

Planning

Growth & Development

Delegated officer report for planning application

Application no. 144460/FO/2025
Date registered valid: 6 November 2025
Proposal: Installation of new entrance and associated elevational alterations
Address: Universal Square, Devonshire Street North, Manchester, M12 6JH
Ward(s): Ardwick Ward

Applicant: Marcin Przybytko
Agent (if any): Rachita Binwani
Case officer: Katie Raw
Tel: 0161 234 4164
Email: katie.raw@manchester.gov.uk

Recommendation: Approve
Date of recommendation: 19 December 2025

Application details

Type of application: Full Application Consent

Development type: Minor Other

Date of site visit: 3 December 2025

Standard consultations:

No consultations have been printed and sent.

Neighbour notifications

Printed: 20 November 2025

Expired: 11 December 2025

Site notice

No site notice has been produced

Press advert

No press advert had been published

Departure from Development Plan: No

Environmental Statement: Not required

Description of site/building

Listed building: Not applicable

Conservation area: No

Tree Preservation Order: No

The application site relates to Universal Square within the north Manchester ward of Ardwick. The application site relates to a large, 5 storey, flat roof office/education complex divided into 5 interlinked, refurbished buildings, set in its own grounds, with a large car park to the rear. The building has undergone various internal and external refurbishment works. There is a total of just over 258,000 sq. ft. of floorspace.

To the north, the building overlooks a railway line and an adjoining bridge that spans Devonshire Street North. Directly in front of the building is a surface car park, with additional smaller parking areas located at both the front and rear. Across Devonshire Street North stands a five-storey red brick office building.

The site subject to this application relates to the front elevation, sited slightly further north than the main entrance to the building (see Figure 1).



Figure 1, Proposed entrance outlined in red

Description of area

The site is situated within a mixed-use area. The site is a short distance to the south-west from the city centre and Piccadilly railway station. The site is bounded by a railway line to the east, a light industrial use and sports centre to the west and further warehouses and offices to the south. Immediately to the north is a car park associated with Universal Square.

Description of development

The current application seeks planning permission for the installation of new entrance and associated elevational alterations.

The works would create a new entrance to the Global Banking School (GBS). It is understood that the GBS occupy 103,00 sq. ft of space of the 258,139 sq. ft available across the site (see planning history section for further details).

The entrance would create a new entrance lobby, with customer service desk, security and facilities office and store. As existing this area is used as two offices.

The new entrance would involve the removal of 2no. windows in place for a sliding door with a canopy above. The canopy would have a projection of 0.9 metres from the proposed signage. The existing green soft landscaping would be removed to allow level access into the building.

No signage is proposed as part of this application.

Materials to be used have been provided during the course of the application and have been listed as:

- Sliding glass door: aluminum RAL7016
- Canopy: to be similar to existing canopy further north along the building- RAL 7016
- Paving: paving to match existing along the pavement of Devonshire Street North immediately in front of Universal Square.

Negotiations during the Course of the Application

During the course of the application, existing plans were supplied for consideration.

Further information was supplied in respect of the proposed materials.

The agent confirmed a canopy would be inserted above the proposed sliding doors and provided proposed side elevations for further clarification.

Planning History

Many applications can be found for Universal Square. This includes:

141755/FO/2024- Change of use of up to 55,000sqft of floorspace from offices (Class E) to a flexible commercial, business and service (Class E) and learning and non-residential institutions use (Class F.1) pursuant to Schedule 2, Part 3, Class V of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015.

Approved 14 July 2025.

This application was put in by the GBS.

ENF/13854/18 Enforcement Enquiry- Advertisement- Continued display of wall mounted LED advertising screen.

Received 14 April 2018.

130541/FO/2021- Change of use of up to 30,000 sq. ft of floorspace from offices (Class E) to a flexible commercial, business and service (Class E) and learning and non-residential institutions use (Class F.1) pursuant to Schedule 2, Part 3, Class V of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015.

Approved 26 November 2021.

128064/FO/2020- Change of use of part of first floor from offices (Class E) to education facility (Class F.1).

Approved 18 December 2020.

126193/FO/2020- Change of use of part of block 4, third floor from offices (Class B1) to education facility (Class D1).

Approved 20 August 2020.

122962/FU/2019- Change of use of part of second floor within rear block from Class B1 (Office) to Class D1 (Education/Training).

Approved 23 August 2019.

Consultations & Notification Responses

Local Residents

No local representatives were received.

Issues

POLICY

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (December 2024)

The document sets out the Government's Planning Policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. At the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development in terms, "For plan-making" and "For decision-taking", (paragraph 11).

Paragraph 8 - Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):

- a) an economic objective
- b) a social objective
- c) an environmental objective

The following specific policies are considered to be particularly relevant to the proposed development:

Chapter 8. Promoting healthy and safe communities

Chapter 12. Achieving well-designed places

Draft National Planning Policy Framework (16th December 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.

