2025.00653.000

Piccadilly Gardens Enabling works & Re-development

Planning Statement

02.02.2026
P02 – Phase 2 revised statement

Introduction

This Planning Statement has been prepared by AHR Architects on behalf of Manchester City Council in support of a planning application described as hoarding & enabling works at Piccadilly Gardens, Manchester. The proposal has been developed with Manchester City Council and consultation with various stakeholders.

The re-development of Piccadilly Gardens is being delivered by Manchester City Council to improve the existing public realm.

The statement describes the application site, its context and relationship with the surrounding environment, the scope of the proposed works. It should be read alongside the supporting drawings and documents submitted with the application. The application follows pre-application advice from the Local Planning Authority. The application has been submitted as an Use Class F2 Local Community.

The Red line boundary area is approximately 8,097m² (0.81ha). The proposed development comprises the erection of temporary no-dig hoarding around Piccadilly Gardens and the undertaking of intrusive site and structural investigations to inform future redevelopment proposals of Piccadilly Gardens.

The planning application relates to the erection of hoarding associated with Phase 1 and Phase 2 enabling works.

Piccadilly Gardens

Piccadilly Gardens is a key area of public realm and a major transport hub within Manchester city centre. It provides an important connection between the city's central retail area and pedestrian, tram, rail and bus networks. The space is heavily used by a wide range of users throughout the day.

The site is bounded on all sides by streets and surrounding buildings, with established pedestrian routes crossing through the gardens. A small open playground is located to the north-east of the site.

Originally forming part of the Manchester Royal Infirmary in 1854, the area was later laid out as a public esplanade by Manchester Corporation, designed by Sir Joseph Paxton. The site has evolved significantly over time, including damage during the Second World War and subsequent redevelopment. Transport infrastructure was introduced to the south and west of the site during the 20th century, including a bus station and the Metrolink tram system.

By the late 1990s, the gardens were considered by some to be an underperforming and unwelcoming space. A major redevelopment took place between 2001 and 2003 with the intention of creating a high-quality public space.

The proposed hoarding will temporarily disrupt pedestrian routes through the centre of the gardens, requiring pedestrians to circulate around the perimeter. Alternative routes are clearly defined, safe, and well established, and no significant disruption to pedestrian movement is anticipated.

Historic Buildings

Piccadilly Gardens contains numerous historic & listed buildings (see Appendix 1.0). Within the site boundary are 3 Grade II Listed statues; Queen Victoria's Statue, Sir Robert Peel's Statue and James Watt's Statue.

Queen Victoria Statue;
The centrepiece of the Piccadilly Gardens is the over-sized bronze statue of Queen Victoria seated on large throne. The statue was completed and unveiled in 1901 and is Grade II Listed.

Sir Robert Peel Statue;
This statue commemorates Sir Robert Peel, former Prime Minister and founder of modern policing, and is an important local landmark. It is Grade II Listed.

James Watt Statue;
A bronze copy of the marble statue that stands in Westminster Abbey. It is because of the work of James Watt that Manchester became known as Cottonopolis. The statue carries a Grade II Listed status.

In addition, the site contains the Tree of Remembrance, a 10-metre-high metallic memorial sculpture commissioned by Manchester City Council to commemorate civilians who lost their lives in Manchester during the Second World War.

The proposal pays particular attention to limiting the impact to the statues on the site by a no-dig hoarding with a minimum of 1500mm offset to the perimeter of each statue base and will not be physically attached to any listed monuments. It should be noted the hoarding will limit the access and ability of the public to visit and view the statues. Whilst the statue figures will stand above the top of the hoarding, the full statue and plinth will not be visible for the duration of the proposed development. This is primarily so surveys and remedial work can be undertaken prolonging the lifespan and securing the long term safety of each statue.

It has been determined a Listed Building Consent is not required for the associated work.

Hoarding General

A temporary no-dig, counterbalanced hoarding will be erected, restricting public access to defined areas of Piccadilly Gardens (see Appendix 2.0). The hoarding will incorporate external LED lighting controlled by day light sensors and timer clock. Perimeter fencing/ hoardings will be approximately 2.4m high and of anti-climb construction. The perimeter layout has been designed to remove internal angles through the use of 45-degree corners removing locations for anti-social behaviour and crime.

