

July 2024

HERITAGE IMPACT STATEMENT – 440-442 WILMSLOW ROAD, MANCHESTER, M20 3BW

Introduction

This brief report is written to provide a professional heritage opinion on a proposed planning application for minor works of the ground floor property which is unlisted yet within the Withington Conservation Area.

The application site is located along Wilmslow Road. The building itself is formed as a three story building, the ground floor shop unit the application site. The shopfront has recently been replaced and therefore the application is retrospective. The former shopfront was modern, timber frame and of late 20th ,early 21st century modern in appearance, the replacement shopfront is equally of a modern quality.

For the purposes of significance, the building is unlisted and therefore its significance is considered low. However, the property is within the conservation area and on a street corner and located adjacent to listed buildings. Therefore the works as proposed could result in impacting the setting of adjacent listed buildings and the setting of the conservation area.



Fig 1, Google map extract showing former shopfront

Description of proposed works

The proposal subject to the planning application is for replacement of the ground floor shopfront. In this respect, the proposal makes little, if any difference to the actual street scene or that of the character of the building itself. However, the proposed shopfront will be of powder coated aluminium and follow a similar design yet with a degree of framing. The proposed shopfront will reduce the amount of advertisement clutter. The proposal replaces an earlier shopfront as highlighted at fig 1 which itself is modern and includes boxed in roller shutter. The works on the whole are modest in their scale and nature.

Heritage Impact assessment

In relation to the building itself, as noted, its significance is its street scene appearance and contribution to the conservation area and is of low significance.

This impact assessment relies on the understanding of the property identified that is an unlisted building. This impact assessment is a judgment on the proposal for works to include the replacement shopfront. It will discuss the impact of the proposals upon the character of the building and its overall design philosophy. It will provide a professional judgment on its acceptance.

In assessing the impact of a proposal which entails the impact on a heritage asset, this assessment draws on a number of key guiding documents where applicable. Such as, English Heritage Conservation Principles 2008, Historic England Guidance Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3, and The Setting of Heritage Assets 2017; where required. I have also considered the impact of the proposal upon the heritage asset by relating directly to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

In this instance given the minor scope of the works, I do not consider that the proposed works will give rise to any major impact and a setting assessment of the proposal is not required.

In determining applications affecting Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas, local authorities have to have regard for the 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act. Policies in the NPPF reinforce the 1990 Planning Act, but use slightly different words and emphasise balancing use, viability and conservation: ‘the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation’. The local authority should ‘identify and assess the particular significance of heritage assets’, and ‘take account of available evidence and necessary expertise’.

This report provides an appropriate level of significance assessment for this case, when ‘considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise conflict between

the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal'. The NPPF advises that when considering the impact of a proposal 'great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset the greater the weight should be'. More weight is therefore given to assets of national importance such as listed buildings, than to local heritage, and more weight should be given to features and elements of high significance than those of lower importance.

Proposals may enhance, have a neutral impact or cause harm to a heritage asset. The level of harm may be slight, 'less than substantial harm' or substantial. The NPPF states that substantial harm to listed buildings (such as demolition or loss) should be exceptional, and it has to be very robustly justified. Where 'less than substantial' harm is likely to be caused, the harm has to be balanced against the public benefits. This level of harm can include removal or covering over of features. In this case, the proposal to replace the shopfront is considered minor works and the level of harm is low, indeed the works proposed will result in a negligible alteration to the building. However, the proposed shopfront will be an improvement to the existing which is unsightly and heavily altered.

Withington Conservation Area

The Withington Conservation Area is situated approximately 3 miles south of Manchester City Centre. It principally consists of a linear shopping centre with some nearby housing. Properties within the conservation area are commercial/leisure/community uses and the area acts as a local centre to the resident population. Buildings' range from 3 storey with ground floor shop units fronting Wilmslow Road principally of brick to more ornate brick and stone buildings, namely Churches, library, public houses and former banks. The character of the CA is as commercial and cultural area for neighbouring residential areas.



Fig 2 Conservation area map extract with application site identified.

The proposal to replace the shopfront is broadly acceptable and results in no harm either to the setting of adjacent listed buildings, other unlisted buildings that contribute to the character of the conservation area or to the setting of the conservation area as a whole. Therefore, it is my opinion that the works result in a benign/neutral impact.

Conclusion

This report has considered the heritage implications of works proposed. Whilst the works are modest in their scale, the works proposed are informed, with an understanding and regard for the heritage asset, its context and significance. The significance of the building has been assessed and the resulting impact of the proposed works commented upon.

Government policy, as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, requires that proposed changes to the historic environment are based on a clear understanding of the significance of any heritage asset and its setting, providing information so that the likely impact of proposals can be assessed.

The heritage assessment provided in this report is carried out in accordance with the historic environment policies in the NPPF and local planning policy and is intended to aid the assessment of any resulting planning application. I have briefly outlined the significance of the building its character and that of the conservation area. I have outlined the scope of the proposed works and commented on the likely impact upon the heritage asset and any mitigating factors.

The crucial test contained within the NPPF is whether the harm to a heritage asset is outweighed by the public interest and benefits of a proposal. There is no negative impact as a result of the proposed works and the resulting impact will be neutral/benign.

My conclusions have found that the proposed works will result in a neutral/benign impact on the heritage asset. I believe the proposals strike a balance between the architectural and historic interest of the area. The proposals as set out will not present any detrimental impact upon the designated heritage asset in accordance with national planning policy. It is of course for the local Planning authority to weigh and balance the positive aspects of the proposal.

I believe the proposals as set out will not present any long term detrimental impact upon the designated heritage asset in accordance with local and national planning policy.

Jason Kennedy, BSc, Dip TP, MA, MRTPI, IHBC
Townscape: Chartered Town Planning & Heritage Consultant Ltd

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