Paul Butler Associates
Planning, Development & Heritage Consultants

9 October 2023

Mrs Julie Roscoe
Head of Planning
Manchester City Council
Town Hall
Albert Square
Manchester
M60 2LA

23.1871

FAO Michael Pearson

Dear Mrs Roscoe,

16 Blossom Street, Ancoats, Manchester, M4 5AF
Application for advertisement consent for 'Painted advertisement mural and 2 x plaque signs'

Introduction

On behalf of our client, Dragonfly Contracts Ltd, please find attached an application for Advertisement Consent for 'Painted advertisement mural and 2x plaque signs'.

In order to provide a clear understanding of the proposal, this letter provides a brief background to the application site and its surroundings; includes a description of the proposed signage; sets out the planning policy guidance of relevance to the proposal; and, assesses the proposed signage against the relevant planning policy context.

The Application Site and Background

The application site comprises 16 Blossom Street, Ancoats, Manchester, M4 5AF (see Figures 1 and 2 below). The property is a former industrial warehouse building which has been converted. The property was last used for education purposes by 'Manchester Creative Studio'. This business closed in 2017 and the building has been without any official use since then (property guardians have occupied the building to provide security).

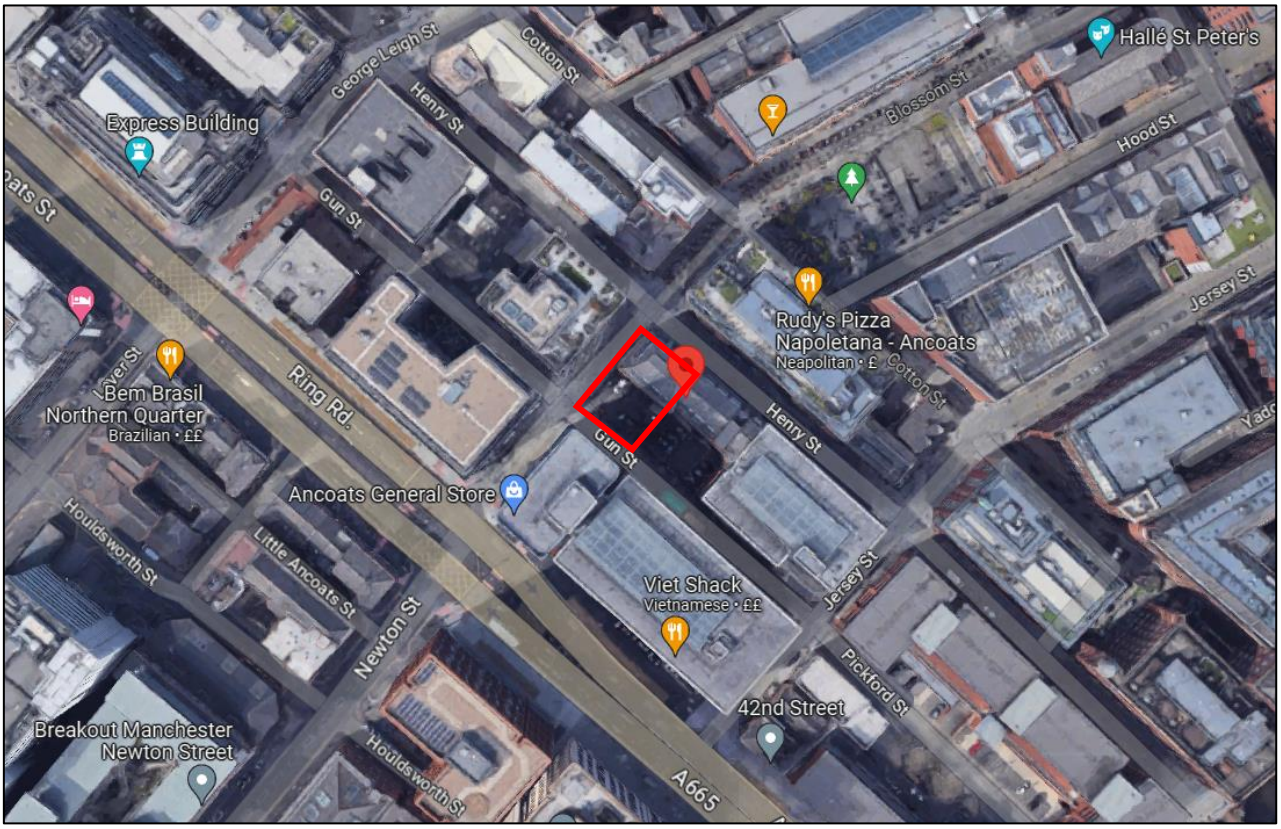


Figure 1: Aerial view identifying 16 Blossom Street.

