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Manchester Centre for Buddhist Meditation; Chorlton-Cum-Hardy **Heritage Statement**

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1. Background

This Heritage Statement has been prepared in support of a planning application for alterations and adaptation of the chapel hall building categorised by the local authority as a 'non-designated heritage asset'. Although not 'listed', it positively contributes to the character of High Lane and therefore any proposed alterations should be sympathetic and well considered. Currently the building is underutilised and by introducing a first floor level, this will increase its usage and ensure future sustainability.

The report includes a brief history of the building, the principles of and justification for the proposed alterations and also their impact on the special character of this 'heritage asset'.

Situated on High Lane in Chorlton, it has been operated for a number of years by an organisation called The Manchester Centre for Buddhist Meditation, offering opportunities for meditation, education, Buddhist contemplation and study. It is well used and opens its doors to the public at certain times to engage with anyone who wishes to know more about Buddhism.

2. History

The hall and former church that once stood adjacent, were built in 1896, with the hall extended in 1908. This, together with other places of worship that grew up in and around the area, catered for the influx of the new 'middle classes' in the second half of the 19th Century.



Map circa 1880



Map from 1908



1890s

The area had huge growth out from the city centre, becoming popular for the emerging middle classes, replacing more modest worker's housing. Development at the end of the 19th Century and early 20th Century has seen many large houses being built, as well as a Masonic Hall and Methodist church.

The Methodist Church closed in 1960 and was destroyed by arson in 1967.



High Lane Primitive Methodist Church (Macpherson's Memorial)

The 1970s saw the building used as the hall of the High Lane Primitive Methodist's Church

However for a very short interval, between the closure of the Methodist Church and the opening of St. John's new school buildings on Chepstow Road, this building functioned as an annexe of that school.

The Samantha Trust, a Buddhist charity, started renting the building from the council in 1977 when it was fairly dilapidated. They had to sort out problems with dry rot, remove a lot of extinct piping and decorate it from top to toe. They bought it from the council at the end of 1995 and have continued to upgrade it since then.

3. Assessment of Significance

The old chapel hall is not listed but is considered by the Local Authority as 'non-designated heritage asset'

Description

Red brick walls with terracotta details including decorative features, string course and coping with corner and intermediate terracotta pinnacles to the gable.

Roof covering is in Grey Welsh slate typical of the period.

Gable windows; large three panel arched windows, divided into square timber framed panels, again probably later replacements. The splayed cill formed by a string course about 2.5M above ground level.

Side window are narrower lancets, in pairs with arched heads. Window frames are timber painted with single glazing.

Timber boarded double doors to either side, with arched lay lights above to front elevation (the doors appear to be later replacements similar in style to the original.) From historic photos, the original lay lights were subdivided into three with arched glazing bars. There are stone steps up to the doors. A plinth offset at low level.



Internally, the end space is double height and is subdivided to form a large meditation hall and the end space pictured below. There are smaller ancillary rooms to the rear of the site.



The floors are suspended timber joist and boarded. Ceilings are underdrawn, with the exception at high level, where there is a flat ceiling, with roof void above.

4. Proposals

The proposal is to introduce a first floor level to the end space to create a number of single study/bedrooms for short residential stays.

First floor

The reason for installing the first floor is that at present the room is unused space as the ceiling is too high to make it useful or economic for most purposes. The extra floor will create an interesting space in front of the big windows and provide a number of small bedrooms which are needed for our occasional residential courses, along with suitable meeting rooms and other facilities.

Downstairs there will be an 'accessible' bedroom and also a disabled fully DDA compliant shower and lavatory facility. The principle is to be as inclusive as possible.

New windows

Windows are to be upgraded (in new sustainable timber frame) to include double glazed units, secondary glazing to the existing main gable windows.

The splayed window cill is to be retained. New gable windows are to be formed at ground floor level, also to be double glazed, in timber frames for increased natural light and sound insulation.

Thermal insulation levels generally are to be improved to ceilings to reduce heat loss.

New doors

New Oak doors are included, outward opening to provide for emergency escape and for the main entrance, to be wide enough for wheelchairs.

Ramp

A ramp will be formed at the front for disabled access with stone steps to the side. A handrail is to be provided, with stone edging and a slip resistant paved surface.

New gable windows at ground floor level will be formed, double glazed, again in timber for increased natural light

Improvements to electrical and heating services.

Velux style windows for bedrooms.

Landscaping will be enhanced to the area in front of the hall with additional planting beds and hard standing.

5. Impact of Proposals

We consider the impact of these proposals to be minimal.

The new ground level gable windows will follow the same line and detail as the gable windows above, retaining the existing cill and extending to ground level.

The ramp will be discrete and built in red brick to match that of the building, with buff stone upstands and steps. The surface of the ramp will be textured buff colour paving.

The handrail will be 50mm round stainless steel bar.

There will be no other significant visual implications. The character of the building will be maintained and all detailing will be of high quality to enhance this heritage asset for future generations.