

Planning

Growth & Development

Delegated officer report for planning application

Application no. 144894/FO/2026
Date registered valid: 8 January 2026
Proposal: Retention of shopfront with proposed mural.
Address: 1 Cross Street, Manchester, M2 1HX
Ward(s): Piccadilly Ward

Applicant: Hotel Chocolat
Agent (if any): Mr Sam Harper Firstplan
Case officer: James Bridgman
Tel: 0161 219 6202
Email: james.bridgman@manchester.gov.uk

Recommendation: Approve
Date of recommendation: 5 March 2026

Application details

Type of application: Full Application Consent

Development type: Minor Other

Date of site visit: 16 January 2026

Standard consultations:

Printed: 14 January 2026 Expired: 4 February 2026

Neighbour notifications

Printed: 14 January 2026 Expired: 4 February 2026

Site notice

Posted: 16 January 2026 Expired: 16 January 2026

Press advert

Published: 20 January 2026 Expired: 10 February 2026

Departure from Development Plan: No

Environmental Statement: Not required

Description of site/building

Listed building: Not applicable

Conservation area: Not applicable

Tree Preservation Order:

The site relates to a ground floor commercial unit in the Arndale shopping centre located at 1 Cross Street. The unit was the former branch of the bank of Halifax but has been vacant for a number of years.

A louvred panel is currently affixed above the fascia and shopfront. A separate application has been submitted to for external signage.

The proposal site is located in Manchester City Centre and therefore the surrounding area has a wide variety of uses including, residential, offices, restaurants, cafes, bars, retail and commercial outlets in the immediate area with associated advertisements on their respective buildings.

The building is not listed, and it is not located within a Conservation Area. The site is located adjacent to St Ann's Square Conservation Area, the boundary of which runs through the centre of Cross Street.

The applicant site is directly opposite the Grade II listed Royal Exchange on the other side of Cross Street, so the proposals should be considered within the context of the adjacent conservation area and listed buildings.

Description of development

Permission is sought for the retention of shopfront with proposed mural.



Figure 1 – Proposed elevation of shopfront



Figure 2 – Proposed CGI of shopfront with painted mural



Figure 3 – Photograph of the retrospective shopfront

Consultations & Notification Responses

Publicity: The proposal has been advertised, by way of site notice and press advertisement, as affecting the setting of a listed building and the conservation area. Letters have also been sent out to local businesses and residents. No comments have been as part of that process.

Highway Services - Waste bins must be stored within the curtilage of the site. All external entrance doors (with the exception of fire doors) should be inwardly opening in order to prevent obstruction on the adjacent footway.

No objections subject to informative relating to licensing, proposed construction fit out arrangements and working safely near Metrolink.

Transport For Greater Manchester (Metrolink) - Metrolink have no objection to this application – as the site is adjacent to the operational Metrolink we would request that the developer is advised that the details of working safely near Metrolink could be found on the Metrolink Website at:- [Working safely near Metrolink | Bee Network | Powered by TfGM](#) .

Relevant Planning History

142254/AO/2025 - Retention of projection sign and installation of hand painted mural. Decision: under consideration

142253/FO/2025 – Retention of external alterations to shopfront. Decision: Refused 2.9.25

Reason for refusal:

The shopfront, by virtue of its use of marine ply panels and textured paint finish results in a poor-quality appearance that is detrimental to the visual amenity of the street scene and wider area. The site fails to preserve or enhance the setting of the adjacent Grade II Royal Exchange Building and the St Anns Conservation Area 1990. The development is therefore contrary to Core Strategy Policies SP1, EN1, EN3, CC9 and DM1, Saved Unitary Development Plan

Policies DC14 and DC18, Places for Everyone Plan Policy JP-P2, the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

142254/AO/2025 - Installation of 1no. internally illuminated sign, 1no. internally illuminated fascia sign and 1no. internally illuminated projecting sign. Decision: Approved 11.06.2025

Policy

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-P1 - Sustainable Places
- Policy JP-Strat2 – City Centre
- 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 SP1 – Spatial Principles
- Policy EN1 – Design Principles and Strategic Character Areas
- Policy EN3 – Heritage
- Policy DM1 – Development Management
- Policy CC9 – Design and Heritage

The Unitary Development Plan for Manchester – For the reasons outlined below the following saved UDP Policies are of relevance to this application:

- Policy DC14 – Shop Fronts and Related Signs
- Policy DC 18 – Conservation Areas
- Policy DC 19 – Listed Buildings

Shopfront Design Guide (2024)

The Guide to Development in Manchester Supplementary Planning Document and Planning Guidance (Adopted 2007)

Paragraph 2.7 states that Chapter 2 'Design' - outlines the City Council's expectations that all new developments should have a high standard of design making a positive contribution to the City's environment and encourages "the most appropriate form of development to enliven neighbourhoods and sustain local facilities. The layout of the scheme and the design, scale, massing and orientation of its buildings should achieve a unified form which blends in with, and links to, adjacent areas.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

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

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Section 66 of the LBCA Act requires the local planning authority to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the setting of listed buildings. This requires more than a simple

balancing exercise and considerable importance and weight should be given to the desirability of preserving the setting.

