

Planning

Growth & Development

Delegated officer report for planning application

Application no. 145004/LO/2026

Date registered valid: 5 February 2026

Proposal: Listed Building Consent for the installation of 3no. non-illuminated signs.

Address: Royal London House, 196 Deansgate, Manchester, M3 3WF

Ward(s): Deansgate Ward

Applicant: AM ALPHA

Agent (if any): Mr Matthew Sobic Savills (UK) Limited

Case officer: James Bridgman
Tel: 0161 219 6202
Email: james.bridgman@manchester.gov.uk

Recommendation: Refused

Date of recommendation: 31 March 2026

Application details

Type of application: Listed Building Consent

Development type: Listed building alteration

Date of site visit: 13 February 2026

Standard consultations:

No consultations have been printed and sent.

Neighbour notifications

Printed: 10 February 2026 Expired: 3 March 2026

Site notice

Posted: 13 February 2026 Expired: 6 March 2026

Press advert

Published: 17 February 2026 Expired:

Departure from Development Plan: No

Environmental Statement: Not required

Description of site/building

Listed building: Grade II

Conservation area: Deansgate Conservation Area 1985

Tree Preservation Order: Not applicable

The site relates to the central entrance to the Grade II listed Royal London House at No.196 Deansgate.

The building was originally constructed as an insurance office in 1904. It was designed in the Free Baroque style by Charles Heathcote, an architect who designed a number of important buildings in Manchester's city centre, including the Grade-II listed Onward Buildings which sit opposite Royal London House. The building's significance is largely derived from its ornate façade. The site also falls within the Deansgate Conservation Area.

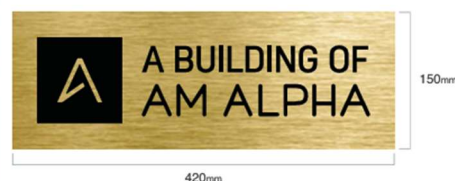
Description of development

Listed Building Consent is sought for the installation of 3no. non-illuminated signs:



ITEM A - Pillar Plaque - Qty 1

Brushed gold dibond panel cut to size
Black vinyl lettering to face
Bonded to column via VHB tape to rear
Size: 420mm x 150mm
Scale 1:5



ITEM B - Window Vinyl - Qty 1

Digitally printed and plotted vinyl display
Externally applied to glazing, above existing displays
Size: 210mm x 75mm
Scale 1:5



ITEM C - Door Vinyl - Qty 1

Plotted etch vinyl display
Reverse applied to glazing on door
Size: 550mm x 150mm
Scale 1:5



Photograph of the front elevation with proposed signs

- Sign 'A' is a proposed external plaque sign 420mm x 150mm
- Sign 'B' is a proposed externally applied vinyl 210mm x 75mm
- Sign 'C' is a proposed internally applied vinyl 550mm x 155mm

Consultations & Notification Responses

Publicity – Letters were sent to occupiers of the building and surrounding buildings. The application was advertised via site notice and in the MEN as affecting a listed building and conservation area. No representations were received in response to the application.

Issues

The Places for Everyone Plan – Joint Development Plan Document, for nine of the 10 boroughs which make up Greater Manchester adopted on 21st of March 2024:

- Policy JP-P2 – Heritage

The Manchester Core Strategy – Development Plan Document 2012-2027 ("the Core Strategy") was adopted by the City Council on the 11th of July 2012:

- Policy CC9 – Design and Heritage
- Policy EN1 – Design Principles and Strategic Character Areas
- Policy EN3 – Heritage

- Policy DM1 – Development Management

Saved Unitary Development Plan for Manchester - The following saved UDP Policies are of relevance to this application:

- Policy DC14 – Shopfronts and Related Signs
- Policy DC18 – Conservation Areas
- Policy DC19 – Listed Buildings

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- Chapter 6 – Building a strong, competitive economy
- Chapter 7 – Ensuring the vitality of town centres
- Chapter 9 – Promoting Sustainable Transport
- Chapter 12 – Achieving well-designed places
- Chapter 16 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Draft National Planning Policy Framework (2025)

The government has published a consultation National Planning Policy Framework which is intended to improve housebuilding rates through a clearer, more predictable and faster policy basis for decision and plan making. Whilst this is a draft NPPF for consultation it is considered that the development proposals do not comply with the design and heritage related policy contained within it.

As set out in the printed report, the harm to the appearance of the listed building has been identified through consideration of the application proposals.

Shopfront Design Guide (2024)

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Issues

Royal London House is a Grade II listed building at No.188-202 Deansgate. The upper floors are constructed in sandstone ashlar, and the ground floor consists of dark brown polished granite. The Baroque style building has symmetrical frontage.

The development refers to the Deansgate central entrance leading to the lobby and upper floors of the listed building. The central glazed doorway is framed by decorative piers and projected pedimented architrave.

Impacts on the listed building

There are 2no. existing plaque signs sited on each of piers of the entrance way to identify the address of the building. These signs have been sympathetically designed as they are black plated, sited at lower level and retain the symmetry of the entrance.

The proposal includes the installation of a plaque sign that would be attached with a very high bond tape and would not require any fixings into the listed building. This would be reversible addition. However, the addition of 1no. gold plaque sign would introduce a visually intrusive element that would disrupt the symmetry and detract from the architectural frontage of the listed building. Whilst it is a reversible addition, the siting and appearance of the plaque sign would result in a medium level of less than substantial harm to the listed building.

There is already existing vinyl sited to the glazed entrance door of the listed building and the proposal seeks to introduce two additional vinyl. One of the vinyl would be sited in the upper left corner, would be solid black with white lettering and externally applied. The other vinyl would be internally applied to the glazing, would have low opacity and is sited to the lower section of the doorway.

