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HERITAGE STATEMENT

ABBAY HOUSE ROOFTOP

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PROJECT REF.	2088



ARCHITECTURE + HERITAGE

AMAZON HOUSE • BRAZIL STREET
MANCHESTER • M1 3PW

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Image: View of Abbey House from Mosley Street.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.0

INTRODUCTION

This Heritage Statement was written to accompany a planning application concerning the rooftop space of Abbey House, Mosley Street, Manchester. It was produced by Atelier MB in July 2025. The statement relates to changes to the rooftop space only.



Image: Abbey House rooftop.

2.0 LOCATION

2.0 LOCATION + DESCRIPTION



Image: Aerial view of Abbey House with rooftop site highlighted.

Abbey House is a part 6-storey, part 5-storey contemporary commercial building, constructed in 1983. It is located at 74 Mosley Street in Manchester City Centre and is roughly 'C' shaped in plan, forming part of a block edged by Mosley Street (southwest), Booth Street (southeast), and Cooper Street (northeast). A narrow, one-way road (West Mosley Street) runs off Princess Street, under part of the building at ground floor level and connects to Booth Street. 80 Mosley Street adjoins Abbey House with 11 Cooper Street (Waldorf House) and 73-75 Princess Street forming the remaining parts of the block.

Abbey House is modern in its architectural style, with sandstone clad elevations, extensive runs of glazing and a mansard roof. The building is not listed, but is within the Upper King Street Conservation Area and within the setting of a number of listed buildings:

Waldorf House (1863) Grade II;

Manchester Art Gallery (1824-25) Grade I;

73-75 Princess Street (1870s) Grade II.

The site is also in the immediate vicinity of George Street Conservation Area and Albert Square Conservation Area.

Proposals are limited to the roof area on the parts of Booth Street and Cooper Street sides of the building. Currently the roof hosts various plant and kit for mechanical ventilation, the lift head and former caretaker's accommodation in the form of a small single-storey flat.

3.0 SIGNIFICANCE

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Images (above): Listed buildings surrounding Abbey House, site in orange.
(below): Upper King Street Conservation Area (red line) and site in orange.

Abbey House is not listed but is within the setting of a number of heritage assets, which are discussed here.

CONSERVATION AREAS

Upper King Street Conservation Area

The site is on the far southern edge of the Conservation Area. Mosley Street is described as the 'natural extension of the central financial district' in the MCC CA overview. The CA has a variety of grand building styles and includes historic street patterns. Dominant building materials are yellow sandstone and granite, along with timber framed windows.

George Street Conservation Area

Designated in 1985, the CA is 'principally a busy commercial district' and dates to the 19th century. Key features include the Portico Library, Manchester Art Gallery and Chinatown, which forms its own distinct part of the CA. Typical materials include red brick and sandstone.

Albert Square Conservation Area

Designated in 1972, the CA contains many of Manchester's key civic buildings and spaces, with the Victorian Town Hall and Albert memorial being the dominant focal points. Throughout the range of building styles evident, there are clearly defined ground, middle and top sections and the use of brick and stone is typical.

LISTED BUILDINGS

Manchester Art Gallery (Grade I)

Originally built for the Royal Manchester institution, the building was designed by Charles Barry in the Greek Revival style and is a fine example of grand classical public architecture. The art gallery includes the former Athenaeum, also designed by Barry, and the two are linked with a modern glass extension by Michael Hopkins and Partners. It is a key architectural landmark in the city centre.

Waldorf House (Grade II)

Originally built as a Freemasons' Hall, later converted to a hotel, before being re-furnished as apartments. The building has a finely decorated principal elevation on Cooper Street and is significant for its historic and architectural values.

73-75 Princess Street (Grade II)

Late 19th century former shop with offices above, the building has decorative elevations in red brick with sandstone dressings and blue brick details. It is significant as a typical example of late 19th century commercial architecture in the city, and forms part of the important cluster of historic buildings around Albert Square, the town hall and its extension.

4.0 PROPOSALS + IMPACT

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Proposals

The proposal is to remove unused rooftop structure and provide two sections of accessible rooftop space for use by the tenants of Abbey House: one for the 5th floor suite only and one for communal use. Works are limited to a portion of the Booth Street/Cooper Street end of the roof.

The caretaker’s flat is no longer required and has been vacant for a number of years. The proposal is to demolish it, retaining a small portion of the structure to provide a WC, store, and stair linking to the main building. Access to the communal rooftop will also be provided via the existing lift, and by the internal staircase.

Canopies with movable louvered roof elements will provide shelter- to be positioned on the Cooper Street corner and to the 5th floor suite rooftop. These canopies are open-sided and do not form an enclosed structure.

A new frosted glass balustrade will be added to the perimeter of accessible areas. The amenity spaces do not extend to the edge of the roof and are substantially set back from the elevations.

Various types of loose and removable low- and high-level seating is proposed, and a tiled finish will be fitted over the existing roof surface.

Impact

The existing structure is of low design quality and does not make a positive contribution to either the Conservation Area or the setting of the surrounding listed buildings. Its removal is considered to be an enhancement.

The proposals for the roof space represent an improvement to the existing situation, with no additional solid structures or extension to the lift head required. The canopies will be high-quality and visually unintrusive additions, with movable louvres and open sides, resulting in a minimal visual impact.

Additionally, the use of glass to form the balustrades limits the aesthetic impact of changes and creates a high-quality finish to the space. All additions are easily reversible, with many being removable.

