

Planning

Growth & Development

Delegated officer report for planning application

Application no. 142253/FO/2025

Date registered valid: 7 March 2025

Proposal: External alterations to shopfront

Address: Unit DD Arndale Shopping Centre, 1 Cross Street, Manchester, M1 1WR

Ward(s): Piccadilly Ward

Applicant: Hotel Chocolat

Agent (if any): Sam Harper Firstplan

Case officer: James
Tel: 0161 219
Email: james.bridgman@manchester.gov.uk
Bridgman 6202

Recommendation: Refuse

Date of recommendation: 2 September 2025

Application details

Type of application: Full Application Consent

Development type: Minor Other

Date of site visit: 9 April 2025

Standard consultations:

Printed: 12 March 2025 Expired: 2 April 2025

Neighbour notifications

Printed: 12 March 2025 Expired: 2 April 2025

Site notice

Dated: 22 May 2025 Expired: 12 June 2025

Press advert

Published: 27 May 2025 Expired: 17 June 2025

Departure from Development Plan: No

Environmental Statement: Not required

Description of site/building

Listed building: Not applicable

Conservation area: Not applicable

Tree Preservation Order: Not applicable

The site relates to a ground floor commercial unit in the Arndale shopping centre located at 1 Cross Street. The unit was the former branch of the bank of Halifax but has been vacant for a number of years.

A louvred panel is currently affixed above the fascia and shopfront. A separate application has been submitted to for external signage.

The proposal site is located in Manchester City Centre and therefore the surrounding area has a wide variety of uses including, residential, offices, restaurants, cafes, bars, retail and commercial outlets in the immediate area with associated advertisements on their respective buildings.

The building is not listed, and it is not located within a Conservation Area. The site is located adjacent to St Ann's Square Conservation Area, the boundary of which runs through the centre of Cross Street.

The applicant site is directly opposite the Grade II listed Royal Exchange on the other side of Cross Street, so the proposals should be considered within the context of the adjacent conservation area and listed buildings.

Description of development

Permission is sought for external alterations to an existing shopfront.

Since the submission of the planning application works have commenced and works have finalised. The unit has opened and is currently operating. The design of the proposal is discussed within the assessment section of this report.

Consultations & Notification Responses

Publicity: The proposal has been advertised, by way of site notice and press advertisement, as affecting the setting of a listed building and the conservation area. Letters have also been sent out to local businesses and residents. No comments have been as part of that process.

Highway Services: No objections subject to informative relating to licensing and working safely near Metrolink

Environmental Health: No objection

Policy

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

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

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

- Policy SP1 – Spatial Principles
- Policy EN1 – Design Principles and Strategic Character Areas
- Policy EN3 – Heritage
- Policy DM1 – Development Management
- Policy CC9 – Design and Heritage

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

- Policy DC14 – Shop Fronts and Related Signs
- Policy DC 18 – Conservation Areas
- Policy DC 19 – Listed Buildings

Shopfront Design Guide (2024)

The Guide to Development in Manchester Supplementary Planning Document and Planning Guidance (Adopted 2007)

This document provides guidance to help develop and enhance Manchester.

Paragraph 2.7 states that Chapter 2 'Design' - outlines the City Council's expectations that all new developments should have a high standard of design making a positive contribution to the City's environment and encourages "the most appropriate form of development to enliven neighbourhoods and sustain local facilities. The layout of the scheme and the design, scale, massing and orientation of its buildings should achieve a unified form which blends in with, and links to, adjacent areas.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

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

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Section 66 of the LBCA Act requires the local planning authority to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the setting of listed buildings. This requires more than a simple balancing exercise and considerable importance and weight should be given to the desirability of preserving the setting.

Section 72 of the LBCA Act requires the local planning authority to have pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area

Issues

Principle

The application seeks planning permission for the installation of a new shopfront to a ground floor commercial unit of the Arndale Shopping Centre. The shopfront faces on to Cross Street opposite the Royal Exchange.

The shopfront is currently glazed, and the unit has been unoccupied for several years. The unit previously housed a branch of Halifax bank. A new occupier has been secured, and they are seeking a new shopfront to alter to the appearance of the shopfront.

The works are therefore related to enhancing the economic vitality of the City Centre and diversifying its food and drink offer pursuant to policies CC2, which supports development that enhances the vitality of the Primary Shopping Area.

Visual amenity

The existing shopfront consists of a glass curtain wall that angles inwards towards the entrance doors. Above the shopfront is light coloured band, a darker horizontal fascia and a large louvred panel.



Figure 1 - Existing Shopfront

The proposal consists of alterations to the existing shopfront. Works have commenced and finalised on site including the installation of marine grade ply to the fascia level and left-hand side of the shopfront.

