

PLANNING STATEMENT

New Canopies at The Annex and Octagon
Buildings at AQA Manchester, Devas
Street, Hulme, Manchester M15 6EX.

MPD Built
Environment
Consultants Ltd

Introduction

This planning statement has been prepared in support of the planning application for new entrance canopies to the Annex and Octagon Buildings at AQA Manchester, Devas Street, Hulme.

This work includes replacing the existing entrance canopy and improving some of the façade works such as replacing external tiles with render, isolated areas of cladding etc.

This statement explains the concept and principles of the development in relation to accessibility, character, community safety, environmental sustainability, movement and assesses the proposal against the relevant Planning Policy framework. The statement demonstrates the proposal accords with relevant National and Local Planning Policy and other material planning policy considerations.

Site and Surroundings



AQA occupy three buildings, and these are currently connection by a link structure, the buildings are currently known as Mansfield Cooper, Annex and Octagon as indicated in the image above. Mansfield Cooper will only include a light refurbishment (carpet and decoration) as the lease on this building is up within 5 years and will be returned to the Landlord. The Annex and Octagon will include a full revamp from the external to the internal, to modernize the building and bring up to current standards and regulations.

The Annex and Octagon are 1960's concrete framed structure, with masonry infill, typical of its time. The buildings has been refurbished in previous years, with new aluminum glazing to the reception area and façade replacement to the entrance areas, the remaining fabric and glazed windows to both Annex and Octagon are the original 1960s, the glazing is the original 40mm single glazed steel frame system with opening windows. In several areas especially in the Octagon a secondary timber glazed frame has been added at a later date.

The AQA building houses the offices of AQA, an exam board. Due to the confidential nature of producing and marking examination papers, there is a high level of security around entering and exiting the building. Supplementary staff are brought in at key times to facilitate the marking of examination papers.

Planning History

120098/FO/2018 - Application seeking full planning permission for edge protection guard railing at the second and third floors and the roof of the AQA building – Approved 31/07/2018

096910/FO/2011/C1 - Elevation alterations including new doors and cladding to existing front and rear entrances – Approved 11/10/2011

092304/FO/2010/C1 - The installation of a cycle shelter – Approved 22/06/2010

052183/FO/CITY2/97 - Construction of new link building between two existing blocks, new enlarged roof plant room, new loading bay & entrance, canopies and formation of new surface car parking – Approved 09/10/1997

038401 - Installation of emergency generator on roof of existing building – Approved 05/03/1991

Planning Policy

National Policy

In the first instance it is necessary to consider the national planning policy context which is the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published in July 2021. The NPPF is clear that Planning Permission should be granted for development where it accords with planning policy. To this end in **Paragraph 7** of the NPPF the point is made that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. At a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Paragraph 8 of the NPPF outlines the three strands to sustainable development namely economic, social and environmental objectives. In this case the redevelopment will deliver economic gains in the form of construction work during the conversion work, the end # scheme will deliver much needed housing from a social perspective and the reuse of the existing building and its sustainable location have environmental benefits.

Paragraph 9 reinforces the point that planning policies and decisions should play an active role in guiding development towards sustainable solutions, but in doing so should take local circumstances into account, to reflect the character, needs and opportunities of each area. This is particularly relevant in relation to this proposal.

The National Planning Policy Framework in **paragraph 11** makes it clear that a presumption in favour of sustainable development is at the heart of national planning policy and where a proposal accords with planning policy then it should be permitted without delay.

Further attention is drawn to **Paragraph 38** of the NPPF which encourages local planning authorities to approach decision-taking in a positive way by looking for solutions rather than problems. Decision-takers at every level should seek to approve applications by using the full range of planning tools available to them and working proactively with applicants. In this particular case it is submitted that given the nature of the proposal the Local Planning Authority could have mitigated any future harm they deem may be created by the proposal by using appropriate conditions and this is further supported in **Paragraph 55** of the NPPF, which identifies local circumstances as a relevant factor to take into account when making decisions. Further **Paragraph 56** makes it clear that planning conditions should be kept to a minimum and only imposed where necessary.

Paragraph 81 makes it clear that planning policies and 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. This proposal represents a major international company investing in the locality creating job opportunities for local people and as such should be supported.