A license has been sort after from the Manchester Highways Services and separate planning applications and licenses will be submitted at a later date for any advertisement or branding proposed to the hoarding.

Phase 1

The scope during Phase 1 is brief. The proposed works will comprise a series of temporary enabling and investigative activities to facilitate the future redevelopment of the site. Intrusive site investigations including excavations will be undertaken to establish ground conditions and inform subsequent phases of development, alongside structural investigations involving localised uncovering and isolated excavations to the existing raised planter structures. Specialist contractors will be appointed to advise on the decommissioning of the fountain and the removal of services and plant located within the underground plant room and will also involve liaison with Electricity North West Limited and United Utilities to identify existing services and, where possible, carry out disconnections and terminations.

Specialist contractors will be appointed to survey the monuments and provide recommendations for any necessary conservation or remedial measure.

The hoarding will incorporate secure, lockable gates to allow controlled access for contractor vehicles, deliveries, and the removal of small quantities of debris, with no major excavation or removal of spoil anticipated. Access to the hoarded area will be managed by the contractor, with entry expected via Oldham Street and exit onto Piccadilly, without any requirement to cross the tram lines.

The proposed development will not involve intrusive works such as deep excavation, piling or ground penetration and, as a result, will not disturb underlying soils or geological conditions. No adverse effects on ground conditions, land stability or contamination risk are anticipated at this stage, and no significant impacts are forecast. While no ground works form part of Phase 1 of development, it is acknowledged that limited excavation may be required during a future Phase 2 to facilitate the removal of existing plant equipment associated with the water fountain.

Additional information that will follow Phase 1;
Construction management plan for Phase 2
Information obtained from surveys in Phase 1 that form the initial work of phase 2

Phase 2

Following the completion of Phase 1 investigation and survey works, Phase 2 will comprise the extension of the no-dig hoarding line to fully enclose Piccadilly Gardens, thereby facilitating a controlled and secure working environment for the subsequent stages of intervention. The information and data collated during the Phase 1 investigatory works will, in part, inform the scope, methodology and sequencing of the Phase 2 activities, ensuring that the proposed interventions are evidence-led and responsive to the site's known constraints and conditions.

The initial activities within Phase 2 are likely to focus on the careful dismantling and removal of the existing water fountain structure, together with associated below-ground plant, services and foundations. These works will be undertaken to sensitively prepare and stabilise the site, creating a suitable and adaptable base condition capable of accommodating a future, high-quality landscape scheme.

The proposed Phase 1 works form enabling development only and do not predetermine the detailed design of the future public realm. An inclusive and welcoming landscape proposal will be brought forward for the Phase 2 permanent works under a separate planning application at a later date. However, the future scheme is anticipated to broadly align with the spatial principles and land-use, ensuring continuity of vision while allowing sufficient flexibility for detailed design development and public consultation.

Planning Considerations

Access & Servicing
Site access is expected to be controlled via Oldham Street, with a potential exit onto Piccadilly. There will not be a requirement to cross the tram lines.

Piccadilly Gardens currently serves as an important pedestrian route through the city centre. It is acknowledged that the proposed hoarding will result in a temporary alteration to pedestrian movement through the site; however, pedestrians will be safely re-routed (See appendix 3.0) around the works area using existing, well-established and accessible pedestrian routes. These arrangements will ensure that pedestrian safety and connectivity are maintained, with only limited and short-term impact on pedestrian circulation during the construction period.

Noise/ Use of Equipment & Waste Management
A baseline noise assessment will be completed during Phase 1, prior to the commencement of any construction to inform the on-going analysis and monitoring of noise during the construction period. Where works have the potential to cause vibration capable of causing disturbance, all details of the proposed works will be assessed to how these can be reduced and minimised.

The hoarding system will be a proprietary system that will utilise ballast. These types of hoarding systems are easy to install with few adaptions required and as a result have a low noise and vibration impact level.

A waste management plan will accompany the Phase 2 proposed development.

Visual Impact
The proposed development at Piccadilly Gardens is not expected to result in any permanent or wider visual impact on the surrounding public realm or cityscape. The design and scale of the works have been carefully considered. Temporary visual effects may occur during the construction phase; however, these will be managed through standard site practices to minimise disruption. Overall, the development looks to enhance the visual quality of Piccadilly Gardens and its immediate surroundings.

