



9th May 2025

55 Spring Gardens, Heritage Statement – Heritage Architecture Ltd.

This Heritage Statement has been prepared by Heritage Architecture Ltd on behalf of Melcotton Ltd. to accompany the Planning application for the proposed redevelopment to 55 Spring Gardens, Manchester (**Figure 1**). The building was constructed c.1986-1987, replacing an earlier office building known as the Danlee Buildings. The building is not statutorily listed but is within the setting of various Listed Buildings and is within the Upper King Street Conservation Area (**Figure 2**).

The applicant (Melcotton Ltd) is seeking Planning Permission to essentially re-glaze the existing office building. The work is required due to the failure of the existing curtain walling, which has resulted in water ingress, the applicant has therefore decided to remove and install new curtain walling.

The purpose of the following Heritage Statement will thus be on the potential visual impact the proposed external works to the building could have on the settings of nearby heritage assets and on the character and appearance of the designed conservation area. Due to the enclosed nature of the streetscapes around the site, the designated heritage assets scoped in for assessment are limited to those identified in **Figure 2, below**.



Figure 1 (left): 55 Spring Gardens, principal elevation and entrance. **Figure 2 (right):** Heritage asset map. Site indicated by red line boundary, Listed Buildings scoped in for assessment numbered and extent of the Upper King Street Conservation Area is indicated in green.

Planning Policy and Guidance

The key planning policy documents are, respectively, the: Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (NPPF), and Manchester City Council's Core Strategy (2012).

This Statement has been prepared in the context of relevant national and local heritage planning policy. With regards to the 1990 Act, **Section 66** is relevant to the current scheme as it requires the Local Planning Authority to “*have special regard to the desirability of preserving [a listed building] or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses*” when considering whether to grant planning permission.

Section 72 is also of relevance as it requires *“special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area”*.

The policies in the NPPF constitute the Government’s view of what sustainable development means in practice. Of particular relevance is **paragraph 207 (NPPF, 2024)**, which states that *“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 following Heritage Statement is written in this context.

This Heritage Statement accords with the guidance set out in Historic England’s Advice Note 12: Statements of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance in heritage Assets (October 2019). The recent guidance calls for a staged approach, which provides relevant and *proportionate* information sufficient to inform decision-making by the Council.

Brief historical development of the Site and surrounding context

The area around the Site has traditionally been home to Manchester’s financial district. Up until the 17th century, the area around the Site had comprised open fields to the south of the medieval town of Manchester (based around the area where the Cathedral is today). Natural springs in the area provided a water supply to the town and gave rise to the names of Fountain Street and Spring Gardens.

By the 18th century, the settlement had begun to develop into a town, with planned streets and buildings of commerce. King Street was named in 1735 in support of the exiled Stuart King and was developed as a prestigious residential area. The affluent upper classes patronised various cultural institutions, including the first Theatre Royal which was established to the north of the site by 1777 and a concert hall, to the opposite side of York Street. These formed the centre of Manchester’s musical and theatrical life until the mid-19th century. Concert Lane, which forms the western boundary of the site, was named as such in honour of this era.

The transition from residential to commercial use started with the construction of the first Town Hall for the Police Commissioners in 1825 which was located at the bottom of King Street on the corner with Cross Street. Alongside this, in 1829 the Bank of Manchester was established on the corner of Brown Street and Market Street giving rise to the concentration of financial institutions and offices in the area.

In 1845 the Bank of England opened a branch at No. 82 King Street soon to be followed by other large, grand buildings along the street and up to Spring Gardens and Fountain Street; many of which form the immediate setting of the present-day Site at 49 Spring Gardens. Mosley Street, which was another elegant 18th century residential street, marked the boundary between the financial institutions to the west and the palazzo styled warehouses to the east.

Throughout the mid-to-late 19th century and into the early-20th century, residential buildings in the area were steadily demolished to make space for the prestigious office buildings of banks and insurance companies. The most influential of which is the Former Midland Bank, established to the west of Spring Gardens to the design of Sir Edwin Lutyens in 1929.

