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Mansfield Chambers, 17-23 St Ann's Square, Manchester, M2 7PW

Heritage Impact Assessment

For MPA (Construction Consultants) Limited

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Donald Insall Associates was commissioned by MPA (Construction Consultants) Limited in October 2023 to assist in the preparation of proposals for high-end retail use within the ground floor and basement of Mansfield Chambers, 17-23 St Ann's Square, Manchester, M2 7PW. The investigation comprised historical research, using both primary and secondary material, and a site inspection to establish the significance of the building which informed now consented works as follows:

139943/FO/2024:	Installation of a new shopfront and permission for the floorspace to operate between the hours of 9am-6pm Monday to Saturday, and 11am-5:30pm on Sundays. Approved: Tue 30 Jul 2024
139944/LO/2024:	Listed Building Consent for the internal refurbishment, along with the installation of a new shopfront. Approved: Tue 30 Jul 2024

This Addendum report should be read in conjunction with the detailed Heritage Impact Assessment prepared in support of the above applications which provides an illustrated history of the site and building and site survey findings. The significance of the building laid out in that report is repeated here within Section 2 whilst the specific constraints for this site are outlined below. Section 3 provides a justification of the signage proposals subject of this application according to the relevant legislation, planning policy and guidance.

1.2 The Building, its Legal Status and Policy Context

Mansfield Chambers is a Grade II-listed building located in the St Ann's Square Conservation Area and in the setting of further listed buildings **[Plate 1.1]**:

Alterations to a listed building generally require listed building consent; signage proposals required advertisement consent. The statutory list description of the listed building is included in Appendix I. Extracts from the relevant legislation and planning policy documents are in Appendix II and summarised below:

1.2.1 The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 is the legislative basis for decision-making on applications that relate to the historic environment. Section 16 of the Act imposes a statutory duty upon local planning authorities with the aim to protect the special interest of a listed building.

1.2.2 The Local Plan

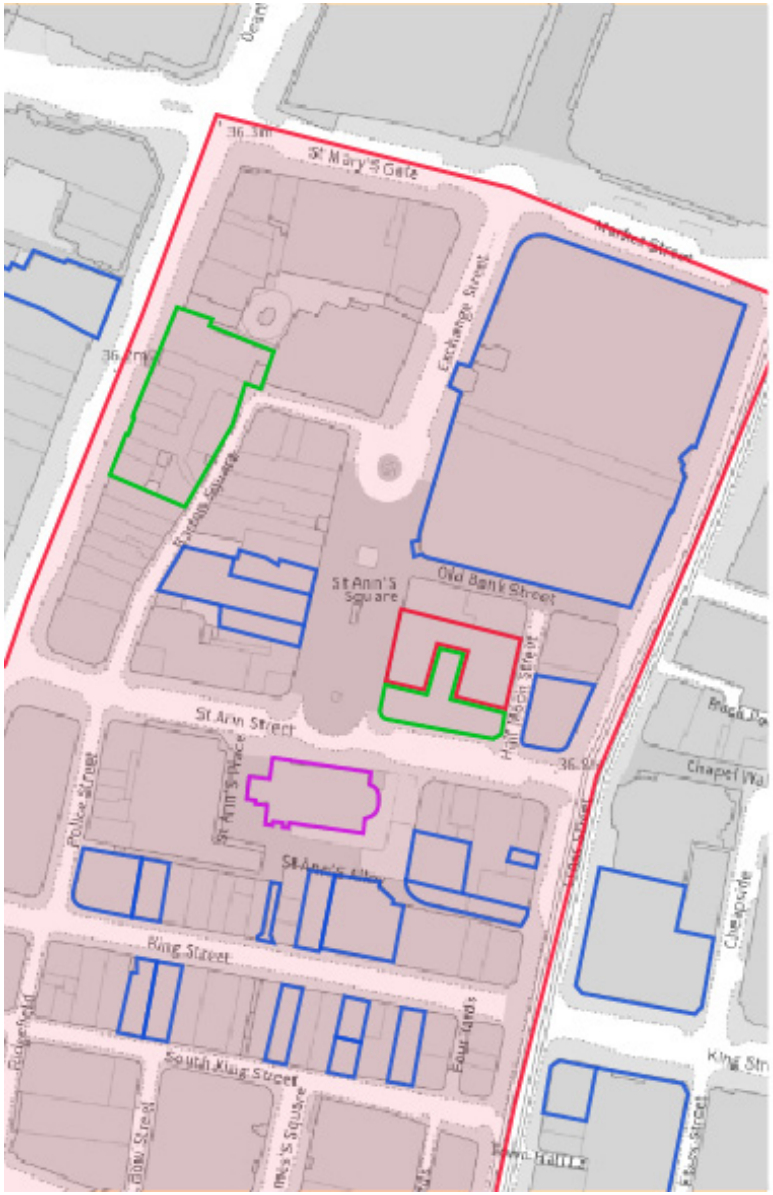
Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The development plan applicable to the building comprises the Manchester Core Strategy 2012-2027 (2012) and saved policies in the Unitary Development Plan (UDP - 1995) which require that proposed works preserve or enhance the historic environment, avoiding adverse impact on the special interest of listed buildings (UDP Policy 19).

