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16 January 2026

Our Ref: 32864d

Your Ref: PP-14633443

Dear Sir/Madam

Full Planning Application for the Installation of a Rooftop Electrical Switchgear Substation at The Printworks, 27 Withy Grove, Manchester M4 2BS

On behalf of our client, DTZ Investors, we hereby submit a full planning application for the installation of a new electrical substation on the roof of The Printworks, Manchester ("the Site").

The application has been submitted via the Planning Portal under reference (state the reference number). The requisite planning application fee of £383.00 (inclusive of VAT and service charge) has also been paid.

Background

A prior approval application (ref: 143290/P14J/2025) was submitted in June 2025 and approved in August 2025 by Manchester City Council for the installation of rooftop solar photovoltaic (PV) panels at the Printworks under Schedule 2, Part 14, Class J of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015.

The proposed substation is required to support the increased electrical demand arising from the approved PV installation and the ongoing operation of the building. Due to its nature, scale and function, the electrical substation does not fall within permitted development rights and therefore requires full planning permission.

The proposal forms part of a wider strategy to improve the resilience, efficiency and sustainability of the Printworks energy infrastructure.

The site and surroundings

The Printworks is a prominent and well-established leisure destination within Manchester City Centre, playing a significant role in the city's evening and visitor economy. The building is recognised as a non-designated heritage asset and is located within the Shudehill Conservation Area.

The application site comprises part of the flat roofscape of the Printworks building. The roof areas are already characterised by existing plant, ductwork and servicing equipment, and are not original or architecturally sensitive elements of the building.

The site is surrounded by the Arndale Shopping Centre to the south, Shudehill Interchange to the east, the National Football Museum and the Corn Exchange to the west and commercial and residential uses to the north.

There are several Grade II listed buildings in proximity to the site including:

- City Buildings to the west of the site.
- Cooperative Wholesale Society to the immediate north of the site.
- Cooperative Society Building to the immediate north of the site.
- Victoria Buildings to the east of the site.
- 29 Shudehill to the east of the site.

The site lies within the Manchester city centre boundary as defined on the adopted proposals map and is located within the Shudehill Conservation Area. However, the Printworks building itself is not listed and is not within the curtilage of a listed building and not a scheduled monument.

Proposed Development

This application seeks full planning permission for the installation of a compact rooftop substation enclosure to house electrical infrastructure required to support the operation of the site. The enclosure will have internal dimensions of 6000mm x 3000mm x 3000mm.

The substation will be located within an existing rooftop plant area and designed to sit discreetly alongside existing plant and servicing equipment. There are no moving parts, and therefore no sound emitted from the proposal.

The installation of the substation enclosure will be facilitated by a crane. The proposed crane position would be situated approximately 37 meters from the designated "Drop Zone" on the rooftop where the prefabricated GRP (Glass Reinforced Plastic) enclosure will be sited. Details of the crane are submitted for information purposes.

Access

Access to the substation will be restricted to authorised maintenance personnel only and will utilise existing internal maintenance routes within the Printworks building. No public access is proposed, and there will be no changes to pedestrian or vehicular access arrangements at ground level.

Appearance

The substation will be housed within a prefabricated GRP (Glass Reinforced Plastic) enclosure with a functional and robust appearance, appropriate for rooftop plant infrastructure.

Materials and finishes have been selected to be subdued and recessive, ensuring the development blends with existing rooftop equipment and does not draw attention when viewed from surrounding streets or buildings. Given the building's height, parapet treatment and surrounding context, the substation will not be visually prominent and will preserve the character and appearance of both the Printworks and the Shudehill Conservation Area.

Layout

The layout has been carefully designed to sit within an existing rooftop plant area, that ensures the equipment is well-screened from public vantage points by existing parapet wall. The substation is designed to be positioned in a specific "Drop Zone" on the roof as indicated in the location drawings.

Internally, the substation will accommodate the required transformer and associated electrical equipment, with appropriate ventilation and safety measures incorporated into the design. The arrangement ensures safe operation while minimising the overall footprint of the development.

Scale

The substation is modest in scale and proportionate to the size of the Printworks building and its extensive roofscape. Its height and footprint have been minimised to ensure it reads as a subordinate rooftop element rather than a dominant structure. The total structural area occupied by the substation is 18.6 square meters with a clear internal height of approximately 3 metres.

Given the scale of the t building and the existing presence of rooftop plant, the proposal will have no adverse impact on skyline views, townscape character or neighbouring amenity

Principle of Development

The principle of the proposed development is acceptable in planning terms. The application seeks permission for the installation of a rooftop electrical substation to serve the Printworks, a major leisure and entertainment destination within Manchester City Centre. The substation is required to support the site's electrical demand, including the operation of previously approved rooftop solar photovoltaic infrastructure, and to ensure the continued, safe and resilient operation of the building.

The proposal makes efficient use of previously developed land, utilising an existing flat roof area already characterised by plant and servicing equipment. No additional land take is required, and no new use is introduced. The development therefore accords with Manchester Core Strategy Policy SP1 and the NPPF (December 2024), which support the effective use of land in sustainable and accessible locations and the provision of essential infrastructure.

Overall, the proposal represents a necessary and proportionate form of development that supports the long-term operation and sustainability of a key city centre asset, aligns with national objectives for resilient and low-carbon energy infrastructure, and gives rise to no planning harm.

Heritage Assessment

The Printworks is a non-designated heritage asset it lies within the Shudehill Conservation Area, therefore consideration has to be given to the potential visual impacts of proposed developments. In the case of the proposal, the substation is confined to a modern roof area with no historic or architectural significance and will not be visually prominent from public viewpoints. As such, the proposal preserves the character and appearance of the conservation area and the setting of nearby heritage assets, in accordance with Core Strategy Policy EN7 and NPPF Chapter 16.

The principle of development on the site is already accepted through numerous applications, and as mentioned above the roof top of the Printworks already hosts a significant amount of plant and machinery. These proposals seek the installation of an additional enclosure for the installation of a switchroom. By placing the proposal in this location, the proposals ensure that there will be no visual impacts from street level either to the non-designated asset or to the wider Conservation Area. This is in accordance with Policy CC 9 of the Core Strategy which specifically requires development in the city centre to preserve and enhance heritage assets, and the proposed development fully complies with the aspirations of the policy.

The proposals will result in no detrimental loss of visual amenity by virtue of their location in accordance with Policy DM1 of the Core Strategy which states that development should have regard to design, the character of the

surrounding area and amenity. As shown on the submitted plans, the location of the proposals will result in limited long or short views of them from street level. The proposals will however allow for the ongoing function and use of the Printworks, in accordance with the Shudehill Conservation Area Appraisal which supports development which enhances the prosperity of the area.

Notwithstanding this, the size and scale of the proposals is in keeping with the characteristics of similar plant on the roof top of the Printworks and will not result in visual impacts that will negatively affect the wider Conservation Area.

Conclusion

The proposed rooftop substation is a necessary and appropriate piece of infrastructure, required to support the continued operation and sustainability of a major city centre leisure destination.

The development has been sensitively designed with regard to its context, heritage setting and visual impact, and will not give rise to any harm in terms of appearance, access, layout or scale.

Accordingly, it is considered that planning permission should be granted without delay, in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development in paragraphs 11 and 96 of the NPPF.

We trust the below submission information is sufficient to validate the application, but should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

