



***DESIGN, ACCESS AND HERITAGE STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF
PROPOSED INSTALLATION OF PAINTED ARTWORK TO FORMER
SCREEN 1 CINEMA BUILDING AT MANCHESTER OXFORD ROAD
RAILWAY STATION***

May 2025



Introduction

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared in order to support a Listed Building Consent (LBC) application in relation to the proposed installation of painted artwork to the former Screen 1 cinema building at Manchester Oxford Road Station.

The 'Proposals' section below explains the works in further detail, setting out the rationale and justification for the proposals. This will also include analysis of the proposals' heritage implications to satisfy the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework and relevant local planning policy.

Site and Surroundings

Manchester Oxford Road railway station is a railway station in Manchester, at the junction of Whitworth Street West and Oxford Street. It opened in 1849 and was rebuilt in 1960. It is the second busiest of the four stations in Manchester city centre.

The station serves the southern part of Manchester city centre and consists of four through platforms and one terminating bay platform. The station lies on the route of the original Manchester South Junction and Altrincham Railway (MSJ&AR), one of the country's earliest suburban railways and the first in Manchester.

Manchester Oxford Road Station is built over a Grade II listed viaduct constructed by the MSJ&AR in 1839. This impressive structure comprises two hundred and twenty-four brick arches and a series of decorative Gothic-style ironwork bridges, which extends for one and three quarter miles from Manchester Piccadilly Station via Deansgate Station to Castlefield, where the viaduct bifurcates to provide both north-south and east-west trans-Pennine rail routes. A new stretch of line at Castlefield, the 'Ordsall Chord' introduced in 2017, provides a direct route through Manchester Oxford Road Station for trains to run from Manchester Piccadilly to Manchester Victoria.

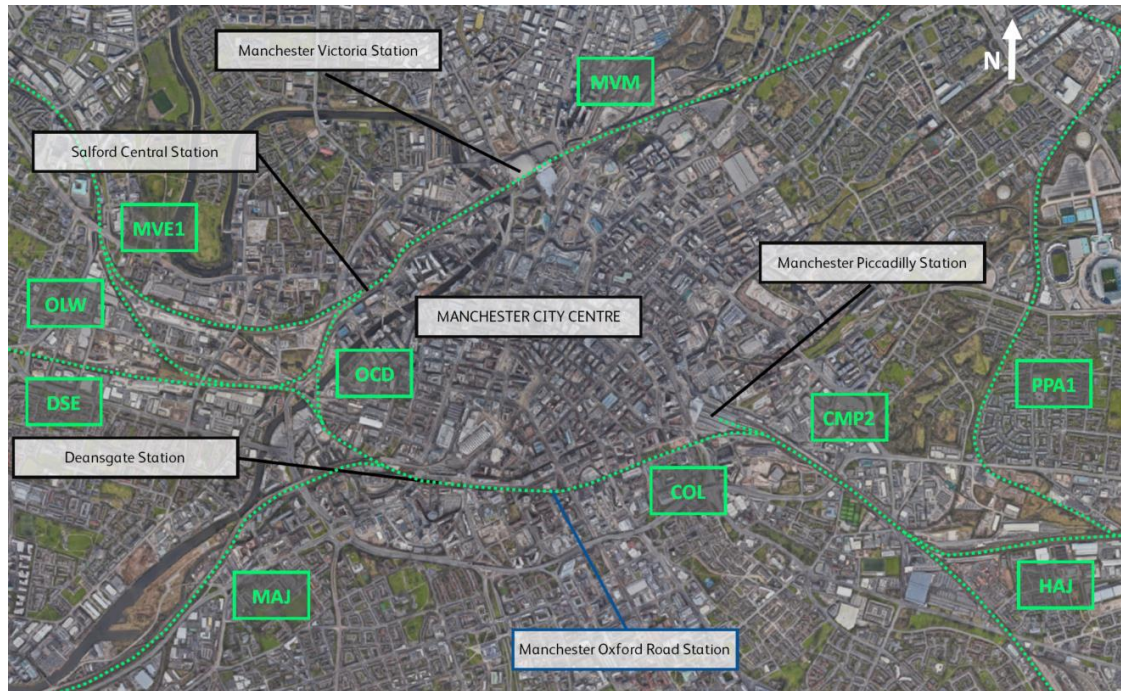


Figure 1 - Map showing Manchester Oxford Road Station in relation to Manchester city centre and other mainline stations within the city centre.



