HERITAGE STATEMENT 15.07.2025

BAREL ARCHITECTURE

PROJECT
FRONT ELEVATION CHANGES
AND NEW SIGN DESIGN

AT
453 WILMSLOW ROAD
M20 4AN, MANCHESTER

BAREL

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INTRODUCTION



This Heritage Statement has been prepared in support of the full planning and advertisement consent applications for the refurbishment of 453 Wilmslow Road, a former bank located within the Withington Conservation Area. The proposal includes external alterations to the front elevation, installation of new signage, and minor servicing adjustments to accommodate the building's new use as a cafe offering traditional food and drinks.

This document assesses the heritage significance of the site, evaluates the potential impact of the proposed works, and outlines how the scheme responds sensitively to its conservation context.

CONTEXT AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

LOCATION AND SETTING

Wilmslow Road forms the commercial spine of Withington and is a key axis within the designated Conservation Area. The character of the area is defined by early 20th-century commercial buildings, typically built in red brick with traditional shopfronts, modest detailing, and consistent scale. 453 Wilmslow Road occupies a prominent position within this historic setting.

EXISTING BUILDING DESCRIPTION

The building is a two-storey former bank with a fully glazed ground floor frontage and solid brickwork above. A recessed arch frames the entrance area, giving the building a formal and symmetrical appearance. Though not statutorily listed, the property contributes positively to the townscape and is considered a non-designated heritage asset.

ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

Architectural Significance

The building has several features of local value:

- Materiality and Form: Brick construction, arched recess, large glazed frontage, and traditionally scaled upper floor.
- Townscape Role: Its proportions and detailing align with the character of surrounding buildings.

Social and Historic Significance

As a long-standing bank, the building served the community for decades. Its reuse as a cafe retains its commercial function and supports active street use, which is encouraged by heritage and planning policy.

Contribution to the Local Character

The building's form and scale reinforce the urban rhythm of the street. The proposed changes are designed to enhance this contribution while modernising the frontage in a respectful and reversible manner.

IMPACT OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Proposed Works

- Closure of the upper windows to create a continuous rendered surface within the arched opening
- Installation of a recessed aluminium and glass shopfront
- Mounting of rust-effect aluminium lettering with concealed amber LED lighting
- Addition of an internally illuminated silhouette figure sign above the lettering
- Rear kitchen flue with odour and smoke control

Potential Impacts

Adverse Effects:

Minor loss of transparency at the upper level, though carefully treated with sympathetic materials.

Positive Aspects:

- Enhanced symmetry and legibility of the building's frontage
- Subtle and well-integrated signage respecting conservation policies
- Continued use of the building, avoiding vacancy or neglect

MITIGATION AND DESIGN STRATEGY

- **Material Selection:** All materials chosen to complement the character of the area, including light-toned render and muted rust-tone signage.
- **Reversibility:** All works are reversible and will not damage the original structure.
- **Lighting Strategy:** Soft amber and warm white LED systems are used with low luminance, avoiding light pollution.
- **Respect for Scale:** Signage and glazing proportions maintain the architectural rhythm of the building and street.

JUSTIFICATION AND CONCLUSION



The proposal offers a respectful and sustainable reuse of a non-designated heritage asset in Withington Conservation Area. Both the materials and proportions match the surrounding buildings. The use of light-coloured render and rust-effect letters is consistent with nearby shops, many of which use similar tones and styles.

The building is located in a highly visible spot on Wilmslow Road and will remain one of the most recognisable buildings on the street. The design enhances the front elevation without harming the existing character and adds to the overall harmony of the conservation area. The changes are modest, reversible, and improve the long-term use of the property.

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