Section 72 of the LBCA Act requires the local planning authority to have pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

Issues

Principle

The application seeks retrospective planning permission for the installation of a new shopfront to a ground floor commercial unit of the Arndale Shopping Centre. A hand painted mural within the frontage is also proposed. The shopfront faces on to Cross Street opposite the Royal Exchange.

The previous shopfront was glazed, and the unit was unoccupied for several years. The former would of the site was a branch of the Halifax bank. A new occupier Hotel Chocolat has been , and they are seeking a new shopfront to alter to the appearance of the shopfront.

Visual Amenity

Policy EN1 (Design Principles and Strategic Character Areas) of the Core Strategy advises development can provide opportunities for good design to enhance the overall image of the City should be fully realised whilst reinforcing and enhancing the local character. It also advises that developer's will be expected to consider the City's heritage, including its listed buildings, and conservation areas

The retrospective shopfront is characterised by a largely flat façade with marine grade ply which results in a visually inactive frontage within the street scene. The site is located within a busy location within the city centre where typically frontages contribute positively to the vitality and visual interest of the street scene. The previous application was refused at the site as the shopfront reads relatively blank and utilitarian. There were also concerns raised with the paint finish as it appeared streaky in natural daylight and dirt was beginning to build up towards the bottom.

During pre-application discussions, the Council suggested the use of more glazing to seek a high-quality finish and introduce an activate frontage with visibility into the shopfront. It was established that due to internal constraints such as structural columns and because some internal areas are not within the occupier's unit, they were unable to install a higher quality material such as glazing.

The proposal therefore includes a hand painted mural that would introduce colour, texture and visual interest to the left side of the shopfront. The botanical imagery is appropriate as it refers to directly to the occupier's brand and would provide a distinct and engaging shopfront.

To ensure that the painted shopfront does not deteriorate and is maintained appropriately, a robust shopfront maintenance plan has been submitted. This includes annual reviews and a reactive call out protocol should any damage occur such as vandalism, graffiti, excessive bird fouling, weather or water ingress. The call out process would ensure someone is able to visit the site within 24 hours. This robust strategy would ensure the shopfront is maintained to a high quality finish and will be conditioned as part of the planning approval.

It is acknowledged the applicant unit and adjoining units were previously vacant for a number of years. The occupation of Hotel Chocolat follows the occupation of the adjoining units which also

have had their original shopfronts replaced. In particular, the adjoining unit HOP has introduced the use of bold colours through consented applications 139404/FO/2024 and 140981/AO/2024 (HOP). Therefore, the use of a coloured mural is considered to respond positively to the street scene.

In summary, the design of the shopfront overcomes the previous concerns outlined with the refused application. Subject to compliance with the ongoing maintenance strategy, the design of the proposal is consistent with saved UDP policy DC14 and Core Strategy Policies SP1, EN1, EN3, DM1 and CC9.

Heritage

Policy EN3 (Heritage) of the Core Strategy advises that 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.

The application site occupies a prominent frontage immediately adjacent to the St Anns Square Conservation Area and the Grade II Royal Exchange Building. The prevailing character of the listed building is defined by the high-quality stone facades, strong vertical emphasis with columns, traditional recessed glazed shopfronts and simple signage. These features collectively contribute to the architectural richness and visual interest of the street scene.

The site is located on the opposite side of Cross Street and is outside of the boundary of St Anns Square conservation area but is within the setting of the adjacent heritage assets. As outlined on the previously refused application by virtue of the use of marine ply panels and textured paint finish this has resulted in a lower quality shopfront as existing.

The use of a hand painted mural would introduce colour, texture and visual interest to the left side of the shopfront which lessens the visual harm previously identified. Therefore, the proposed shopfront alterations would result in a low level of less than substantial harm to the significance and setting of the heritage assets and is contrary to paragraph 208 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

In line with the requirements of paragraph 215 of the NPPF, where less than substantial harm has been identified, this must be considered against any public benefits.

The external alterations subject of this application has been undertaken to facilitate Hotel Chocolat as the new occupier and there are public benefits associated with bringing a former vacant unit into a new use.

The use of the hand painted mural responds positively to the street scene and contributes towards activating the frontage within the setting of the heritage assets.

The low level of less than substantial harm identified to the character and significance of the setting of the adjacent St Anns Square Conservation Area and the Grade II listed Royal Exchange Building is therefore considered to be outweighed by this public benefit.

