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22 April 2025

Planning Department
Manchester City Council
Manchester
M60 2LA

Dear Sir/Madam,

PLANNING AND ADVERTISEMENT CONSENT APPLICATIONS – UNIT 1, GROUND AND FIRST FLOOR, ST MICHAELS DEVELOPMENT, MANCHESTER CITY M2 5WD

Firstplan have been instructed by our client, Big Mamma Group, to submit the enclosed planning application for the alterations to the exterior of the premises alongside the associated advertisement consent application for the necessary signage, at the address above to accommodate the ingoing tenant. The application has been submitted online via the Planning Portal (ref: PP-13956377) and the requisite fee of £551 (including £85 admin fee) has been paid online.

In accordance with national and local validation requirements, the following plans and documents have been submitted with the application:

- Completed Planning and Advertisement Consent Application Forms (including Certificates);
- Completed CIL Form 1 Additional Information;
- Site Location Plan;
- Site Block Plan;
- Existing and Proposed Floor Plans;
- Existing and Proposed Elevations;
- Proposed Floor Plans;
- Proposed Signage Details.

Site Description

The application site comprises a commercial unit set across parts of the ground and first floors of No 1 St Michaels; a new mixed-use development located on Jackson's Row/Southmill Street/Bootle Street in the City Centre. The wider development consists of two phases, of which the application site is located in the 10 storey, glass-fronted Phase 2. The majority of the development's lower levels contain active frontages, including retail spaces and entrances to upper-floor offices.

This application relates to the retail unit that runs alongside Jackson's Row and is entered via Abercromby Square. The site includes the existing retail unit located on the ground floor, and the first-floor office space above it, which has been granted a Change of Use under application ref: 140687/FO/2024. The ingoing tenant – Big Mamma Group – is to occupy both floors with restaurant space.

The building's appearance is very modern with large, glazed entrances and windows at ground floor level with a small fascia/louvred panel above. The upper floor is similarly full height glazed windows. The wider area comprises a paved public realm which includes seating, foundations and other features for the public to enjoy. It is understood that the surrounding public realm is on private land.

Planning History

Permission was granted for the St Michaels development in 2018 under ref: 114664/FO/2016. There have been a number of amendments to this consent. Planning permission ref: 135827/JO/2022 approved on 8 August 2023 the ***"Variation of conditions 2 (approved drawings and documents), 5 (ground conditions), 7 (waste management), 10 (drainage), 40 (piling), and 48 (building contract) so as to make minor material changes to consent referenced 131612/JO/2021 (as amended by 133317/NMC/2022, 134638/NMC/2022 and 135828/NMC/2022) to remove synagogue space and introduction of grade A office space at levels 1-5, reconfiguration of ground floor entrance, frontage and loading, increase depth of basement below tower podium a further two levels and creation of a third basement resulting reduction of parking and increase in cycle provision, remodelling of level 6 internal space and roof terrace, expansion of plant area to block A, increase in tower, elevational alterations, reduction of hotel rooms and increase in residential apartments".*** It is understood that this now forms the operative consent.

There have been numerous subsequent applications to discharge planning conditions associated with this consent. In relation to the application site, the discharge of conditions 19 (disabled access) and 30 (opening hours food and drink) were approved on 2 October 2024 under ref: CDN/24/0680. The relevant signage strategy was approved on 11 October 2024 under ref: CDN/24/0718. A discharge of condition application for conditions 27(Secure by Design accreditation), 33 (Odour), 34 and 35 (Noise) has been submitted to Manchester City Council at the start of April and is currently pending determination under ref: CDN/25/0336.

In addition, it is noted that planning permission was granted on 22 October 2024 for the use of the first floor as a restaurant under ref: 140687/FO/2024. Approval was granted for the details reserved by condition 3 (materials) under ref: CDN/25/0193 on 14 April 2025. A discharge of condition application for conditions 4 (Odour) and Noise (6 and 7) has been submitted to Manchester City Council at the start of April and is currently pending determination under ref: CDN/25/0337.

Of most relevance, planning and advertisement consent applications were sought by Big Mamma in November 2024 for *'installation of 1no. illuminated fascia sign, 1no. illuminated freestanding menu box, and 1no. awning sign'* (refs: 141614/FO/2024 and 141615/AO/2024) and subsequently withdrawn in January 2025 following feedback from the Council.

This application seeks for a revised proposal following informal discussion including a site visit on 4 April 2025 with Manchester City Council Officers.

