

Heritage Statement

Building: Coupland 3 Building University of Manchester	List Entry Number: 1209002 (Listed as Pharmacy Department, Department of Adult Education, UoM)
Listed Status: Grade II listed	Year of Construction: 1874 – 1894

Introduction

This Heritage Statement examines Coupland 3 Building in Manchester. Coupland 3 is a part of a significant ensemble of buildings located within the heart of the historic University of Manchester and is listed Grade II with Group Value.

Coupland 3 building was constructed between 1874 and 1894 to designs by Alfred Waterhouse and his son Paul Waterhouse as the Former Medical School.

Coupland 3 building is currently only in partial use with the School of Dentistry occupying the ground and first floors. All upper floor areas are currently vacant and awaiting future refurbishment.

The purpose of this report is to set out the way in which the current proposals might impact upon the heritage significance of the site. This is set out in line with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to determine whether this addition to the scheme constitutes substantial harm or less than substantial harm.

Site Location

The Coupland building footprint fronts onto several differing external spaces but currently does not have a high visual impact on key external spaces on the University Campus. It forms a hard edge to Coupland Street to the north and a car park adjacent to Upper Cambridge Street to the west. To the south it faces an open “compound” space formerly occupied by several single storey buildings sandwiched between the Coupland 3 Building and John Rylands Library.

Site Ownership

The building is currently owned by the University of Manchester.

Statutory and Non-Statutory Designations

Coupland 3 building is listed Grade II with Group Value. This designation is a statutory recognition of the national architectural and/or historical importance of this heritage asset and its immediate curtilage.

Coupland 3 building does not lie within a Conservation Area. However, its setting and context includes several substantial university buildings, some of which are listed. Changes to Coupland 3 building therefore have the potential to not only have an impact on the significance of these buildings, but also those that surround it.

Site Description

Coupland 3 Building – the former Medical School occupies an irregular L-shaped plan formed by main range parallel to Coupland Street, with set-back continuation to northeast and rear wing behind this.

The existing accommodation located in Coupland 3 is arranged over four floors. The existing accommodation comprises a mix of lecture rooms and cellular office space. The upper floors have been mainly cleared of internal timber studwalls to create larger two storey space.

Building Description

The exterior of the Coupland building is of pale-yellow brick with sandstone dressings and red tiled roofs. The main west range is four storeys high and nine bays wide, with the entrance bay incorporating a corner tower. The second and ninth bays are wider than the intermediate bays and gabled with pinnacles. Each bay is separated by corner pinnacles. The range has stone cill and head bands, cusped stone niches between the bays at top floor and a moulded cornice and parapet. The corner tower has a large two centred moulded entrance arch in each side at ground floor and a first-floor oriel in the left side.

The tower is finished with a slated spirelet. Windows are large sashes to the first three storeys, with stone mullioned sash windows to the third floor and arcades of arched windows to the top floor.

The continuing set-back east range is of two unequal storeys with seven bays. The ground floor is taller with buttresses and cross windows with arched lights and corbel tables. The smaller first floor has mullioned windows. There are gabled dormers over the second and sixth bays with a continuous skylight between. There is a fleche on the ridge. The rear wing is in similar style to the east range, with an irregular plan and gables at high level. The roofs are steeply pitched with dormers.

Assessment of Significance

National and Regional – The Coupland 3 building is of national significance overall. This is not only reflected by its statutory designation as a Grade-II listed building, but also by many of their deeper heritage values.

Evidential – Evidential value lies in the potential for important below-ground archaeological deposits to survive below basement level across the site. Such material may yield further evidence about the use and occupation of the site prior to the development of the University, shedding light not only on the history and significance of the Oxford Road area, but Manchester in general.

Above ground, further evidential value lies in the fact the extensive modern interventions and surface treatment within the interiors of the buildings may conceal original features and décor that could add to the understanding and significance of the site and form the basis of informed reinstatement where appropriate.

Historic - The importance of the Coupland 3 building lies in its associative and illustrative values as examples of the work of Alfred Waterhouse and, to a somewhat lesser extent, Paul Waterhouse. Alfred Waterhouse was a nationally important architect of the high Victorian period, and the building accords with not only the broad stylistic tastes but also the constructional and technological approaches of the day.

The understanding of the site is also well supported by the drawn and written record. However, while it is necessary to recognise and respect these aspects of associative and illustrative significance, it is true that more important and intact examples of Waterhouse's university work survives elsewhere and the level of interior intervention in more recent times remains a detracting factor.

Similarly, while the buildings is a good example of 19th century university facilities that were built-for-purpose with the input of notable university professors and scientists, the proliferation of such sites nationally combined with the loss of diagnostic fixtures and fittings means that Coupland 3 is not the oldest or best-preserved historic university buildings to have remained in use.

Aesthetic - Overall, the aesthetic significance of the Coupland 3 building centres on its group value as a complimentary historic ensemble within the Owen's College complex. The use of the 'domestic' Gothic style, traditional materials and 19th-century building techniques makes an important contribution to the visual experience around Owens College.

The scale, massing and design of Coupland 3 is particularly impressive, and the corner tower is notable as a clever device to draw attention to the entrance from the Coupland Street archway on Oxford Road.

Communal and Social - The significance of the Coupland 3 building is based on its inseparable association with the University of Manchester since the 1870s. The building has historically had a strong communal meaning as a place of teaching and learning and continue to feature in the collective memory of generations of students.

