

Our Ref: 04C000839
Your Ref: PP- 12084855



25 April 2023

Manchester City Council
Planning
PO Box 532
Town Hall
Manchester
M60 2LA

Submitted via Planning Portal (PP-12084855)

Dear Sir/ Madam,

LISTED BUILDING CONSENT – SOUTH OFFICE REFURBISHMENT AT THE ROYAL EXCHANGE, 16 CROSS STREET, MANCHESTER, M2 7AE

On behalf of our client BVK Highstreet Retail Royal Exchange ('the Applicant') we are pleased to submit a Listed Building Consent (LBC) application for the internal refurbishment of the South Offices at Royal Exchange, 16 Cross Street, Manchester. The application documentation has been submitted via Planning Portal (Ref. PP-12084855) with the following supporting documentation:

- Application forms duly signed
- Site Location Plan and suite of architectural plans (please refer to **Appendix I** for a submission schedule of drawings)
- Planning Covering Letter
- Heritage and Access Statement
- Heritage Works Method Statement

BACKGROUND

Hines and Universal-Investment acquired Manchester Royal Exchange in 2016 following an extensive refurbishment programme undertaken by the previous owners. Hines administers and manages the Royal Exchange on behalf of BVK.

Hines intends to undertake further refurbishment works to ensure that the building remains competitively placed as a premier commercial location within the city centre.

The purpose of this application for listed building consent is to refurbish existing office space within the Royal Exchange, no external changes are sought. The proposed development will considerably improve the internal appearance and feel of the building and will enhance the communal facilities, accessibility and the environment for future tenants of the building's south office accommodation.

SITE CONTEXT

The Manchester Royal Exchange, a Grade II listed building (listing entry: 1200826), is located in the heart of Manchester City Centre.

The Manchester Royal Exchange is one of Manchester's most iconic buildings located within the commercial and retail core. The ground floor is predominately in use for retail (Use Class E(a)), the upper floors as office accommodation (Use Class E(g)) and part of the building as a theatre (sui generis). This planning application relates the internal refurbishment of the south offices on the second through to the fifth floor of the Manchester Royal Exchange.

The surrounding area comprises a mix of commercial uses. The Arndale Shopping Centre is located to the north-east of the site and Deansgate to the west. St Mary's Gate is located immediately to the north of the site, Cross Street to the immediate east, Old Bank Street to the south, and Exchange Street to the west. The area contains high quality retailing and several restaurants. The site is located within St Ann's Square Conservation Area.

PLANNING HISTORY

A review of Manchester City Council's (MCC) online planning register has been undertaken. The following listed building applications are considered relevant to this application:

- 124719/FO/2019 – listed building consent for the refurbishment of existing office accommodation, external alterations and associated development – approved 12/12/2019.
- 122890/LO/2019 – listed building consent for the replacement of external doors and associated works – approved 31/05/2019.
- 121025/LO/2018 – listed building consent Office fit out of 3rd, 4th, 5th and upper 5th floors to include the installation of partitions, kitchen facilities, lighting and services and the installation of externally mounted equipment – approved 19/02/2019.
- 118084/LO/2017 – listed building consent for the fit out of currently vacant office space to provide office accommodation and public court space' – approved 05/01/2018.
- 116597/LO/2017 – listed building consent for alterations to the first floor offices comprising the removal of non-original fixtures and the installation of partitions and alterations to the second floor offices comprising the installation of partitions, minor amendments to the layout of lighting, ductwork, air conditioning and ceiling rafts and installation of an access control system to entrance doors – approved 26/09/2017
- 109964/LO/2015/C1 – listed Building Consent for the refurbishment to the sixth floor office space – approved 15/01/2016.

- 108146/LO/2015/C1 – Listed building consent for internal and external alterations to provide office accommodation at 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th floor levels and associated works/refurbishment – approved 13/05/2015.
- 108145/FO/2015/C1 – Refurbishment of vacant office space at 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th floor levels, the creation of a roof top terrace at 6th floor level, soft landscaping to east and west lightwell at 1st floor level, the installation of air conditioning and associated plant at roof level, elevation alterations to the ground floor reception area, and associated works – approved 13/05/2015.

The above planning history demonstrates that a number of internal alterations have taken place to facilitate the use of the building to provide modern and suitable office accommodation. The level of works already undertaken has established the high benchmark for quality of finish which the same Applicant seeks to maintain and achieve through these latest refurbishment works which are required to maintain future occupancy of these work spaces.

THE PROPOSAL

Listed building consent is sought from Manchester City Council for the refurbishment of existing office accommodation to the south offices at the Manchester Royal Exchange.

The works sought by the Applicant predominantly comprise refurbishing existing office space within the Royal Exchange; located on the second through to the fifth floors of the building. Specifically, the proposed works will take place on these floors on the south western corner of the Royal Exchange; as shown on the supporting Location Plan (Drg No 426.PL.00).

Internal layout changes will take place as part of the proposed works, with the removal of the majority non-original partition walls and suspended ceilings in vacant spaces to expose the original historic features. There will be no external alterations as a result of these works.

These works are being pursued in order to make the building more accessible, improve the facilities provided to users of the office accommodation and enhance the internal visual appearance of the building. The scope of works has been designed in a manner which is reflective of the building's historic significance, which eliminates the requirement to affect the building's historic fabric.

Further details of the proposals are set out in the Design and Heritage Statement and supporting plans submitted in support of the application prepared by HK Architects.

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The NPPF was revised in July 2021 and sets out the planning policies for England at a national level and is a material consideration in planning decisions. The following policies are considered relevant to this full planning permission and listed building consent application:

- Paragraph 81 of the NPPF states that planning decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.
- Paragraph 194 of the NPPF states that when 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.
- Paragraph 197 of the NPPF outlines that when 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 202 of the NPPF 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 206 of the NPPF outlines that local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites, and within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably.

