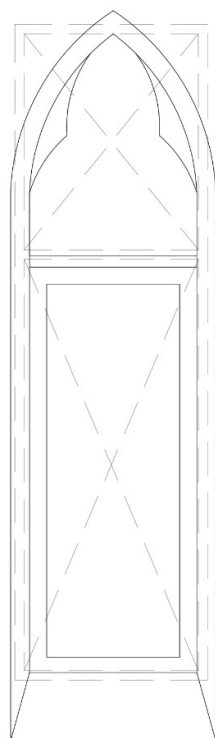


Fig 7 Elevation and Section of relationship of link to listed building



Existing Church windows proportions

This diagram illustrates the proportional framework of the existing church windows. The tall, narrow vertical emphasis and the overall aspect ratio have been used as reference points for the proposed glazed link design. The intention is not to replicate the historic form but to echo its rhythm and scale in a modern interpretation, ensuring that the new structure respects the massing and architectural language of the original church buildings.

Fig 8 Proportional relationship diagram

The proposed extension link affects a group of three window elements located on the south-east portion of the south elevation. The intervention is necessary to enable the connection of a lightweight roof to the existing building. Of the three window elements impacted, two are currently spandrel panels and will remain unchanged. The third, a tinted glass panel, will be carefully amended and replaced with a matching spandrel panel to facilitate the roof connection.

The proposal involves a lightweight roof structure with a waterproof connection to the listed building. Importantly, this connection will not involve any alterations to the structural elements of the listed building. All fixings will be designed to be sensitive and fully reversible, ensuring no damage to the historic fabric and allowing the intervention to be removed in the future without lasting impact.

The overarching aim of the proposal is to preserve the integrity of the existing building. No structural alterations are proposed, and the visual impact on the elevation will be minimal. The intervention has been carefully designed to ensure a respectful and conservation-led approach, maintaining the building's character and appearance while allowing for functional adaptation.



Fig 9
Photograph showing elevation
and window affected by
proposed link

3.2. Vehicular Access and Gate Proposal

The proposed development includes the installation of a new secure vehicular entrance to serve the car park fronting the former Methodist Church building, accessed via the existing vehicular crossover from Wilmslow Road, located along the western boundary of the site.

Existing Context

The existing entrance lies adjacent to a pair of Grade II listed Gothic gate piers, which form part of the west boundary wall of the historic church site. The listing description specifically references these piers, noting their octagonal spired tops and contribution to the architectural and historic significance of the site.

The west boundary wall also contains a further set of original wrought iron gates, which are part of the listed fabric and remain visually prominent within the Conservation Area.

It is noted that the current wrought iron gates located between the masonry piers at the pedestrian entrance on Sandhurst Road and pair on Wilmslow Road accessing the original church entrance are not referenced in the statutory listing description for the former Methodist Church. On further investigation, it has been advised that these gates are not original to the building and are estimated to have been installed approximately 20 years ago. As such, they are considered to be of limited historic or architectural significance in themselves and do not form part of the listed fabric.

The pair of piers to which this application relates (at the proposed access point) do not currently contain any gates.

Any proposals involving the installation of new gates, or affecting existing non-original gates, will be developed with sensitivity to the setting, using designs and materials appropriate to the historic context. The intention is to enhance site security while preserving the visual character of the boundary treatment, and ensuring that the significance of the listed building and its curtilage structures is not harmed.

Proposed Works

The proposed works are sensitively designed to preserve and enhance the setting of the listed gate piers and the wider Didsbury St James Conservation Area. Key elements of the proposal include:

- New vehicular gates positioned a minimum of 6 metres back from the boundary wall/footpath, ensuring that vehicles can stand clear of the public highway without disrupting pedestrian movement or traffic flow on Wilmslow Road.
- Retention of the existing Gothic stone piers in their current location, with no physical alteration or attachment. This ensures full preservation of the historic fabric.
- Installation of a new set of wrought iron vehicular gates and connecting side panels, designed in a Gothic-inspired style to complement (but not replicate) the existing historic gates, respecting the character of the listed features while clearly distinguishing new from old.
- Supporting steel gate posts to be installed adjacent to the existing stone piers, fixed into the ground independently with no fixings made to the listed piers. This avoids any physical harm to the heritage asset and ensures reversibility.
- A short section of wrought iron fencing will be installed to span the space between the rear of each pier and the setback gates, ensuring continuity in boundary treatment and enclosure.