The new plywood has been painted in a dark brown and the louvre panels have been painted to match. The new shopfront includes a circular window and external fire exit door.

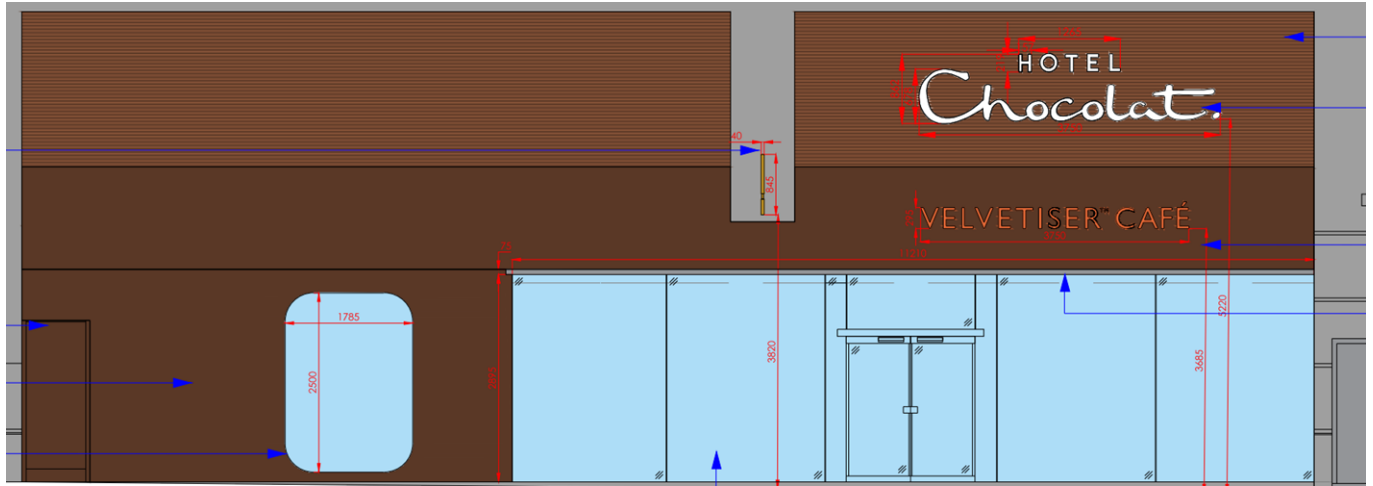


Figure 2 – Proposed front elevation



Figure 3 – Photograph of as built shopfront

The existing glass shopfront with the entrance doors has been retained as shown in this section drawing.

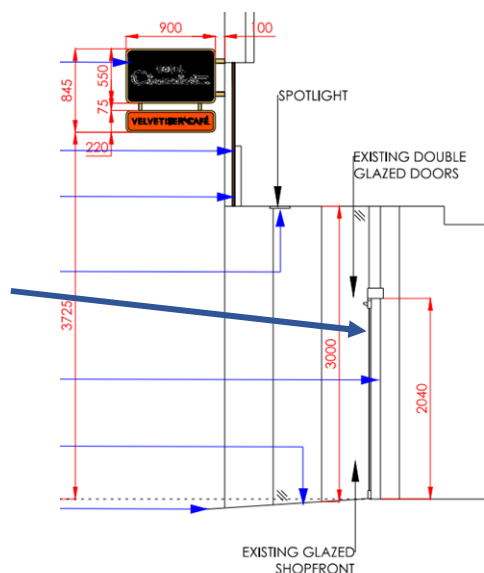


Figure 4 – Section of existing shopfront

Advertisement consent has been sought under 142254/AO/2025 for the signage to the louvred panel, fascia sign and projection sign.

Issues

Visual amenity

The site forms part of the Manchester Arndale Building which was constructed in phases between 1972 and 1979. The unit previously housed a branch of Halifax bank but has been vacant for a number of years. Hotel Chocolat have been secured as the new occupier and have commenced works on site.

In recent years the immediately adjoining units have undertaken works to replace the original shopfronts and it has contributed towards activating the frontages of these formerly vacant units. These works were carried out under applications 141242/FO/2024 and 141243/AO/2024 (Joe & the Juice) and 139404/FO/2024 and 140981/AO/2024 (HOP).

Policy EN1 (Design Principles and Strategic Character Areas) of the Core Strategy advises development can provide opportunities for good design to enhance the overall image of the City should be fully realised whilst reinforcing and enhancing the local character. It also advises that developer's will be expected to consider the City's heritage, including its listed buildings, conservation areas, archaeological remains and historic street pattern.

