

17 June 2025

By email only

Jennifer Atkinson
Manchester City Council
Planning and Building Control
Manchester City Council
Level 6, Town Hall Extension
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Manchester
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Our ref: ISQM3015

Dear Jennifer,

FULL PLANNING APPLICATION FOR THE CHANGE OF USE OF THE GROUND FLOOR UNIT FROM OFFICE (USE CLASS: CLASS E) TO A MARKETING SUITE (USE CLASS: SUI GENERIS) AND EXTERNAL ALTERATIONS TO THE GROUND FLOOR – BAINBRIDGE HOUSE, LONDON ROAD, MANCHESTER

Further to our recent correspondence regarding the above and on behalf of IQ Student Accommodation ("the Applicant" or "IQ"), we are pleased to enclose a full planning application for the change of use of part of the ground floor of Bainbridge House (elevations fronting London Road and Granby Row) from office use to a marketing suite. The proposed use relates to the adjacent Echo Street purpose-built student accommodation development¹ being brought forward by IQ. The proposal also includes external alterations to the ground floor.

The description of development is as follows:

"Full planning application for the change of use of the ground floor unit from office (Use Class: Class E) to a marketing suite (Use Class: Sui Generis) and external alterations to the ground floor"

The application has been submitted via the Planning Portal (ref. PP-14043480) and is supported by the completed application forms and this covering letter, along with a full suite of architectural information (listed below).

- Existing Ground Floor Plan (dwg ref. 63073 SRA XX 00 DR A 20800 P04), prepared by Sheppard Robson
- Proposed Ground Floor Plan (dwg ref. 63073 SRA XX 00 DR A 20801 P09), prepared by Sheppard Robson
- Design and Access Statement (dwg ref. 63073-SRA-XX-XX-RP-A-0005 P06), prepared by Sheppard Robson
- Location Plan (dwg ref. 63073 SRA ZZ XX DR A 00800 P01), prepared by Sheppard Robson
- North & East Elevations (dwg ref. 63073 SRA ZZ XX DR A 20810 P06), prepared by Sheppard Robson
- Proposed North & East Elevations (dwg ref. 63073 SRA ZZ XX DR A 20811 P05), prepared by Sheppard Robson

¹ 136874/FO/2023

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The requisite application fee of £588.00 has been paid online via Planning Portal.

BACKGROUND

As you are aware, in May 2023, full planning permission was granted for the erection of 3 interlinked towers ranging from 27, 21 and 16 storeys together with intermediary link buildings (15 and 11 storeys) to form purpose-built student accommodation (Sui Generis) with associated amenity space and external landscaping and other associated works (LPA ref. 136874/FO/2023). This scheme is under construction and will be occupied by students for the 26/27 academic year.

The proposals to which this application relate seek to provide the marketing suite for the Echo Street development, to enable future prospective students to visit and view the different types of accommodation available. As Bainbridge House is technically an office use (Use Class E) and the marketing suite would comprise a sui generis use class, a change of use application is necessary. Similarly, to facilitate suitable access which enables the most efficient internal arrangement of the marketing suite, the entrance door into the building is required to be re-located from the London Road elevation to the Granby Row elevation.

THE SITE

The application site ("the Site") comprises c. 440sqm ground floor space within the existing Bainbridge House building. It has previously been in use as an office; however, has been vacant since 2018. The building has been marketed on a number of occasions since IQ acquired the building in 2019; however, there has been no interest from prospective occupiers.

First marketed in March 2019 by Matthews and Goodman, it stated that the accommodation was available by way of a new full repairing and insuring lease for a term of years to be agreed. This also included the second floor of Bainbridge House, which is not included within this current planning application. The site was marketed twice in 2021, September and May, before being marketed in October 2023 by Fisher German. Each marketing brochure can be provided upon request.

The site is bound by Granby Row to the north, London Road (A6) to the east, the Altrincham Railway Viaduct to the south and Echo Street to the west. Located in the southeastern corner of Manchester City Centre, the site is within a strategic location adjacent to University of Manchester and nearby to other key services, amenities and Manchester Metropolitan University. The site is situated within the Whitworth Street Conservation Area.

Further analysis of the site and surroundings can be found in the enclosed Design and Access Statement, prepared by Sheppard Robson.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The proposed development will change the use of the existing ground floor unit from office (Class E) to a marketing suite (Sui Generis). As noted above, the site has been marketed for a period of c. 6 years but has remained vacant since 2018. Converting the space to a marketing suite is not only convenient due to its immediate adjacent location to the Echo Street development, but will also breathe new life into a property facing one of Manchester's most prominent highways.