1.2.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (2024)

The courts have held that following the approach set out in the policies on the historic environment in the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) will effectively result in a decision-maker complying with its statutory duties. The Framework forms a material consideration for the purposes of section 38(6). At the heart of the Framework is *'a presumption in favour of sustainable development'* and there are also specific policies relating to the historic environment.

The Framework requires that proposals for change give 'great weight' to the conservation of heritage assets (paragraph 212), that harm to the significance of heritage assets requires 'clear and convincing justification' (213), and that such harm is outweighed by public benefits. Harm is to be categorised as substantial (214) or less than substantial (215).

The Framework requires local planning authorities to look for positive opportunities for new development within conservation areas and within the setting of heritage assets. Proposals that preserve positive elements or enhance/ better reveal their significance, are required to be treated favourably (219).



Key:

- St Ann's Square Conservation Area
- Grade I Listed Building
- Grade II* Listed Building
- Grade II Listed Building

1.1 *HA map-01*

2.0 Assessment of Significance

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this section is to provide an assessment of significance of Mansfield Chambers (basement and ground floors only internally) so that the proposals for change are fully informed as to its significance and that the effect of the proposals on that significance can be evaluated.

This assessment responds to the requirement of the National Planning Policy Framework to 'recognise that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and conserve them in a manner appropriate to their significance'. The NPPF defines significance as;

> *'The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological (potential to yield evidence about the past), architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting'.*

2.2 Assessment of Significance

2.2.1 Summary

Mansfield Chambers originally dates to the 1860s, constructed as a purpose-built commercial building comprised of shops and 'warehouses' (or rather store rooms) at ground floor, with corresponding basement space below, and offices above. There is a basement and three principal floors, the first and second floors (not part of this report) remaining in their original office use today (although recently vacant), accessed via the independent entrances in the northeast and southwest corners.

Externally, Mansfield Chambers was constructed running on a north-south alignment through the centre section of the block bound by St Ann's Square to the south (front), St Ann Street to the east, Half Moon Street at the north (rear) and Old Bank Street to its west. This was an eminent and prominent position, as evidenced by the presence of its immediate neighbour, the private Benjamin Heywood's Bank (Grade II*). There was, however, a clear hierarchy of status and use across the lower floors, with the shops and the principal entrance to the offices (cut out of 17 St Ann's Square) fronting onto the prestigious square, whilst the rear faced onto Half Moon Street, a secondary street similarly enclosed by the rears of the buildings to Cross Street. There is no evidence to indicate that this part of the building ever had any other, more prestigious uses, prior to its warehouse use, recorded in 1886 (11 years after construction). The rear retained this store use until subsequently, by the Edwardian period in conjunction with some of the shops to the front (a wholesale provisioner and wine merchant), finally becoming back-of-house space for WH Smith in the 1960s or early 1970s.