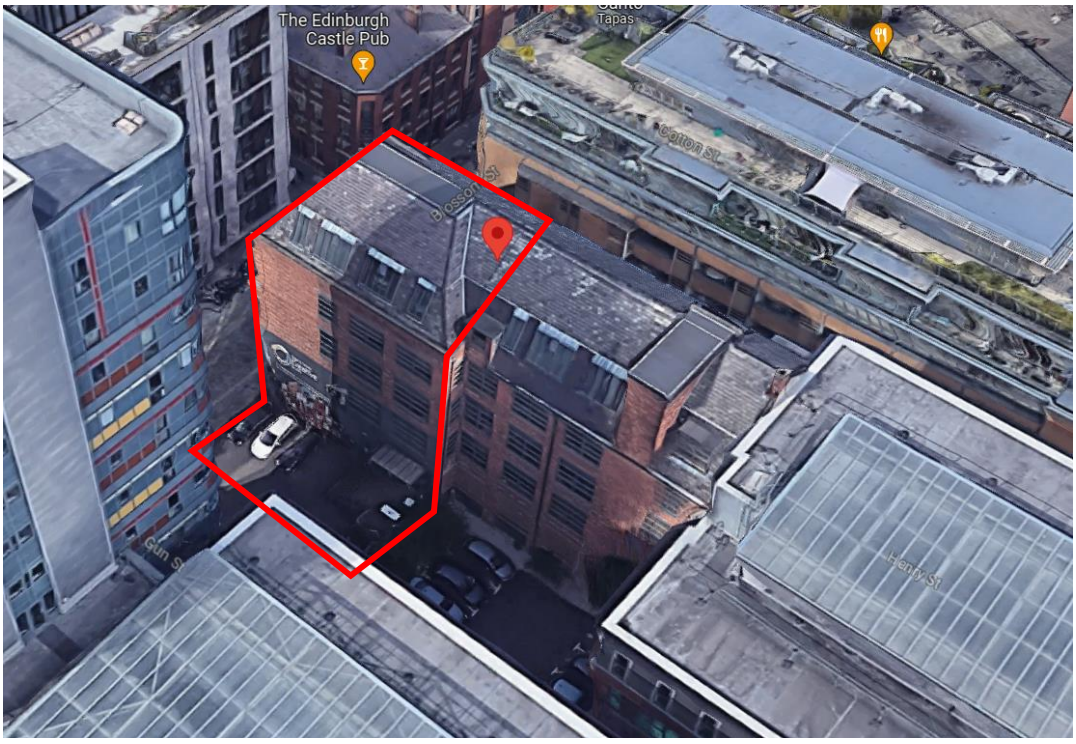


Figure 2: 3D Aerial view of 16 Blossom Street.

The property is shortly to be occupied by Ada National College for Digital Skills following completion of refurbishment of the building due to complete in early 2024. Ada is a further education college that specialises in providing digital skills education to equip future generations with the skills required to pursue a career in tech and digital industries. The college has strong links with the tech industry and works directly with businesses to secure employment opportunities for students, many of which are from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The building is four storeys above a half-basement and attic. It is of brick construction with a slate roof. The Blossom Street / Henry Street corner of the building comprises smooth red brick with terracotta dressings and incorporates the original entrance to the building. The main entrance to the building is however located on the rear elevation which fronts Gun Street. The lower floors of the Gun Street elevation comprise painted render with previous signage / branding installed on this elevation.

The Gun Street entrance is currently accessed across a tarmacked hardstanding / car park space. This has recently been granted planning permission for 'Provision of access ramp, hard and soft landscaping, bin and bike storage and associated works' approved under planning permission 137419/FO/2023, with these works to be commenced shortly.

The implementation of this planning permission will significantly improve the hardstanding area, which will form an attractive and welcoming entrance to Ada. A key element of these landscaping works is to highlight and emphasise the position of the entrance, which is located on the rear elevation of the building and away from Blossom Street which is the main route through the area. Together with these physical enhancement works the proposed signage forms a key element of the scheme to ensure that the entrance to the building is readily identifiable and Ada has a strong and distinctive identity.

