

7th February 2023

Anthony Mitchell
Planning
Manchester City Council
Town Hall Extension
Manchester
M60 2LA

Dear Tony,

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 (AS AMENDED)
TOWN PLANNING AND LISTED BUILDING APPLICATION FOR REPLACEMENT STAIRCASE
PLANNING PORTAL REFERENCE: PP- 11917375
FORMER LONDON ROAD FIRE STATION, LONDON ROAD, MANCHESTER M1 2PH

Planning and listed building applications have been submitted on behalf of Allied London Fire Station Limited to achieve alterations to the wider scheme relating to the external staircase located in the courtyard.

This application submission contains:

- This Planning Statement letter prepared by Zerum
- Heritage Statement by Stephen Levrant Heritage Architecture
- Plans and Architectural Statement prepared by Purcell
- Staircase condition report prepared by Curtins

Submission of planning and listed building consent applications is considered to be fully appropriate in this case by the Council and applicant. The principles arising from the case of Hillside Parks Ltd v Snowdonia National Park Authority [2020] EWCA Civ 1440 have been taken into account. The new consents will be capable of standing alongside the existing consents, and will not affect their ability to be implemented. Additionally, the changes proposed are not material in the context of the wider scheme.

The original full planning and listed building consent applications were granted on 17th April 2020 for the following, respectively:

Refurbishment, restoration, reconfiguration and extension of former London Road Fire Station site to create a mixed use development comprising of hotel (Use Class C1), workspace/office (Use Class B1, D1), commercial floorspace for shop and food and drink uses (Use Classes A1, A3 and A4), residential apartments (Use Class C3) and leisure (Use Class D2), together with access and highways works, servicing, rooftop plant and associated works; and

LISTED BUILDING CONSENT for internal and external works in association with refurbishment, restoration, reconfiguration and extension of former London Road Fire Station site to create a mixed use development comprising of hotel, workspace/office, commercial floorspace for

shop and food and drink uses, residential apartments and leisure, together with access and highways works, servicing, rooftop plant, landscaping and associated works

These were subsequently amended by applications 127817/JO/2020 and 127818/JO/2020; and later applications 132633/JO/2022 and 132634/JO/2022. These altered the consented plans but retained the same descriptions of development.

Existing Staircase

Following attempted repair work and further detailed investigation, the courtyard stair has been condemned as neither safe nor sound by the professional design consultants. It has suffered from structural movement and fracture due to insufficient foundations and construction detailing and due to the extensive water ingress and corrosion. This submission includes a report from structural engineers Curtins which identifies the defects. These include cracks to columns, beam corbels and areas of heavy corrosion.

The previously consented versions of the scheme sought to retain the original staircase. To this end, the applicant has undertaken major stabilisation and repair works to the existing stair. Works undertaken have incurred significant costs to the applicant and have generally involved replacement and reinforcement of elements.

They include:

- replacement of several landing beams;
- treads reattached with new bearings;
- replacement of three severely corroded beams at first floor level which connect spans between stair columns and bear on the adjacent masonry wall;
- addition of columns/beams to prop the outer edge of the balcony to relieve the stair load at first floor level; and
- addition of new beams under existing beams to the columns at all levels to support the balcony without replacing original steels.

However, despite several rounds of repairs, the condition of the staircase has continued to deteriorate. Previously invisible / new hairline cracks have appeared in the structural columns; lateral bracing cables have snapped; and the stair is pulling away further from the masonry it is fixed to. This structural movement has resulted in many of the stair treads and risers being significantly out of horizontal alignment and unsafe.

The stair has been assessed by Curtins, and condemned, as detailed in the submitted report. They identify inherent design and compliance issues with the way that the stair was originally designed which explains why the repairs have not been successful.

Structural columns do not extend to ground level but are supported on one side at a high level by the brick façade of the building. This has caused structural movement in both the elevation of the building and the stair itself. The stair is required to act as a fire escape and is an integral part of the building's fire strategy. There is no alternative approach. The stair cannot therefore be retained as a historic visual or interpretative feature which is not to be used.

Proposed approach

The stair has been accurately surveyed to a detailed component level by Survey Operations. This can act as a historic record of its current condition. The stair is to be carefully dismantled. Stair components will be inspected in the courtyard, with sound decorative elements retained

and reused in replacement. This is likely to include cast iron cross bracing, brackets, balustrading, hand rails, finials and detailing.

A new steel stair has been designed to match the existing in geometry wherever possible, utilising modern steel members to match the existing profiles as closely as possible. Plans are provided as part of this submission.

For longevity and durability, steel is to be used rather than cast iron. Cast iron is brittle and has a shorter life span than steel, as evidenced by numerous existing failures and cracks in the existing structure. The high cost of bespoke castings renders the use of cast iron unviable.

The new staircase will address some of the design issues which are inherent in the original staircase. For example, some cross bracing has been introduced to provide additional structural support. This will allow the configuration of the new principal posts to follow the historic pattern with the east three columns bearing onto the second floor terrace.

Heritage Impact

The proposal is accompanied by a Heritage Statement from SLHA. Referencing their original significance appraisal of the property, their report confirms that the staircase is of considerable significance. Their report considers the proposed interventions for each element of the staircase and assesses the heritage impact/mitigation.

In each case, the impact on historic fabric is found to be minor adverse. While the loss of parts of the original staircase will constitute removal of original historic fabric, the replacement elements have been designed to match the original as closely as possible. This will allow for an appreciation of the original design ethos of the staircase. This approach will also improve the performance of the stair and prevent further impact on surrounding historic fabric.

The assessment notes the structural failure and heavy deterioration of the staircase's condition has informed the proposal for its replacement. It concludes that the proposals are required as stipulated by the project's structural engineer, and to ensure that a staircase in this location can continue to be safely utilised on completion of the building's redevelopment. On balance, the approach is found to be acceptable in planning and heritage terms.

Overall Heritage Impact

The proposals are consistent with the requirements of the NPPF and Historic England guidance. The alterations align with the principles which have been established throughout the project to date. They constitute minimal changes; minimise the loss of fabric; and uphold the significance of the asset.

Overall, the proposed alterations will not change the cumulative impact assessment undertaken in the 2019 SLHA Heritage Statement which found that there will be a positive heritage impact on the London Road Fire Station. As such, the works are appropriate in heritage terms, and comply with the necessary legislation and policy.

The proposed approach to the staircase forms part of a scheme which will still maximise use of the London Road Fire Station whilst securing its optimum viable use for the future. The amendments uphold the high quality and conservation-led principles of the consented scheme, which was recognised as delivering transformative regeneration to this part of Manchester, and securing the future of an important Grade II* listed building. This remains a sustainable form of development that complies with the relevant national and local policies.

I trust the submitted application is satisfactory and I look forward to acknowledgement of its receipt. Should you wish to discuss the proposals or have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

I look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "DBB", with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Deborah Baker Barnett
Associate Director