

Planning

Growth & Development

Delegated officer report for planning application

Application no. 145355/LO/2026

Date registered valid: 6 March 2026

Proposal: Listed Building Consent for the installation of security baskets and amended window design.

Address: HMP Manchester, Southall Street, Manchester, M3 1JL

Ward(s): Cheetham Ward

Applicant: Jo Lewington, Ministry of Justice

Agent (if any): Mrs Claire Walker, Cushman & Wakefield

Case officer: Steven McCoombe
Tel: 0161 234 4607
Email: steven.mccoombe@manchester.gov.uk

Recommendation: Approve

Date of recommendation: 13 April 2026

Application details

Type of application: Listed Building Consent

Development type: Listed building alteration

Date of site visit: 20 March 2026

Standard consultations:

Printed: 11 March 2026 Expired: 1 April 2026

Neighbour notifications

No neighbour notifications have been printed and sent.

Site notice

Posted: 20 March 2026 Expired: 12 April 2026

Press advert

Published: 17 March 2026 Expired: 9 April 2026

Departure from Development Plan: No

Environmental Statement: Not required

Description of site/building

The application site relates to HMP Strangeways - a large brick built Victorian prison built circa 1868, which is Grade II listed. The building incorporates a panoptic layout and is bounded by Sherborne St to the north, Empire St to the east, Southall St to the south and Great Ducie St to the west. Adjoining the prison to the west is a single storey visitor's centre comprising a heptagonal building of a more recent architectural design. The prison was designed by Alfred Waterhouse – a prominent architect of his time and is dominated by a 71-metre-high ventilation tower. The prison comprises two main sections. The lower prison is of radial design with wings extending from a central rotunda. The upper prison is of a cruciform design, also with a central rotunda.

The site in this case specifically involves the external windows of G wing.

Listed building: Grade II

Conservation area: No

Tree Preservation Order: No

Description of area

With the exception of the prison complex, the site is situated within the 'warehouse district' which is largely characterised by large warehouse buildings, cash and carry businesses, light industry and sporadic residential uses. The city centre is situated a short distance to the south.

Background

An Inspection report by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons published in January 2025¹ identified physical security as a priority concern at the prison, with physical weaknesses allowing large

quantities of drugs, weapons and other illicit items to be delivered by drones or by being thrown over the wall.

An Urgent Notification was issued for HMP Manchester ahead of the report being published, which concluded that action was required to “reduce the supply of drugs and other illicit items which were so clearly undermining every aspect of prison life, particularly safety”.

A review has been undertaken to identify and assess options for different physical mitigation measures that would prevent access by drones and improve prisoner, staff and public safety.

Description of development

Listed Building Consent is sought for the installation of new external security baskets (grilles) to the windows on G Wing. The baskets are of an overmounted design, which allows them to be easily unlocked to enable the external removal of accumulated rubbish while restricting the windows from opening beyond their full extent. For security reasons, the baskets are fixed to the external face of the building, rather than within the window reveal, ensuring full coverage of the windows and preventing internal access to anchor and fixing points.

Planning permission and listed building consent were granted in December 2025 for the replacement custody windows to G Wing (refs. 144286/FO/2025 and 144287/LO/2025). Since consent was issued, a minor amendment has been made to the window design to alter the fenestration layout from five vertical panels to six panels, with four glazed panels positioned centrally rather than the originally approved three. The amended window design is included as part of this application.

The baskets are to be manufactured from mild fabricated zinc-plated steel, with a perforated design and powder coated in a terracotta colour to reflect the brickwork (RAL 8012).

The application is accompanied in tandem by a planning application (Ref: 145354/FO/2026).

Consultations & Notification Responses

Local residents/occupiers - No representations received.

Policy

The below policy and guidance is relevant to the consideration of this application:

- Policies DM1, EN3 and SP1 of the Manchester Core Strategy; -
- Saved policy DC19.1 of the Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester;
- Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan – Policies JP-P1 and JP-P2;
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – Sections, 3, 4 and 16.