ADOPTED LOCAL PLANNING POLICY

MCC's development plan consists of the Core Strategy (2012), and saved policies from the Unitary Development Plan (UDP). The following policies from the Core Strategy are relevant to this application for planning permission and listed building consent:

- Policy CC9 states that development within the City Centre should preserve or enhance identified heritage assets, including listed buildings and Conservation Areas;
- Policy EN3 requires that new developments must be designed to preserve or, where possible, enhance the historic environment including listed buildings.

The following saved policies from the UDP are relevant to this application for full planning permission and listed building consent:

- Policy DC18 states that the Council will give particularly careful consideration to development proposals within Conservation Areas, such as the effect of major changes to the appearance of existing buildings.

- Policy DC19 states that the Council will not permit any internal alteration to a listed building where there would be an adverse effect on its architectural or historic character.

OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Impact on the Listed Building

The Manchester Royal Exchange is a Grade II listed building, designated in 1974. As demonstrated by the site's extensive planning history, a significant number of internal / external refurbishment works have taken place to facilitate increased occupation of the building by modern users. The continued acceptability of such proposals was recently acknowledged through the granting of listed building consent for the 'listed building consent for the refurbishment of existing office accommodation, external alterations and associated development' g (LPA ref. 124719/FO/2019). These works have been completed by the Applicant to an exceptionally high standard, which will be maintained through these next phase of works. Accordingly, the principle of upgrading existing office accommodation within the building is accepted.

All works discussed as part of this application for listed building consent are to take place on the second through to the fifth floors of the Royal Exchange. These areas of the building are inaccessible by the general public and features of architectural and historic significance will be exposed as a result of the proposed works; stemming from the removal of large sections of suspended ceiling which will enable the historic cornicing detailing to be displayed in these areas. As such, the proposal will better reveal the valued qualities of the building and seeks to celebrate its heritage through sensitive refurbishment works.

The proposed works will contribute to the buildings operation by providing modern, usable office accommodation, improving the office environment for workers based within the premises. It will also ensure that this area of the building adheres to building regulations and safety standards. As a result, the office facilities will remain attractive to prospective occupiers and in turn, this will positively contribute to the conservation of the Grade II listed building and the economic vitality of Manchester City Centre.

In light of this, the public benefits of the proposal significantly outweigh any potential harm to the listed building, in accordance with paragraph 196 of the NPPF and Core Strategy policies CC9 and EN3 and saved UDP Policy DC19.

Impact on the St Ann's Square Conservation Area

The site is located within the St Ann's Square Conservation Area and is a prominent building on St Ann's Square.

The proposals do not include any external alterations. With regards to the internal nature of the proposed works, they will not be visible from street level and as such, this element of the proposed development will have not have a visual impact on the setting, distinctiveness or local character of the St Ann's Square Conservation Area, in accordance with paragraph 200 of the NPPF and Policy EN3 of the Core Strategy.

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT - DISCUSSION

Design

The proposals have been informed by the accompanying Design and Access Statement. This document assesses the nature of the proposed works in the context of the building and its historical and architectural significance; utilising archival research to discuss how the proposed design has been informed through the former building's original detailing, will remove the incongruent late 20th century fit-out works, whilst integrating sympathetic contemporary additions. Accordingly, it is considered that the proposed works will have a positive effect on the physical features of the building that justify its status as a listed building.

Amount

The proposal regards the refurbishment of existing office space, therefore the sought extent of development will not result in the creation of any additional floorspace.

Layout

The proposal will not lead to significant internal alterations to the Royal Exchange, the main changes comprising the removal of some modern plasterboard partition walls, door repositioning and the creation of kitchen area.

Scale

The proposed development primarily comprises of refurbishment works to the second through to the fifth floor of the Manchester Royal Exchange. The scale of the works is identified on the supporting plans, and the Design and Heritage Statement, accompanying this application.

The scale of works is considered relatively minor and is thus considered appropriate to the character and setting of the Manchester Royal Exchange, particularly as the proposed works will replicate the contemporary design exhibited by the entrance located on the building's Exchange Street elevation.

Landscaping

No landscaping is proposed as part of the development.

Appearance

The proposed design is sympathetic to the building's history and has been informed by extensive archive research.

The research that has been undertaken which pertains to the history of the building and the design of the original office accommodation; ensures that the proposed development will not detract from the building's external or internal appearance. Conversely, the proposals will better reveal

the significance of the Manchester Royal Exchange through sensitive, contemporary internal alterations.

Access

No external access modifications are proposed. The sought internal design and layout will ensure that disabled users of the premises can move around the building with ease.

Consultation and Listed Building Consent

Due to the scale of the proposed works, no consultation with the public has taken place.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This application for listed building consent is submitted on behalf of BVK Highstreet Retail Royal Exchange Manchester Limited for the refurbishment of existing office accommodation at the Manchester Royal Exchange. It has been demonstrated that the proposal will:

- enhance the communal facilities for users of the Royal Exchange;
- expose the historical detailing currently obscured by the existing partition ceiling;
- employ materials that are appropriate and sympathetic to the building's setting and relate well to its history; and
- restore a better level of consistency to the existing internal floorspace.

In conclusion, the proposal will result in less than substantial harm to the significance of the listed building in accordance with paragraphs 194, 197, 202 and 206 of the NPPF and Core Strategy policies CC9 and EN3 and saved UDP Policy DC19, and should be considered favourably.

I trust that the above is sufficient to secure validation, however if there is anything further you require then please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Smith'.

Joseph Smith
Senior Planner

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For and on behalf of Avison Young (UK) Limited