Figure 2 - Aerial image showing Manchester Oxford Road Station

Proposal

Network Rail propose to commission and install a mural which will be located around the façade of the building of the former Screen 1 cinema building at Oxford Road Station. The artwork will be directly applied to the former cinema building, which fronts onto station approach and along Oxford Street.

The proposed mural pays homage to Manchester's rich heritage in both industry and music by weaving together symbols that reflect the city's past, present, and ongoing cultural influence. Including inspiration based on the following three key factors: Industry and movement, Music and culture, and craft and travel. The key factors are symbolised by the following features in the mural:

1. Industry and Movement

Cogs and vintage train tickets spiral through the air, symbolising the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution and the role Manchester played in pioneering global movement and innovation.

The tickets, swept up in motion, also suggest personal journeys, both literal and metaphorical, that begin and end at the station.

Two Magpies in flight one carries one of these tickets. This symbolises joy, and also represents freedom, navigation, and the idea that travel, whether for work, discovery, or creativity, is embedded in the city's identity.

2. Music and Culture

Muted, torn Hacienda stripes stretch across the wall, their weathered look referencing old gig posters and flyers that once papered the city. They mark Manchester's profound influence on global music through the legendary club and the movement it inspired.

Scattered throughout the mural are musical icons: a gramophone, cassette mixtape, guitar pick, an ear, and drumsticks. Each represents a different era of sound and style

that Manchester has contributed too. These details honour the raw talent, innovation, and diversity that have emerged from the city's music scene across generations.

Cymatic sound wave patterns are also included within the mural, these visual forms created by vibrating water. These images celebrate the physical force of sound and, at the same time, nod to Manchester's famously rainy climate, grounding the artwork in both emotional and environmental context.

3. Craft and Travel

On the right-hand wall, a hand points towards a levitating, spinning guitar pick, symbolising the mastery, craft, and elevation of musical skill in Manchester. The scene then transitions back into the theme of travel with a vintage suitcase and a station controller's pocket watch. These speak to time, place, and personal history, showing how Manchester has always been a gateway city, welcoming influences while exporting culture.

The project proposes a large-scale, temporary mural to the elevation of the former Screen 1 cinema building at Oxford Road Station. The mural will be painted directly onto the existing building, which has been painted on a number of occasions, usually to remove graffiti. This non-intrusive initiative is designed to be fully reversible and will not alter the fabric or structure of the building.

The mural will reach around the former cinema and along the frontage on Oxford Road. The former cinema building is currently vacant, and in poor visual condition.

This installation is intended as the starting point of a wider two-year programme of creative engagement and art-led placemaking. It is considered that the proposal will act as a catalyst, inviting public interest, setting the tone for what's to come, and opening the door to deeper community involvement, which will encourage a sense of pride and identity for the public with this vibrant part of Manchester.

Critically, the next phase of the project will be led by local Manchester arts centre (and former residents of the Screen 1 building) HOME, who will deliver a socially engaged programme of co-creation with local communities. This will result in a second, community-curated artwork that is

intended to replace the initial mural after 18–24 months, embedding local voices and longer-term value into the evolving story of the station.

This initial initiative also forms part of Music for the Senses, an upcoming citywide art trail launching in Summer 2025 and expected to attract over one million visitors. Delivered in collaboration with Manchester City Council, TfGM, Northern Rail and HOME, the artwork will celebrate Manchester’s cultural and musical heritage while fostering a sense of connection and shared ownership among passengers, communities, and partners through creative engagement.