Throughout the late-20th and early 21st century, Spring Gardens has remained a vibrant, financial epicentre for the city. This is reflected in the rich variety of architectural styles within the area, including a number of contemporary buildings of considerable height and scale, including York House (11 storeys), 55 Spring Gardens (9 storeys) and 11 York Street.

Table 1: Map progression



Figure 3: 1908 OS Map: By the early 20th century, the area around the Site is shown to be predominately built up and characterised by bank buildings. The site itself is shown to retain two small buildings on an otherwise cleared plot. Spring Gardens is shown extended to the south to join Charlotte Street, creating a distinct island site which is shown to have two bank buildings on it. This group of buildings terminates the eastern end of the commercially focused King Street.



Figure 4: 1948 OS Map: By the mid-20th century, the site is now shown to be occupied by the 'Danlee Buildings', established c.1916 (outlined in red). The character of the surrounding area is shown to have witnessed a fair degree of change, with the construction of York House (1910-1911) to the north east and the Ship Canal House (1927) to the west. Both the Danlee Building and the Ship Canal House were designed by notable Edwardian architect, H. Fairhurst.



Figure 5: Historic Image c.1960s: The image illustrates the Spring Gardens in the mid-20th C, which was defined by the Danlee Buildings (now demolished) – outlined in red.

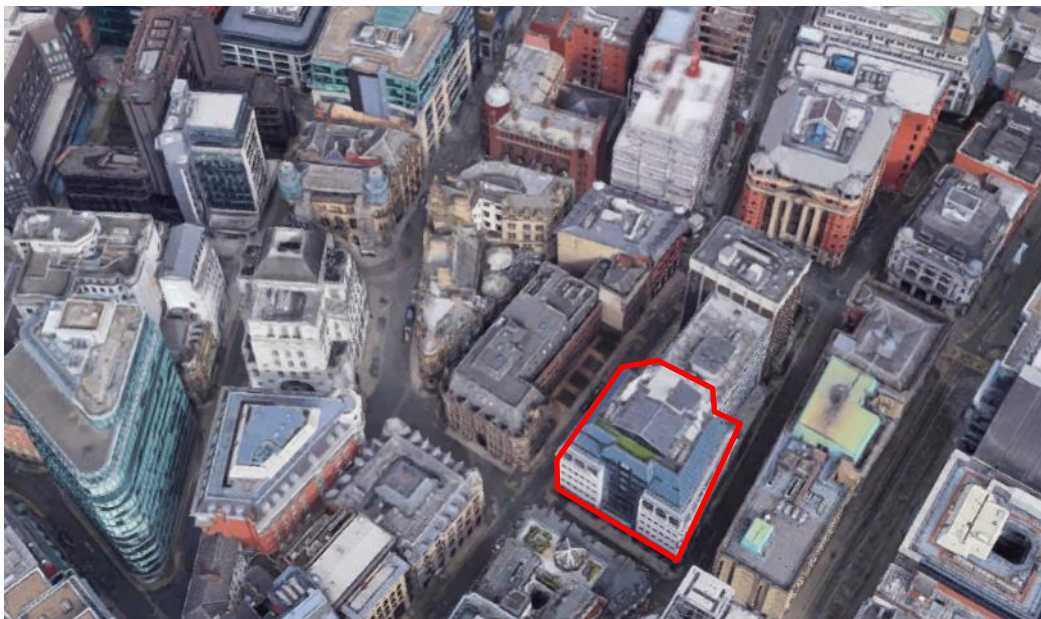


Figure 6: 2025 Aerial view of Site: Former Danlee buildings were demolished in the mid-1980s and replaced with the current building at 55 Fountain Street. Despite the loss of buildings such as the Danlee Buildings (demolished) the overarching character of the area as a financial district has been largely maintained with the retention of key buildings such as the Former Midland Bank to the west of the Site and the collection of bank buildings to the north west of Concert Lane. **Source:** Google Maps.