Trees & Ecology
It is not anticipated that any trees will be removed or adversely affected by the proposed development. Appropriate surveys will be undertaken to assess their ecological and amenity value and their contribution to the character of the site. Where required, robust tree protection measures, including protective fencing and ground protection, will be implemented to safeguard trees from construction activity and machinery. The wider project strategy seeks to enhance the quality of public realm and green infrastructure at Piccadilly Gardens.

Timescales & Programme

It is anticipated the hoarding will be erected for a total of 18 months to facilitate both phases of the project, with an anticipated start date of 9th March 2026 subject to planning approval. Phase 1 is expected to take 3-6 months with the remaining 12-15 months attributed to Phase 2.

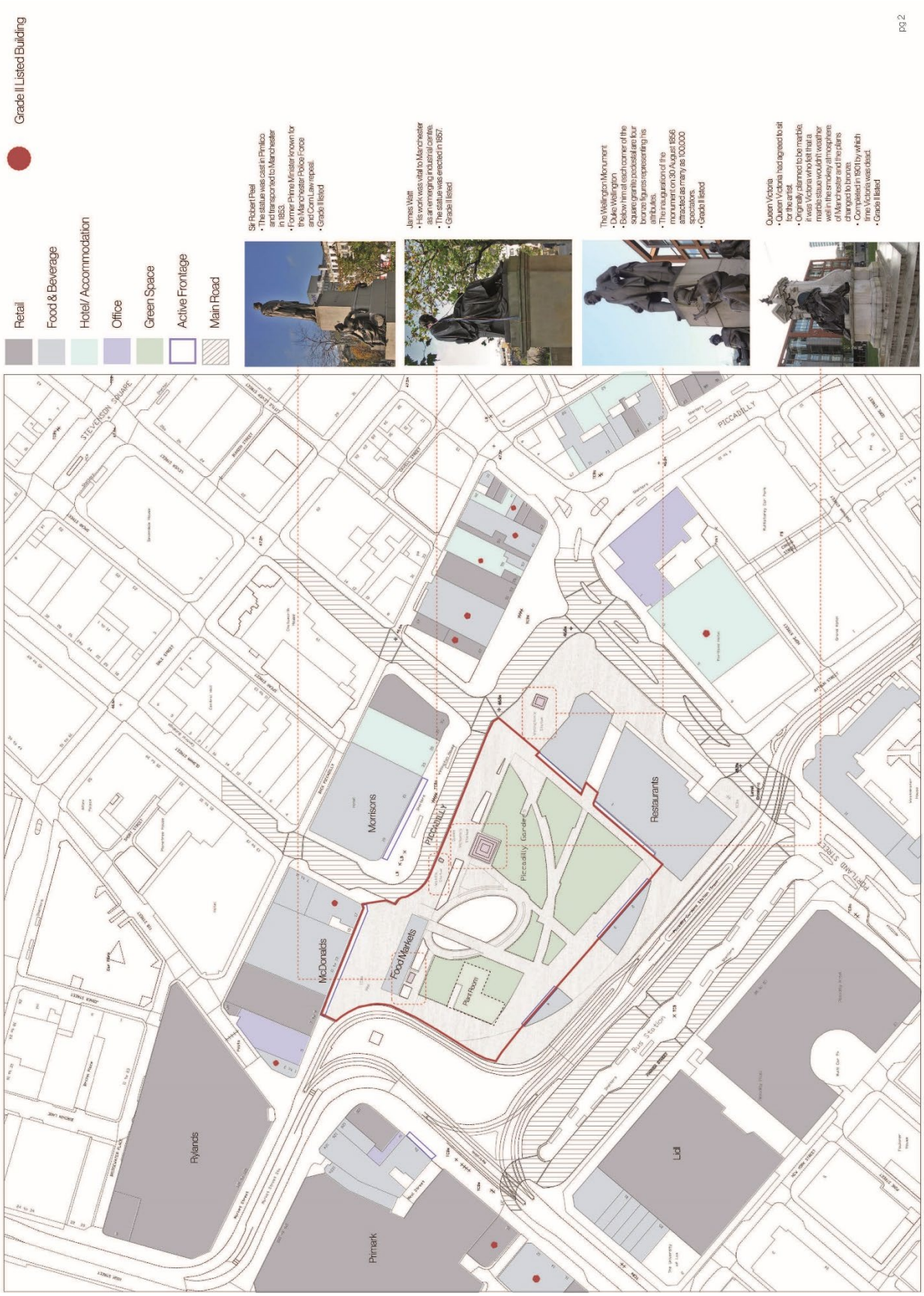
Conclusion

The proposed temporary hoarding and site investigations at Piccadilly Gardens are essential enabling works that will inform the future redevelopment of this important city centre space. The proposals are well considered, limited in scope, and designed to protect public safety, heritage assets, and surrounding infrastructure.

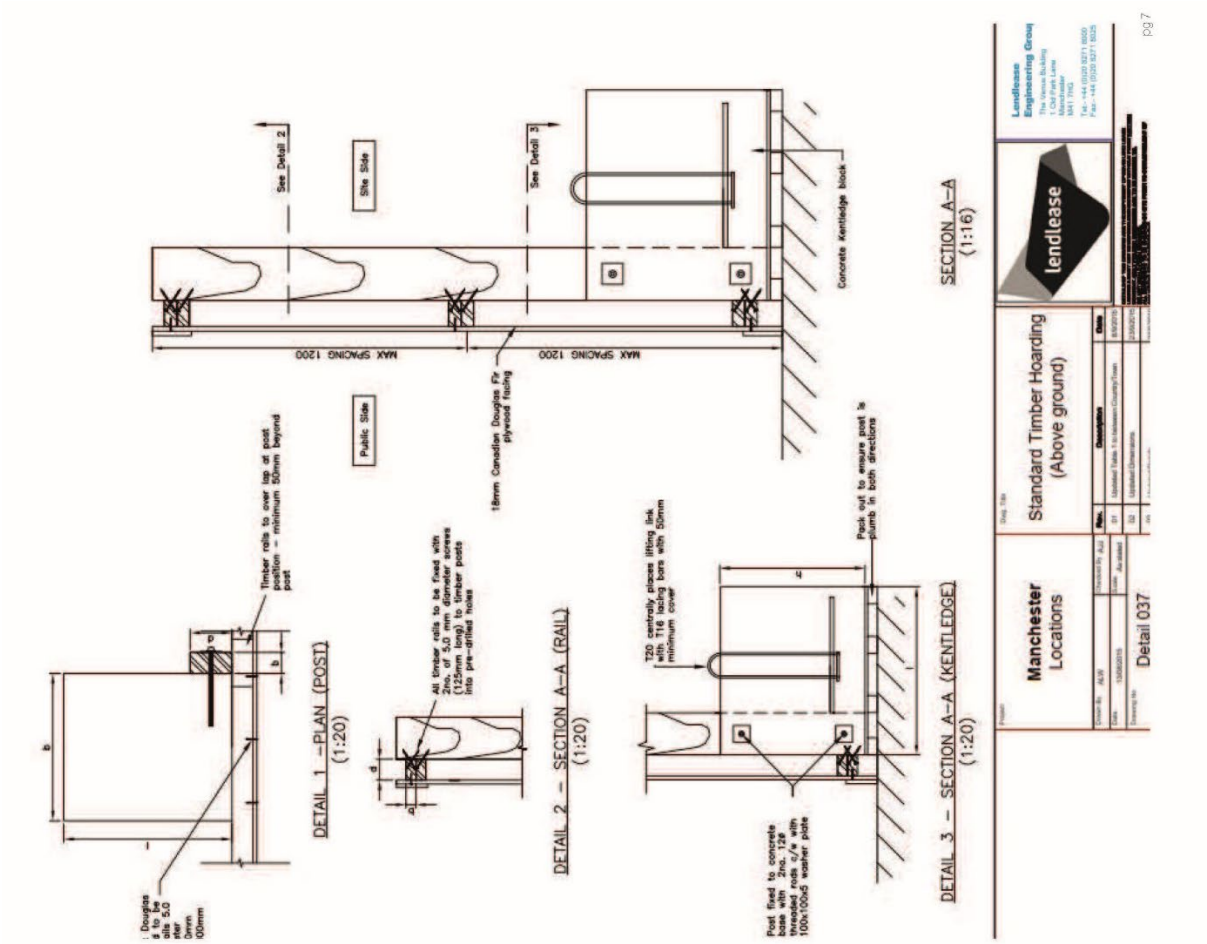
It is therefore concluded that the development is acceptable in planning terms and planning permission should be granted.