Significance of Heritage Asset

The requirement for applicants proposing to undertake works to heritage assets to describe the significance of the heritage asset affected is set out in the NPPF. Guidance to assist with assessing the asset’s significance is provided in the Historic Englands document ‘Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment’.

Paragraph 7 of this document states *‘Being able to properly assess the nature, extent and importance of the significance of a heritage asset and the contribution of its setting early in the process is very important to an applicant in order to conceive of and design a successful development and to the local planning authority in order to make decisions in line with legal requirements and the objectives of the development plan and the policy requirements of the NPPF’*. When evaluating the existing significance of an asset, the Guide recommends assessing the nature of significance, extent of fabric and level of importance. These are all considered below.

To understand the heritage significance of Manchester Oxford Road railway station it is useful to understand the national development of railways. The Listing Selection Guide for Transport Buildings (July 2011) produced by Historic England provides a useful overview, it states;

‘The railway was the culmination of the transport revolution, and was to have major consequences in economic, social and cultural terms. Its origins lay in the Georgian period, but the railway system’s development was one of the greatest achievements of the Victorians. Its history falls into four distinct phases.

The pioneering first phase extends from the opening of the Stockton to Darlington (1825) and Liverpool and Manchester (1830) Railways (both George Stephenson) to the completion of the Great Western Railway from London to Bristol in 1841.

The second phase runs from 1841 to 1850 and marks the heroic age of railway building and the period of 'railway mania' in which commercial speculation and the competition for routes led to the frantic construction of lines, including the Great North Railway and the laying of many of the main trunk lines that form the basis of today's Inter-City network.

The third phase, from the 1850s to the 1870s, saw the consolidation of the network including the opening of the dramatic Settle to Carlisle line, carrying the Midland Railway into Scotland. The fourth period runs up to 1914 and saw the completion of the network.'

Oxford Road Station is a Grade II Listed Building. It stands on top of the Grade II Listed Manchester South Junction and Altrincham Railway Viaduct and is located adjacent to the Whitworth Street Conservation Area in Manchester. Manchester Oxford Road Station, which was constructed in 1958-60 replacing an earlier station of 1874.

This station is one of the best post-war railway stations in the country, with a striking and highly elegant design constructed of laminated timber, elevating the station for its architectural significance. It was designed by Max Clendinning of British Railways' Midland Region and Hugh Tottenham of the Timber Development Association is considered to represent Tottenham's finest work. It is considered that the station's unique design employs a high level of sophistication and innovation through its use of conoid shells supported on a cruck-like frame, which not only create a dramatic aesthetic form, but endow the building with a light and spacious interior.

The railway viaduct dates from 1846 to 1849, which dates from the second phase of the second phase of railway building. This was the period of 'railway mania' in which commercial speculation and the competition for routes led to construction of the main trunk lines that form the basis of today's inter-city network.

Following the opening of the world's first inter-city railway, between Liverpool and Manchester in 1830, there followed a rapid expansion of the railway network in Britain. Intense speculation in the 1840s led to multiple competing railway companies being formed. The result was a lack

of strategic oversight and consequent lack of connections between the various lines, in particular, trains from the Manchester and Birmingham Railway and the Sheffield, Ashton & Manchester Railway terminated at London Road (now Manchester Piccadilly) Station and had no access to the port of Liverpool. To address this need, this key route was devised, stretching from London Road Station to Ordsall Lane, to join up with the Liverpool and Manchester Railway, and became the Manchester South Junction & Altrincham Railway. Construction was authorised by an Act of Parliament in 1845. To traverse the River Medlock and the Rochdale Canal a viaduct of 224 arches and almost 2 miles long was constructed. This viaduct is now a grade II listed building, and it runs through Manchester Oxford Road Station, which is built on top of it.