Internally, the ground and basement floors appear to have initially formed six separate units (each with an area of lightwell to the interior), the first available records showing the four to St Ann's Square in retail and hospitality use and the two to Half Moon Street as stores. The six units were amalgamated over a series of phased changes, until eventually operated as a single wholesale unit (subsequently WH Smith), although 23 St Ann's Square (the last to be absorbed) was subsequently re-separated (and remains so today). Plans indicate repeated changes in vertical and horizontal circulation, partitioning and fit out according to the changing relationship between the units and the occupants and types of use. Consequently, little survives of the original internal and dividing walls at ground floor (although there is slight greater survival in the south of the basement), even where these have been rebuilt, with almost no of the historic fit out at ground floor. However, the basic original separation of the four front units to St Ann's Square remains perceptible, evidenced in the survival of remnants of walls or their rebuilding (with associated coffering to the ceilings), and in the still extant division of the St Ann's Square frontage into four distinct shopfronts. This is also legible at basement level, although in the south only, the historic footprint lost entirely in the rear basement and almost completely in no. 17.

Internally, these floors as they survive today are formed of the separate 23 St Ann's Square and the large amalgamated unit, the latter containing two enclosed entrances running to the basement and upper floors, cut out of its southwest (17 St Ann's Square) and northeast (in what was originally one of the two Half Moon Street units). Both no. 23 and the single amalgamated space retain their retail use, although currently vacant.

2.2.2 Significance – Mansfield Chambers

The significance of Mansfield Chambers centres on the architectural interest of its neo-classical principal facade (although heavily altered), the contribution that this makes to the street scene and character of St Ann's Square and its listed buildings – particularly the Church of St Ann (Grade I) – and its historic interest as a representation of the Victorian commercial phase of the multi-faceted evolution of the St Ann's area. The rear elevation has some limited interest at ground floor, mainly in its original ashlar doorways in the east and

its surviving swinging crane in the west. The modern rebuilding, however, although respecting the original bay division and retaining the structural supports, is heavily detracting, diluting the historic character of the rear and obscuring its historic warehouse function.

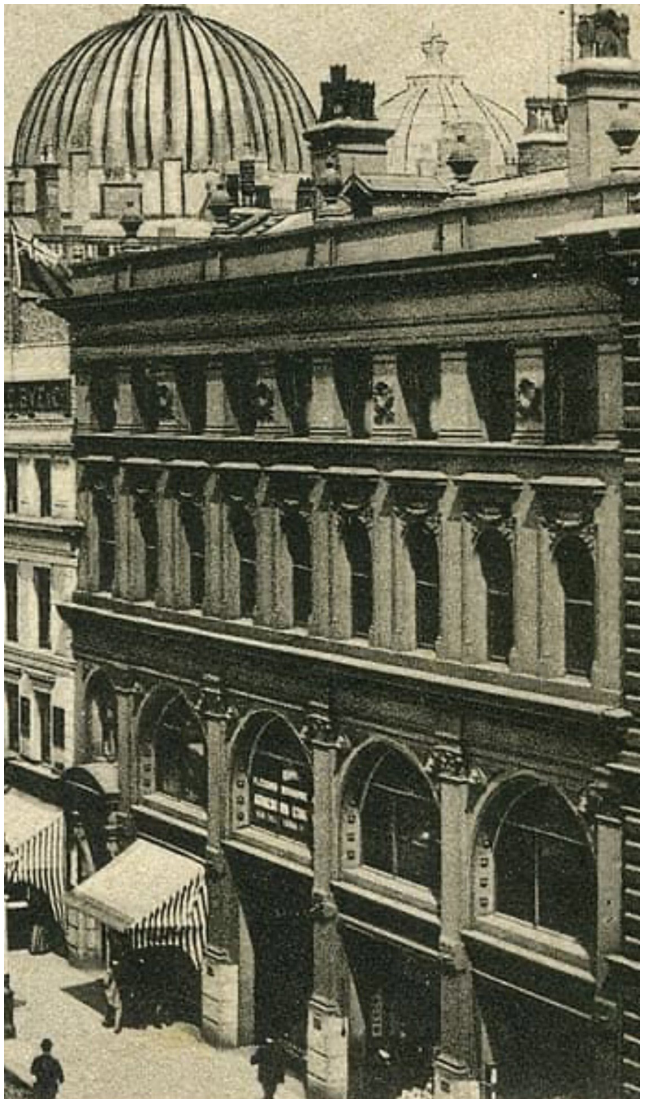
Internally, however, the building is heavily altered, having lost almost all of its historic fittings and fit out and potentially a substantial amount of its internal historic fabric. At ground and basement floors much of its original plan form has been lost, particularly in the west and north. Consequently, the interior collectively has only a low historic and architectural interest. At ground and basement floors it is the areas of retained structural fabric that provide fragmented evidence of the building's original cellular layout, this surviving primarily at basement level, a secondary, more utilitarian service space throughout the life of the building. Here, it is the southern units that have the most intact plan form and structural fabric (although with evidence of alteration), their retained dividing walls and original and early interconnecting openings the source their greatest interest. Although this area seemingly retained a single function from before 1886 until around the 1960s there is very little fabric surviving to evidence its wine store use, beyond two remnant wine bins (now infilled) and discolouration left by former shelving. Having lost this internal dividing fabric and the extent of modern fitout the basement rear and unit 17 are of much lower significance, the presence of probably non-original grid column to the rear further distorting any evidence of the original plan form and character.