The setting back of the spaces from the perimeter will limit any impact on views within the Conservation Area. New lighting will be limited to the canopied areas in order to minimise visual impact in the longer views of the building within the Conservation Area.

Overall, the proposals are considered to be appropriate and to exert no level of harm to the significance of surrounding heritage assets.

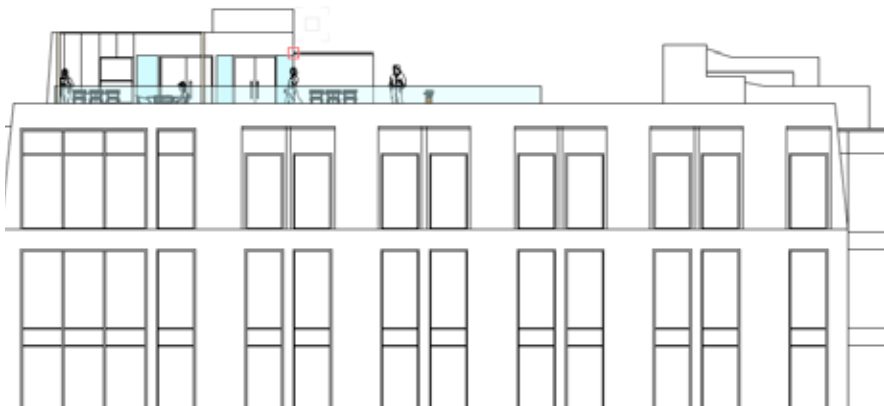


Image: Showing proposed elevation of new rooftop.

5.0 PLANNING CONTEXT

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National Policy

The site is within a Conservation Area and in close proximity to a number of listed assets, which are offered a degree of statutory protection.

National policy regarding built heritage is contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Paragraph 207 states, '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.'

This Heritage Statement meets that requirement.

Part 'a' of paragraph 210 states, 'In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- a) The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation.

The proposals are considered to sustain the significance of the Conservation Area and the nearby listed buildings, exerting no degree of harm and improving the quality of the rooftop space.

Local Policy

Local policy reflects principles established in the NPPF and is contained within the Local Development Framework Core Strategy, 2012. Of particular relevance are CC9, which states that development should preserve or enhance listed assets; and EN3 which states the Council will encourage development that complements and takes advantage of historic and heritage features of neighbourhoods.

Places for Everyone is Greater Manchester's joint development plan. Policy JP-P2 relates to heritage and states that particular consideration will be given to ensuring 'the significance of key elements of the historic environment which contribute to Greater Manchester's distinct identity and sense of place are protected from harm' and that positive management and integration of heritage should be informed by 'delivering positive benefits that sustain and enhance the historic environment as well as contributing to the economic vitality, accessibility and environmental quality of a place.'

The proposals are considered to accord with local and national policy.

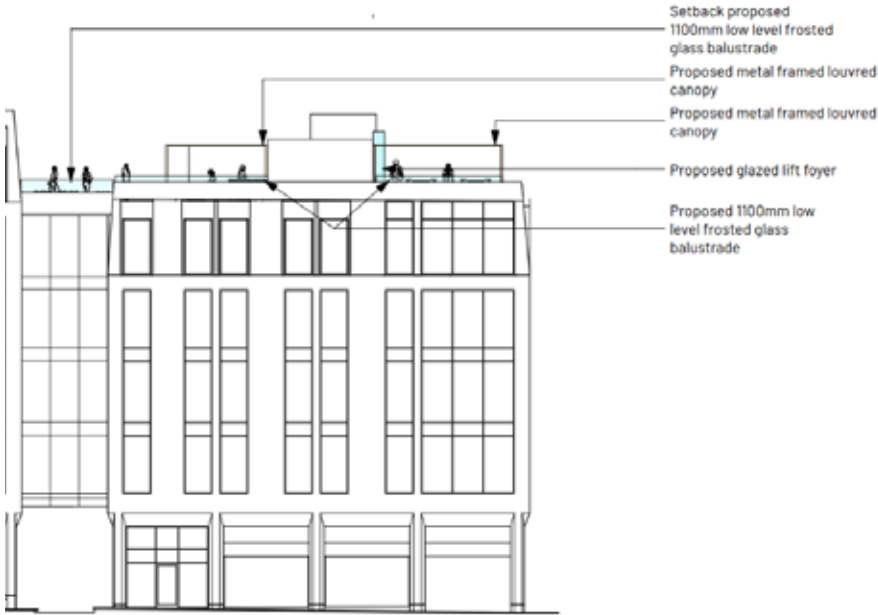


Image: Showing proposed changes to rooftop.

6.0 CONCLUSION

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Abbey House is a 1980s commercial building situated in close proximity to a number of important listed buildings in Manchester City Centre. Its design and quality are limited, and it does not make any particular positive contribution to the Conservation Area.

The rooftop area is currently used for mechanical kit and unsightly (now vacant) caretaker accommodation. There is an opportunity to improve the space by removing the majority of the caretaker block, introducing open sided canopies and glass balustrades which are visually 'light touch' and unobtrusive.

The setting of the surrounding listed buildings will not be harmed by the changes proposed, nor is there any degree of harm to the Conservation Area. The proposals introduce a high quality of materials and design and will give the building a new amenity, ensuring it remains attractive to tenants.

There is no level of harm to heritage assets and the changes are considered an enhancement to the current situation. Proposals are in accord with both local and national policy.



Image: Aerial view of Abbey House as existing.

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