Listed Buildings – Contribution of setting to significance

The heritage assets which have the potential to be impacted by proposed redevelopment of the Site have been identified in **Figure 2** (above). The contribution of setting to the significance of these heritage assets will be explored in **Table 2**, below.

The scope of potential impact upon heritage assets can involve impacts upon their setting as well as any physical impact. The importance of ‘setting’ lies in what it contributes to the significance of the heritage asset or to the ability to appreciate that significance. Therefore, it is the contribution of setting to the significance of the heritage asset which should be established at this stage in the process. For these purposes, the contribution of setting to the significance of any given heritage asset is considered to be either high, medium, low, negligible or neutral (refer to ICOMOS 2011 guide to Heritage Impact Assessments for complete definitions).

Table 2: Heritage Assets - contribution of setting to significance				
Number given on Figure 2	Grade	Summary of Architectural and Historic Interest	Contribution of setting to significance	Relationship to existing Site
1	Grade II	60 and 62, Spring Gardens: Formerly known as: Nos.60 AND 62 Gartside's SPRING GARDENS. Includes: No.58 FOUNTAIN STREET. Manufacturers' warehouse, subsequently insurance office. 1882, by Alfred Waterhouse, for Gartside & Co; altered. Sandstone ashlar, slate roof. Rectangular plan on corner site, with narrow chamfered corners. Renaissance style. Four storeys and attic, 7 bays plus the corners; rusticated ground floor with cornice, string-courses and sill-bands to the upper floors, modillioned main cornice, panelled parapet interrupted by pedimented attic dormers, and octagonal corner turret with domed caps and slender apex lanterns.	The heritage asset is situated within the immediate setting of 55 Spring Gardens. The building at 60-62 is of a renaissance style which is in subtle contrast to the gothic detailing of 49 Spring Gardens (discussed below). The heritage asset is best understood and appreciated from Spring Gardens where it meets Fountain Street, looking west; from which point, the building can be viewed in conjunction with the Grade II listed 49 Spring Gardens and the Grade II* listed Former Midland Bank. The immediate setting of the building is formed of a collection of statutorily listed buildings which make a positive contribution to the streetscape and conservation area as a whole. The buildings to the immediate east however, are much more contemporary and contrasting in age and materials. The overall contribution of the setting to significance of the heritage asset is thus considered to be medium beneficial .	The listed building is situated directly west of the proposed development site. The existing building at 55 Spring Gardens subsequently forms the immediate setting to the Grade II listed building and shares a strong visual relationship with the designed heritage asset. It will be clear, therefore, that proposals to redevelop / alter the Site will have to respect and respond to the adjacent heritage asset and minimise any potential for adverse impact.
2	Grade II	49, Spring Gardens: Commercial building, probably textiles warehouse; now offices. Sandstone ashlar, slate roof. Rectangular plan on end-of-block site, with curved corners, and loading bay to rear. Eclectic style, with some Gothic features. Three storeys with basement and attic, 5 unequal bays plus the	The part of the listed building which yields architectural and historic interest is the sandstone elevations fronting Spring Gardens, Concert Lane and Fountain Street. Together with the collection of sandstone buildings situated from 41-47 Spring Gardens and 60 Spring Gardens, the group value of these buildings can be fully appreciated within their historic setting. The later extension to the rear (50	The listed building is situated directly north-west of the proposed development site. The existing building at 55 Spring Gardens subsequently forms the immediate setting to the Grade II listed building and shares a strong visual relationship with the designed heritage asset.

		corners, symmetrical; with sill-bands and string-courses to all floors, Lombard frieze over 2nd floor, slender brackets to moulded cornice, and blind-arcaded parapet interrupted by gabled attic dormers.	Fountain Street) was constructed in the 1970s and is largely inconsistent the otherwise coherent, historic setting around the Spring Gardens / King Street area; which is characterised by former bank buildings. The retention of the historic layout of the streetscapes in line with the survival of key historic buildings of high quality within the immediate environs around the site make a positive contribution to the setting of 49 Spring Gardens. The overall contribution of the setting to significance of the heritage asset is considered to be medium .	It will be clear, therefore, that proposals to redevelop / alter the Site will have to respect and respond to the adjacent heritage asset and minimise any potential for adverse impact.
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Upper King Street Conservation Area