Section 66 of the LBCA Act requires the local planning authority to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the setting of listed buildings. This requires more than a simple balancing exercise and considerable importance and weight should be given to the desirability of preserving the setting. Section 72 of the LBCA Act requires the local planning authority to have pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

As outlined above, the proposal is considered to contribute positively to the street scene and this part of Cross Street. It would not result in unacceptable harm to the setting of the heritage assets in accordance with Sections 66 and 72 of the LBCA.

Overall, it is considered that the low level of harm identified to the setting of the Grade II Royal Exchange and St Anns Conservation Area is outweighed by the public benefit. The development therefore complies with Policies CC9, EN1 and EN3 of the Manchester Core Strategy, saved UDP Policies DC18 and DC19, paragraph 215 of the NPPF which relate to design and heritage

Impact on Highway Network and Metrolink

The applicant site is located on Cross Street which refers to an operational tram/Metrolink service.

The proposed external alterations are all within the red-line boundary of the site and as such, will not impinge upon the adopted highway. An informative has been added relating to any construction fit out requirements and advice on working safely near an operational Metrolink service. The proposal complies with Core Strategy policy DM1.

Conclusion

In light of the above assessment, the design of the proposal is considered to overcome the previously raised concerns on the refused application 142253/FO/2025. The proposal is therefore acceptable and is consistent with PfE Policies JP-P1, JP-Strat2 and JP-P2, Core Strategy Policies SP1, EN1, EN3, DM1 and CC9 and saved UDP Policies DC14, DC18 and DC19.

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

The proposal complies with the development plan and would improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. It therefore comprises sustainable development and the Local Planning Authority worked proactively and positively to issue the decision without delay.

Condition(s) to be attached to decision for approval

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 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

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

- Proposed Shopfront Elevation: 020
- Design and Access Statement: 25038/SH/CVN, prepared by First Plan

All received by the Local Planning Authority on 8 January 2026

Reason: To ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the approved plans. Pursuant to policies SP1 and DM1 of the Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.

3. The shopfront including the mural hereby approved shall be maintained at all times thereafter in accordance with the details specified within the document labelled 'HOTEL CHOCOLAT MANCHESTER CROSS STREET SHOPFRONT MAINTENANCE PLAN (FEB 2026)', as received by the Local Planning Authority on the 5 March 2026.

Reason - In the interests of visual amenity pursuant to policies SP1, DM1 and CC9 of the Core Strategy for the City of Manchester.

Informative

If works are required to the highway as part of this application this should be subject to a S278 Highways Works agreement. Any modifications / improvements to the public highway or footpath the applicant will require an agreement with MCC's Highways teams. This will be funded at the applicant's expense. The following link provides access:

https://www.manchester.gov.uk/directory_record/287709/permission_to_work_on_the_highways_-_section_278_agreements/category/355/highways_and_pavements

Should there be any basement excavations proposed adjacent to the highway structural drawings and calculations for the temporary and permanent support works must be submitted for checking (for a fee) to MCC Bridges/Structures Section. The applicant is advised to contact highways.structures@manchester.gov.uk.

. For the avoidance of doubt, all external entrance doors (with the exception of fire doors) should be inwardly opening in order to prevent obstruction on the adjacent footway. Detail should be sought from the applicant in relation to any proposed construction or fit-out arrangements, where there is an impact on the highway. It would be useful for a site layout plan to be provided, referencing the location for contractor parking, waste storage areas, and loading/unloading areas.

The applicant is required to discuss and agree any requirements for licensing, hoarding / scaffolding, and skips with MCC's Highways Licensing Team via Email to: highwaylicences@manchester.gov.uk

The applicant is required to discuss and agree any requirements for temporary pedestrian and traffic management with MCC's Event and Traffic Management Team via Email to highwaynetworkmanagement@manchester.gov.uk

The applicant is to be advised of the details of working safely near Metrolink which can be found on the Metrolink Website at; <https://www.tfgm.com/public-transport/tram/working-safely>. This document provides contact details for the Metrolink Operator in order that the proposed method of erection can be discussed and relevant permits obtained.

Further guidance directly from Metrolink – as the site is adjacent to the operational Metrolink we would request that the developer is advised that the details of working safely near Metrolink could be found on the Metrolink Website at:- [Working safely near Metrolink | Bee Network | Powered by TfGM](#) .

Appendix 1 – List of consultees & neighbours notified

Highway Services
Transport For Greater Manchester
Metrolink

5 Cross Street, Manchester, M2 1WE
Advertising Right JC Decaux Outside 1, Cross Street, Manchester, M2 1HX
8 - 10 Cross Street, Manchester, M2 7AE
3 Cross Street, Manchester, M2 1WE
14 Market Street, Manchester, M1 1PT
16 Market Street, Manchester, M1 1PT
28 Market Street, Manchester, M1 1PW
30 Market Street, Manchester, M1 1PW
26 Market Street, Manchester, M1 1PW

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

Susceptible to Surf Water Flood (Middle) -

Area Team Boundary - Name: CENTRAL