Heritage Statement

Practice: Building Design Services

December 2025



Address: 1 Hillcourt Street, Manchester, M1 7HU

Proposed: Proposed Alteration to Existing Elevation Including Formation of New Entrance Door

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Heritage Statement has been prepared in support of a planning application for minor external and internal alterations to the commercial building at 1 Hillcourt Street, Manchester, M1 7HU. The proposal seeks consent for the removal of an existing ground floor window opening and its replacement with a new entrance door, together with small associated internal works to facilitate improved access to the commercial unit. The primary purpose of the alteration is to provide a dedicated and independent entrance to serve the existing business use.

1.2 The application site is not located within a designated Conservation Area and the building is not statutorily listed. However, Manchester City Council has identified the structure as a non-designated heritage asset due to its modest architectural interest and its contribution to the established local streetscape character. Furthermore, the site lies within the wider setting of several nearby listed buildings, primarily associated with institutional and civic development along the Oxford Road and Grosvenor Street corridor. As such, the proposals require careful consideration in line with national and local heritage policy.

1.3 This statement has been prepared to assess the heritage significance of the host building, to evaluate the impact of the proposed works upon that significance, and to consider whether the development would affect the setting of nearby designated heritage assets. It has been produced in accordance with the requirements of Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the heritage policies contained within the Manchester Core Strategy, including Policy EN3.

1.4 The proposed works are limited in scope and are confined to one existing ground floor opening on the Sidney Street elevation. There are no changes proposed to the scale, massing, roof form, or upper storey elevations of the building. The intervention has been designed to be proportionate, reversible, and respectful of the modest heritage significance of the host property, ensuring that the building can continue in viable commercial use without causing harm to its architectural character or to the wider historic environment.

2. PLANNING POLICY

2.1 The statutory duty in respect of designated heritage assets is set out under Sections 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, which requires decision makers to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the setting of listed buildings and the character and appearance of conservation areas. While the application site at 1 Hillcourt Street is not located within a designated Conservation Area and the building itself is not statutorily listed, the site lies within the wider setting of nearby listed buildings. As such, the proposal must be considered with regard to its potential impact on designated and non-designated heritage assets in accordance with national and local planning policy.

2.2 National guidance is provided within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2023), specifically Section 16: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment. The NPPF identifies heritage assets as an irreplaceable resource and states that their conservation should be recognised as an essential component of sustainable development. Paragraphs 199 to 202 of the NPPF establish the approach to assessing harm to designated heritage assets, introducing the concepts of substantial harm and less than substantial harm, and making clear that any harm must be clearly and convincingly justified.

2.3 In relation to non-designated heritage assets, Paragraph 203 of the NPPF states that the effect of a development on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In such instances, a balanced judgement is required, having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset. This reflects the proportionate approach that is appropriate for assets of local rather than national importance.

2.4 Local planning policy is contained within the Manchester Core Strategy (2012). Policy EN3 – Heritage seeks to ensure that the city's heritage assets are preserved or, where appropriate, enhanced. The policy applies to both designated and non-designated heritage assets and requires development proposals to demonstrate a clear understanding of significance and to avoid harm where possible. Policy DM1 – Development Management further requires high quality design that responds appropriately to its context and reinforces local character.

2.5 In addition, Policy EN1 – Design Principles and Strategic Character Areas and Policy EN2 – Tall Buildings promote development that achieves high standards of design, respects its surroundings, and contributes positively to the quality of the built environment. While the current proposal does not involve large-scale development, these overarching design principles remain relevant in assessing the appropriateness of the proposed alteration.

2.6 Together, the above legislative framework and planning policies establish that:

- heritage significance must be properly understood,
- any impact on heritage assets or their setting must be carefully assessed, and
- proportionate, sympathetic change to non-designated heritage assets is supported where it preserves significance and sustains viable use.

2.7 The proposed alteration at 1 Hillcourt Street has therefore been assessed within this policy context to ensure full compliance with both national and local heritage requirements.

3. 1 HILLCOURT STREET – NON-DESIGNATED HERITAGE ASSET

3.1 The application site at 1 Hillcourt Street, Manchester, M1 7HU comprises a late nineteenth to early twentieth-century commercial building positioned on the corner of Hillcourt Street and Sidney Street, close to Grosvenor Street and the Oxford Road corridor. The building sits within a dense urban block characterised by a mixture of historic commercial buildings, institutional university buildings, and modern redevelopment associated with Manchester Metropolitan University and surrounding residential accommodation.

3.2 The host building is constructed in traditional red brick with a simple and coherent façade composition typical of late Victorian and early Edwardian commercial architecture. The elevation incorporates regularly spaced window openings with consistent vertical proportions, stone lintels and sills, and a restrained level of architectural detailing. Its overall form, scale, and materiality reflect its original functional commercial purpose and allow it to sit comfortably within the historic street pattern.

3.3 Although the site is not located within a designated Conservation Area and the building itself is not statutorily listed, Manchester City Council has identified it as a non-designated heritage asset due to its townscape value, group value, and contribution to the established character of the surrounding streetscape. While the wider area has undergone extensive redevelopment, including large institutional buildings and modern residential blocks, 1 Hillcourt Street has retained its historic footprint, traditional scale, and original frontage proportions. As such, it remains a visible remnant of the earlier phase of urban commercial development that once characterised this part of the city.

3.4 There are four Grade II listed buildings located along Grosvenor Street within the wider surroundings of the application site. These listed buildings are primarily institutional in character and contribute to the historic interest of the wider area. The relationship between the application site and these designated heritage assets is predominantly contextual and visual, rather than direct. The host building does not form part of their curtilage or immediate setting, but lies within their wider urban backdrop.