Passenger traffic grew rapidly and by the 1870s the station was handling 100,000 passengers a week. In 1874 the station was substantially enlarged. This included extending the viaduct with a siding along Whitworth Street, to create terminating platforms for special excursions, offices and a licensed refreshment room. The entrance approach was modified to meet the junction with Oxford Road with a gentler, sweeping curve in 1896 and an additional single storey triangular extension with 3 small units was constructed at the east end of the 1874 siding viaduct. Further works took place between 1903 and 1904 with the building of an island platform on the through lines.

In 1910 a new cinema was created beneath the 1874 siding viaduct. The Kinemacolor Palace was the second purpose-built cinema in Manchester and is the oldest one surviving. It was designed by Charles Swain, a prolific architect who went on to design many more cinemas.

Between 1928 and 1931 the line to Altrincham was the first to be electrified to the then national standard of 1500v DC. However, as road traffic increased during the 1930s passenger numbers were in decline, down about 25 % on their 1870s peak. In 1935, the old picture theatre became the Tatler New Theatre and was replaced with a new entrance by Peter Cummings, a leading Art Deco architect.

During WW2 Manchester suffered massive air raids. Oxford Road station was hit, the roof over the platforms on the siding was damaged and was later removed and the walls lowered.

Following nationalisation of the railways in 1948, the decision was taken to build a new station as part of the modernisation programme to electrify the railway line between London and

Manchester. The pre-war standard of 1500v was abandoned in favour of a new national 25kv AC standard. This was incompatible with the existing electrified line to Altrincham. To save costs it was decided not to upgrade the Altrincham line and to instead terminate the service at Oxford Road, keeping it separate from the rest of the railway network. This was a key driver behind the design of the new station.

To allow the existing station to remain in operation as long as possible and to avoid major disruption of train services, the new station was designed to fit onto the tapering part of the site, straddling the railway viaduct. Conoid timber shells on a glulam frame structure were chosen for the roof concourse to fit the triangular site and to enable it to be as lightweight as possible to reduce loads on the Victorian viaduct below. This facilitated prefabrication of much of the structure which meant disruption to the station could be reduced.

The design team consisted of Chief architect for the London Midland Region WR Headley, A.N. Butland (chief civil engineer, Midland Region), J.H. Wyatt (principal assistant architect), and Hugh Tottenham of the Timber Development Association. Max Clendinning was the architect in charge.

A timber framed and clad lozenge shaped single storey pod accommodates the booking office and former buffet area. The toilets and staff facilities and are also constructed in timber. Beyond the main shell roofs are two smaller shells and these lead to arched timber canopies over the platforms. The design includes custom designed timber seats including a unique semicircular bench in the main entrance area.

Construction began in June 1958, with work completing in September 1960. This predates Eero Saarinen's conoid roofed Transworld Airlines building at JFK Airport, built between 1959 and 1962, and the Sydney Opera House shells constructed between 1963 and 1967. The timber conoid roof structure of Oxford Road Station is believed to be the first of its kind in the world.

Following completion, Hugh Tottenham became a Research Fellow at Southampton University developing the mathematical tools that provided the foundation of modern computational engineering. The engineers Ove Arup consulted with Tottenham on the structural design for Sydney Opera House, leaning heavily on his expertise to test models in the Southampton test laboratories in 1961.

When the station opened there were four platform canopies, today only three remain after the fourth one was removed in the 1970s. They are formed of cylindrical timber shells cantilevering 12 ft over the platform and supported on glued laminated curved timber supports.

The original design of the new station consisted of five platforms: three through platforms and two terminating on the north viaduct to isolate the 1500v electrified line. However, not long after the new station opened the Beeching Report, “The Reshaping of British Railways” was published in 1963, announcing Manchester Central Station was to close in 1969 and its services to transfer to Oxford Road Station and Manchester Piccadilly. To cater for this, an additional through platform was added on the south side of the viaduct and the footbridge was adapted to facilitate this change around 1967. Plans were also made to upgrade the Altrincham line electrification to the 25kv standard which was completed in 1971 and resulted in the original platform 5, the most northerly on the viaduct, being taken out of use. The canopy, furniture and platform were subsequently removed.