Design Justification

The design has been carefully considered to:

- Preserve the visual prominence and historic character of the listed gate piers by ensuring the new gates are clearly set back, maintaining the visual gap and legibility of the original entrance arrangement;
- Enhance the character and appearance of the Didsbury St James Conservation Area, by introducing a high-quality, contextually appropriate boundary treatment that does not introduce overly contemporary or intrusive elements;
- Provide a functional and secure access point for vehicles in a manner that is sensitive to both the historic and urban context.

The proposals strike a careful balance between modern functional requirements and the need to preserve the architectural and historic interest of the designated heritage assets. The new gates and fencing will be fabricated to a high standard, with detailing that reflects the Gothic idiom of the church while remaining clearly legible as contemporary interventions, in accordance with best practice in heritage design and conservation.

3.3 External works :

Area to West elevation of the former Methodist Church and South elevation of the listed building

The external space fronting the former Methodist Church currently comprises a mix of paving types and colours, resulting in a somewhat inconsistent visual character. To the west elevation of the building, the existing surface treatment consists of buff paving and buff-coloured gravel, forming the current car parking area. This is visually and physically separated from the frontage by a formal laurel hedge. The wider setting benefits from a combination of formal and informal landscaping, including flower beds, low-level planting, and boundary hedging, all of which contribute positively to the character of the site.

As part of the proposed development, which includes the installation of secure gated access, it is proposed to reconfigure the existing gravelled area to create a slightly enlarged car parking facility. The revised layout will accommodate 18 parking spaces, and incorporate a designated loading and delivery bay to support the operational needs of the expanded facility.

In order to preserve the setting of the Grade II listed building and its location within a Conservation Area, the overall appearance and character of the external space will remain largely unchanged. The proposed surface treatment for the car park will utilise a buff-coloured porous tarmac, specifically Tarmac Ulticolour (or similar approved) in 'Harvest Weathered' finish. This material has been selected for its durability, permeability (to support sustainable drainage), and most importantly, its visual compatibility with the existing gravel and paving.

Design Justification

The proposed design has been carefully developed to respond sensitively to its historic and architectural context. Key considerations include:

- **Material choice:** The use of buff-coloured porous tarmac ensures continuity with the existing palette while introducing a unified and practical surface.
- **Character retention:** By maintaining existing landscaping features, including formal hedges and soft planting, the proposal safeguards the visual integrity of the setting.
- **Minimal intervention:** The layout changes are limited in scale and have been designed to minimise impact on the setting of the listed building.
- **Conservation-led approach:** The scheme has been guided by principles of conservation best practice, ensuring that the significance of the heritage asset is preserved, and where possible, enhanced.