There is, therefore, comparatively little evidential or historical associative interest in those basement areas viewed (i.e. excluding no. 23), with the limited interest focused principally in the south.

At ground floor the architectural and historic interest is derived principally from the two surviving moulded and bracketed lightwell walls, the remnants of dividing wall running between the four units and the original cellular plan form that these memorialise. Even in no. 23, which has been restored as a separate unit, the loss of the staircase enclosure, relocation of the stairs, replacement of the lightwell screen and known creation of modern openings to its west wall compromises its interest. Beyond the two moulded and bracketed lightwell enclosures there is no surviving historic fit out or decoration to this floor and no features such as fireplaces survive, with the original circulation between the shopfloors and their basement stores lost, the staircase to no. 17 a modern replacement and only one staircase (potentially altered) surviving in the rear.

The shopfronts in place prior to the consented works commencing were entirely modern replacements; a tripartite arrangement with an introduced fanlight and framed by the pilasters which rise from the moulded ashlar plinth to the first-floor moulded cornice. Historic photographs show Victorian shopfronts with recessed doorways, curved windows, traditional stallrisers and awnings, and canted external fascia boards. These still survived in no. 23 in the 1950s and no.17 in the 1970s, by which latter time no. 21 had gained a modern shopfront with a taller fascia, no. 17 and no. 17 a contrasting full shopfront that rose above the cornice **[Plates 1-4]**. The replacement shopfronts are constructed in timber with a metal core and comprise a tripartite arrangement to each opening, with a single fanlight spanning across.

1. *Principal frontage, 1952 (Manchester History Revisited)*



2. *Principal frontage, c.1904 (Manchester History Revisited)*

3. *Principal frontage, undated (Manchester History Revisited)*

4. *Principal frontage, 1973 (Manchester Local Image Collection)*

2.2.3 Significance - St Ann's Square Conservation Area

The conservation area draws historic value from illustration it provides of the evolution of Manchester beyond its medieval core, illustrating the evolution of a planned Georgian commercial and domestic suburb into a commercial, financial, and retail powerhouse over the course of the later 18th and 19th centuries, by the mid-19th century now driven by purpose-built large-footprint buildings such as Mansfield Chambers. This is particularly evident through the continuing public use of its buildings and the substantial evolution of purpose-built commercial and retail premises with an impressive range of 19th-century revival styles that, whilst highly varied in their visual execution, create a well-articulated frontage.

As a result of the linear course of St Ann's Square and the building's distinction from its neighbours, accentuated by its ornamental flamboyance and (modern) decorative scheme, Mansfield Chambers remains one of the most prominent examples of the area's Victorian re-invention. This importance is further enhanced by its purpose construction for a multi-faceted office, retail and storage use, capturing the very hybrid character of mid-19th-century St Ann's Square as its transformation from a Georgian domestic enclave into a commercial heartland was cemented in the Victorian period. Shopfronts within the area are generally modern with signage (of varying merit) positioned externally at fascia or fanlight level.

