



Atelier MB
Urban Architects



Design and Access Statement to support a
Planning Application for
125 Portland Street, Manchester

Client:
Portland Street Estates
August 2022
Job 1877
Revision A:
13-12-22 Proposed of extension removed

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Atelier MB have been instructed by Portland Estates Limited to design and submit a planning application for the extension and enhancement of the ground floor and rear external area of 125 Portland Street, Manchester.

Current Situation

125 Portland Street is a six storey building situated on the corner of Portland Street and Dickinson Street. The building is of concrete frame construction with red brick and stone elevational features around aluminium windows. Dating from the 70s, with the rhythm of the façade and the window proportions, it was considered to be a loose interpretation of a warehouse style building, although it was always in use as offices. There are many examples of such buildings throughout Greater Manchester and all have similar form and proportion. The building neighbours a number of listed buildings and sits within the Whitworth Street Conservation Area. Refer to the separate Heritage Statement by Atelier Heritage for more information on the history and significance of the site and the surrounding architecture.

Office floorplates of 12m deep were common at this time as the need for good natural ventilation and natural light were a requirement and were considered to diminish if one exceeded a nominal dimension of 6m from an opening light. This dictated the width of the plan form of these buildings and often lead to sites being partly built up, leaving odd sections of external space at the rear and sides. In this case, the rear and sides are used for car parking. There is a small basement which contains some building plant. The top floor is constructed as a mansard roof with lead feature dormers. Rooftop plant is also present here.

At ground floor, the main front elevation to Portland Street is set back from the line of the footpath and the historic building line by around 1.8m. Three trees have been planted along the back of the footpath along the line of Portland chambers which are now semi mature. These separate the ground floor elevation from the street and demarcate the ownership line. On both the Portland Street façade and the Dickinson Street façade, the ground floor is elevated by around ½m and there are no active uses at this level and little interaction with the street.



125 Portland Street with chamfered entrance.



125 Portland Street Rear Parking Area



1.8m setback from the street



Rear yard currently in use as a car park



3D Model of proposed single storey rear extension, bike/bin store and landscaping



Render of proposed bike/bin store and seating

The present corner entrance to the office reception and floors is understated and deeply set back in the facade. A convoluted disabled ramp was added sometime in the past, but the access to the building is awkward and uninviting. The heavy canopy and scale of the entrance jars with the height and mass of the building and the entrance generally has a poor street presence.

Proposals

The revised proposal is to provide a 52 sqm single storey rear extension to the existing building the ground floor suite. In this application it is not intended to convert this space into class E. The existing bike store is to be relocated to the back of the bin store as it is a more secure location and will promote use of the outdoor space.

Planning context

Applications for:

- a two-storey glazed front elevation extension with part demolition of existing front façade at ground and first floor (approved, 2012 application number 099901/FO/2012/C2) and
- a proposed single storey glazed front extension to form feature reception and additional space to ground floor following part demolition of existing front façade at ground and first floor (101300/FO/2013/C2, 2013, approved) and
- Change of use of front suite to Cafe (class E). Front and side extension to form glazed entrance to Cafe and extension of office reception and provision of rear external seating area in association with the cafe use (approved, 2021 application number 130103/FO/2021) are the most recent relevant planning applications.



Render of proposed seating and rear extension

2.0 DESIGN STATEMENT

Materials:

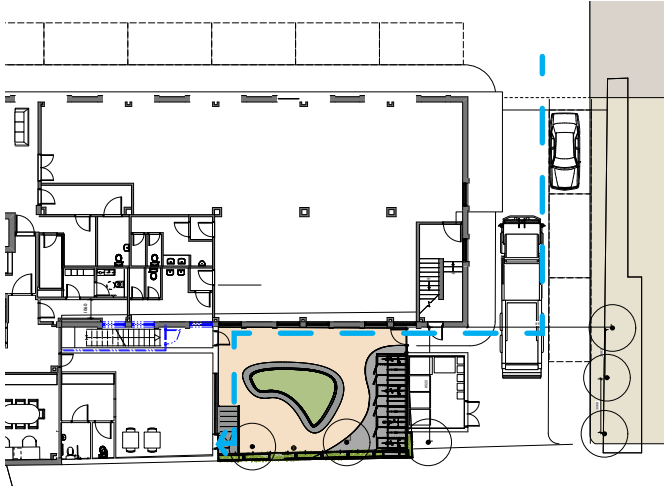
The proposed rear extension uses red brick and dark grey powder coated aluminium frame windows. The proposed red brick matches the existing building and the proposed windows match the approved windows, which are due to be updated shortly.

Use:

The use classes are not being changed as part of this application.

Heritage Issues

A heritage statement has been prepared by a sister organisation Atelier Heritage. It concludes thus “The proposed changes do not represent any degree of harm to the significance of the Conservation Area, or to the setting of the surrounding listed buildings. “



Render of proposed bike/bin store and seating

3.0 ACCESS STATEMENT

A covered cycle store is shown in the rear section of the car park accessed from the ginnel off of Portland Street.

Access to the building will remain primarily through the front entrance via Portland Street. Entrance through the rear of the building will be via the existing ginnel off of Portland street and through, a secure gate and up a short flight of stairs. This provides an additional entrance/ exit point to the existing arrangement and is in line with the previously approved layout.

Car parking has been reduced by the numbers indicated on the planning form, which match the previously approved drawings to create the new external seating area. The reduction in car parking is not considered to be problematic as it is line with general policy to reduce car usage in the City Centre. Transport infrastructure in the City Centre is well documented and public transport hubs are immediately outside the building in the form of bus stops and a short 5 minute walk away in the form of Metrolink.

4.0 REFUSE

A secure bin store has been shown to the rear of the seating area. There plenty of room for separate recyclable waste and non-recyclable waste. Collections will be via the private access from Dickinson Street on a daily basis. The bin store also captures the 2no. 1100ltr bins which are current not contained and sit within the car park which represents a significant improvement to the external rear area.

5.0 CONCLUSION

The proposed scheme revitalises a neglected open space in the back of the building, creating more opportunity for use of the space and a more visually appealing outlook for the buildings users. The scheme therefore represents improvements to all stakeholders.



ateliermb



0161 236 0051



ateliermbarchitects



atelier mb architects



info@ateliermb.co.uk



Atelier MB Ltd. Suite 2A, Amazon House, Brazil Street, Manchester, M1 3PJ