The 1950s saw news theatres begin to lose out to competition from television. The Tatler News Theatre closed in 1959 and went through a series of reinventions until finally closing in 1985.

The cinema got a new lease of life when it was taken over by the Greater Manchester Visual Arts Trust. The refurbishment was designed by architects Fletcher Priest. The Cornerhouse arts complex opened in 1985, showing high quality and independent films from around the world. In 1987, Fletcher Priest returned to design the redevelopment of the next two railway arches beneath the siding viaduct to create the Green Room theatre.

As the Cornerhouse became more successful, a comprehensive refurbishment was carried out in 1997 by architect David Chipperfield. Chipperfield added the landmark green curved lightbox façade and glass atrium to the corner complementing and mirroring the reclad curve of the 1874 building.

The Cornerhouse Cinema closed on 4th April 2015. One of the final films screened was “Blue Velvet”. The building was briefly occupied as a squat and is now mostly empty, although some areas at platform level are occupied by Network Rail / Northern.

Evidential Value:

The main viaduct, carrying the through lines, has important evidential value of the methods of railway construction in the 1840s. This is one of the first viaducts in the world to be built over a city centre during the period known as “railway mania”.

The grouping of the various railway bridges in this area has the unofficial name of the “Castlefield Viaducts”, which were built over a period of 50 years. The MSJ&A Railway Viaduct was the first to be built here. It has architectural and artistic value, providing a backdrop to streetscapes throughout the south of the city and lending character to local neighbourhoods.

Its structure. However, the eastern part is a significant departure, due to existing structures and the difficulties of the site. The engineers have had to adapt their techniques to construct a siding next to a working railway on a sloping site, to produce an additional viaduct which also had to be strong enough to support two storey buildings as well as the rails and engines.

Although part have been lost in bombing damage, or demolished, there is still enough of the 1876 build left to provide important evidential value of construction techniques in this era. The internal curving brickwork in the retaining wall is particularly fine, showing how the curve has been replicated and extended by later builders.

There is continuing evidential value in the repeated façade changes, which can be seen in layers of render and attempts to change the appearance of the fenestration.

Historical Value:

The main, 1840s viaduct is an important and integral part of one of the country’s first suburban railways. Its construction provided a link that enabled freight transport from the east of the country and London to reach the port of Liverpool. This was nationally and internationally important.

The siding viaduct extensions and internal alterations also provide evidence of the changing patterns of land values and land use as Oxford Road developed from an industrial area to a busy commercial district. This provided the impetus to make use of even small, irregular plots such as that at the east end of the viaduct.

Increasing footfall and wealth meant that the arches under the viaduct also became more valuable, developing from “low trades” and storage to cinemas and theatres.

The original viaduct and the siding are well built examples of Victorian engineering but are of limited aesthetic interest at this site (elsewhere on the viaduct are some excellent Gothic-style bridges). The cast iron pillars within the main cinema auditorium space are good examples of their kind. As mentioned in the Evidential section, the curving brickwork on the inner, south side of the viaduct is also excellent work.

The station and cinema buildings have been given many treatments over the years. These buildings have seen many, major changes, both forced due to bomb damage and station requirements; and chosen due to changing tastes and uses. The bomb damage and subsequent partial demolition of the upper level buildings reduces the significance of the Victorian parts of this siding viaduct. Parts of the Victorian fenestration are still in place behind the curving letterbox window. It's unclear what their condition would be if this cladding was removed.