3.5 It is noted that the external appearance of the building has not previously been subject to significant alteration, and its principal façade composition, brickwork, and overall massing have remained consistent. While previous submissions have sought to introduce internal alterations, the external fabric and townscape contribution of the building have remained intact to date. The current proposal therefore represents the only recent external intervention to be assessed against the building's modest heritage significance.

3.6 The significance of the building as a non-designated heritage asset can be summarised as follows:

- Architectural value: Modest, derived from its traditional red brick construction, consistent window proportions, and restrained commercial detailing.

- Historic value: Localised, reflecting late nineteenth to early twentieth-century commercial development within this part of Manchester.

- Townscape value: Moderate, through its contribution to the established street enclosure and continuity of built form.

- Group value: Present, through its relationship with other retained historic buildings within the surrounding area.

3.7 The elements of highest sensitivity in heritage terms relate to the upper-storey elevations, original brickwork, building line, and overall façade rhythm. Sensitively designed ground floor alterations, where proportionate and well detailed, are capable of being accommodated without resulting in harm to the building's overall significance.

4. PROPOSAL IMPACT

4.1 The proposed development comprises alterations to the ground floor Sidney Street elevation of 1 Hillcourt Street, involving the replacement of two existing ground floor window openings with wider glazed window units and the replacement of a third ground floor window with a new aluminium entrance door to provide a dedicated independent access to the commercial premises. No changes are proposed to the upper floors, roof form, building height, footprint, or overall massing of the building.

4.2 The proposal has been carefully designed to ensure that it respects and preserves the significance of the host building as a non-designated heritage asset. The aspects of the building that contribute most strongly to its heritage significance are its upper-storey elevations, traditional red brick construction, consistent façade rhythm, and established building line. These elements remain entirely unaltered by the proposal. The alterations are confined solely to the ground floor, which is traditionally the least sensitive part of historic commercial buildings and the area most capable of accommodating functional change.

4.3 The introduction of wider window openings has been designed to retain strong vertical proportions and to sit comfortably within the existing façade composition. The use of increased glazing at ground floor level is considered appropriate in this commercial context and will enhance passive surveillance and active frontage without detracting from the building's architectural character. The new aluminium entrance door will be finished in a colour and profile that is sympathetic to the host building, ensuring visual coherence with the existing brick façade.

4.4 There are four Grade II listed buildings located along Grosvenor Street within the wider surroundings of the application site. Given the modest scale of the host building and its position within a dense urban block, the relationship between the site and these designated heritage assets is predominantly contextual and visual in nature. The proposal does not introduce any additional height, massing, bulk, or visually intrusive architectural elements. As such, it is concluded that the development will not result in harm to the setting, character, or significance of any nearby listed buildings.

4.5 It is noted that the external appearance of the building has not previously been altered in any significant way, and its principal façade composition and townscape contribution have remained consistent. While there have been previous proposals relating to internal alterations, the historic external fabric has been retained. The current proposal therefore represents a carefully controlled and proportionate external intervention.

4.6 In accordance with Paragraph 203 of the National Planning Policy Framework, the effect of the proposal on the significance of the non-designated heritage asset has been fully considered. The proposed works are assessed as resulting in no harm, or at most negligible harm, to the significance of the host building. This limited impact is clearly outweighed by the public and operational benefits arising from improved glazing, enhanced activation of the street frontage, and the provision of a clear, independent commercial entrance.

4.7 The proposal is therefore considered to represent an appropriate, proportionate, and sensitive form of development within a historic urban context, fully compliant with both national and local heritage policy.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 This Heritage Statement has assessed the significance of 1 Hillcourt Street, Manchester, M1 7HU, and evaluated the impact of the proposed alterations in accordance with the requirements of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the National Planning Policy Framework (2023), and the relevant policies of the Manchester Core Strategy (2012).

5.2 The host building is a late nineteenth to early twentieth-century red brick commercial building identified by Manchester City Council as a non-designated heritage asset due to its modest architectural quality, townscape value, and contribution to the historic character of the surrounding streetscape. While the site is not located within a designated Conservation Area, there are four Grade II listed buildings located along Grosvenor Street within the wider setting. The proposal has therefore been carefully assessed in relation to both the host building and the nearby designated heritage assets.

5.3 The development comprises a proportionate and localised alteration to the ground floor only, involving the widening of two existing window openings and the formation of a new aluminium entrance door within a third opening to provide a dedicated independent access to the commercial premises. The upper-storey elevations, roof form, building height, footprint, original brickwork, and overall façade rhythm – which represent the most sensitive elements of the building in heritage terms – remain entirely unaffected by the proposal.

5.4 It has been demonstrated that the proposal will result in no harm, or at most negligible harm, to the significance of the non-designated heritage asset and will not cause harm to the setting, character, or significance of the nearby Grade II listed buildings. The works preserve the architectural integrity and townscape contribution of the building while delivering clear operational and functional benefits through improved glazing and a dedicated independent entrance.

5.5 In accordance with Paragraph 203 of the National Planning Policy Framework, the limited impact of the development on the non-designated heritage asset is clearly outweighed by the public and operational benefits arising from the proposal. The development accords fully with Policy EN3 (Heritage) and Policy DM1 (Development Management) of the Manchester Core Strategy, as well as the broader objectives of the NPPF.

5.6 The proposal therefore represents a sensitive, sustainable, and policy-compliant form of development within a historic urban context, and there are no heritage-based grounds on which planning permission should be withheld.