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The Renold Building, Manchester: Proposed External Signage. Heritage Statement

Introduction

This Heritage Statement has been written by Stephen Levrant Heritage Architecture Ltd (SLHA), a practice of conservation architects, surveyors, planners, and heritage consultants that specialises in the historic environment.

The Renold Building forms part of the former UMIST campus which is now subject to the vision for an innovation district as set out within the ID Manchester Strategic Regeneration Framework ('SRF'), endorsed by Manchester City Council in October 2023. This document establishes Pillars of Success, which set an ambitious framework to deliver an exemplar of urban regeneration and renewal.

The Renold Building has been identified as a non-designated heritage asset and is adjacent to the Grade II listed Manchester South Junction and Altrincham Railway Viaduct and the boundary to the Whitworth Street Conservation Area.

An application to change the use of the Renold Building was approved by Manchester City Council in April 2024. Sensitive, light touch internal works, that have been informed by a detailed understanding of the heritage interest of the building, are underway that preserve and celebrate the original features whilst forming space for a mix of start-ups, incubators, and collaboration space within the building to form the central "hub" for the innovation district and secure the long-term re-activation and use of the building.

As part of the proposals to re-activate the building, it is proposed to install new external signage to the north and south elevations.

This statement, and the preceding conservation advice to the project team, has been prepared in the context of relevant national and local heritage planning policy. In particular, the statement is presented to accord with the national policy requirements of the NPPF (2023), to describe the significance of the affected heritage assets and the consequent impact of the proposals.

The Site and its Heritage Context

The Renold Building is located to the south of Altrincham Street between London Road to the east and Sackville Street to the west (see Figure 1).

The Renold Building was designed in 1958, and completed in 1962, by the architect Arthur Gibbon, a partner in the firm Cruickshank and Seward. It was innovative in its concept as a lecture room block, to be used by all departments, with classrooms, lecture theatres and other teaching rooms all gathered under one roof. It was one of the first major buildings to be completed at the former UMIST campus.

The building was assessed for statutory listing in 2006. Whilst it was recognised that the building had a degree of significance in terms of its technical innovations and design concept, the lack of special architectural merit and the degree of alteration meant that it did not meet the high standards required to list a post-war buildings.

As a non-designated heritage asset, the special architectural and historic interest of the building is conveyed through its multi-level setting within the former university campus and its architectural form; its heavily glazed zig-zag east elevation against the white painted concrete presents a distinctive building.

Due to the localised nature of the proposals, it is considered that other listed buildings within the setting of the Site, namely the Grade II listed MSJAR Viaduct, would not be impacted.

The boundary of the Whitworth Street Conservation Area follows the line of the listed MSJAR Viaduct opposite the Site. It is considered that that the proposals will not impact the character and appearance of the Conservation Area as a whole and this heritage asset has also been scoped out of this assessment.