The Surrounding Area

The site is located in the Ancoats Conservation Area in Manchester City Centre. No other site specific planning policy designations apply.

Uses in the area are varied which is typical of the site's City Centre location. These include shops, restaurants, cafes, bars, pubs, hotels and offices. Due to this location, signage displayed on buildings is a common feature.

The Application Proposal

This application is for advertisement consent for the installation of branding / signage on the rear elevation of 16 Blossom Street. The proposal is for a painted mural which will incorporate the Ada logo, and an adaption of the Ada logo which combines geometric shapes and bold colours to create an eye-catching and distinctive appearance. The total size of the mural area will measure 6.655m x 12.720m, with the individual elements being shown on the submitted application drawing.

Two entrance plaques will be provided to the right side of the existing entrance. These will comprise of printed vinyl applied to brushed stainless steel panels. One will display the text 'Ada

National College for Digital Skills', with the other displaying the text 'Greater Manchester Institute of Technology'.

This new branding will replace an existing mural / signage in this location which has been in place since 2016, although for which no formal advertisement consent can be found (see figure 3 below of existing mural / signage).



Figure 3: View of the site from Blossom Street showing the existing mural / signage.

Planning Policy Context

Planning policy guidance of relevance to the proposal is contained within the Town and Country Planning (Control of Signage) (England) Regulations 2007; the National Planning Policy Framework (2021); National Planning Practice Guidance; Manchester's Core Strategy Development Plan Document (2012); Saved policies of the Unitary Development Plan for Manchester (July 1995); and, the Guide to Development in Manchester Supplementary Planning Document and Planning Guidance (2007).

Town and Country Planning (Control of Signage) (England) Regulations 2007

Government Circular 03/2007 Town and Country Planning (Control of Signage) (England) Regulations 2007 requires local planning authorities to exercise their powers in relation to impact on amenity or public safety only, taking into account relevant development plan policies so far as they relate to amenity or public safety.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. A revised NPPF was published in July 2018 and updated most recently in September 2023. The document states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Of relevance to the application proposal it seeks to achieve this objective by:

- Setting out that there is a need for the planning system to perform a number of roles, including an economic role, social role and environmental role (paragraph 8).

- Requiring that planning decisions should ensure that developments: will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short-term but over the lifetime of the development; are visually attractive as a result of good architecture; are sympathetic to local character and history including the surrounding built environment; maintain a strong sense of place; and, create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible (paragraph 130).

- The quality and character of places can suffer when advertisements are poorly sited and designed. A separate consent process within the planning system controls the display of advertisements, which should be operated in a way which is simple, efficient and effective. Advertisements should be subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking account of cumulative impacts (paragraph 136).

- Section 16 of the NPPF deals with conserving and enhancing the historic environment. Paragraph 189 states that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations.

- Paragraph 194 advises that 'In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance'.

- Paragraph 195 states that 'Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.'

- Paragraph 197 states 'In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

  a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
  b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
  c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness'.

- Paragraph 199 states 'When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is

irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance'.

- Paragraph 200 states 'Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of:

    a) grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional;
    b) assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, registered battlefields, grade I and II* listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional'.

- Paragraph 201 states that 'Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:
    a) the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and
    b) no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and
    c) conservation by grant-funding or some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and
    d) the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.

- Paragraph 202 states that 'Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use'.

- Paragraph 203 states that 'The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset'.

- Annex 2 of the NPPF provides a glossary of key terms which are relevant to the application. 'Significance' is defined as: 'The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting'.

- 'Setting of a heritage asset' is defined within Annex 2 as 'The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the

significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral'.

National Planning Practice Guidance

The government published guidance on advertisements via the National Planning Practice Guidance website on 6 March 2014 (Reference ID: 18b).

The guidance states: 'Advertisements are controlled with reference to their effect on amenity and public safety only, so the regime is lighter touch than the system for obtaining planning permission for development'.

The guidance goes on to state that 'local planning authorities [should] control the display of advertisements in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking into account the provisions of the development plan, in so far as they are material, and any other relevant factors'.