The site's use as a cinema and gallery provided the impetus for regular changes inside and out, which are required by the night economy's need for an image of modernity. This meant the 1890s shop front was destroyed to create the 1910 façade, the 1910 façade was destroyed with faience tiles in the 1930s, and these were covered with render in the 1980s. These facades are not recoverable. The present lightbox facade, constructed in 1997, was a dramatic and effective draw for the cinema and a very positive addition to the streetscape. However, the materials used, as has often been the case in cinemas, were intended to reflect the zeitgeist, not to be an enduring feature.. One of the plastic strips is already broken, and others are becoming chipped and damaged. The render and letter box windows covering the original arches are also damaged. The whole no longer has the gleaming contemporaneity of its intended design. It is unlikely to be recoverable to its pristine state, nor is this a style that is well suited to a patina of age.

Communal Value:

The cinema itself also has important cultural associations, particularly after its rebirth as the Cornerhouse in 1984.

Its cultural and economic impact is considered to be of some significance. It is said to have shaped the careers of contemporary artists. Damien Hirst credited the Cornerhouse for his success after he took part in a group show in 1991, and the galleries also exhibited many other

British artists before they became internationally famous, including Tracey Emin, Sam Taylor Wood, Isaac Julie, Martin Parr and many others (Morris Hargreaves Macintyre, 2005).

Legislative and policy context

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) governs the designation and works to listed buildings in England. The Act states in **s.1 (5)**:

‘In this Act “listed building” means a building which is for the time being included in a list compiled or approved by the Secretary of State under this section; and for the purposes of this Act—

(a) any object or structure fixed to the building;

(b) any object or structure within the curtilage of the building which, although not fixed to the building, forms part of the land and has done so since before 1st July 1948, shall be treated as part of the building.’

Under the Act, no one is permitted to undertake or cause to be undertaken any works that would affect the character of a listed building unless the works are authorised. Section 16 of the Act identifies that whether such works can be carried out is determined by the local planning authority or the Secretary of State:

‘(1) Subject to the previous provisions of this Part, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State may grant or refuse an application for listed building consent and, if they grant consent, may grant it subject to conditions.

(2) 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.

(3) Any listed building consent shall (except in so far as it otherwise provides) ensure for the benefit of the building and of all persons for the time being interested in it.’

In relation to the granting of Listed Building Consent, Section 17 of the Act stipulates that

conditions attached to Listed Building Consent may include those with respect to:

- ‘(a) the preservation of particular features of the building, either as part of it or after severance from it;*
- (b) the making good, after the works are completed, of any damage caused to the building by the works; [and]*
- (c) the reconstruction of the building or any part of it following the execution of any works, with the use of original materials so far as practicable and with such alterations of the interior of the building as may be specified in the conditions’.*

It is also defined in s.17 (2) that a condition *‘may also be imposed requiring specified details of the works (whether or not set out in the application) to be approved subsequently by the local planning authority or, in the case of consent granted by the Secretary of State, specifying whether such details are to be approved by the local planning authority or by him’.*

The Act also states in s.66 (1):

‘In considering whether to grant planning permission or permission in principle for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, 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’.

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) also governs duties of the local planning authority relating to conservation areas, particularly Sections 69, 72 and 74.

- Section 69 requires local planning authorities to define as conservation areas any *‘areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance’.*
- Section 72 confers a general duty *‘with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area... special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area’.*

- Section 74 defines that demolition of a building in a conservation area is not permitted *‘without the consent of the appropriate authority’*.

National Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provides the Government’s national planning policy on the conservation of the historic environment, supported by the Planning Practice Guidance (updated July 2019). This Heritage Statement aims to address relevant policy within the NPPF in relation to Section 16 ‘Conserving and enhancing the historic environment’ and includes an assessment of significance of the heritage assets and their setting that may be affected by the proposed works.

The following paragraphs as set out in the NPPF include key provisions considered of particular importance to this application.

- Paragraph 207 - *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.*
- Paragraph 212 - *When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, 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 213 - *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.*

- Paragraph 214 - *Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset, 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.*

- Paragraph 215 – *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.*

- Paragraph 216 – *The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgment will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.*

The National Planning Practice Guidance (Historic Environment) (PPG, 2019) gives further information on how national policy is to be interpreted and applied locally. The PPG includes particular guidance on matters relating to protecting the historic environment.