Application Proposal

This proposal seeks a variety of alterations to the restaurant unit for the ingoing tenant, Big Mamma. Big Mamma Group offer a vibrant and contemporary take on traditional Italian trattoria cuisine, which focuses on utilising only Italian produce. The applicant seeks to introduce their distinctive restaurant concept to Manchester. The proposed alterations are detailed below and, on the plans submitted with the application.

External Alterations

The proposed works seek to introduce a freestanding entrance awning with associated planting to the site. The awning's support poles would be placed within planting pots at floor level to integrate it attractively into the shopfront. This would be positioned on the terrace in front of the main door to delineate the entrance and create an attractive feature at the front. It has been carefully designed to alert customers to the position of the restaurant. The awning is to be domed with cream and red striping and lettering. In addition, a metal frame will be positioned alongside the awning to allow for climbing plants either side. This will hide the support system needed for the freestanding awning to be held up.

Overall, coupled with the planting, the external alterations proposed are considered to enhance the public realm. It is noted that the site lies on private land so the placing of freestanding furniture should not require consent and is shown on the plans for completeness.

Advertisements

- 1no. freestanding menu box
  - 440mm x 640mm
  - Brass
  - Internally illuminated

- 1no. 'CIRCOLO POPOLARE' internal sign
  - 2370mm x 350mm
  - Brass letters
  - Internally illuminated

- 1no. 'CIRCOLO POPOLARE' internal sign
  - 2210mm x 300mm
  - Brass letters
  - Internally illuminated

- 1no. 'TRATTORIA' awning sign (freestanding with support within planters)
  - 1145mm x 117mm
  - Red letters
  - Non-illuminated

Visuals can be provided to the Council should it be considered helpful.

Relevant Planning Policy

The statutory Development Plan in Manchester comprises the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan 2022 to 2039 (2024), Manchester Core Strategy and Proposals Map (2012), and Extant Unitary Development Plan (UDP) (1995, saved 2012). Material considerations relevant to the application include the National Policy Framework (NPPF) (2023) and Local Supplementary Planning Documents and Guidance such as the Guide to Development in Manchester SPD (2007) and Shopfront and Signage Design Guide (2024). These have been considered in the formation of the proposals.

The Manchester Core Strategy and Proposals Map designates the application site as located within the Deansgate/Peter Street Conservation Area, The Regional Centre), and the City Centre.

National Planning Policy Framework (2024)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It states, at Paragraph 7, that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, which can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Chapter 12 of the NPPF highlights the importance of well-designed and beautiful places. In **Paragraph 135**, NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should be both functional and attractive, whilst establishing a strong sense of place that is sympathetic to the surrounding local character and amenity.

In relation to advertisement, the NPPF Paragraph 141 states:

"The quality and character of places can suffer when advertisements are poorly sited and designed. A separate consent process within the planning system controls the display of advertisements, which should be operated in a way which is simple, efficient and effective. Advertisements should be subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking account of cumulative impacts."

Chapter 16 is concerned with "conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment". It is noted within paragraph 207 that when describing the significance of a heritage asset the level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more that is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on the significance. When determining an application affecting a heritage asset that the planning authority should take into consideration the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation. Additionally, it is also recommended that the positive contribution that a heritage asset makes towards sustainable communities is considered as well as the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

Manchester Core Strategy Development Plan Document (2012)

Policy SP1 states that the Regional Centre will be a focus for economic and commercial development, and retail, leisure and cultural activity. Developments in all parts of the city should create well designed places that enhance or create character and protect and enhance the built and natural environment.

Policy EC3 states that within the Regional Centre development for employment generating uses including offices and other commercial development will be encouraged.

Policy DM1 states that all development should have regard for appropriate siting, layout, scale, form, massing, materials and detail and be appropriate to the appearance and character of the surrounding area

Policy CC9 states that development in Manchester City Centre should preserve or enhance the heritage assets that have bene identified and particular attention should be given to the City Centre context and character.

Extant Unitary Development Plan

The Core Strategy replaced the UDP, but some policies remain and are relevant to this proposal.

Policy DC14.1 (Shopfronts and related signs) In determining applications relating to these premises for shop fronts, security grilles, advertisement signs, canopies and awnings, the Council will seek to ensure that proposals are in keeping with the character of the building and adjoining buildings, of adjoining shopfronts, where appropriate, and of the area within which the premises are located.

