

HERITAGE STATEMENT

Proposed Alterations to the Elevation of Existing Commercial Unit
1 Hillcourt Street, Manchester – M1 7HU



1. Introduction

This Heritage Statement has been prepared in support of a planning application for external alterations to an existing commercial unit, comprising the formation of a new entrance door within an existing window opening on the principal elevation.

The application site is not statutorily listed and is not located within a conservation area. However, the building is considered to hold non-designated heritage value due to its architectural character and contribution to the local streetscape.

This statement should be read alongside the submitted Design and Access Statement, which provides further detail on the design rationale and access strategy.

The scope of the application is limited to external alterations to the ground floor elevation, with no changes proposed to the overall form, scale, or footprint of the building.

2. Planning Policy Context

National and local planning policy requires that the impact of development proposals on heritage assets is properly understood and assessed.

At a national level, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) advises that Heritage assets should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. Great weight should be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets, while non-designated heritage assets should also be considered in decision-making. Where a proposal results in less than substantial harm, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

At a local level, planning policy within Manchester supports the protection and enhancement of the historic environment. They promote High-quality design that responds positively to local character and proposals that deliver public benefits, including improved accessibility

The proposal has been developed in accordance with these principles, seeking to minimise harm while delivering clear functional and visual improvements.

3. Existing Building and Heritage Significance

The application site at 1 Hillcourt Street, Manchester, M1 7HU consists of a commercial building dating from the late nineteenth to early twentieth century. It occupies a prominent corner plot at the junction of Hillcourt Street and Sidney Street, in close proximity to Grosvenor Street and the Oxford Road corridor. The surrounding area is characterised by a dense urban grain, combining historic commercial properties, university buildings, and more recent redevelopment linked to Manchester Metropolitan University, alongside nearby residential accommodation.



The building itself is constructed in traditional red brick and presents a straightforward, well-ordered façade typical of late Victorian and early Edwardian commercial architecture. The elevation is defined by regularly spaced window openings with consistent vertical proportions, complemented by stone lintels and sills and relatively restrained decorative detailing. Its scale, form, and material qualities reflect its original commercial function and enable it to integrate comfortably within the established historic streetscape.

While the site does not fall within a designated Conservation Area and the building is not statutorily listed, it has been identified by Manchester City Council as a non-designated heritage asset. This designation reflects its contribution to the townscape,

its relationship with surrounding historic structures, and its role in maintaining the character of the area. Despite substantial redevelopment in the vicinity, including large institutional buildings and modern residential schemes, the property at 1 Hillcourt Street retains its original footprint, scale, and frontage proportions. As such, it serves as a surviving example of the earlier phase of commercial development in this part of the city.

Within the wider context, four Grade II listed buildings are located along Grosvenor Street. These are predominantly institutional in nature and add to the historic significance of the area. The connection between the application site and these designated heritage assets is largely visual and contextual rather than direct; the building does not lie within their immediate setting or curtilage but forms part of the broader urban backdrop in which they are experienced.

It is also noted that the building's external appearance has remained largely unaltered. Its principal façade, brickwork, and overall massing have been preserved, with previous proposals focusing mainly on internal modifications. As a result, its external character and contribution to the townscape have been maintained. The current proposal therefore represents a relatively rare instance of external change and must be considered in relation to the building's limited but recognised heritage value.

The significance of the building as a non-designated heritage asset can be summarised as follows:

- Architectural value: Modest, arising from its red brick construction, consistent window rhythm, and restrained commercial detailing.
- Historic value: Local in scope, illustrating late nineteenth to early twentieth-century commercial development in Manchester.
- Townscape value: Moderate, due to its role in defining the street edge and maintaining continuity within the built environment.

Existing Condition

The ground floor elevation has been subject to a number of unsympathetic alterations over time, including:

- Inconsistent and visually intrusive paint finishes
- Poor-quality signage
- Applied coatings to stone elements
- General wear and lack of maintenance

These elements detract from the overall quality and coherence of the façade and dilute the building's historic character.



Existing condition of the elevation

4. Description of the Proposal

The proposal comprises:

- The conversion of one existing window opening into a new entrance door
- Installation of a glazed, slim-profile framed door with a fixed top light
- Retention of the existing structural opening, including the sandstone header
- Localised brick infill using salvaged materials to accommodate revised proportions
- Repainting of the ground floor elements in a consistent black finish
- Repair and cleaning of existing façade elements

The works are limited in scope and do not involve any enlargement of openings or removal of significant structural fabric.



The proposal

5. Impact on Heritage Significance

The proposal results in the loss of one window opening and its replacement with a doorway. This introduces a minor change to the established rhythm of the façade and represents a low level of harm to the building's heritage significance.

The design has been carefully developed to minimise this impact through:

- Retention of the original opening dimensions and structural elements
- Avoidance of new or enlarged openings
- Use of a vertically proportioned door with a fixed top light, reflecting the original window hierarchy
- Slim framing to maintain a lightweight and recessive appearance
- Reuse of salvaged brick to ensure a high-quality and sympathetic infill
- Matching of mortar and materials to existing fabric

In addition to minimising harm, the proposal delivers a number of improvements to the building:

- Removal of inappropriate paint from stone elements and their refurbishment
- Introduction of a consistent and high-quality colour scheme
- General cleaning and repair of the façade
- Improved visual coherence of the ground floor elevation

These measures result in a net enhancement to the appearance of the building.



Existing and proposed elevation



Existing and proposed side elevation

Public Benefit

The proposal delivers a clear public benefit through the provision of inclusive access, allowing the building to be accessed by wheelchair users and those with limited mobility. This is achieved through:

- A new accessible entrance at street level

- A step-free threshold
- Internal measures to overcome level differences

This represents a meaningful improvement to the usability of the building and aligns with broader planning objectives for inclusive design.

Planning Balance

The identified harm is considered to be less than substantial and at the lower end of the scale. In line with national policy, this harm must be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

Given the limited extent of harm, the high quality of the design, and the clear benefits in terms of accessibility and façade improvement, it is considered that the proposal results in a positive overall outcome.

6. Conclusion

The proposal represents a carefully considered and proportionate intervention to a building of non-designated heritage value. It:

- Minimises impact on the building's historic fabric
- Retains key architectural features and proportions
- Enhances the visual quality of the façade
- Provides significant public benefit through improved accessibility

On this basis, the proposal is considered to comply with both national and local planning policy and should be supported.