The proposed development includes internal reconfiguration of the existing office in order to maximise the proposed developments accessibility, layout and efficiency for the new marketing suite use. The marketing suite will feature a selection of IQ's studio accommodation and cluster accommodation (bedroom and kitchen examples), constructed to scale to ensure students get the best possible experience of their potential room without

needing to navigate the hazards of a live city centre construction site. The space will also incorporate a back of house office which will only be accessible to the 2 permanent staff members.

External alterations are limited to the relocation of the main entrance to the corner of London Road and Granby Row. This prominent corner location will provide a focal point, as well as maintaining levels of natural light and visual surveillance from the marketing suite. The existing building entrance doors will be permanently sealed up preventing access. The proposed materials for the external doors and frames will comprise:

- Material: PPC Aluminium
- Finish: RAL ADBronzeC33 30898.90 Matt

The external levels to the entrance will be addressed through coordination with Highways and targeting limited amendments to the existing footpaths (as identified on the Proposed Ground Floor Plan (dwg ref. 63073 SRA XX 00 DR A 20801 P09)). The proposals will be built to Secured by Design standards with the proposed entrance door being access controlled, as is currently the case.

This application is accompanied by an enclosed Waste Strategy Proforma. Due to the change of use from office to a marketing suite, associated with the ongoing Echo Street development, the proposed development is considered bespoke and does not fit within the template of the Proforma. As such, the proposed development requires a bespoke waste management strategy. Bins will be stored within the courtyard and wheeled out by a member of staff to the bin collection point located on Altrincham Street, in line with the existing strategy. With only 2 members of permanent staff and a maximum capacity of 5 people at any given time, the proposed development will generate very limited waste in comparison to the previous use. It is proposed that the development will include one of each bin type (general waste and recycling), which will be collected by a commercial service provider. Operatives will enter the courtyard to collect and return the bins.

A future advertisement consent application will be submitted for further external alterations comprising the inclusion of temporary advertisement boards. It is intended that this space will be used to advertise the marketing concept connects the suite to the site and promotes the benefits of the main development at Echo Street. Please note the temporary advertisement boards are not included within this application.

Once complete, access for visitors will be by appointment only.

PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT AND APPRAISAL

In accordance with the provisions of Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and Section 70(2) of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990, this application must be determined against of the adopted Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

In this case the adopted Development Plan comprises the Places for Everyone Plan for Greater Manchester ("Pfe") (2024), Manchester Core Strategy ("MCS") (2012) and 'saved' Unitary Development Plan ("UDP") policies (1995 and alternations on various dates). The Guide to Development in Manchester Supplementary Planning Document (2017) and National Planning Policy Framework ("the Framework" or the "NPPF") (2025) are also relevant.

Given the nature of the proposed development, specifically the size, scale and type of development the key matters which relate to this application are principle of development, design, heritage and transport and accessibility.

Principle of Development

CS Policy EC2 states that the Council will seek to retain and enhance existing employment space and sites, unless it can be demonstrated that the existing use is unviable, incompatible or unsuitable. **CS Policy EC3** confirms that

employment generating uses including offices and other commercial development will be encouraged. Other town centre uses will be assessed in accordance with other city centre-based policies.

CS Policies CC1 – CC10 set out the key policies for development within the City Centre. **Policy CC1** confirms that a range of economic development uses will be encouraged in the City Centre, in order to contribute to the city being a vibrant location which is attractive to all. **Policy CC9** and **Policy CC10** states that development should support the range of uses that the Council expects in the City Centre.

CS Policy DM1 outlines key development management matters, to which all developments should demonstrate consideration as part of any planning application. The relevant matters include effects on amenity and safety (including paragraphs 96 of the Framework). Paragraph 124 of the NPPF supports planning decisions that promote an effective use of land, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions.

The proposed development relates to the conversion of a vacant ground floor unit on a busy thoroughfare. This property has stood vacant for around 6 years and the redevelopment of the ground floor of Bainbridge House would be a positive step for the locality. It is evident that there is no demand for office space at this site and as such redevelopment of the site would provide an efficient use of land. The proposed development would be ancillary to the applicant's ongoing development at neighbouring Echo Street and provides an opportunity for students to choose their accommodation in a safe, controlled environment. Moreover, the proposed development will be fundamental to the success of the Echo Street development which itself provides significant benefits in terms of the wider Core Strategy vision and spatial objectives. The location will allow potential residents to be easily directed to neighbouring buildings to improve their overall customer experience, with a clear route between the marketing suite and IQ's Echo Street development.