The applicant site's new shopfront has been constructed using large panels of marine grade plywood and finished in a textured brown paint. The Council have significant concerns with use of this material as it has created a flat and temporary looking appearance. It is a sheet material with limited visual quality in comparison to higher quality materials such as traditional timber joinery and tiles or contemporary metal cladding and large areas of glazing.

Paragraph 139 of the NPPF states development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes.



Figure 5 – Plywood panels



Figure 6 - shopfront

The chosen material and the textured paint finish has produced a flat appearance which lacks depth, shadow lines or level of craftsmanship that is expected within this location. The plywood material's benefits are limited to its practical water-resistant qualities and does not present the high-quality aesthetic required in this location and instead gives the frontage a temporary and poorly executed character.



Figure 7 – Close up of shopfront

As shown above in figure 7, the shopfront is set behind the fascia level, and the bottom section of the shopfront is recessed. It is recognised these setbacks provide some visual break to the predominately flat surface.

The close-up images were taken a few weeks after the unit opened and in short period of time the paint finish appears streaky in natural daylight and dirt is beginning to build up towards the bottom. The Council have concerned the low-quality finish, and appearance will continue to deteriorate.

The development is therefore contrary to Policy EN1 and DM1 of the Manchester Core Strategy as it has resulted in detrimental harm to the visual amenity of the street scene and area.

Impact on Heritage Assets

Policy EN3 (Heritage) of the Core Strategy advises that 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.

The application site occupies a prominent frontage immediately adjacent to the St Anns Square Conservation Area and the Grade II Royal Exchange Building. The prevailing character of the listed building is defined by the high-quality stone facades, strong vertical emphasis with columns, traditional recessed glazed shopfronts and simple signage. These features collectively contribute to the architectural richness and visual interest of the street scene.

The site is located on the opposite side of Cross Street and is outside of the boundary of St Anns Square conservation area but is within the setting of the adjacent heritage assets. By virtue of the use of marine ply panels and textured paint finish, the development represents a low-quality shopfront that results in harm to the significance and setting of the heritage assets and is contrary to paragraph 208 of the National Planning Policy Framework. The amount of harm identified would be less than substantial.

In line with the requirements of paragraph 215 of the NPPF, where less than substantial harm has been identified, this must be considered against any public benefits.

The external alterations subject of this application has been undertaken to facilitate Hotel Chocolat as the new occupier and there are public benefits associated with bringing a former vacant unit into a new use.

Whilst this benefit has been acknowledged, the less than substantial harm to the character and significance of the setting of the heritage assets is not outweighed by this public benefit.

The use of higher quality materials is required to respond positively to the setting of the nearby listed building whilst also activating the frontage of the unit positively and similarly to the adjacent units which have been altered within the last year.

Overall, it is considered that the development would neither preserve nor enhance the setting of the Grade II Royal Exchange and St Anns Conservation Area. The development is therefore contrary to Policies CC9, EN1 and EN3 of the Manchester Core Strategy, saved UDP Policies DC18 and DC19 which relate to design and heritage

Level Access

The existing shopfront and entrance area will be retained including the provision of level/step free access.

Highways Impact

The proposed Hotel Chocolat Inlay to the pavement shown on the drawings is located within the inward angled shopfront entrance and does not impact on the adopted highway.

The works related to the proposal are contained within the curtilage of the building and thus would not impinge on the adopted highway. The entrance door opens inwards, ensuring there it would not cause an obstruction to the footway. Highways Services do not object to the proposal.

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: Refuse

Article 35 Declaration

Officers have worked with the applicant/agent in a positive and proactive manner in determining this application by assessing the proposal against relevant planning policies and all material considerations, identifying matters of concern with the proposal and discussing those with the applicant/agent. However, the issues identified are considered to be so fundamental that it has not been possible to negotiate a satisfactory way forward and due to the harm which has been clearly identified within the reason for the refusal, approval has not been possible.

Reasons for recommendation to refuse

- 1) The shopfront, by virtue of its use of marine ply panels and textured paint finish results in a poor-quality appearance that is detrimental to the visual amenity of the street scene and wider area. The site fails to preserve or enhance the setting of the adjacent Grade II Royal Exchange Building and the St Anns Conservation Area 1990. The development is therefore contrary to Core Strategy Policies SP1, EN1, EN3, CC9 and DM1, Saved Unitary Development Plan Policies DC14 and DC18, Places for Everyone Plan Policy JP-P2, the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Appendix 1 – List of consultees & neighbours notified