The Core Strategy Development Plan Document (July 2012)

The Core Strategy was adopted in July 2012 and is the key Development Plan Document. Relevant policies within the Core Strategy include:

Policy SP 1 'Spatial Principles': states that development in all parts of the City should make a positive contribution to neighbourhoods of choice including protecting and enhancing the built and natural environment.

Policy CC 9 'Design and Heritage': states that development in the City Centre should preserve or enhance heritage assets, including conservation areas.

Policy EN 3 'Heritage': sets out that new developments must be designed so as to support the Council in preserving/enhancing the historic environment, the character, setting and accessibility of areas and buildings of acknowledged importance including conservation areas.

Policy DM 1 'Development Management': states that all development should have regard to the following specific issues:-

- Appropriate siting, layout, scale, form, massing, materials and detail.
- Impact on the surrounding area in terms of the design, scale and appearance of the proposed development. Development should have regard to the character of the surrounding area.
- Effects on amenity.

Saved Policies of the Unitary Development Plan for Manchester (July 1995)

The Unitary Development Plan (UDP) was superseded by the Core Strategy. However, a number of UDP polices have been 'saved'. Extant polices contained within the UDP which are relevant to the proposed scheme include:

Policy DC18 'Conservation Areas' seeks to protect, preserve and enhance the character of the city's conservation areas.

Policy DC14 'Shop Fronts and Related Signs' seeks to ensure that the frontages and signage of commercial premises are in keeping with the character of the building and the surrounding area.

Policy DC15 'Advertisements, hoardings and posters': states that the Advertisement Regulations require that applications for advertisements be considered only in the interests of amenity and public safety. The Council will take account of the following matters in assessing these interests:

a) The general location of the proposed development and the effect on visual amenity;
b) The scope for posters and hoardings to make a positive contribution to the locality;
c) The design of the structures, and the relationship with any premises on which they are located;
d) The effect of the proposal on permanent redevelopment of the land;
e) Public safety resulting from the positioning of the design of the display;
f) The ease with which the structure is capable of being satisfactorily maintained;
g) The use of hoardings to screen vacant sites or buildings during development, or where development is known to be imminent;
h) The number of advertisements in the locality and their cumulative effect on visual amenity.

The Guide to Development in Manchester Supplementary Planning Document and Planning Guidance (2007)

Guidance contained within this document of relevance to the proposal includes:

Chapter 2 'Design': which states new development, whether for residential, industrial, commercial or retail purposes, should have a high standard of design making a positive contribution to the City's environment.

For the reasons identified below, it is considered that the proposal accords with the above planning policy guidance.

Planning and Heritage Appraisal

The key material considerations against which the proposed signage should be considered include: effect on amenity; and, effect on public safety. The relationship of the proposed signage with the building and its conservation area location are also important material considerations.

Principle of Signage

The application proposal involves the installation of new signage / branding on the rear elevation of 16 Blossom Street. This elevation will include the main entrance to Ada National College for Digital Skills with the current hardstanding area undergoing significant landscaping improvements. As part of these improvements disabled access will be provided by a new ramp, with new hard and soft landscaping being provided. The entrance position is located away from Blossom Street

which is a main route through the area, meaning it is not as visible as it otherwise might be, particularly given the position on the building's rear elevation.
The above characteristics mean that there is an increased importance of providing signage / branding which helps to visually distinguish the building and allow for ready identification of the entrance. The proposal has been designed with careful consideration of these factors, incorporating the Ada logo, and an adaption of the Ada logo which combines geometric shapes and bold colours to create an eye-catching and distinctive appearance. Two plaque signs are to be situated to the right of the entrance further identifying the college.

In addition to the above, it is highlighted that signage already exists on the rear elevation of 16 Blossom Street. Whilst no formal approval can be identified for this installation it is considered that the approach for some form of signage / branding / advertisement in this location has a beneficial impact, adding visual interest to what would otherwise be a blank, lifeless elevation. The use of artwork and branding on blank elevations and elsewhere have been approved elsewhere across the City Centre, and these can contribute to a diverse and interesting urban environment.

The City Centre location of the site also means that signage, branding and other advertisements can be readily found in the surrounding environment and that these are appropriate within this context.

Design, Visual Appearance, and Effect on Amenity

In accordance with national and local planning policy it is necessary to consider the impact of the proposed signage in terms of design and visual appearance, whilst the potentially non-designated status of the building and its conservation area location further emphasises the importance of ensuring a proposal of high quality and sensitive design.