Issues

Principle

The proposed works are considered essential to facilitate necessary upgrades directly arising from the findings of the most recent prison inspection. The improvements are intended to strengthen security arrangements, specifically by deterring and preventing the introduction of illicit items into the facility. The proposal accords with the overarching objective of protecting public safety, in line with Policies DM1 and SP1 of the Core Strategy and Policy JP-P1 of the Places for Everyone framework. It is also consistent with national guidance set out in

paragraphs 101–102 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which highlight the importance of modernising public infrastructure and responding to wider security considerations through reducing risk, enhancing resilience, and ensuring public safety. As such, planning decisions should recognise and support development that is demonstrably necessary to meet operational security requirements.

It is acknowledged that the proposed works would result in a degree of harm to the heritage significance of the host Listed Building. However, in this instance, that harm is considered to be justified. The limited heritage impact is outweighed by the significant public safety benefits arising from the proposal, including the provision of a safer working environment for staff and the maintenance of security standards appropriate to a high-security custodial setting. Overall, the proposal represents a balanced and proportionate response to heritage considerations, appropriately weighed against essential operational and security needs.

Heritage Impact

Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a statutory duty on decision-makers to give special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings, their settings, and any features of special architectural or historic interest when determining planning applications that may affect them.

This requirement is reinforced through local planning policy. Core Strategy Policy EN3 requires the impact of new development on heritage assets to be properly assessed, while saved UDP Policy DC19.1 seeks to preserve and enhance listed buildings and states that consent will not be granted for proposals that would adversely affect their architectural or historic character. Similarly, Policy JP-P2 of the Places for Everyone framework requires proposals affecting designated and non-designated heritage assets, and their settings, to be assessed in accordance with national policy.

National policy guidance is set out in Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Paragraph 208 requires local planning authorities to identify and assess the significance of any heritage asset affected by a proposal and to take this significance into account in order to avoid or minimise potential conflict between conservation and development. Paragraph 214 advises that development resulting in substantial harm or total loss of significance to a designated heritage asset should be refused unless the harm is necessary to deliver substantial public benefits or meets specific exceptional tests. Where harm is assessed as less than substantial, paragraph 215 requires this to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing the heritage asset's optimum viable use. Paragraph 216 further requires a balanced judgement to be made for proposals affecting non-designated heritage assets, having regard to both the scale of harm and the significance of the asset.

In this instance, the design of the proposed security baskets is inherently functional, reflecting the overriding need to enhance security and prevent drone access to individual cells. The baskets incorporate a perforated design to allow light penetration and ventilation, together with an externally openable element to facilitate the removal of accumulated debris.

The installation of the external baskets would introduce a consistent and uniform appearance across the windows and elevations of G Wing. Notwithstanding the associated visual impact, there is a clear and compelling justification for the proposal. The scheme would deliver significant public benefits in terms of safety and security, which are considered to outweigh the identified heritage impacts. The level of harm arising from the proposal is therefore assessed as being less than substantial.

On this basis, the proposal is considered acceptable, and the impact on the heritage significance of the Listed Building and its setting is regarded as sustainable. A condition is included to control the colour of the baskets, ensuring an appropriate match with the existing brickwork and minimising visual impact.

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: Approve

Article 35 Declaration

Condition(s) to be attached to decision for approval OR Reasons for recommendation to refuse

1) The development must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of this permission.

Reason - Required to be imposed pursuant to Section 18 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

2) The development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with the following drawings and documents:

17280 01.A3 (site location plan), 17280 12.A1 (proposed site plan), 17280 13.A0 (proposed G wing elevations), 17280 15.A2 (proposed basket design, Photograph of basket design modelled in RAL 8012 and Heritage Statement prepared by Mott MacDonald, received by the City Council as Local Planning Authority on 6 March 2026.

Reason - To ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the approved plans, pursuant to policies SP1, EN3 and DM1 of the Manchester Core Strategy, saved policy DC19 of the Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester, policies JP-P1 and JP-P2 of Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

3) The window baskets hereby approved shall be coloured to a specification of Red Brown (RAL 8012) unless otherwise agreed by the City Council as Local Planning Authority.

Reason - To ensure satisfactory colouration and in order to safeguard the character and appearance of the heritage asset, pursuant to policies SP1, EN3 and DM1 of the Manchester Core Strategy, saved policy DC19 of the Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester, policies JP-P1 and JP-P2 of Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Appendix 1 – List of consultees & neighbours notified

Heritage & Urban Design

Appendix 2 – Planning constraints

Article 4 Direction - City Centre PD Restriction - Class B1(c) To C3

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

Area Team Boundary - Name: NORTH AREA