Local policy

Manchester Core Strategy

When developing the proposals, regarding was had to the policies within the Manchester Core Strategy, including the following:

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

Policy EC 1 - Employment and Economic Growth in Manchester (supporting text)

Ensuring access to job opportunities via sustainable transport such as walking and cycling, and public transport, such as bus routes, Metrolink and heavy rail is vital to improving the quality of life of residents through job opportunities, raising residents' wages and thereby increasing wealth

Policy T 1 - Sustainable Transport

To deliver a sustainable, high quality, integrated transport system...the Council will support proposals that: -Contribute to improvements to the extent and reliability of the public transport network; Facilitate modes of transport that reduce carbon emissions e.g by incorporating charging points for electric vehicles, subject to their appropriate design and location.

Policy EN 1 - Design Principles and Strategic Character Areas

Developers will be expected to consider the City's heritage and continue the rich pattern of activity in the core area

Assessment against planning policy

The Oxford Road Artwork project is the first initiative to emerge from the Early Deliverables Portfolio developed as part of the Greater Manchester 7 Stations (GM7) Programme. It has been shaped through close collaboration between Network Rail, Manchester City Council, Transport for Greater Manchester, and Northern.

The project proposes to install a mural which will reach around the part of the façade of the building of the former Screen 1 cinema building at Oxford Road Station. The mural intends to pay homage to Manchester's rich heritage in both industry and music by weaving together symbols that reflect the city's past, present, and ongoing cultural influence. As described within the Proposal section of this statement, the artist has focused upon three key areas to convey the city's heritage: Industry and movement, Music and culture, and craft and travel.

The artist has acknowledged the significant influence Manchester has played as being the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution, and its role in pioneering global movement and innovation. Manchester has a significant place in transportation history as the terminus of one of the world's first interurban railways, the Liverpool and Manchester Railway. This pioneering steam-powered railway was designed to revolutionise the movement of both passengers and goods, and its establishment marked the beginning of a new era in trade and travel. The mural depicts this well through the inclusion of cogs and vintage train tickets which spiral through the air.

As the mural moves onto Oxford Road, the mural merges into a more musical and cultural influence. This reflects the changing environment as the public pass onto Oxford Road; the various musical references (a gramophone, cassette mixtape, guitar pick, an ear, and drumsticks), Hacienda references convey Manchester's profound influence on global music through the legendary club and the movement it inspired. These details honour the raw talent, innovation, and diversity that have emerged from the city's music scene across generations. This again pays tribute to the City's heritage and significance.

It is considered that this artwork reflects the historic influence of Manchester over the years; the site is also a good location for such a piece of artwork, being adjacent to an iconic railway station and viaduct still very much used today and stretching along Oxford Street where, a number of cultural and musical venues once stood.

The artwork will be directly applied to the former cinema building, which fronts onto station approach and along Oxford Street. This light-touch, non-intrusive initiative is designed to be fully reversible and will not alter the historic fabric or structure of the building. The cinema building has been repainted on a number of occasions, unfortunately due to the persistent

graffiti. It is considered that the presence of this mural would discourage the return of the tagging and graffiti.

The former cinema is currently vacant, and in poor visual condition, which detracts from the wider station environment and its historic significance, as well as the wider environment within this area of Manchester. A series of repairs will also be undertaken to the building as discussed with the Councils conservation officer. Alongside these repairs it is considered that the mural will enhance its appearance. The mural will significantly improve perceptions of safety, cultural identity, and provide a sense of place. It is considered that the proposed mural will provide a welcome to the area, that is reflective of Oxford Roads social culture and contributing to a more vibrant and engaging public realm for passengers, pedestrians and the city.

