

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT - ALTERATIONS TO THE SHOP FRONT COMPRISING BRINGING FORWARD THE ENTRANCE DOORS AND FORMING A NEW EMERGENCY EXIT TO THE RIGHT HAND SIDE AT 77 WHITWORTH STREET, MANCHESTER, M1 5WQ

On behalf of The Arch Company Properties Limited

31 October 2022

Introduction

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared by Rapleys LLP, on behalf of The Arch Company Properties Limited and is submitted in support of a full planning application seeking planning permission and listed building consent for the alteration of the shopfront and installation of an emergency exit door to the front infill.

By way of background, The Arch Company is one of the largest providers of commercial business space for small to medium sized businesses (SMEs) in the UK. The company has over 5,000 properties of which more than half are converted railway arches.

The Arch Company acquired Network Rail's former commercial estate business in the 2019 and is now engaging in a program of renewal and improvement works of circa 900 railway arches of its newly acquired portfolio. This will bring these units, which are currently vacant, back into beneficial use, securing improvements that will provide high quality and modern space to meet the operational requirements of a range of SMEs.

The application site comprises 1no arch unit fronting onto Whitworth Street. The arch has a Grade II listing status as it is part of the Manchester South Junction and Altrincham Railway Viaduct.

The level of detail contained within this Design and Access Statement is considered to be proportionate to the scale of the proposed development.

Contents of the Application

The following documents are submitted as part of this application:

- Completed planning application form.
- Planning Design and Statement (this document).
- Site Location Plan (1:1250).
- Existing and Proposed Elevations.
- Heritage Statement.

Site and Surroundings

The subject arch known as 77 Whitworth Street fronts onto Whitworth Street and is located to the south of the city centre.

Proposal

The application seeks to alter the aluminium shopfront including bringing forward the entrance doors and installing a new emergency exit to the right hand side of the infill. The proposal includes for the replacement of an unsafe mezzanine structure and infilling of the rear basement infill due the neighbouring land blocking the fire exit.

As such the application seeks full planning permission for the alteration of the shopfront, installing a new emergency exit to the front infill, infilling the emergency exit located at the rear of the arch and replacing an unsafe internal mezzanine structure.

Appearance

The proposal is considered to be relatively minor in nature and is considered essential to keep the unit safe and lettable for a new tenant.

The proposed works comprise altering the existing powder coated aluminium shopfront, installing a new emergency exit to the front infill, infilling the existing emergency exit located to the rear of the arch and demolishing and rebuilding an unsafe internal mezzanine structure.

Access

The proposed access will be via the aluminium shopfront with a secondary fire escape provided to the right hand side of the infill.

Heritage Statement

This Heritage Statement has been prepared by Rapleys LLP on behalf of The Arch Company Properties Limited in support of a full planning application seeking planning permission and listed building consent for the alteration of the shopfront, installation of an emergency exit door to the front infill, infilling the rear existing emergency exit and rebuilding an unsafe internal mezzanine structure.

The need for a heritage assessment is identified at paragraph 189 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This requires an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by its setting.

The level of detail within this Statement is proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on its significance.

The preparation of this Statement has entailed a site visit and subsequent desk-based assessment involving the review of relevance guidance, such as the Historic England publications on conservation principles (2008) and the setting of heritage assets (2017).

The subject arches are Grade II listed and gained their listing status in 1994.

The proposed works affect the front and rear infill of the arch. The alteration works to the shopfront comprise the installation of a new powder coated double doorset which will be installed in line with the rest of the shopfront. The new entrance doors will match the existing.

The existing basement fire exit to the rear has been blocked by the neighbouring tenant. A new secondary means of escape is therefore required to comply with Building Regulations. Therefore a new emergency exit will be installed in the brickwork to the right-hand side of the front infill. Following a Structural Engineer's inspection, replacement of the mezzanine has been recommended to provide a safe unit for a new tenant's occupation.

Conclusions

It is considered that the proposal constitutes appropriate development for the following principle reasons:

- The proposal supports the continued use of railway arches putting these spaces back into beneficial use;
- The proposal involves improvements to the environment of the arch including accessibility, safety and servicing;
- The proposals will not negatively impact on surrounding amenity;
- The design positively responds to the local area, improving the current tired archway building; and
- The proposal supports the local economy by providing an additional lettable unit.

This statement and the accompanying submission documents confirm that the proposal is acceptable and that planning permission should be granted without delay.