

22nd November 2024

Jennifer Atkinson
Planning
Manchester City Council
Town Hall Extension
Manchester
M60 2LA

Dear Jennifer,

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 (AS AMENDED)
FULL PLANNING APPLICATION FOR EXTERIOR ALTERATIONS TO ELEVATIONS AND PUBLIC REALM IMPROVEMENTS, INCLUDING ALTERATIONS TO PARKING AT CASTLEFIELD HOUSE.
PLANNING PORTAL REFERENCE PP-13526559
CASTLEFIELD HOUSE, LIVERPOOL ROAD, MANCHESTER M3 4SB

This application is submitted on behalf of Castlefield House Properties Limited. The application involves modest but effective measures to enhance the appearance of Castlefield House and better integrate the site into its surroundings. This involves redecoration of elevations; signage to the western elevation; and removal of the frontage car parking to provide new public realm. Works are modest and seek to harmonise with the Conservation Area and neighbouring listed assets.

This letter forms the Planning Statement, and should be read alongside the other submitted documents, which are as follows:

- Application form prepared by Zerum;
- Heritage Statement prepared by Zerum;
- Design and Access Statement prepared by Studio Hart;
- Full set of plans prepared by Studio Hart;
- Transport Assessment prepared by Mosodi; and
- Drainage Statement and Proposed Outline Drainage Strategy prepared by Civic Engineers.

The proposals form part of the strategy for the emerging Campfield campus. Consent was granted in March 2024 for the restoration and refurbishment of the Grade II listed Upper and Lower Campfields which flank Castlefield House. They will together provide a workspace development comprising offices, a technology incubator hub, recording studios and events space.

Castlefield House will serve as a hub within the Campfield campus providing media workspace, production studio spaces and content creation suites. The proposed works will enhance the

building's visual appeal and improve its contribution to the Conservation Area. The public realm elements will better link the three buildings, in line with the original masterplan vision.

The description of development is: *"Exterior alterations to elevations and public realm improvements, including alterations to parking at Castlefield House"*.

The Site

Castlefield House is a six storey office building, with a two storey element which extends to the back of the pavement on Liverpool Road. It dates to the 1960s. Its curtilage is edged by railings and contains 30 car parking spaces. Many of these are difficult to navigate. The building is partially let at present.

Surrounding built form is varied. To the southern side of Liverpool Road, there are three storey Georgian terraces. The site sits in between two Grade II listed former market halls. Consent was granted on 07 March 2024 for their restoration and refurbishment by the applicant to create a workspace development comprising offices, a technology incubator hub, recording studios and events space (138345/LO/2023, 138377/FO/2023, 138346/LO/2023). Conditions are currently being discharged and works are progressing.

The site is located opposite the Castlefield Urban Heritage Park. Nearby built form includes traditional public houses; four to five storey modern blocks; and further away but within view, modern towers. The site is located within the Castlefield Conservation Area which includes the site of the former Roman fort; canals and warehouses; and the 1830s Liverpool Road Station to the west.

Description of Proposal

Elevations

The proposed amendments for the ground and first floor elevations include the decoration of the existing curtain walling in dark grey, along with new aluminium fins and coping. There is currently a greenish tone here which does not reflect the local context nor the local colour palette. A second door is to be inserted into the main elevation to facilitate circulation.

For the upper section, a light-touch renovation will be undertaken. The building envelope will be cleaned and repaired where necessary. The existing beige cladding will be painted grey. A metal mesh is to be applied to the vertical section over the existing entrance in order to add subtle interest. The Byrom Street elevation will incorporate large lettering which will signpost the presence of the 'Campfields' buildings. The proposed colour treatments are drawn from the local context. Materials have been chosen for their high quality finish.

Public realm and parking improvements

The site currently presents railings and car parking to Liverpool Road and Byrom Street. This is to be completely reworked in order to deliver considerable public realm improvements. The existing railings are to be removed along Liverpool Road, and largely removed along Barton Street and Tonman Street.

Car parking in the front will be eliminated. To the rear, nine spaces will be retained including two accessible spaces. This will allow tenants with existing parking needs to continue to drive to the site. The submitted Transport Statement sets out all associated works which will be carried out.

The revised parking format will open up the frontage space, enhancing connectivity and accessibility. The extended public realm will link the site into the public spaces along Liverpool

Road and Byrom Street. Planting including three mature trees will demarcate the site while attracting its use. High quality materials will include small square pavers echoing cobblestones. Ground levels in the front yard will be adjusted for level access from the surrounding pavements. The enhancement of the building, signage to the western elevation and the integration of the site into the surrounding public realm will enhance the Campfields campus.

There will be a covered cycle store added along Barton Street which will house 56 bikes. It will be secured with fencing and will serve Castlefield House as well as Upper and Lower Campfields.

For further details, please refer to the Design and Access Statement and Transport Statement submitted with the application.

Planning issues

This letter has described the proposals and will now examine the planning considerations which they raise. In accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, determination of the application must be made in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The development plan relating to the Site consists of Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan 2022-2039 (adopted 2024) and the Manchester Core Strategy (adopted 2012). The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2023) is a material consideration in planning terms.

Principle of Use

It is important to note that these proposals do not represent an intensification of the site's use. The application is for external elevational changes and public realm improvements aimed at enhancing the building's appearance and its contribution to the Conservation Area, and improving connectivity with the surrounding Campfield development.

As there is no change of use and no increase in the intensity of the existing use, the principle of development is well-established and does not need to be justified here.

Design

The proposals seek to modestly enhance the building while tying it together with its neighbours in signposting the Campfields tech campus. The incorporation of signage to the western elevation of building is a means of linking the building with the adjacent Campfields buildings, which offer a complementary offer. Along with the landscaping improvements, this seeks to build the sense of an interlinked campus. Alternative signage options were considered during the pre-application stage. It was felt appropriate to limit signage to the side elevation. This signposts the building and enhances wayfinding, whilst ensuring that the proposals do not dominate this part of the Conservation Area.