In this context, it is considered the proposed development and the role it plays in the redevelopment of the wider site and the success of the Echo Street development, fully aligns with local and national planning policies, specifically **CS Policies E2 and E3, the relevant CS Policies CC1 – CC10, CS Policy DM1 and the Framework (paragraphs 96 and 124).**

Design

PfE Policy JP-P1 states that development should be distinctive, resilient, durable and resource-efficient. **CS Policy EC1** requires proposal to be designed in a way that makes best possible use and efficient use of space available. **CS Policy EN1** expects development to maximise the opportunities for good design and enhance the overall image of the city. **CS Policy DM1** outlines key development management matters (including layout, scale, materials and appearance of the proposed development), to which all developments should demonstrate consideration as part of any planning application.

Despite the minor extent of the external alterations, the design of the proposed development has been carefully considered to ensure that the scheme is appropriate within the setting and represents a high standard of design. The relocation of the main access and internal alterations will ensure that the property can be efficiently utilised by staff members and visitors. Externally, the relocation of the main entrance will improve experience and legibility within and around the site, respectively.

The future advertisement consent application proposals will create an additional layer of engagement with pedestrians - offering a more contemporary and vibrant experience than the existing façade. The final design for the advertisement boards will be agreed with the Council.

Therefore, the Proposed Development is in accordance with **PfE Policy JP-P1, CS Policy EC1, EN1 and DM1, paragraph 131 of the Framework and Guide to Development in Manchester SPD.**

Transport and Accessibility

PfE Policy JP-C8 prioritises safe and convenient access to the site for all users. **CS Policy T1** state that developers should improve pedestrian safety. **CS Policy CC5** sets out the Council's transport and parking requirements for new development in the City Centre. **Paragraph 109 of the Framework** requires that transport issues are considered from the earliest stage of development proposals, so that the potential impacts of development on transport networks can be addressed and the environmental impacts of traffic and transport infrastructure can be identified, assessed and considered.

The proposed development will only be open to visitors by appointment and therefore should not lead to a meaningful increase in footfall locally. As per 4.6 of the enclosed the Design and Access Statement, the site is located in a highly sustainable part of the city centre – minutes from Manchester Piccadilly station, tram routes and bus stops. It is expected that visitors will rely on the various modes of sustainable transport available, especially students who typically have low car ownership. It is expected the proposed development will have minimal additional vehicular impact. If visitors do choose to drive to the site, they will be required to find parking independently.

Therefore, the Proposed Development accords with the relevant local, regional and national planning policies including **CS Policy T1, CS Policy CC5, PfE Policies** and **paragraphs 109 and 117 of the Framework**.

Heritage

Bainbridge House is within the Whitworth Street Conservation Area, at its eastern extent and adjacent to the eastern boundary, defined by London Road. The conservation area was first designated in September 1974 and is described by Manchester City Council as “uniquely Mancunian in character”. Its character results from the concentration of textile warehouses erected between 1850 and 1920; the distinctive architecture of which arose from their function and the expression of the owners' wealth.

The development of the Whitworth Street Conservation Area is closely linked to the Ancoats area of Manchester. The cotton mills provided a need for warehouses to store their products which led to specially designed buildings being built nearer the centre of the city. By the mid-19th century, ‘Manchester had become the largest textile centre in the world’ which increased the demand for warehousing larger than ever before. This led to the development of warehouses along Princess Street, Whitworth Street and Oxford Road.

Character and Appearance

The character and appearance of the conservation area appears generally consistent in respect to the street pattern and sense of enclosure formed by the dense pattern of former warehouses. The grain of the street pattern is largely defined by Whitworth Street and Princess Street that form the principal east-west and north-south routes respectively. Sackville Street forms a further important north-south route. A series of secondary grids form a key part of the street hierarchy and incorporate narrow service lanes that provided access to the warehouses. The access arrangements, often based on an internal loading bay forms an important part of the circulation system, particularly in the area south of Whitworth Street.

The Rochdale Canal crosses through the conservation area on a broadly east- west alignment that is broadly parallel to Whitworth Street, however between Oxford Road and Princess Street the canal is enclosed to such a degree as to make little impact on the appearance of the conservation area. The Whitworth Street and Princess Street area experienced a rapidly development of warehouses during the mid to late 19th century.

The warehouses were typically of a grand scale with the distinctive architecture expressing the wealth of the owners. The conservation area reflects the historic importance of the textile industry in Manchester and the area became the focus for packing and shipping warehouses, combining offices, making-up, inspection and packing facilities, showrooms and rooms to entertain clients.