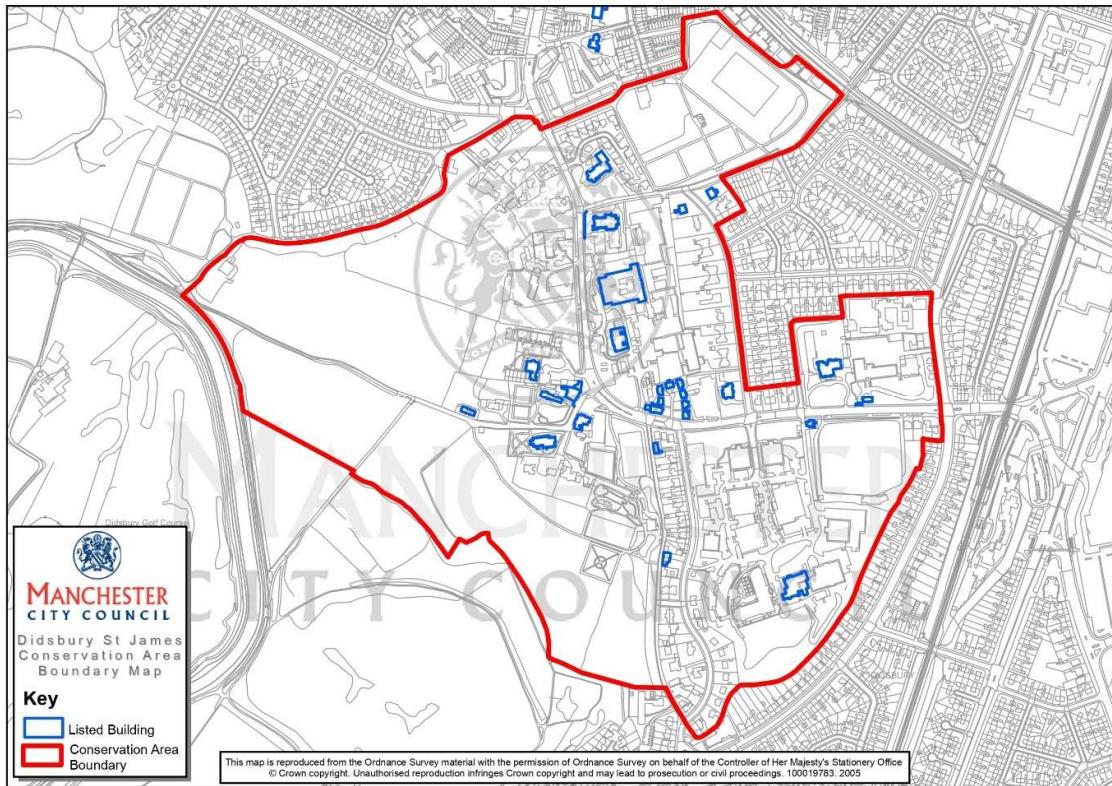
Refer to drawings 2526 /02/04 and 05 External works external finisher Existing and proposed

4.0 Heritage Asset and Significance

The site sits adjacent a Grade II listed Building and sits within Didsbury St James Conservation area. The following paragraphs describe the site and conservation area and summaries their heritage significance.

Didsbury St James conservation area, nine kilometres south of the city centre, was designated in November 1970.

It is centred on the historical core of Didsbury, at the junction of Wilmslow Road and Stenner Lane, and covers an extensive area. The boundaries include Ford Lane, Didsbury Park and Sandhurst Road to the north, the backs of properties on Parrs Wood Road to the south-east, a ditch draining the Mersey flood plain to the south-west and River Mersey to the west.



The application whilst in principle is for a change of use for the former methodist church building it is proposed to link the listed building to the former church.

The site is outlined as three elements:

1. The Listed Building
2. The Listed boundary walls
3. The Former Methodist Church

1.0 Listed Building

Heritage Category:	Listed Building
Grade:	II
List Entry Number:	1254966
Date first listed:	03-Oct-1974
List Entry Name:	DIDSBURY METHODIST CHURCH OF ST PAUL
Statutory Address:	DIDSBURY METHODIST CHURCH OF ST PAUL, WILMSLOW ROAD

SJ8490 WILMSLOW ROAD, Didsbury 698-1/25/670 (East side) 11/11/87 Didsbury Methodist Church of St Paul

GV II

Methodist church. 1875, by E.T. Barry and Sons. Coursed squared sandstone rubble, steeply pitched roof of graduated green slates. Nave with transepts, chancel with north vestry and south organ house, south-west steeple. Gothic style. The 3-stage tower has diagonal buttresses, a 2-centred arched west doorway with 2 orders of moulding including foliated bands and shafts with foliated caps, coupled lancets to the 2nd stage, coupled belfry lancets with shafts and hoodmoulds with figured stops, a foliated cornice with pseudo-gargoyles at the corners, square corner pinnacles with shafts, and a broach spire with lucarnes. The 3-bay nave has stepped triple lancets rising into gablets, and a traceried 5-light west window; the buttressed aisles have arcaded 5-light windows, and the north aisle has a gabled porch at the west end, with 2-centred arched doorway and steeply pitched roof. The transepts have angle-buttresses and corner pinnacles like those of the tower, 3-light windows in the gables and coupled lancets in the sides; and the chancel has a traceried 3-light east window with figured stops to the hoodmould. Most windows have geometrical coloured glazing. Interior: aisle arcades of polished granite columns with carved capitals and 2-centred arches; barrel roof to nave, on corbelled columns; wide crossing with stout corbelled shafts to the arches; wide chancel arch, and 3-bay chancel arcades (blank arches on north side, organ on south side) with heavily-carved 2-centred arches; encaustic tiled floors; painted panelled barrel roof to chancel; stone pulpit on granite shafts; marble reredos; carving throughout includes foliage, fruit, animals and birds; several wall monuments to "tutors of this college" (etc). History: associated with former Wesleyan Theological College to south (now Manchester Polytechnic School of Education, q.v.).