3.0 Impact Assessment

3.1 Description of the Proposals and their Impact on the Listed Building

It is proposed to install two back-light signs within the fanlights above each of the entrance doors (to the outer two bays). The positioning would be akin to the location of the historic fascia signs, fixed to the glazing to ensure visibility given the recess of the shopfronts themselves in the building line, with the backdrop of the internal bulkhead behind. This is particularly critical given the prominence of external signage with St Ann's Square – of varying quality but including fascia signs, inserted signage at fanlight level and signage fixed to external stonework above shopfronts. It is also proposed to replace four plaque signs set within recesses in the stone base of the intervening pilasters with brushed stainless steel plaques – fixed in place by reusing the existing concealed fixings behind.

The proposed signage has been designed to respond to the architectural character and existing features of the listed building. The resultant impact is a high quality signage strategy which minimises clutter and allows the architectural interest of the listed building's neo-classical principal façade to dominate whilst also accommodating the branding required for the high-retail use.

3.2 Justification and Conclusion

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The development plan applicable to the building comprises **The Core Strategy (2012)** and saved policies from the **Unitary Development Plan (1995)**. **Policy EN3 Heritage in the Core Strategy** establishes a presumption in favour of 'development that complements and takes advantage of the distinct historic and heritage features of its districts and neighbourhoods, including those of the city centre' and that 'proposals which enable the re-use of heritage assets will be encouraged where they are considered consistent with the significance of the heritage asset'. Similarly, **Policy 19 Listed Buildings of the UDP** indicates the 'council will have regard to the desirability of securing the retention, restoration, maintenance and continued use of such buildings'...provided 'in its opinion, there would be an adverse effect on its architectural historic character'.

The proposed signage would cause no harm to the appearance of the listed building, sensitively accommodated within the consented shopfrontage and not detracting from the architectural quality of the principle façade. Furthermore, the signage strategy would maintain the contribution of the listed building to the conservation area and would have no impact on visual amenity. The signage strategy is an integral part of the wider scheme to bring forward a reuse of the ground and basement floors in a manner akin to their historic use, albeit to serve the needs of 21st century retail, without causing harm to the significance of the listed building or its architectural historic character. Perhaps more critically however, given the well-known challenges facing the high street, is the role that the proposed retail offer would play in maintaining and enhancing the distinctiveness of St Ann's Square as a high-end retail area, both historically and as existing - brand identity and legibility in a wider commercial area has a critical role to play in achieving this.

The thrust of the Core Strategy aligns with the **National Planning Policy Framework,** which seeks to ensure the heritage assets are conserved in a manner accordingly to their significance. Considered in isolation and as part of the wider scheme of works previously consented, the proposed signage would sustain and enhance the significance of both the listed building and the conservation area through the high-end retail offer they would enable, which in turn will positively contribute to the economic vitality and local character and distinctness of this part of the city (Para 210). As such they would be wholly beneficial and would cause no harm to the significance of Mansfield Chambers as a Grade II listed building or the St Ann's Conservation Area. Likewise, the statutory duties of the **Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990** to preserve the special interest of the listed building would be met.

It is therefore the conclusion of this report that the proposals would meet the statutory duties of the Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the policy requirements of the Local Plan and the tests for sustainable development outlined in the NPPF insofar as they relate to the historic environment.

Appendix I - Statutory List Description

Mansfield Chambers, 17-23 St Ann's Square
Grade II listed building
List Entry Number: 1247654
Date first listed: 03-Oct-1974
Listing NGR: SJ8381498389

Shop with offices over. Probably later C19; altered. Stucco on brick, with dressings of stone and fibre-glass imitating stone (roof concealed). U-plan formed by main range parallel to street with back extension, and rear wing attached to this parallel to Half Moon Street. Italianate style. Four storeys and 5 bays (the first narrower and slightly set back); 4-bay giant arcade to ground and 1st floors (1st floor treated as mezzanine), with pilasters (now partly or wholly of fibre-glass), frieze, and moulded cornice; low 3rd floor with sill-band and frieze; modillioned cornice and pilastered parapet with urns. The arcade has C20 shop fronts at ground floor and semi-circular windows above, and the narrow bay to the left of this has a doorway with C20 doors, rectangular overlight, frieze lettered "MANSFIELD CHAMBERS", and segmental pediment on long fluted consoles, and above this a round-headed 2-light window with circular tracery; the 2nd floor has round-headed sashes in moulded architraves with swags and cornices; 3rd floor has short sashed windows. Three chimneys visible above parapet. Interior not inspected.