This installation is intended as the starting point of a wider two-year programme of creative engagement and art-led placemaking. It is considered that the proposal will act as a catalyst, inviting public interest, setting the tone for what's to come, and opening the door to deeper community involvement, which will encourage a sense of pride and identity for the public with this vibrant part of Manchester.

This proposal also forms part of Music for the Senses, an upcoming citywide art trail launching in Summer 2025 and expected to attract over one million visitors. Delivered in collaboration with Manchester City Council, TfGM, Northern Rail and HOME, the artwork will celebrate Manchester's cultural and musical heritage while fostering a sense of connection and shared ownership among passengers, communities, and partners through creative engagement.

This project represents a sensitive, creative and collaborative response to a visibly deteriorating building within a key transport gateway. Providing a new purpose into a vacant listed building, within the conservation area. By using art as a tool for transformation, the Oxford Road Artwork delivers immediate improvement, fosters community connection, and lays the foundation for a more inclusive and cared-for station environment. It aims to demonstrate what is possible when heritage, culture and partnership come together to reimagine public space, with minimal intervention and maximum public benefit.

The public benefits of this project are significant:

- **Enhanced Station Environment:** Improves the visual condition of a prominent but neglected site, contributing to a safer, more welcoming, and vibrant gateway to the city.
- **Sensitive initiative on a Building in Disrepair:** Provides a proactive, meanwhile solution for a building in poor condition, offering an uplift in appearance while longer-term plans are developed.
- **Graffiti Deterrent:** Acts as a positive and managed intervention that discourages tagging and vandalism, to which the building is currently highly susceptible.
- **Creative Placemaking:** Demonstrates how low-cost, high-impact interventions can positively transform public space and uplift daily experiences for passengers and pedestrians.
- **Cultural Identity & Storytelling:** Reflects and celebrates Manchester's rich musical and social heritage through accessible, site-specific art.
- **Community Ownership:** Lays the foundation for meaningful, longer-term engagement by inviting local voices to shape future creative outcomes.
- **Partnership in Action:** Embodies cross-sector collaboration between transport, arts and civic partners, showcasing collective ambition and shared care for the public realm.
- **Reversible & Non-Intrusive:** A sensitive, paint-only intervention that preserves the historic structure and respects the character of the listed building.
- **Civic Pride & Visibility:** Contributes to a high-profile cultural moment (Music for the Senses) that will bring national attention, footfall, and a sense of celebration to the area.

The scheme proposals will result in only very minor interventions to the station building.

Although these works will require some intervention to the station fabric, in the most part this will have no resulting harm to the heritage asset. A couple of aspects of the required works will result in some physical changes to the fabric of the station and its appearance and these have been assessed to be a very minor degree of less than significant harm. This harm is assessed to be outweighed by the public benefits by visually improving the aesthetics of a heritage asset and a prominent part of the street scene within a designated Conservation Area, the proposal will also help to create a sense of place and cultural identity within this area of Manchester by reflecting upon its rich and diverse history.

The proposals are therefore in accordance with the thrust of MCC Core Strategy policies Policy EN 3 – Heritage, Policy EC 1 - Employment and Economic Growth in Manchester, Policy T 1 -

Sustainable Transport and Policy EN 1 - Design Principles and Strategic Character Areas. It is thus concluded that the proposal would result in less than substantial harm in line with the NPPF (para 215) and meet the test of achieving public benefits which outweigh the harm to the significance of the station.

CONCLUSION

It is considered that the works are respectful to the character and appearance of the listed structure and there is a sound justification and strong public benefits associated with the scheme. This will be done in a manner that is respectful to the heritage significance of the station.

In light of the above, the proposals are considered to be in accordance with relevant policy stipulated by the NPPF and the Manchester Core Strategy. The proposals therefore satisfy both national and local planning policy regarding the balance test of the impact of development on significance of heritage assets and their setting, and the public benefits to be realised. Consequently, it is requested that Listed Building Consent be granted for the development.