Highway Services
Environmental Health

Ocean Dental Manchester, Second Floor, Boots, 32 Market Street, Manchester, M1 1PL
Boots, 32 Market Street, Manchester, M1 1PL
Kiosk 19A, Arndale Centre Food Chain, Market Street, Manchester, M2 1NP
Kiosk 19, Arndale Centre Food Chain, Market Street, Manchester, M2 1NP
Units R10 To R19, Arndale Centre, Market Street, Manchester, M4 3AT
Unit R36, Arndale Centre, Market Street, Manchester, M4 3AT
Unit R35, Arndale Centre, Market Street, Manchester, M4 3AT
Unit R34, Arndale Centre, Market Street, Manchester, M4 3AT
Unit R33, Arndale Centre, Market Street, Manchester, M4 3AT
Units R31 And R32, Arndale Centre, Market Street, Manchester, M4 3AT
Unit R30, Arndale Centre, Market Street, Manchester, M4 3AT
Unit R29, Arndale Centre, Market Street, Manchester, M4 3AT
Unit R28, Arndale Centre, Market Street, Manchester, M4 3AT
Units R26 And R27, Arndale Centre, Market Street, Manchester, M4 3AT
Unit R25, Arndale Centre, Market Street, Manchester, M4 3AT
Unit R24, Arndale Centre, Market Street, Manchester, M4 3AT
Unit R23, Arndale Centre, Market Street, Manchester, M4 3AT
Unit R22, Arndale Centre, Market Street, Manchester, M4 3AT
Unit R21, Arndale Centre, Market Street, Manchester, M4 3AT
Unit R20, Arndale Centre, Market Street, Manchester, M4 3AT
The Fold Dentistry, Ground And First Floor, 3 Back Pool Fold, Manchester, M2 1HB
Advertising Right JC Decaux Outside 1, Cross Street, Manchester, M2 1HX
8 - 10 Cross Street, Manchester, M2 7AE
Scappaticci, Kiosk Adjacent 42 To 46, Market Street, Manchester, M1 1PW
Stall Opposite Unit R23, Arndale Centre, Market Street, Manchester, M4 3AT
Stall Opposite Unit R21, Arndale Centre, Market Street, Manchester, M4 3AT
15 - 17 Old Bank Street, Manchester, M2 7PE
18 Cross Street, Manchester, M2 7AE
Sainsbury Supermarket, 22 Cross Street, Manchester, M2 7AQ
Lloyds Bank PLC, 42 - 46 Market Street, Manchester, M1 1PW
1 Cross Street, Manchester, M2 1HX
14 Market Street, Manchester, M1 1PT
1 Pall Mall, Manchester, M2 1JR
Kiosk 12, Arndale Centre Food Chain, Market Street, Manchester, M2 1NP
Kiosk 11, Arndale Centre Food Chain, Market Street, Manchester, M2 1NP
Kiosk 10, Arndale Centre Food Chain, Market Street, Manchester, M2 1NP
Kiosk 9, Arndale Centre Food Chain, Market Street, Manchester, M2 1NP
Kiosk 8, Arndale Centre Food Chain, Market Street, Manchester, M2 1NP
Fourth Floor, Princess Chambers, 26 Pall Mall, Manchester, M2 1JR
Second Floor To Third Floor, Princess Chambers, 26 Pall Mall, Manchester, M2 1JR
Ground Floor And First Floor, Princess Chambers, 26 Pall Mall, Manchester, M2 1JR
8 New Market, Manchester, M2 1WB
Kiosk 6, Arndale Centre Food Chain, Market Street, Manchester, M2 1NP
Taco Bell, Kiosk 5, Arndale Centre Food Chain, Market Street, Manchester, M2 1NP
Kiosk 4, Arndale Centre Food Chain, Market Street, Manchester, M2 1NP
Kiosk 3, Arndale Centre Food Chain, Market Street, Manchester, M2 1NP
McDonald's, Kiosk 2, Arndale Centre Food Chain, Market Street, Manchester, M2 1NP
Kiosk 1, Arndale Centre Food Chain, Market Street, Manchester, M2 1NP
15 Cross Street, Manchester, M2 1WE

Kiosk 7, Arndale Centre Food Chain, Market Street, Manchester, M2 1NP
Motel One, Commercial Buildings, 11 - 15 Cross Street, Manchester, M2 1WE
3 Back Pool Fold, Manchester, M2 1HB
16 Market Street, Manchester, M1 1PT
28 Market Street, Manchester, M1 1PW
30 Market Street, Manchester, M1 1PW
26 Market Street, Manchester, M1 1PW
Unit R9, Arndale Centre, Market Street, Manchester, M4 3AT

Appendix 2 – Planning constraints

Article 4 Direction - City Centre PD Restriction - Class B1(a) To C3
Article 4 Direction - Removal Of PD Rights Change Of Use From Class C3 To Class C4
Coal Authority - Development Low Risk - Name: DEVELOPMENT_LOW_RISK_AREA
Area Team Boundary - Name: CENTRAL