Appendix II - Planning Policy and Guidance

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

The Act is legislative basis for decision making on applications that relate to the historic environment.

Section 16 of the Act impose a statutory duty upon local planning authorities to consider the impact of proposals upon listed buildings and conservation areas and states:

[...] in considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works the local planning authority or the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

National Planning Policy Framework

Any proposals for consent relating to heritage assets are subject to the policies of the NPPF (December 2024). This sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. With regard to 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment', the framework requires proposals relating to heritage assets to be justified and an explanation of their effect on the heritage asset's significance provided.

Paragraph 7 of the Framework states that the purpose of the planning system is to 'contribute to the achievement of sustainable development' and that, at a very high level, 'the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'.

At paragraph 8, the document expands on this as follows:

Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives:

a) an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;

b) a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and

c) an environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

and notes at paragraph 10:

10. So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 11).

With regard to the significance of a heritage asset, the framework contains the following policies:

208. Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

In determining applications local planning authorities are required to take account of significance, viability, sustainability and local character and distinctiveness. Paragraph 210 of the NPPF identifies the following criteria in relation to this:

a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

With regard to potential 'harm' to the significance designated heritage asset, in paragraph 212 the framework states the following:

> *... great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.*

Paragraph 211 relates to proposals to remove or alter a historic plaque, statue, memorial or monument:

211. *In considering any applications to remove or alter a historic statue, plaque, memorial or monument (whether listed or not), local planning authorities should have regard to the importance of their retention in situ and, where appropriate, of explaining their historic and social context rather than removal.*

The Framework goes on to state at paragraph 213 that:

> *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:*
>
> *a) grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional;*
> *b) 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.*

Where a proposed development will lead to 'substantial harm' to or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset paragraph 214 of the NPPF states that:

> *...local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:*
>
> *a) the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and*
> *b) no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and*
> *c) conservation by grant-funding or some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and*
> *d) the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.*

With regard to 'less than substantial harm' to the significance of a designated heritage asset, paragraph 215 of the NPPF states the following;

> *Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.*

Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester (1995)

The Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester (the UDP) was adopted by the Council in 1995 as the statutory document that set out guidelines for all development in Manchester and provided a framework from which to base decisions about planning applications. Although the UDP has been superseded the following policies were retained and remain extant.

19. Listed Buildings

DC19.1 In determining applications for listed building consent or planning applications for development involving or having an impact on buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest, the Council will have regard to the desirability of securing the retention, restoration, maintenance and continued use of such buildings and to protecting their general setting. In giving effect to this policy, the Council will:

> b. not permit a change of use of a listed building, where it would have a detrimental effect on the character or appearance of the building;
> c. not permit any external or internal alteration or addition to a Listed building where, in its opinion, there would be an adverse effect on its architectural or historic character;
> d. seek to preserve and enhance the settings of listed buildings by appropriate control over the design of new development in their vicinity, control over the use of adjacent land, and where appropriate, by the preservation of trees and landscape features;

f. not permit alterations to a listed building which would prevent the future use of any part of the building, in particular upper floors or basements, or where poor maintenance is likely to result.

Manchester Local Plan. Core Strategy Development Plan Document (2012)

Manchester Local Plan was adopted by Manchester City Council in 2012, though it retains several of the policies set out in the 1995 UDP. The following policies are of relevance.

Policy EN 3: Heritage

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. Proposals which enable the re-use of heritage assets will be encouraged where they are considered consistent with the significance of the heritage asset.

Policy CC 9: Design and Heritage

Design of new buildings will need to be of the highest standard in terms of appearance and function. The standards and guidance explained in other LDF policies should be the basis for the approach to design, with particular attention to be given to the City Centre context and character.

Development in Manchester City Centre should preserve or enhance the heritage assets that have been identified, including listed buildings, conservation areas and scheduled ancient monuments.

The Council will support high density and mixed use development in the City Centre, but developers must recognise the specific design challenges that must be overcome to ensure complementarity of function and form. New development must support the range of uses the Council expects in the City Centre and contribute to a coherent and integrated physical environment.

Other Relevant Policy Documents

National Planning Policy Guidance (2019)

Historic England: Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning (December 2017)

Historic England: Conservation Principles and Assessment (2008)

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