This approach aligns with Core Strategy Policy SP1 which emphasises the importance of good design in enhancing the city's overall image and in creating places that align with its role. Policy EC1 recognises that development proposals can enhance a sense of place and respond to the needs of building users, with resulting benefits to places of work and the economy in general. The proposals also align with Policy EC2 which welcomes schemes that retain and enhance employment spaces.

The proposals are modest, ensuring the property retains its role as a 'backdrop' building within the Conservation Area. The grey palette was settled upon following a contextual analysis. Black was initially chosen for the two-storey element and vertical band down the building. While it would have smartened up the structure, it was felt to be overly dominant in the streetscene. The grey is

a recessive colour which delivers a high quality look to the building, while ensuring it blends with its surroundings. This responds to Policy EN1 and the NPPF, both of which emphasise good, contextual design.

Heritage

Heritage matters are reviewed in detail in the submitted Heritage Statement undertaken by Zerum, which forms part of this application. The report confirms that the site is located within the Castlefield Conservation Area and identifies relevant listed assets to be considered as part of the assessment of heritage impact. It provides a description and assessment of significance for each relevant asset and considers the proposals against local and national policy and Sections 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

The Assessment finds that Castlefield House currently makes a negative contribution to the Conservation Area and to the setting of nearby heritage assets. As such, the sensitive redecoration of the building and the removal of the visual clutter in the form of parking from the site frontage will have a minor positive impact on the relevant heritage assets.

The proposed materials are found to be suitably modest and recessive. They will ensure that the building's elevations are cleaned, repaired and refinished in a suitable manner, without drawing attention from the heritage assets. This is particularly the case in relation to the listed former market halls, Upper and Lower Campfields, which are adjacent to Castlefield House.

The site is confirmed not to contain any listed buildings or heritage assets. The church formerly on the site was demolished in the 1950s. While the site was historically enclosed by railings, the railings currently on the site are modern. They have no significance in relation to the former church, nor does the fact that the site is enclosed play a historic role. It cannot be seen to form any kind of heritage asset. The removal of the railings is fully acceptable from a heritage perspective.

The relevant heritage assets and their significance will be preserved in line with the legislative requirements, the NPPF and local policies. The works will generate a minor enhancement and significance will be upheld. No harm will be caused. The proposal thereby complies with local and national policy. There are no grounds to refuse consent on the basis of heritage impact.

Landscaping

In accordance with Policy JP-P1 of Places for Everyone, the proposals will enhance the public realm by transforming a previously fenced-off, concrete area dominated by parking, into a space with high-quality landscaping. This also aligns with Policy JP-Strat2, which emphasises the importance of improving public spaces to enrich local character. It aligns with Policy EN9 which seeks an enhanced quality and quantity of green infrastructure as part of development proposals. The provision of additional planting is to be welcomed as a modest contributor towards climate change mitigation, as set out in Policy EN8.

Chapter 8 of the NPPF underscores the critical importance of developing high-quality public spaces that foster active travel. The proposed enhancements to the public realm will help to realise this objective through improving the public realm and thereby encouraging active travel to the building and in the local area.

Core Strategy Policy CC5 supports proposals that enhance pedestrian safety and create a more accessible public realm. A key aim of the proposed improvements is to enhance connectivity by opening up the front yard and linking it to the public spaces along Liverpool Road and Byrom Street. Therefore, these proposals align with the objectives of Core Strategy Policy CC5.

Highway, parking and access

Policy JP-C8 of Places for Everyone emphasises that car parking should be well integrated and unobtrusive to support the street scene. Currently, the car parking design is problematic. It is visually intrusive, dominating the view from the street. The existing parking negatively impacts the streetscape and the pedestrian experience. Its layout is impractical with many spaces requiring coordination with other drivers in order for them to be accessed.

By removing the car parking from the front of the building and eliminating the front railings, along with enhancing the public realm, the development will significantly improve the streetscape and pedestrian journey. These changes will also make the remaining car parking more functional. Overall, these proposals align with Policy JP-C8.

A reduction in car parking spaces from 30 spaces to 9 in a well-connected city centre location should be viewed positively. The Transport Statement confirms that the reduction in parking will result in a minor positive impact on the operation of the highway network. Core Strategy Objective 2 'Economy and City Centre' outlines the Council's support for development sites with sustainable transport connections. Castlefield House, being exceptionally well-served by public transport, underscores the case for reducing and optimising car parking spaces, leveraging its highly accessible location.

To support this objective, covered, secure cycle parking for 56 bikes is proposed. It will serve Castlefield House, as well as Upper and Lower Campfields, promoting sustainable transport across the Campfield development. There will be no changes required to the refuse collection and servicing arrangements which will continue to operate from Byrom Street as at the present time.

Conclusion

The proposals involve no change of use and no intensification of use. It has been demonstrated that the proposals have been carefully developed in order to enhance the building's appearance in a manner which responds suitably to nearby heritage assets.

The incorporation of an expanded, landscaped public realm will enhance the general experience of this area. Along with the proposed signage, it will contribute towards local regeneration by better linking Castlefield House with Upper and Lower Campfield, underscoring the buildings' linked offer of media, technology and creative workspaces. The associated reduction of car parking brings benefits in sustainability and environmental enhancement.

The proposals have been demonstrated to comply with all relevant policy and to deliver economic, social and environmental benefits.

I trust the submitted application is satisfactory and I look forward to acknowledgement of its receipt. Should you wish to discuss the proposals or have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Deborah Baker Barnett
Associate Director