The proposed signage will be applied to the blank elevation of 16 Blossom Street in a location where existing signage/branding is present.

The background of the new mural branding will be a dark grey colour which reflects the existing. This will be broken up with bold geometric shapes which reflect the logo and branding of Ada. These shapes will be mainly white to give a largely monochrome appearance, but with some shapes being brightly coloured to create interest. The use of bold colours and shapes forms part of the overall brand identity of Ada, and the need to project a youthful, exciting image for students and other college users.

Prior to the submission of the application, earlier advertisement proposals were presented to the Council. These included significantly more use of colour and a greater concentration of shapes. Following feedback by an Officer the signage was toned-down to be more subtle, particularly to ensure greater sensitivity with the conservation area setting. The current proposal is judged to strike an appropriate balance between the need for distinctive signage / branding, as well as successfully integrating with the surrounding area. On this basis it is not considered that there is an adverse impact on the visual amenity.

With the proposed signage / branding painted directly onto the existing rendered elevation, and with no projection or illumination, there is not considered to be any adverse public amenity impact. The 2x plaque signs to be installed to the right of the entrance are modest in size and do not raise any planning implications.

In summary, the proposed signage / branding is of high quality, will complement the appearance of the building and will be consistent with relevant provisions of the NPPF; Core Strategy Policy SP 1, CC 9, and DM 1; Saved UDP policies DC14 and DC15; and, the Guide to Development in Manchester SPD.

Effect of Signage on Public Safety

Planning policy guidance states that new signage should not present any risk to highway or public safety.

The proposed signage will be installed directly on the external façade of the building and there will be no obstruction to the footpath or highway.

There are numerous existing signs located on buildings / premises in the vicinity of the site and the proposed signage will not act as a distraction to any drivers travelling along Gun Street or Blossom Street in the vicinity of the premises. The branding is considered to strike an appropriate balance of being distinctive without being a visual distraction or causing a risk to highway safety. No direct illumination is proposed to the signage.

For the above reasons the proposal will not have an adverse impact on public safety and is consistent with provisions of the NPPF and Core Strategy Policy DM 1.

Relationship of Proposed Signage to the Building and the Ancoats Conservation Area

As noted previously, the proposed signage is of a carefully considered, high quality design and appropriately positioned. It is considered to strike an appropriate balance between the sensitivities associated with the Ancoats Conservation Area location, and the need to ensure distinctive and successful branding to support a new education use.

Similarly, the proposed signage / branding will not have an adverse impact on the setting of any listed heritage asset in proximity to the site. The signage will be installed to an existing rendered part of the building, ensuring that there will be no material adverse impact to the brick façade, whilst it could be readily overpainted at a future point if required.

In summary, due to the proposed location and design of the signage the proposal will not have an adverse impact on the building or the character and appearance of the Ancoats Conservation Area. It will also not adversely affect the setting of any nearby listed buildings. The proposal is therefore consistent with provisions of the NPPF; Core Strategy Policies CC 9 and EN 3; Saved UDP Policy DC19 and, the Guide to Development in Manchester.

In conclusion, the proposed signage will not have an adverse impact on amenity or public safety. It will assist in the identification of Ada National College for Digital Skills which is particularly important given the main entrance position on the rear elevation of the building and away from Blossom Steet. This in turn may contribute to the success of the college, helping to retain the building in active economic use and delivering wider economic, social and environmental benefits. This will have a positive heritage impact for both the building itself, and the Ancoats Conservation Area. As a result, the proposal is in accordance with relevant national and local planning policy guidance.

Submission Information

The following information has been submitted in support of the application:

- Completed Application Forms for Advertisement Consent

Drawing No.	Rev	Drawing Name
-	-	Entrance Plaque Material & Fixing Document_v1
57283_1	-	Existing Elevations
-	-	Ground Floor Entrance - Gun Street Elevation Signage Proposal
-	-	Agreed Design – Signage Proposal Detail
-	-	Entrance where stencil design will be applied

The above information has been submitted alongside the application forms via the planning portal. The application fee (amounting to £132) will be paid during submission of the application.

We look forward to receiving confirmation that the application has been validated. In the meantime, if you require any further information in order to determine the application please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely



Ralph Taylor BSc. MPLAN MRTPI
Associate Director