

Planning

Growth & Development

Delegated officer report for planning application

Application no. 144939/FO/2026

Date registered valid: 11 February 2026

Proposal: Installation of photovoltaic panels.

Address: Cobbett House, Manchester Royal Infirmary, Oxford Road,
Manchester, M13 9WL

Ward(s): Ardwick Ward

Applicant: Miss Bethany Stewart, Revolution Energy Services

Agent (if any): Miss Bethany Stewart, Revolution Energy Services

Case officer: Jack Naven
Tel: 0161 219 2095
Email: jack.naven@manchester.gov.uk

Recommendation: Approve

Date of recommendation: 26 March 2026

Application Details

Type of application: Full Application Consent

Development type: Minor Other

Date of site visit: 3 March 2026

Standard consultations:

Printed: 17 February 2026 Expired: 10 March 2026

Neighbour notifications

Printed: 17 February 2026 Expired: 10 March 2026

Site notice

Posted: 03 March 2026 Expired: 24 March 2026

Press advert

Published: 24 February 2026 Expired: 17 March 2026

Departure from Development Plan: No

Environmental Statement: Not required

Description of Site/Area

Listed building: Grade II

Conservation area: Not applicable

Tree Preservation Order: Not applicable

The Manchester Royal Infirmary (MRI) is a major teaching hospital and a key component of the Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust.

Located in the heart of Manchester, it provides a wide range of acute healthcare services, including specialist treatments in cardiology, oncology, and trauma care. The hospital campus comprises a mix of historic and modern buildings, with several multi-storey wards, outpatient facilities, and support services.

The site is characterised by high operational activity, with complex logistics and strict safety protocols to ensure uninterrupted patient care, therefore, the buildings that make up the MRI estate typically feature numerous pieces of plant equipment required to keep the hospital functional.

To the north of the MRI site, lies the University of Manchester campus, an area characterised by a high number of buildings in educational uses.

To the east and west of the MRI site lie two arterial roads that lead to the heart of Manchester City Centre, Oxford Road and Upper Brook Street.

This site is not within a conservation area.

There are several listed buildings on the MRI site:

- St Marys Hospital (Grade II)
- Former Lodge of Royal Infirmary (Now Royal Bank of Scotland), Railings and Four Pairs of Gatepiers (Grade II)
- Royal Infirmary (Cobbett H, Admin/drs Res Block, X Ray Teaching Block and Chapel) (Grade II)
- Royal Eye Hospital (Grade II)
- The Pankhurst Centre (Grade II*)
- 60, Nelson Street (Grade II)

The site specifically comprises the southernmost of 3no. grade II listed buildings of 4-storeys fronting Oxford Road, collectively known as Cobbett House.

All of these assets are red brick with distinctive white limestone detailing in an Edwardian Baroque style (architects: ET Hall and John Brooke, 1905-8). Details include landmark towers, giant Ionic pilasters, and bold quoins to corners, the whole ensemble contributing highly significant architectural interest and townscape value to the Oxford Road corridor.

They also have group value with other listed buildings nearby including the Whitworth Art Gallery, Eye Hospital and St Mary's.

Cobbett House also contributes historical value, being the first building to open on the Oxford Road site following the hospital's relocation from Piccadilly Gardens in 1908.

The site where development is proposed is the southernmost building facing Whitworth Park. It has an inverted U-shaped plan form and is shown on drawings as being 9* metres high to a bituminous felt flat roof. On the Oxford Road elevation, this is fronted by a parapet, the majority of which comprises of a decorative stone balustrade. The flat roof sits 900mm below the top of the parapet and is a modern intervention with low heritage significance replacing an original pitched slate roof.

Description of Development

The proposal is for the installation of 160no. solar PVs sited centrally in 2 adjacent rows across the north, west and eastern rooves. The PVs will be affixed on an east-west axis via a non-invasive ballast system that sits on the rooves without penetrating the bitumen surface. Their maximum mounted height at a 11.3o tilt will be 255mm. An inverter will also be sited on the roof and AC cabling will be routed in a southeastern internal corner. The array provides 72MWh per year of electricity for the hospital.

Consultations & Notification Responses

Publicity - Neighbour notification letters were sent to surrounding properties. A site notice and local press advert were also produced. At the time of writing this report, no representations have been received because of this publicity.

Helipad Manager - Confirmed that there are no objections or further comment from either the helipad or helicopter operator regarding the installation of the PV panels on Cobbett House.

Manchester Airport Safeguarding Officer - Requested that an informative be attached to any approved decision regarding cranes and tall equipment. This has been attached to the decision.