Policy DC15.2 (Advertisements, hoardings, and posters) In assessing the interests of amenity and safety the Council will take account of the following criteria: *a*. developments of this kind should not harm the character or architectural features of a building, nor interfere with its proper use; *b*. they should be in scale with the locality and relate properly to the site on which they stand; *c*. they should be unobtrusive and should not intrude into residential neighbourhoods and areas of high amenity value; *d.* a proposal which would be injurious to public safety or adversely affect the flow of traffic, by reason of its position, size, or design will not be permitted.

Policy DC18 (Conservation Areas) states that the Council seek to preserve and enhance the character of its designated conservation areas by considering the effects of signs and advertisements and the relationship of new structures to neighbouring buildings and spaces.

Shopfront and Signage Design Guide (2024)

This provides guidance on the principles and standards of shopfront and signage design throughout the City in order to promote positive change in the context of its urban environment. The guide outlines that awnings and canopies can make a positive addition to a building or streetscene when well-designed and well-integrated. It also outlines that signage should also integrate well to the building and streetscene and should not dominate the façade, but relate well to its overall scale, character and composition. The document does not promote any specific design but provides guidance to enable applicants to sensitively restore, modify or construct new shopfronts.

Deansgate/Peter Street Conservation Area

The application site is located within the Deansgate/Peter Street Conservation Area, as designated in 1985. The online Conservation Area description sets out that the area is predominantly made up of commercial buildings constructed of materials ranging from historical stone and redbrick to modern glass frontages. These contribute to a varied streetscape but one where buildings retain a positive relationship with one another. Where redevelopment is sought, the City Council will seek designs which are consistent with the character of the surrounding buildings.

Planning and Heritage Statement

This application proposes alterations to the shopfront in order for the ingoing tenant to appropriately advertise their presence and provide legibility to the units entrance. The principle of development should therefore be considered acceptable. The relevant planning considerations arising from the proposals include the design and appearance of the alterations including its impact on the relevant heritage assets identified, and its impact on surrounding amenities, if any. This is addressed in turn below.

Design and Heritage Impact

The application site lies within the Deansgate/Peter Street Conservation Area however it forms one of the new commercial units within the ground/first floor of a building within the St Michaels development. Therefore, the proposed signage and other shopfront alterations should be assessed in the context of the ongoing redevelopment. This is a large mixed use, new building. Signage zones are defined as part of the approval, and Big Mamma is working within these constraints as far as practicable. Accordingly, the proposed shopfront works and advertisements should be considered acceptable.

Notwithstanding this, our assessment is that the proposed advertisements are sympathetic to the Conservation Area, principally due to the limited overall number of signs proposed, their respective size and limited illumination and the high quality bespoke design. The proposed shopfront alterations seek to create a distinctive, legible, and attractive façade which enhances the character of the surrounding development without harming public safety or heritage assets. As a result, the proposed signage relates well to the newly developed building and surrounding area and is consistent with the policies set out above.

The existing shopfront, as approved under the St Michaels development permission, consists of floor to ceiling glass panelling designed with a sleek, modern appearance. Signage zones have been approved recently by Manchester City Council. The proposal seeks a series of four no. signs to the unit. The proposed menu board and fascia sign are considered to comply with the aspirations of the signage strategy and should be considered acceptable. The addition of the awning sign is acknowledged as not in keeping with the approved signage strategy however it is considered to be acceptable given that it is non-illuminated and provides an attractive entrance to the restaurant.

Prior to the submission of this application, informal discussion has taken place with the Council officers on the acceptability of the signage/ entrance sign. A site visit also took place on 4 April 2025 with Ms Jennifer Atkinson (City Centre manager) in attendance. During the discussion, it has been confirmed that the Big Mamma signage and external alterations will undoubtably enhance the appearance of this unit, and the public realm, creating an attractive, active frontage for the St Michael's development – which has been designed to be a high-profile commercial and leisure

destination. The proposals have been amended to reflect Officer comments, with 2 internal signs to accord with the approved signage strategy. The additional signs include the freestanding menu board (which in the assessment of application ref: 141615/AO/2024 Officers confirmed was acceptable) and the freestanding awning and planters.