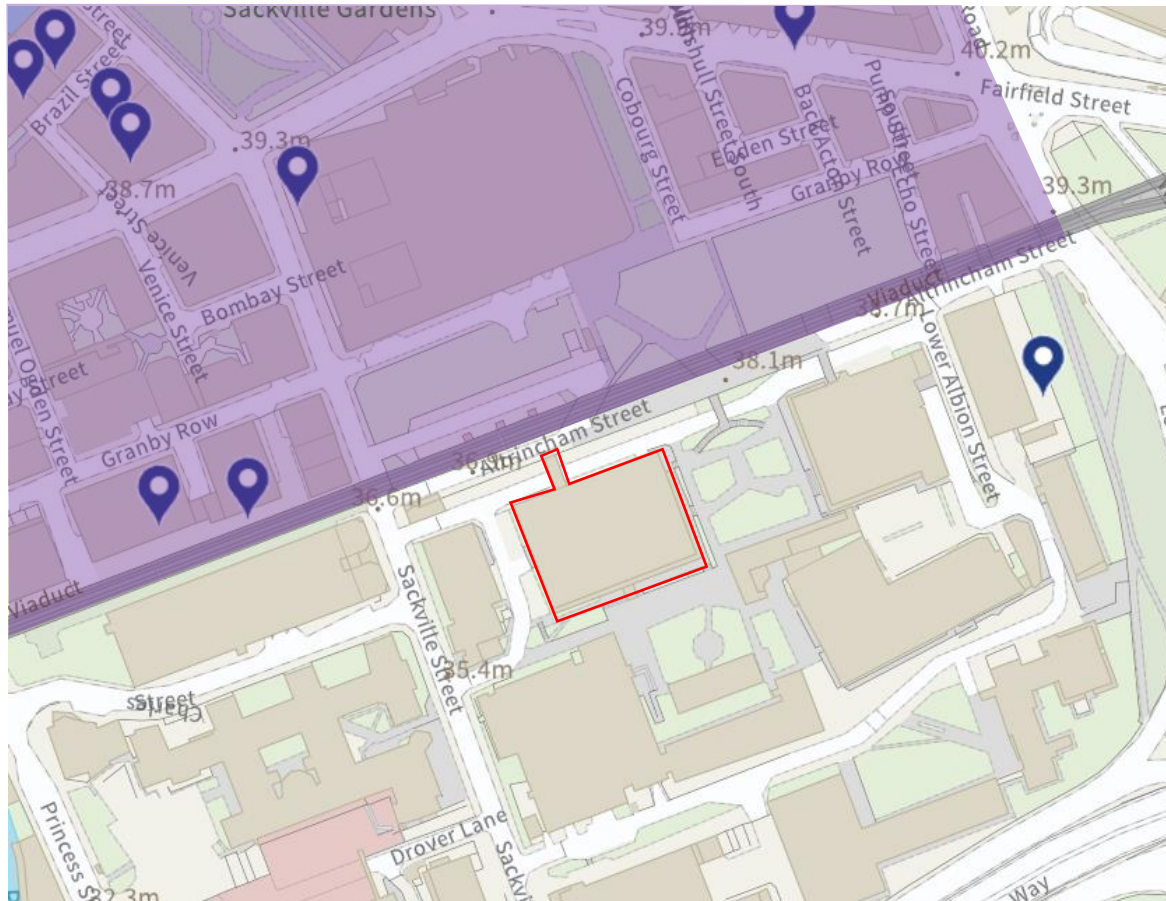


Figure 1: Site Plan. Renold Building highlighted in red. Locations of Listed Buildings are identified with blue pins. The Whitworth Street Conservation Area is highlighted in purple.

Proposals

The re-activation of the Renold Building marks the start of the implementation of the wider transformative proposals for the site. As a signifier to what is to become a new place within Manchester City Centre, the proposed high-quality signage to the Renold Building has been designed to provide suitable wayfinding as well as announce the new identity and branding for the buildings and area.

It is proposed to install at high level (Floor 6) on the north side of the building an illuminated sign of approximately 5x5m in size. This mounted sign will be backlit, have a 3 core power supply and stand-off rods fixed back to the concrete elevation. At street level, the existing entrance from Altrincham Street is to have a black aluminium panel wrap installed around the existing canopy with 3D lettering to the front (see Figure 2).

To the south side of the building, it is proposed to have a painted sign to the wall and the existing entrance canopy will have the same aluminium wrap and 3D lettering as proposed to the north elevation (see Figure 3).



Figure 2: CGI illustrating how the proposed signage will appear on the north side of the building.



Figure 3: CGI illustrating how the proposed signage will appear on the south side of the building.

Heritage Impact and Conclusion

Detailed information on the proposed design and fixings for the signage is provided by Place Marque in their accompanying documents.

It will be clear that the design, location and quantity of signage proposed is of a high quality and modest in nature. As such, it is considered that the proposed signage will not compete with the architectural interest of the building. The proposed signage is considered necessary to provide wayfinding and signify the reactivation of the building as well as mark to the beginnings of the transformation of the site as a whole.

Where fixings/ power supply are required (the high-level north sign), consideration has been given to the allowance for the minimal number and size required. Further to this, should the signage need to be removed in the future it is reversible and any fixing holes created could be infilled easily to match the existing elevation.

Overall, it is considered that the proposed signage will result in the heritage interest of the site being enhanced.

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