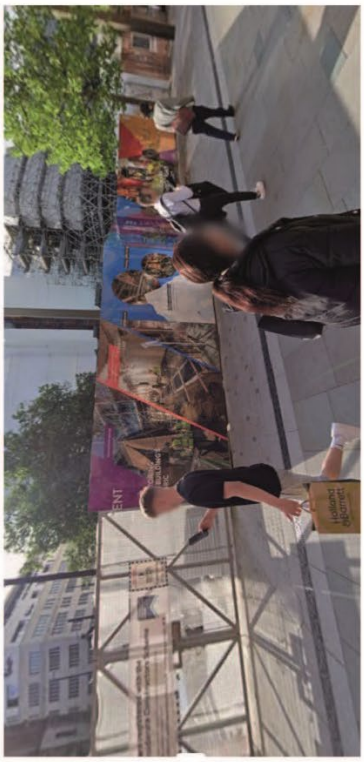
Appendix

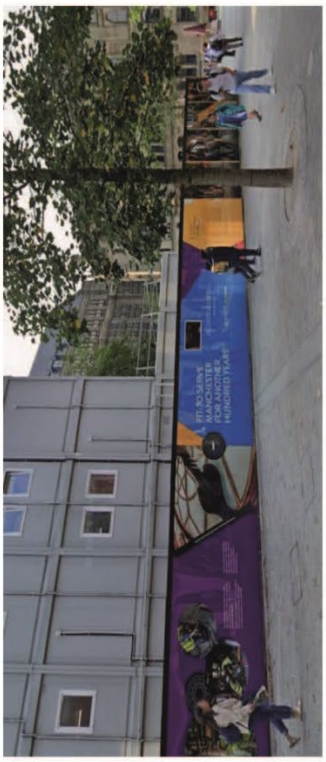
1.0 – Historic Buildings



2.0 – Hoarding Precedence



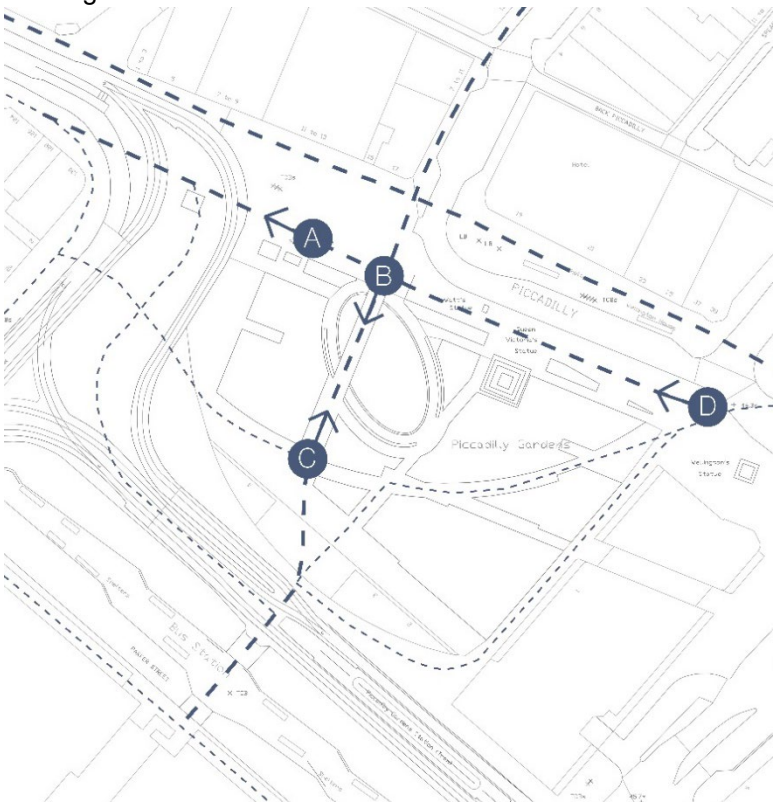






3.0 – Pedestrian Access

Existing











Proposed



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