Of relevance to the application proposals the draft NPPF makes it clear that local planning authorities should amongst other things:

- Work with the applicant in a positive and proactive manner, where necessary seeking solutions to problems arising from initial proposals, to enable a timely decision.
- Take account of planning matters raised during any pre-application engagement, including any positive responses to this engagement, as well as representations on the proposals.
- Decisions on development proposals should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development and this means that for development within settlements should be approved unless the benefits of doing so would be substantially outweighed by any adverse effects, when assessed against the national decision-making policies in this Framework.

The following specific policies are considered to be particularly relevant to the proposed development:

HC1: Planning for healthy communities (Chapter 16. Promoting health communities)

DP3: Key principles for well-designed places (Chapter 14. Achieving well-designed places)

The Manchester Core Strategy Development Plan Document 2012-2027 ("the Core Strategy") was adopted by the City Council on 11th July 2012. Updated March 2024 following adoption of Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan

The Core Strategy is the key document in Manchester's Local Development Framework. It replaces significant elements of the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) as the document that sets out the long term strategic planning policies for Manchester's future development. Of relevance are:

- Policy DM1 (Development Management);
- Policy SP1 (Spatial Principles);
- Policy EN1 (Design Principles and Strategic Character Areas);
- Policy EC1 (Employment and Economic Growth in Manchester);
- Policy EC2 (Existing Employment Space);

Policy EC8 (Central Manchester).

Unitary Development Plan Saved Policies

Large elements of the UDP have been superseded by the Core Strategy. The following saved policies are of relevance in the consideration of this application:

DC26.1 states the Council intends to use the development control process to reduce the impact of noise on people living and working in, or visiting, the City. In giving effect to this intention, the Council will consider both:

- a. the effect of new development proposals which are likely to be generators of noise; and
- b. the implications of new development being exposed to existing noise sources which are effectively outside planning control.

DC26.2 states new noise sensitive developments (including large scale changes of use of existing land or buildings) such as housing, schools, hospitals, or similar activities, will be permitted subject to their not being in locations which would expose them to high noise levels from existing uses or operations, unless the effects of the noise can realistically be reduced. In giving effect to this policy, the council will take account both of noise exposure at the time of receiving a planning application and of any increase that may reasonably be expected in the foreseeable future.

DC26.4 states where the council believes that an existing noise source might result in an adverse impact upon a proposed new development, or where a new proposal might generate potentially unacceptable levels of noise, it will in either case require the applicant to provide an assessment of the likely impact and of the measures he proposes to deal satisfactorily with it. Such measures might include the following

- a) engineering solutions, including reduction of noise at source, improving sound insulation of sensitive buildings or screening by purpose-built barriers
- b) layout solutions, including consideration of the distance between the source of the noise and the buildings or land affected by it and screening by natural barriers or other buildings or noncritical rooms within a building; and
- c) administrative steps, including limiting the operating times of the noise source, restricting activities allowed on the site or specifying an acceptable noise limit.

Any or all these factors will be considered appropriate for inclusion in conditions on any planning permission

DC26.5 states the council will control noise levels by requiring, where necessary, high levels of noise insulation in new development as well as noise barriers where this is appropriate.

Guide to Development in Manchester Supplementary Planning Document and Planning Guidance, Adopted April 2007

The Guide aims to help to develop and enhance a unique and positive sense of place within Manchester and its neighbourhoods. The guidance is grouped under seven key principles recognised by CABI as being those urban design characteristics which create successful places. These are: character and context, continuity and enclosure, ease of movement, quality of the public realm, diversity, legibility, and adaptability. It advises that high quality design is a vital attribute of successful neighbourhoods.

Of relevance are paragraphs 2.3, 2.7, 2.14 and 2.16.

Places for Everyone

Places for Everyone is a long-term plan of nine Greater Manchester districts for jobs, new homes, and sustainable growth. It has been published by the GMCA on behalf of the nine districts and took effect and became part of the statutory development plan on March 21, 2024. The Plan and its policies are now a material planning consideration in the determination of planning applications. The Plan and its policies must therefore be given full weight in the planning balance.

The policy is of relevance:
JP- S1- Sustainable development.

ISSUES

Principle of Development

The current application seeks planning permission for the installation of new entrance and associated elevational alterations. The works would create a new entrance to the Global Banking School (GBS). It is understood that the GBS occupy 103,00 sq. ft of space of the 258,139 sq. ft available across the site. The entrance would sit along the primary elevation of the property and would sit close to the main entrance and would be similar to the entrance further north relating to the VFS Global Visa Application Centre. The proposal would offer further access in and out of the building. As such, the principle of development can be considered acceptable. However, consideration must be given to the proposal's appearance, impact on the visual amenity of the area and impact on the neighbouring properties' residential amenity.

Residential Amenity

There are no residential properties in the surrounding area as the surrounding area primarily relates to offices. Due to the nature of the proposal, the works would not give rise to any impacts in relation to loss of light or adverse privacy implications.