Listing NGR: SJ8478590704

Description of building

Designed by the architect H.H. Vale and built by E.T. Barry and Sons as a church for the nearby Wesleyan Theological Institution, this Grade II listed building (Fig. 9) was opened in 1877. The church was built as a memorial to the local philanthropist and MP, James Heald of Parrs Wood. James Heald's family bore the entire £20,000 design and building cost. Built in the Victorian Gothic style, of coursed squared sandstone rubble, with a steeply pitched roof of graduated green slates, Vale's church displays freely interpreted elements of Early English and Geometrical Decorated Gothic architecture. The layout is cruciform with a belfry and steeple on

the south-west corner. Architectural elements typical of the style are used throughout, such as lancet windows and foliar decoration, with dormer windows along the nave. The 3-stage tower has diagonal buttresses, and there is a 2-centred arched west doorway.

The building was bestowed a Grade: II Listing by English Heritage in October 1974. However, spiralling costs of upkeep finally forced the old church to sadly close its doors, and in 1987 it moved into the newly built modern church building next door. The grand old building lay empty for a while before being acquired by Quorum Estates. In 1991, together with Architects Downs and Variava, they transformed it into the unique space inhabited today. Although it has a very contemporary feel with mezzanine walkways, flying stairs and intermediate floors, there are still many original features including the polished granite columns and stone carvings

2.0 Listed Boundary Walls

Heritage Category:	Listed Building
Grade:	II
List Entry Number:	1254967
Date first listed:	03-Oct-1974
List Entry Name:	WALLS, GATE PIERS AND GATES TO DIDSBURY METHODIST CHURCH OF ST PAUL
Statutory Address 1:	WALLS, GATE PIERS AND GATES TO DIDSBURY METHODIST CHURCH OF ST PAUL, WILMSLOW ROAD

SJ8490 WILMSLOW ROAD, Didsbury 698-1/25/671 (East side) 20/06/88 Walls, gate piers and gates to Didsbury Methodist Church of St Paul

GV II

Walls bounding north and west sides of churchyard of Didsbury Methodist Church of St Paul, with gate piers and gates. Probably 1875. Coursed squared sandstone rubble and sandstone ashlar. The walls have pitched copings, and upstands at regular intervals (the piers to former railings). Two pairs of Gothic gate piers in west wall, with octagonal spired tops, and double gates of wrought-iron in Gothic style: one pair of gate piers in north wall, in simpler style, with single gate. Included for group value.

Listing NGR: SJ8475190703

3.0 The Former Methodist Church

Didsbury Methodist Church. Christian worship continued until recently on the site in the modern small brick building dating from 1961. Methodism in Didsbury traces its roots back to John Wesley's time with the establishment of "Classes" of Methodist members in Burnage with an offshoot in Didsbury commencing in 1790. During the 19th century two congregations developed, one in Albert Hill St. and one at St. Paul's. The two congregations came together in 1991 to form Didsbury Methodist Church holding services in the refurbished building.

The former methodist church lacks any architectural merit in character and appearance. The main external envelope material is average quality brick with a stone hue in an attempt to blend with the original church stone colour. Low pitch concrete roof tile, unrelated to the steeply pitched church roofs. Generally the design of the building has little to no reference to the original church.

