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April 2025

HERITAGE STATEMENT: SUNLIGHT HOUSE, MANCHESTER – EXTERNAL LIGHTING AND SIGNAGE

Savills Heritage and Townscape have been commissioned to provide a Heritage Statement in relation to a listed building consent (LBC) application for installation of external signage and lighting at Sunlight House, Quay Street, Manchester, M3 3JZ (hereafter 'the Site'). This follows a series of previous planning and LBC applications for the Site, including consented planning and listed building consent applications for an extensive programme of external works to repair and improve the building's façade (refs: 142316/FO/2025 & 142317/LO/2025). These external works are nearing completion, and permission is therefore now sought for proposed external lighting and signage to the listed building, following iterative engagement with MCC on these proposals.

This report should be read in conjunction with drawings and documents provided by Signbox Ltd and OR Constulting Engineers. Please also refer to the full Heritage Statement (March 2025) prepared for the listed building by Savills Heritage and Townscape in relation to previous applications, an overview of which is included below.

Significance:

Sunlight House is Grade II listed building (NHLE ref: 1270915), which is also located within the Deansgate/Peter Street Conservation Area. A full assessment of the listed building's significance is included in the detailed Heritage Statement referenced above, with a summary provided here.

Sunlight House was constructed in 1932 and designed by Joseph Sunlight. The architectural interest of Sunlight House is considered to be primarily derived from its external façades. This is due to both its striking design as a landmark within the surrounding context and its external detailing, particularly at ground floor level. Its central lightwell is also considered to be a key

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architectural feature, which gives the building a unique character. Internally the building has undergone numerous stages of refurbishment during its history, with the resulting loss of original features throughout the building and considerable variety across different floors. Sunlight House derives historic interest from its association with the prominent local figure of Joseph Sunlight, as well as being a milestone in the history of Manchester's development and the wider transition from industrial to commercial in this part of this city.

Impact assessment:

The proposed works to the external façade of the listed building comprise upgrading external lighting and signage, in accordance with the building's wider rejuvenation. The impact of these proposals in relation to the listed building and wider conservation area is assessed below.

The proposed external lighting design draws upon local precedent and has been reviewed iteratively with MCC during the design process. The particular character of Sunlight House has also been a key consideration for the proposed design, drawing inspiration from other such Art Deco landmarks and how they are best lit. There is considered to be considerable potential to improve the existing lighting of the building, through rationalising the current fixtures and fittings by employing a holistic approach, which allows the building's unique architecture to be celebrated day and night.

Key architectural features of the listed building have therefore been selected to be highlighted through the proposed lighting scheme. As such the domes crowning the façades will be lit through linear LED lighting around the architectural frieze at the parapet line of the towers, to illuminate these artistic features and define the domed roofs above. To complement this spotlights will also be used to highlight the eagle motifs at the top of each tower, marking the full height of the building within the Manchester skyline. Further lines of linear LED lighting will be introduced at seventh and sixth floor levels, to define the architectural plinth and detailing demarcating the building's proportions here.

At first floor level a further line of linear LED lighting will be introduced to define the transition between the ground floor frontage and upper levels. Uplights will also be installed aligned with the corners of the tower, to effectively define the verticality of these key elements within the building façade, with complementary downlights providing consistency across the building. Further lighting at ground floor level comprises lighting to the proposed signage (discussed

below) and the introduction of spotlights to highlight the distinctive decorative vases located above the entrance canopies.

The fixtures and fittings proposed for this lighting scheme have been reviewed with the Savills Heritage and Townscape team, with regard to their suitability for the listed building. The proposed lighting scheme will use existing cable routes and interventions within the building's fabric wherever possible, with fixings also installed within mortar joints or using a secondary fixing system to further minimise necessary interventions. The existing redundant and incongruous light fittings will also be removed as part of this process in order to rationalise the building's external lighting scheme and markedly improve the façade's overall appearance. The proposed fixtures themselves are minimally sized and sympathetically coloured to avoid adverse visual impact on the building's façade during daylight hours, with the lighting scheme itself serving to effectively celebrate the building's landmark architecture at night.

The proposed signage upgrades proposed as part of this application relate to new 'Sunlight House' signs above the main building entrance on Little Quay Street, and on the building corners at Little Quay Street/Atkinson Street and Quay Street/Little Quay Street. These proposed new signs will be hand-fabricated in aluminium, with a painted anodic bronze finish and the upstands painted to match the Portland stone behind. These signs will be sat within an aluminium trough housing LED lighting, to effectively illuminate the signage whilst minimising fixings to the listed building. These troughs will be painted black and green to match existing building detailing, and will ensure that all associated cabling and fixings are concealed to minimise visual impact on the building's façades. The only fixings therefore required are for these troughs themselves, which also provide lighting to the signage, co-ordinated with the wider lighting strategy.

Conclusion:

The proposed signage and lighting installations described above are considered to be a sympathetic and considered upgrade to the listed building, which have been designed in order to minimise fabric interventions and be sympathetic to the building's architectural interest. The proposals represent an overall improvement in the external appearance of the listed building within the wider conservation area, removing redundant fixings and introducing a holistic approach which suitably celebrates the building's landmark status and provides clear wayfinding outside of daylight hours.

It is therefore considered that the proposals will result in **no harm** to the significance of the Grade II listed Sunlight House, but will instead provide a considerable **heritage benefit** to both the listed building and wider conservation area, through sympathetic improvement to and celebration of the listed building.

References:

- *Sunlight House, Manchester: Heritage Statement*, Savills Heritage and Townscape (March 2025)
- Manchester City Council, Deansgate/Peter Street Conservation Area: https://www.manchester.gov.uk/info/511/conservation_areas/1092/deansgatepeter_street_conservation_area
- National Heritage List for England: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>
- National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024)
- Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Prepared by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alice Jones", with a stylized flourish underneath.

Alice Jones ACIfA
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