It is understood the works would offer a new entrance to the Global Banking School. The proposal is not considered to give rise to any adverse noise implications given the office floorspace would be reconfigured as opposed to an extension where additional floorspace would be added to allow additional customers.

It is noted a stone 'Universal Square' sign is sited in-between the public highway and the paving which offers an entrance path into the Universal Square building. Google Imagery shows the stone structure does not interfere with the pathway and so there is considered to be adequate circulation for customers, including those in wheelchairs, to access the new entrance way without conflict with the existing stone signage. The proposed drawings also confirm level access will be available from the pathway into the building via the new entrance and so ensures the site is accessibility to all users.

Overall, it is not considered that the proposal would have an adverse impact upon the users of the Global Banking School or any other users of Universal Square, pursuant with Core Strategy Policies DM1 and SP1.

Visual Amenity

The new entrance would involve the removal of 2no. windows in place for a sliding door with a canopy above. The canopy would have a projection of 0.9 metres from the proposed signage.

The proposed entrance is considered to reflect the entrance for the VFS Global Visa Application Centre further north along the primary elevation and so it is not considered the proposal would create an overly dominant or visually prominent feature, to the detriment of visual amenity.

Overall, it is not considered that the proposal would have an adverse impact upon visual amenity, pursuant with Core Strategy Policies DM1 and SP1.

Design, Scale and Appearance

As stated previously, the design would be in keeping with the existing style of entrance along the primary elevation of Universal Square.

The canopy would have a projection of 0.9 metres and so is not considered to create an overly prominent feature into the streetscene and would allow shelter when exiting and entering the building.

Materials to be used have been provided during the course of the application and have been listed as:

- Sliding glass door: aluminum RAL7016

- Canopy: to be similar to existing canopy further north along the building- RAL 7016

- Paving: paving to match existing along the pavement of Devonshire Street North in front of Universal Square.

Such materials are considered acceptable and would largely match the style of development in the immediate context. Such materials would be conditioned accordingly within any approval granted.

On balance it is considered that the design and appearance of the proposed development accords with Core Strategy Policies DM1 and EN1 and in general the design is considered acceptable.

Loss of Grassed Area

A small area of grassed verge would be lost as a result of the proposal to allow level access in the form of hardstanding. As such area would measure 5.6 square metres and so would not be subject to BNG, as it would be exempt as being under the de minimis threshold. No further information or conditions are required in this respect.

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 was assessed with regards to policies outlined in the National Planning Policy Framework, Unitary Development Plan Saved Policies, Local Development Framework Core Strategy Development Plan and other material considerations. In this instance officers have worked with the applicant in a positive and proactive manner, and further information has been supplied to overcome concerns raised. Appropriate conditions have been attached to the approval granted.

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 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:

-Application Form, received by the City Council as Local Planning Authority on 6 November 2025.

-Drawing- Proposed- Site and Location Plan, numbered 3392-CDA-00-ZZ-DR-A-0400, received by the City Council as Local Planning Authority on 6 November 2025.

-Drawing- Proposed- Plan and Elevation, numbered 3392-CDA-00-ZZ-DR-A-0401 REV A, received by the City Council as Local Planning Authority on 16 December 2025.

-Supporting Information- Materials (Coda Studios), received by the City Council as Local Planning Authority on 16 December 2025.

Reason - To ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the approved plans, pursuant to policies SP1 and DM1 of the Manchester Core Strategy.

3) The materials used in the external surfaces of the development hereby approved shall be those as specified on approved 'Supporting Information- Materials (Coda Studios)', received by the City Council as Local Planning Authority on 16 December 2025.

Reason - In order to ensure a satisfactory appearance in the interests of visual amenity in accordance with policies SP1 and DM1 of the Core Strategy and the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Informatives

1) This consent does not confer permission for any advertisements on the site.

Appendix 1 – List of consultees & neighbours notified

Unit 1A, 132 Higher Ardwick, Manchester, M12 6DA
132 Higher Ardwick, Manchester, M12 6DA
Fourth Floor, Universal Building, 37 - 49 Devonshire Street North, Manchester, M12 6JR
Third Floor, Universal Building, 37 - 49 Devonshire Street North, Manchester, M12 6JR
5 Universal Square, Devonshire Street North, Manchester, M12 6JH
Ground Floor, Universal Building, 37 - 49 Devonshire Street North, Manchester, M12 6JR
Second Floor, Universal Building, 37 - 49 Devonshire Street North, Manchester, M12 6JR
1 Universal Square, Devonshire Street North, Manchester, M12 6JH
4 Universal Square, Devonshire Street North, Manchester, M12 6JH
3 Universal Square, Devonshire Street North, Manchester, M12 6JH
2 Universal Square, Devonshire Street North, Manchester, M12 6JH
First Floor, Universal Building, 37 - 49 Devonshire Street North, Manchester, M12 6JR
Fifth Floor, Universal Building, 37 - 49 Devonshire Street North, Manchester, M12 6JR

Appendix 2 – Planning constraints

Article 4 Direction - North Manchester PD Restriction - Class B1(c) 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