5. Assessment of Harm and Benefits

- 5.1 Given that the site is adjacent to a Grade II listed building and within the Didsbury St James Conservation Area the proposals impact upon the character and appearance of the Grade II listed building and Conservation Area.
- 5.2 The section looks to address the heritage planning issues that warrant consideration in the determination of the application for planning permission in line with the proposals set out in Section 3 of this report.
- 5.3 The statutory requirement set out within planning (listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, at sections 72 confirms that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Conservation Area, and therefore this needs to be the primary consideration when determining the proposed application.
- 5.4 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase act (2004) also requires that planning applications are determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless materials considerations indicate otherwise. The policy guidance set out within the NPPF is considered to be a material consideration which attracts significant weight in the decision making process.

NPPF considerations

- 5.5 Chapter 16 of the NPPF relates to the historic environment Paragraph 207 reminds us to take into account :

207. In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.

135. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

(a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;

(b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;

(c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);

(d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;

5.6 National Design Guide : Section C2 relates to valuing heritage, local history and culture and states:

- 46 *When determining how a site may be developed, it is important to understand the history of how the place has evolved. The local sense of place and identity are shaped by local history, culture and heritage, and how these have influenced the built environment and wider landscape.*
- 47 *Sensitive re-use or adaptation adds to the richness and variety of a scheme and to its diversity of activities and users. It helps to integrate heritage into proposals in an environmentally sustainable way.*
- 48 *Well-designed places and buildings are influenced positively by:*
- *the history and heritage of the site, its surroundings and the wider area, including cultural influences;*
 - *the significance and setting of heritage assets and any other specific features that merit conserving and enhancing;*
 - *the local vernacular, including historical building typologies such as the terrace, town house, mews, villa or mansion block, the treatment of façades, characteristic materials and details.*

5.7 Historic England's Conservation Principles Policies and Guidance

- 138 *New work or alteration to a significant place should normally be acceptable if:*
- a. *there is sufficient information comprehensively to understand the impacts of the proposal on the significance of the place;*
 - b. *the proposal would not materially harm the values of the place, which, where appropriate, would be reinforced or further revealed;*
 - c. *the proposals aspire to a quality of design and execution which may be valued now and in the future;*
 - d. *the long-term consequences of the proposals can, from experience, be demonstrated to be benign, or the proposals are designed not to prejudice alternative solutions in the future.*

6.0 CONCLUSION

Research into the site's planning history reveals that the two buildings were historically connected by a covered link structure. The 1990 planning application 035405 sought permission to demolish this link, with the intention of enabling the church hall to function as a standalone Methodist Church and facilitating the separation and sale of the original church building for conversion to office use.

Although no detailed records, plans, or visual documentation of the former link structure have been located, this evidence indicates that the two buildings were previously physically and functionally connected. The current proposals seek to reinstate this connection in a sensitive and respectful manner, reflecting the site's historical layout while addressing modern operational needs.

The proposals have been carefully considered and sensitively designed with due regard to the significance of the designated heritage asset, in particular the listed former church building. The scheme seeks to respect, preserve, and protect the existing historic character, appearance, and significance of the listed building, with only minimal and reversible intervention to the historic fabric.

While the adjacent former Methodist Church is not a designated heritage asset, and its contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area is considered neutral at best, the proposed glazed link creates a functional and visual connection between the two buildings.

Under Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, there is a statutory duty to preserve listed buildings and enhance the special character or appearance of conservation areas. In this context, "preservation" means ensuring that no harm is caused to the heritage significance of the asset.

It is considered that the introduction of the glazed link will result in no harm to the listed building or the conservation area. The design has been led by a clear understanding of the architectural language of the listed building, drawing on its verticality and rhythm, particularly in the proportions of its historic windows. However, the proposal intentionally avoids replication of historic detail, instead offering a contemporary and subservient intervention that is legibly modern while remaining sympathetic in scale and materiality.

The proposed glazed link will have no harmful impact on the character, setting, or appearance of the listed building or the wider conservation area. On the contrary, it has the potential to enhance the relationship between the listed church and the adjacent, lower-quality former Methodist Church by creating a cohesive and functional connection between the two, suitable for modern use.

Through its well-considered design, sensitive detailing, and minimal physical intervention, the proposal ensures the preservation of the listed building and the special interest of the conservation area, aligning with both national and local heritage policy.