The addition of two vinyl would contribute to visual clutter and would interrupt views into the glazed principal doorway of the listed building. Whilst the externally applied vinyl is relatively small in scale, it would be exposed to weathering and could deteriorate quickly therefore resulting poor quality addition to the listed building.

The addition of three signs with the same purpose within such close proximity is considered to be excessive and for the reasons outlined above would result in harm to the listed building and would not positively contribute to the setting and significance of the listed building.

On the drawings an existing menu board is shown at the adjoining site (Federal). There is no record of listed building consent for this sign, and it is unauthorised.

Heritage Assessment

For the reasons outlined above, less than substantial harm has been identified through the installation of the three signs. The signs would result in visual harm to the appearance and character of the listed building and therefore resulting in harm the setting and significance.

In line with the requirements of paragraph 215 of the NPPF where less than substantial harm occurs this must be set against the public benefits of the scheme.

The applicants supporting statement identifies no harm to the listed but states that in any event the proposal will ensure that the floorspace of the buildings can be brought back into their optimum viable use and contribute towards economic objectives of the policies within the Core Strategy.

There has been no evidence submitted to support the required need for the signage to accommodate the use of the listed building. Notwithstanding this, signage for an office use could be sited internally, or in other locations which are less harmful to the listed building.

It is therefore considered that no public benefits exist to outweigh the harm identified as required by paragraph 215 of the NPPF.

Conclusion

The Council have engaged with the applicant and sought amendments to reduce the proposal to the siting of 1no. internally applied vinyl. No amendments were forthcoming and the application has therefore been recommended for refusal.

In light of the above assessment, the proposal is contrary to policies SP1, CC9, EN1, EN3 and DM1 of the Manchester Core Strategy, saved UDP policies DC18 and DC19, Places for Everyone Plan policy JP-P2, and guidance within the National Planning Policy Framework and the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Other Legislative Requirements Equality Act 2010

Section 149 (Public Sector Equality Duty) of the Equality Act 2010 requires due regard to the need to: Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act and; Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. The Equality Duty does not impose a legal requirement to conduct an Equality Impact Assessment. Compliance with the Equality Duty involves consciously thinking about the aims of the Equality Duty as part of the process of decision-making.

Human Rights Act 1998 considerations

This application needs to be considered against the provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998. Under Article 6, the applicants (and those third parties, including local residents, who have made representations) have a right to a fair hearing and to this end the local planning authority must give full consideration to their comments.

Protocol 1 Article 1, and Article 8 where appropriate, confer(s) a right of respect for a person's home, other land and business assets. In taking account of all material considerations, including Council policy as set out in the Core Strategy and saved policies of the Unitary Development Plan, the Director of Planning, Building Control & Licensing has concluded that some rights conferred by these articles on the applicant(s)/objector(s)/resident(s) and other occupiers and owners of nearby land that might be affected may be interfered with but that that interference is in accordance with the law and justified by being in the public interest and on the basis of the planning merits of the development proposal. She believes that any restriction on these rights posed by the recommendation given is proportionate to the wider benefits of and that such a decision falls within the margin of discretion afforded to the Council under the Town and Country Planning Acts.

Recommendation: Refusal

Article 35 Declaration

Officers have worked with the applicant in a positive and proactive manner based on seeking solutions to problems arising in relation to dealing with the planning application. Issues have arisen during the consideration of this application and the officer negotiated with the agent to reach a satisfactory resolution. No amendments were received and the application has therefore been recommended for refusal.

Reasons for recommendation to refuse

- 1) The 1no. plaque sign and 2no. vinyl signs due to their siting and appearance cumulatively form incongruous additions to the listed building. The signage obscures an architectural feature, disrupts the symmetry of the entrance, contributes to visual clutter with existing signage and interrupts views through the glazed doors. The development would not contribute positively to the character and appearance of the listed building. It would have an unduly harmful impact on the visual amenity and character of the listed building resulting in less than substantial harm. The required public benefits do not exist to outweigh the level of harm caused. This is contrary to policy JP-P2 of Places for Everyone, Policies SP1, EN1, EN3, CC9 and DM1 of the Manchester Core Strategy (2012), Saved policy DC19 of the Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester (1995), the National Planning Policy Framework and Shopfront and Signage Design Guide (2024).
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Appendix 1 – List of consultees & neighbours notified

Basement, Royal London House, 196 Deansgate, Manchester, M3 3WF
Third Floor, Royal London House, 196 Deansgate, Manchester, M3 3WF
First Floor, Royal London House, 196 Deansgate, Manchester, M3 3WF
Fourth Floor, Royal London House, 196 Deansgate, Manchester, M3 3WF
Second Floor, Royal London House, 196 Deansgate, Manchester, M3 3WF
London House, 193 Deansgate, Manchester, M3 3NE
Third Floor Right, London House, 193 Deansgate, Manchester, M3 3NE
Fifth Floor, Royal London House, 196 Deansgate, Manchester, M3 3WF
194 Deansgate, Manchester, M3 3ND
209 Deansgate, Manchester, M3 3NW
198 Deansgate, Manchester, M3 3NE

Appendix 2 – Planning constraints

Article 4 Direction - City Centre PD Restriction - Class B1(a) To C3
Article 4 Direction - Removal Of PD Rights Change Of Use From Class C3 To Class C4
Coal Authority - Development Low Risk - Name: DEVELOPMENT_LOW_RISK_AREA
Conservation Area - Deansgate Conservation Area 1985
Area Team Boundary - Name: CENTRAL