Paragraph 86 further highlights that Planning policies and decisions should support the role

that town centres play at the heart of local communities, by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation. Local planning authorities should promote the long-term vitality and viability of town centres by allowing them to grow and diversify in a way that can respond to rapid changes in the retail and leisure industries, allowing a suitable mix of uses that reflects their distinctive characters and functions.

Overall, the NPPF confirms that the primary objective of development management is to foster the delivery of sustainable development, not to hinder or prevent it. Local Authorities should approach development management decisions positively - looking for solutions rather than problems so that applications can be approved wherever it is practical to do so. Securing the optimum viable use of the property and achieving public benefits as key material considerations for application proposals.

Local Planning Policy

Manchester City Council adopted its Core Strategy on 11th July 2012. Within the Core Strategy the following policies are considered relevant to the consideration of these proposals.

Policy EC 1 Employment and Economic Growth in Manchester

Development proposals should have regard to:

Climate change resilience demonstrating how CO2 emissions will be minimised with an aim of zero carbon emissions, through energy efficiency, renewable energy and contributing to low and zero carbon decentralised energy infrastructure;

Ensuring design makes the best possible use of a site or building in terms of efficient use of space, enhancing the sense of place of the wider area and minimising detrimental impacts on adjacent uses, considers the needs of users/employees of a site/building for access via walking, cycling and public transport and reduction of opportunities for crime by applying current best practice in security design;

Policy EC 2 Existing Employment Space

The Council will seek to retain and enhance existing employment space and sites. Alternative uses will only be supported on sites allocated accordingly, or if it can be demonstrated that:

The existing use is un-viable in terms of business operations, building age and format;

The existing use is incompatible with adjacent uses;

The existing use is unsuitable for employment having had regard to the Manchester Salford - Trafford SFRA; or

On balance, proposals are able to offer greater benefits in terms of the Core Strategy's vision and spatial objectives than the existing use.

Policy CC 1 Primary Economic Development Focus: City Centre and Fringe

Within the City Centre and the fringe, a variety of high-quality accommodation types, sizes and foot-plates will be encouraged to boost investment by local, national and international businesses. The City Centre and fringe will be considered a suitable location for the consideration of high-density buildings and commercially led mixed use schemes. The focus for employment growth will be in B1a high density offices and the Council will give particular encouragement and support for such development in the Birley Fields/Manchester Science Park area.

Proposals will be expected to show how they contribute to decentralised low and zero carbon energy infrastructure in the Regional Centre as set out in the Energy policies.

Developments which lead to the more intensive use of employment land (in terms of floorspace provided) will be supported.

Policy CC 5 Transport

The Council will seek to ensure that development includes adequate parking provision for cars and bicycles. This should be based on the parking standards described in Appendix B.

Policy CC 9 Design and Heritage

Design of new buildings will need to be of the highest standard in terms of appearance and function. The standards and guidance explained in other LDF policies should be the basis for the approach to design, with particular attention to be given to the City Centre context and character.

Policy EN 1 Design Principles and Strategic Character Areas

All development in Manchester will be expected to follow the seven principles of urban design, as identified in national planning guidance and listed above and have regard to the strategic character area in which the development is located. Opportunities for good design to enhance the overall image of the City should be fully realised, particularly on major radial and orbital road and rail routes. Design and Access Statements submitted with proposals for new development must clearly detail how the proposed development addresses the design principles, reinforces and enhances the local character of that part of the City and supports the achievement of the Core Strategy Strategic Objectives.

2. The Corridor (Higher Education Precinct (HEP)) Character Area

This area contains major educational and medical institutions located alongside a linear route in a variety of large-scale buildings. Underlying this are remnants of the historic past such as the grid iron street pattern dating principally from the 19th Century. The area contains a network of open spaces often resulting from more recent developments and is busy especially with public transport and pedestrian movement through much of the 24-hour day with patterns of movement linking areas to both sides of Oxford Road. The Corridor represents the only area where the levels of activity, range of uses and scale of built form associated with the City Centre extend beyond the Mancunian Way. New development needs to reflect the significant scale and form expected from major City institutions and opportunities will exist for more innovative and contemporary built forms,

which have regard to the historic context. A balance between built form and open space which allows for easy movement through and across the area will be required.