The proposed awning and planters are considered to accommodate the specific operational and visibility needs of this restaurant for the reasons set out below:

- The building design features a dominant glass frontage with limited solid architectural elements on which to mount signage. This significantly reduces the impact of traditional signage and makes it difficult for passersby to immediately recognise the unit as a destination restaurant.
- Additionally, the approved signage strategy does not provide sufficient ground-level visibility meaning branding opportunities are restricted – particularly for pedestrians at street level.
- The building design features a dominant glass frontage with limited solid architectural elements on which to mount signage. This significantly reduces the impact of traditional signage and makes it difficult for passersby to immediately recognise the unit as a destination restaurant. Additionally, the approved signage strategy does not provide sufficient ground-level visibility meaning branding opportunities are restricted – particularly for pedestrians at street level.
- The building has tinted windows which further limit the effectiveness of the internal signage shown in the signage strategy that would otherwise be visible from the street.

Overall, there are clear economic benefits for the proposed signage and freestanding awning/planters as presented. As per the NPPF para 85 which states "*Planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity*." As the high street continues to struggle it is even more important for business to attract and retain customers. Approving the Big Mamma specific proposals is in line with this policy emphasis, as it facilitates the restaurant establishing itself as the first occupier within the St Michaels development, attract customers, and contribute to local economic sustainability. In addition, the proposed signage will not impact visual amenity nor highway safety in line with para 141 of the NPPF.

It is understood that Officers will attach a condition stating that the any future application that the structure is removed if the end user vacates the building and should not be viewed as a precedent for other units. It is confirmed that Big Mamma are happy for a condition to this effect be attached to a future consent and we are happy to discuss this further with Officers during the course of the applications.

All the proposed signage is considered to be in proportion to the existing shopfront and would not unduly dominate or clutter the frontage. Given the modern nature of the wider development, and the variation in design styles of the surrounding area, it is not considered that the proposals will be of detriment to the character of the Deansgate/Peter Street Conservation Area. The advertisements are of a limited size, amount and illumination and are in keeping with those of similar units in the surrounding area and the approved signage strategy.

The proposed awning, planters, and planting would be proportional to the shopfront and entrance doors and is considered to be a well-designed and positive addition, creating interest to the shopfront that would relate well to its overall scale and composition, as per the Shopfront and Signage Design Guide (2024). The proposal should be seen as acceptable in terms of its appearance and siting within the existing shopfront opening. It is high-quality in both design and materials. The existing supporting pillar will remain to maintain the general rhythm and form of the wider development. The whole effect of the proposal will create a strong sense of place and will work to uplift the streetscene, enticing visitors from within the surrounding development and further afield to this part of Manchester.

Impact on Surrounding Amenities

With regard to public safety, the shopfront faces on to the pedestrianised Abercrombie Square which allows ample space for the movement of foot traffic. The proposed awning structure and potted planting would not project out so much as to impact the permeability of the Square, and it is of a suitable height. The shopfront will be fully accessible to those with mobility impairments as per Policy DC14.2 of the UDP.

Taking into account the site context and the proposed designs, the advertisements too would satisfy National Planning Policy Guidance. The proposed signage would not:

- Obstruct or impair sight-lines at corners, bends or at a junction, or at any point of access to a highway;
- Because of its size or siting, cause obstruct or confuse a road user's view, or reduce the clarity or effectiveness of a traffic sign or signal, or would be likely to distract road-users because of their unusual nature;
- Leave insufficient clearance above any part of a highway;
- Include external illumination that would be flashing, be a colour which could be confused with traffic signals/authorised signals, or because of their size or brightness, could result in glare and dazzle, or distract road-users.

The proposed signage is of limited, static illumination and is sited appropriately to ensure there will be no detriment on public or highway safety, satisfying national and local policy requirements.

Conclusions

The proposals include Big Mamma's bespoke signage, necessary to alert customers to their presence in the approved restaurant within the St Michaels development.

Overall, the design and scale of the proposed signage and shopfront alterations would be appropriate to the commercialised character of the wider building and area. The scheme is considered to be well-designed and offers a high quality and legible shopfront which enhances the public realm while maintaining standards of public and highway safety. The proposal seeks to maintain the modern feel of the shopfront while adding Big Mamma Groups signature style. The proposed signage and awning will create a high-quality and interesting façade that keeps true to the existing contemporary glass front design and complies with the approved signage strategy.

It has been demonstrated that the proposals are consistent with the relevant policies set out in the NPPF, Manchester Core Strategy, Unitary Development Plan and Shopfront and Signage Design Guide.

I trust that the information enclosed is sufficient to allow for validation of the application and subsequently allow for the grant of planning and advertisement consent. In the meantime, we look forward to confirmation that the application is valid shortly. Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully,



TITO AROWOBUSOYE
Associate

Enc.