The Upper King Street Area has been designated as a Conservation Area due to the high architectural and historic interest of a number of the buildings within the area and clear grouping of buildings that were born out of a commercial growth of the city during the mid-18th century to the early 20th century. The historic street plan has produced an area of dense urban development with the characteristic continuous building line at the back of the pavement and total coverage of plots. The articulation of junctions and corners is often expressed by the architectural treatment of the buildings with either canted elevations displaying grand entrances or impressive rooflines. There is a rich variety of architectural styles within the area.

As is commonplace with city centre Conservation Areas, the architectural character and materiality is varied. This is primarily due to the continuous cycles of change and redevelopment which defines the commercial focused nature of town centres. Just east of King Street, around the Site, sandstone and Portland stone is most commonly used, with the surviving warehouses and bank buildings in the immediate area being of a dominant height and massing, establishing their sense of established importance within the townscape.

The upper part of King Street is a wider and more majestic continuation of the earlier portion to the west. Although almost all properties in the street have been re-developed at some time, the west retains the small-scale property boundaries typical of the Georgian period while the upper part to the east has changed its character completely.

Key landmark buildings which define the historic financial core include the Grade II* listed Former Midland Bank, the Former National Westminster Bank and the collection of Grade II listed former banks and insurance buildings situated at 41-47 Spring Gardens. The retention of historic street patterns is prevalent in this part of the city, with King Street; York Street and Fountain Street forming key historic thoroughfares allowing for kinetic views across the designated area. It should however be noted that the character of the area with regards to scale has been subject to considerable change since the late-20th century, with the development of much larger buildings including York House (11 storeys), **55 Spring Gardens (9 storeys – the site)** and 11 York Street (8 storeys).

Statement of Significance

The site comprises a mid-1980s building which yields negligible architectural interest and no historic interest in its own right. As evidenced by planning history, in which permission was granted for the *“Erection of a 9-storey office building with ground floor showrooms and basement car-parking, after demolition of existing”* (ref: 023005).

Historically, the stairwell of the building was enclosed by a semi-circular curtain walling system, which protruded beyond the façade (refer to page 8 of PRP, DAS for information).

The building has been lightly altered over the past few decades, with one of the most recent alterations being a new, dominant lighting scheme to the principal entrance. This is considered to make a negligible adverse contribution to the character and appearance of the designated Upper King Street Conservation Area. The overall height and external fenestration of the building is otherwise incongruous and generally in keeping with the form of newer buildings in the area.

The building is thus considered to make a negligible adverse contribution to the setting of neighboring listed buildings.

Proposals

55 Spring Gardens is currently an active office. The following works are proposed to improve the appearance of the main entrance and the thermal performance of the building as a whole. Please refer to the DAS prepared by PRP architects for detail of proposals as summarized below:

- Replacement of the existing curtain walling with a new double-glazed capless curtain walling system.
- Clean and restore the existing precast concrete panels.
- Improve the ventilation strategy of the current office suites with MVHR system.
- Provide a new communal terrace and amenity space at 9th floor level.



Figure 7: Existing and proposed views of 55 Spring Gardens

Heritage Impact Assessment and conclusions

The proposed changes to the 1980s office building will result in some negligible, visual change to the overall composition of the building, especially as viewed from Fountain Street and Spring Gardens. The proposed curtain walling to the centre of the principal elevation will 'infill' the original recessed entrance and strengthen the building's visual presence within the streetscape, without compromising the original aesthetic of the building. The proposed removal of the illuminated entrance and signage with the revolving door is considered to be an improvement, as this will be less obtrusive within immediate streetscape views.

The proposals are thus considered to have a **neutral impact** upon the settings of designated heritage assets identified within this report. Thereby resulting in '**no harm**' as defined within the NPPF (2024, paras.215-216). The proposals are thus considered to comply with relevant national and local planning policy.

Yours sincerely,

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