The earliest mills in Manchester were in Ancoats but by the mid-19th century the need had developed for warehouses to store products in specially developed buildings. To meet these needs, the Whitworth Street area was developed with commercial warehouses built by manufacturers, wholesalers, independent merchants and packing companies. As demand grew, with Manchester becoming the largest textile centre in the world, the area developed and buildings became increasingly large and distinctive in style.

The majority of the blocks formed by the street pattern are occupied by a single orthogonal building. Front elevations tend to maintain a very clear formal relationship with the street frontage with secondary elevations to the side and rear. This pattern is particularly pronounced with the later, Edwardian warehouses, but is less discernible amongst the earlier building. The sense of enclosure throughout most of the conservation area is particularly high due to the height of the warehouses and narrow width of the grid like street pattern.

Most of the buildings in the conservation area originated as warehouses, which have subsequently been converted into business or residential uses. The quality of architecture is high and there are very few buildings within the conservation area that make an adverse contribution to its character and appearance. The architectural language is generally classical, rather than Venetian Gothic as in other parts of the city centre. However, the style and degree of decoration varies considerably from the mid to late Victorian buildings to the later more flamboyant Edwardian additions. Changes in the use of elevational materials contribute to the distinctiveness of the different phases of warehouse construction.

The longer east-west routes, including Whitworth Street, Granby Row and Fairfield Street provide long vistas, the view west along Granby Row emphasising the landmark qualities of the tower of the Palace Hotel. North-south views tend to be restricted by the more informal alignment of key streets. The height and mass of key buildings, such as the Palace Hotel and Institute of Science and Technology, create important landmarks that can be appreciated from outside of the conservation area.

The topography is relatively consistent, with subtle changes, such as that associated with the River Medlock on Oxford Road, providing expansive views to the prominent rear elevations of the sequence of warehouses that enclose the southern side of Whitworth Street.

The overwhelming density of the conservation area is a function of the narrow streets, complex street pattern, massing of the buildings and limited open space. Sackville Gardens and Vimto Park are the only two landscaped spaces within the conservation area.

Bainbridge House occupies the most diverse part of the conservation area, the character and appearance of which was weakened by the clearance that took place during the mid C20th.

Contribution made by Bainbridge House

Bainbridge House is arranged around a narrow courtyard/light well in the position of the former Britain Street. It is generally three storeys but varies in height with both flat and pitched roof forms and dates from the mid-20th century. It is of brick construction, and the elevations to Granby Row and Echo Street have bands of horizontal windows within concrete surrounds. Its age and style mean that it deviates from the key characteristics of the conservation area. It does not yield heritage value and does not contribute to the character, appearance or significance of the conservation area.

Appraisal

The proposed external alterations are confined to the ground floor of the building. The altered Granby Row and London Road elevations will have limited visual impact on the conservation area due to the position of the building at the eastern extent of the designated area. The building has already been altered at ground floor and the future proposed signage banding will create a uniformity to these elevations. The changes are proposed to a building that makes no contribution to the character and appearance of the designated area and within a part of the

conservation area that has experienced change and is of lesser sensitivity. The character and appearance of the conservation area would be preserved.

Manchester City Council (MCC), in determining the submitted planning application, has a statutory duty under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to 'pay special attention' to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area. Case law has determined that these are matters to be given 'considerable importance and weight' in the planning process.

For the reasons set out above it is concluded that the requirement of section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 can be satisfied if MCC grants planning permission. **The Proposed Development aligns with PfE Policy JP-P2, CS Policy EN3 and paragraphs 210, 212, and 220 207 of the NPPF.**

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The proposed development relates to the change of use of the ground floor of Bainbridge House to form a marketing suite relating to the nearby IQ Student Accommodation scheme at Echo Street. In addition to internal changes, the proposed development will include limited external alterations, comprising relocation of the main entrance. A future advertisement consent application will be submitted for hoarding and signage on the ground floor of the site. Once the applicant has finalised the design for the advertisement boards, a separate application will be submitted to Manchester City Council. Please note the future advertisement consent application and associated external alterations are not included in this application. The proposed development will bring a vacant unit back into use and provide a safe space for potential residents to select accommodation.

The Proposed Development complies with all relevant national, regional and local planning policies and will not result in an adverse impact on the environment. As such, planning permission should be granted without delay.

I trust that you have all the information to enable you to register the application and approve the proposed development. Should you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



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