Proposed Works

The University has recently undertaken a risk assessment of existing roofs currently without edge protection and Coupland 3 building was highlighted as urgently needing edge protection to protect maintenance operatives.

It is worth noting that the proposed roof access works that make up this application are to re-install previously removed edge protection that was removed in 2014 as it was not fit for purposed.

These proposed works comprise:

1. New access ladder to the valley gutter to the west side of the roof providing access for maintenance, window cleaning and gutter clearance.



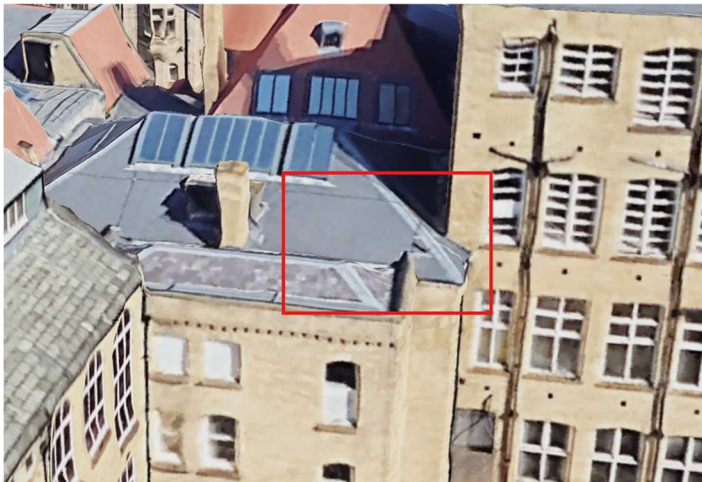
Location of new ladder – not visible from ground level*

2. New access ladder to the atrium with walkway to the east side providing safe access for maintenance, window cleaning and gutter clearance.



Location of new ladder and walkway – not visible from ground level*

3. New guardrail and “D” end to south side of roof at end of valley gutter.



Location of new guardrail and D end – Just visible from ground level*

These proposed alterations are detailed in the Design and Access Statement, Design Drawings ref. 2637_SDA_P_01 – 04 and Surpro Drawing ref. IDS-300-N1094.

Heights, materials, colours and fixing details for the roof access system are detailed on Surpro Drawing ref. IDS-300-N1094.

*Images courtesy of Google

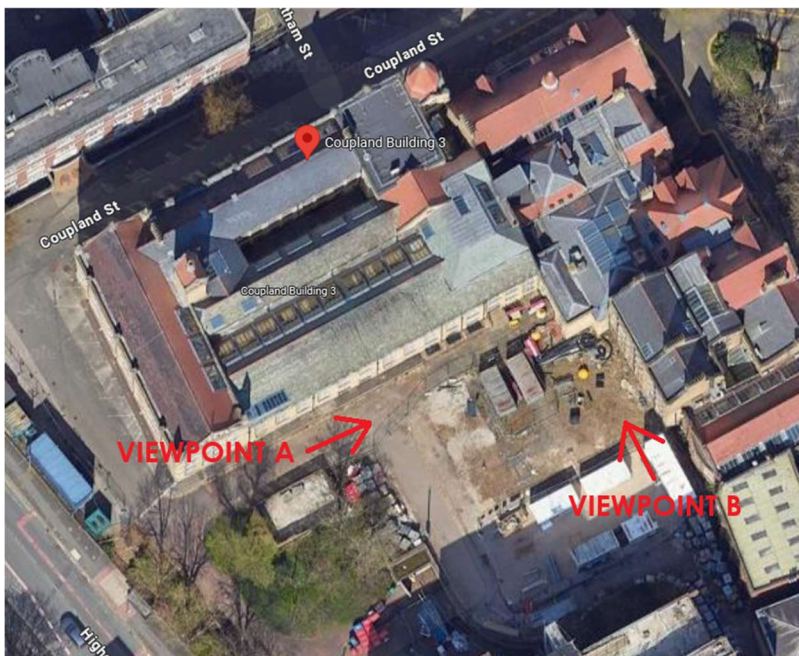
Impact of Proposed Works

The University worked closely with Surpro (handrail supplier) to design a handrailing and access system that was discrete yet provided the necessary protection to those maintaining the roof areas to Coupland 3. It was important for the university to strike a balance between safety for roof users and not reducing the aesthetic appeal of the building.

As such, only a very small part of the roof access improvements will be visible from ground level areas on completion. In addition, no other university buildings overlook the elevations affected by the proposals.

It should also be noted that none of the main elevations (facing Coupland Street and Higher Cambridge Street) are affected by the proposals. All proposed works are to the elevations that overlook the current site compound area between Coupland 3 and the John Rylands Library.

These compound areas are restricted to university contractors only and there are currently no plans for this area to become open to the public.



Elevational Key



Viewpoint A



Viewpoint B

Heritage significance

Low.

It is our opinion that the proposed roof access works are minimal, and it is felt that these alterations will have a very limited visual impact – especially when viewed from ground level.

What if the repair works are not carried out

Extension of the existing roof access system is required to provide safe access for roof users. Without undertaking these works, workers will potentially be at risk from falls from height when maintaining the roof and rooflights.

The University are seeking Approval to proceed with the proposed design (taking the recommendations above into account).

Project Manager: Michael Boyle MRICS



Signed:

Date: 04th April 2025

Listed Building Consent required: Yes

Application date/number: