



Atelier
Heritage



125 Portland Street
Rear Extension
Job: 1877

Heritage Statement

Date: July 2022
Job: 1978

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Image 01: 125 Portland Street corner entrance. Contemporary photograph.



Image 02: Archival photograph showing previous buildings on the site in 1957. (Manchester Archives).

1.0 Introduction

This Heritage Statement accompanies a Planning Application for 125 Portland Street, Manchester. It was produced by Atelier Heritage in July 2022, and its author is Laura Jessup, MA History and Theory of Architecture, PGCert. Conservation of the Historic Environment.

2.0 Location and Description

Portland Street is located on a major road in Manchester city centre, running from Newton Street, alongside Piccadilly Gardens, to Oxford Street. 125 is a six-storey 1970s office block, fronting Portland Street. The building is metal-framed, with brown brick elevations and vertical runs of glazing at regular intervals. Its design is contemporary, with some attempt to reference surrounding warehouse forms through scale and materials. To the rear, the building has an open area, currently used for ad.hoc. parking for approximately seven cars. This land is next to the thoroughfare of 127 Portland Street, which is formed from the loading bay accessed off Portland Street, through the building.

3.0 History and Significance

Portland Street developed with large-scale commercial buildings from the mid-19th century onwards. The 'uniquely Mancunian character' identified in the Conservation Area Appraisal is created by the mass of Victorian and Edwardian commercial buildings and the dominance of red brick.

125 Portland Street is a late 20th century office block (originally with ground floor showrooms) designed by Leach, Rhodes and Walker. It replaced former properties at 125 Portland St and 49 Dickinson Street.

The existing building is of limited heritage value, demonstrated by its lack of listing. It does play a role within the historic Portland Street townscape, positioned between two listed buildings, both of which are positive contributors to the character of the Conservation Area. However, whilst the property is suitably subservient to the adjacent listed assets and has elements which have been considered within the surrounding context, it has no real historical significance of its own.

The building sits within the immediate setting of the following Grade II listed buildings-

110-114 Portland Street; 127-133 Portland Street; 116-118 Portland Street; 32 Dickinson Street, and St James' Buildings.



Image 03: Archival photograph showing previous buildings on the site in 1972. (Manchester Archives).



Image 4: 125 Portland Street with the Grade II listed Portland Buildings to the right-hand side. Contemporary photograph.

The site of proposals is the rear of the building, which is within the immediate setting of 127-133 Portland Street.

A loading bay to the end of 127 Portland Street runs through the listed building and the 'courtyard' is next to this open thoroughfare. The external space has been used for parking for a limited number of cars and the area does not enhance the setting of number 127 Portland Street. Portland Buildings, 127-133 Portland Street is a Grade II listed building, designated in 1974. The site comprises various former shipping warehouses for Louis Behrens & Son, dating from 1860. Together they form a large block with main elevations (red brick and sandstone) on both Portland Street and Oxford Street. These listed assets have a high heritage value, and their elevations make a significant contribution to the Conservation Area. An extract from the listing is included here.

SJ8497NW PORTLAND STREET 698-1/32/316 (South East side) 03/10/74 Nos.127 TO 133 (Odd) GV II

Various shipping warehouses, now bank (No.133) and variously occupied. 1860, by P.Nunn for Louis Behrens and Sons; altered. Some sandstone ashlar but mostly red brick with sandstone dressings (roof concealed). Irregular plan on large trapeziform corner site, with rounded corner to Oxford Street. Four storeys with basement, 23 bays plus 2-window corner; a very regular composition with strong horizontal emphasis; with stone plinth, channelled rusticated facings to piers and doorway surrounds at ground floor; moulded stone cornice over this, rusticated quoins to the corners, moulded sill-band to 3rd floor; and brick parapet with stone coping. The ground floor has 3 pairs of segmental-headed loading bay entrances with run-out voussoirs and voluted keystones, and a round-headed doorway in similar style, alternating with groups of 3 sashed windows over basement openings; and the bank at the right-hand end has a corner doorway with richly moulded surround, and coupled plate-glass windows in each side wall. The 1st and 2nd floors form a continuous arcade of giant round-headed arches with moulded imposts and keyed heads, segmental-headed sashes at 1st floor; round-headed sashes at 2nd floor; and brick panels between; the 3rd floor has pairs of small square-headed sashes. Corner and 4-bay return in matching style. Forms group with No.61 Oxford Street (q.v.).

125 Portland Street contributes little to the setting of 127-133, other than being subservient and taking some



Image 5: Photograph showing proposed location of extension to rear of 125 Portland Street. To the left hand side is the rear and less significance elevation of neighbouring listed building at 127-133 Portland Street.



Image 6: Showing proposed extension.

reference in terms of using brick, echoing similar massing. Similarly, its contribution to the Conservation Area is limited and considered to be neutral, generally in-keeping with the scale of the area and the overall streetscape but lacking any heritage values.

4.0 Proposals and Impact

Proposals focus on the addition of an extension to the rear courtyard area, to provide a small, single-storey building, with flat roof (sedum), and associated external landscape works.

The extension will be located within the existing 'courtyard', which is in effect an area of open land to the rear. Elevations are to be brick to match existing building, with glazed doors within the rear wall and a small set back in brick work to denote the difference between existing and new elements. There is no direct impact on listed fabric of the surrounding buildings.

The impact is limited to the effect upon the significance of the Conservation Area and surrounding listed buildings, in particular Portland Chambers.

127-133 Portland Street (Portland Chambers)

The proposed extension does not touch the listed building. It will sit alongside a short section of the access road which meets the loading bay at the rear of 110-114 Portland Street. Impact is confined to the setting of the listed asset. The extension will alter the architectural form of the setting and the view from nos. 127-133. These views are from the rear of the listed building, which is of a lower significance than the front elevations.

The height and extent of the extension is such that this impact will be minimal. The form of the proposed is restrained and is subservient to the architectural and the aesthetic qualities of the listed building. Proposals represent a minor alteration to a neutral contributor to the setting of a Grade II listed building, and will not have any substantial impact upon the heritage significance of numbers 127-133. The addition of a green roof will form an attractive view from the upper floors of Portland Chambers and represent improvement in design and form of the existing external courtyard, currently used for a limited amount of parking and having a minor negative impact upon the setting. There are further environmental benefits in providing a green roof in this location.

Conservation Area

The development will have a limited positive impact upon the wider Conservation Area. It will be an enhancement to a neutral contributor and will improve an underused space currently used for parking.

5.0 Planning Context

National policy

Heritage policy is contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (revised 2021).

Paragraph 194 states that applicants should be required to describe significance of the assets effected by proposals.

This report meets that requirement.

Paragraph 197 states that local 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.

This application is considered to be a **positive** response to the above policy, and changes will enhance and retain the setting of the adjoining listed building.

Local policy

Manchester's Local Development Framework, Core Strategy, adopted July 2012, contains local policy and the council's vision for the city from 2012-2027.

- Policy CC9 states 'design in Manchester City Centre should preserve or enhance the heritage assets that have been identified, including listed buildings, conservation areas and scheduled ancient monuments.'

The City Council Whitworth Street Conservation Area appraisal notes that it contains 'many of Manchester's most important buildings' and that open space is not characteristic of the area.

Manchester's Local Development Framework Core Strategy (adopted 2012) has relevant policy at CC9 'Development in Manchester City Centre should preserve

or enhance the heritage assets that have been identified, including listed buildings, conservation areas and scheduled ancient monuments'; EN3 'Throughout the City, the Council will encourage development that complements and takes advantage of the distinct historic and heritage features of its districts and neighbourhoods, including those of the City Centre.' and EN3 'Proposals which enable the re-use of heritage assets will be encouraged where they are considered consistent with the significance of the heritage asset.'

The proposals are seen as a minor beneficial intervention in the Conservation Area, improving an underused area of land and creating a small-scale extension with the benefit of a green roof. They do not exert any level of harm upon the setting of the listed building nor upon the Conservation Area.

6.0 Conclusion

The changes proposed do not amount to any degree of harm upon the significance of either the listed building next door, or to the Conservation Area. The present situation will be enhanced; the under-used land given a new purpose and improved in aesthetic terms.

The proposals are limited in height, scale and size and their design has been deliberately simplified in order not to compete with the rear elevations of the next door building.

The green roof is a positive benefit in environmental terms and will give an improved view from the listed building which overlooks the space. A degree of separation between the extension and the listed building will remain, due to the loading bay thoroughfare, and there will be no direct impact upon significance.

The proposals are considered to respond positively to the local and national policy outlined above.



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