Policy EN 4 Reducing CO2 Emissions by Enabling Low and Zero Carbon Development

The Council will seek to reduce fuel poverty and decouple growth in the economy, growth in CO2 emissions, and rising fossil fuel prices, through the following actions:

All development must follow the principle of the Energy Hierarchy, being designed:

to reduce the need for energy through design features that provide passive heating, natural lighting and cooling

to reduce the need for energy through energy efficient features such as improved insulation and glazing

to meet residual energy requirements through the use of low or zero carbon energy generating technologies

Wherever possible new development and retrofit projects, including energy generation plant, must be located and designed in a manner that allows advantage to be taken of opportunities for low and zero carbon energy supplies.

Where possible new development and retrofit projects will be used as a mechanism to help improve energy efficiency and provide low and zero carbon energy supplies to existing buildings.

Where appropriate new development and retrofit projects will be required to connect to and/or make contributions to low or zero carbon energy schemes and/or to incorporate provision to enable future connection to any existing / potential decentralised energy schemes.

The use of building materials with low embodied carbon in new development and refurbishment schemes.

Policy EN 5 Strategic Areas for low and zero carbon decentralised energy infrastructure

Within Manchester it is considered that the following strategic areas, indicated on the key diagram, will have a major role to play in achieving an increase in the level of decentralised, low and zero carbon energy supplies available: The Regional Centre, which also includes the Oxford Road Corridor

Within these areas new development, regeneration and retrofit projects, will be expected to take place in the context of more detailed proposals for decentralised low and zero carbon energy infrastructure in the form of energy proposals plans. The Council will work with all relevant stakeholders, which may include developers, landowners, residents, community groups, private sector partners, utilities companies, neighbouring authorities and other public sector bodies, as appropriate, to bring forward such plans.

Where investment or development is being undertaken into or adjacent to a public building/asset or district heating network, full consideration shall be given to the potential

role that these can have in providing an anchor load within a decentralised energy network or in creating opportunities for CO2 reduction funded by contributions.

Policy DM 1 Development Management All development should have regard to the following specific issues for which more detailed guidance may be given within a supplementary planning document:- Appropriate siting, layout, scale, form, massing, materials and detail. Impact on the surrounding areas 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, including privacy, light, noise, vibration, air quality, odours, litter, vermin, birds, road safety and traffic generation. This could also include proposals which would be sensitive to existing environmental conditions, such as noise. Accessibility: buildings and neighbourhoods fully accessible to disabled people, access to new development by sustainable transport modes. Community safety and crime prevention. Design for health. Adequacy of internal accommodation and external amenity space. Refuse storage and collection. Vehicular access and car parking. Effects relating to biodiversity, landscape, archaeological or built heritage. Green Infrastructure including open space, both public and private. The use of alternatives to peat-based products in landscaping/gardens within development schemes. Flood risk and drainage. Existing or proposed hazardous installations. Subject to scheme viability, developers will be required to demonstrate that new development incorporates sustainable construction techniques as follows (In terms of energy targets this policy should be read alongside policy EN6 and the higher target will apply):-

(b) For new commercial developments to demonstrate best practice which will include the application of the BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method) standards. By 2019 provisions similar to the Code for Sustainable Homes will also apply to all new non-domestic buildings.

Guide to Development in Manchester Supplementary Planning Document and Planning Guidance Adopted April 2007

Analysis

The proposals involve the installation of external glazed canopies to the main entrances of the Octagon Building and Annex Building. The canopies will provide weather protection during periods of inclement weather as well as providing shade during the warmer months of the year.

The canopies have been designed to be complimentary to their host buildings and will not jar with their existing architectural aesthetic.

There will be no impacts in terms of other material planning considerations such as amenity of highway safety.

Conclusions

The proposed entrance canopies are considered to be compliant with both national and local planning policy. They have been designed to be sympathetic to the existing host buildings and are aesthetically in keeping with these structures. Their installation does not compromise any other material planning considerations such as residential amenity or highway safety and as such it is considered that the proposed canopies should be approved without delay in accordance with the NPPF.