Policy

The **Places for Everyone Plan - Joint Development Plan Document**, for nine of the 10 boroughs which make up Greater Manchester adopted on 21st March 2024:

- Policy JP-Strat2 - City Centre
- Policy JP-C1 - An Integrated Network
- Policy JP-J1 - Supporting Long-Term Economic Growth
- Policy JP-P2 - Heritage
- Policy JP-P6 - Health
- Policy JP-S1 - Sustainable Development
- Policy JP-S2 - Carbon and Energy
- Policy JP-S4 - Resilience

The **Manchester Core Strategy - Development Plan Document 2012-2027** ("the **Core Strategy**") was adopted by the City Council on the 11th July 2012:

- Policy SP1 - Spatial Principles
- Policy CC7 - Mixed Use Development
- Policy CC9 - Design and Heritage
- Policy EN1 - Design Principles and Strategic Character Areas
- Policy EN3 - Heritage
- Policy EN4 - Reducing CO2 Emissions by Enabling Low and Zero Carbon Development
- Policy EN19 - Waste
- Policy DM1 - Development Management

Saved Unitary Development Plan for Manchester - The following saved UDP Policies are of relevance to this application:

- Saved Policy DC19.1 (Listed Buildings)

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2024)

- Chapter 12 - Achieving well-designed and beautiful places
- Chapter 16 - Conserving the Historic Environment

Draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (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.

Whilst this is a draft NPPF for consultation it is considered that the development proposals are in accordance with the general thrust of policy contained within it. As set out in the printed report no adverse impacts have been identified through consideration of the application proposals that would outweigh a positive decision in this instance.

Sections 16, 66 and 72 of the Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990

Assessment

Principle of the development

The principle of the development is considered to be acceptable as it will contribute to decarbonisation. The full details of this are outlined in the public benefits section below.

Heritage

In determining whether the proposed works are acceptable, the main issue to consider is the impact these proposed works will have on the historic character and fabric of the listed building itself and to establish whether the public benefits, including heritage benefits, of the proposal will outweigh any harm to the significance of the heritage asset.

Assessment of significance

Key features contributing to the significance of the listed building are the elevations, decorative masonry, historic silhouette, and courtyard composition.

Impact on heritage asset

Key features contributing to the significance of the listed building are the elevations, decorative masonry, historic silhouette, and courtyard composition.

This is the elevation that potentially affords most public visibility due to the open nature of the parapet and position on Oxford Road with long range views. However, visual mitigation from the low upstand of the PV array, 4-metre offset from the parapet and height of the building, will be sufficient to ensure that the development is screened from public view, including long-range views from the front of The Whitworth, thus securing the character and appearance of this elevation.

The Revolution Heritage Impact Statement (December 2025) states that the associated cabling for the AC inverter will be routed externally on the southeastern internal corner of the building which the D&A notes is shown in the submitted photos. These are the internal corner in photos 2 and 4 which has no public view and faces the rear of the mortuary building.

The ballasted, non-penetrative mounting system avoids drilling or fixing into the original roof structure.

Cabling routes avoid internal fabric disturbance and are fully reversible.

No changes will be made to the building's elevations, windows, chimney features or historic roof edges

The equipment is low-profile, dark-coloured, and consistent in form, ensuring a neutral visual impact.

During installation of the PV panels and associated equipment, materials will be lifted using a central courtyard hoist, avoiding any impact on historic external façades or elevations

The other roof elevations, to the north and east, are entirely contained within the hospital campus with no public visibility, and very limited visibility from the upper storey of the neighbouring Clinical Sciences Centre building to the east.

Given the siting of these PV panels and associated infrastructure, and on the basis of the other details above, the significance of the building will be unaffected and the development amounts to less than substantial harm at the lowest end of the scale.

Public benefits

As less than substantial harm has been identified, paragraph 215 of the NPPF requires evaluation of the development against its public benefits.

In this case, the benefits are substantial, removing 13.93 tonnes of CO₂ emissions annually (equivalent to the CO₂ absorbed by 640 trees per annum) contributing to improved local air quality and a lesser reliance on fossil fuels.

The proposal enables the transition to a sustainable form of renewable energy, delivers stable energy security to the NHS thus managing costs, and meets city-wide and regional carbon reduction objectives. It supports the wider hospital campus decarbonisation programme enabling it to meet the challenge of climate change and complementing the Council's 2038 carbon neutrality target.

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It carrying this out, the proposal will comply with NPPF chapters 2 (Achieving Sustainable Development), 14 (Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change), and 16 (Conserving the Historic Environment), Core Strategy policies EN1, EN3, EN6, DM1 and SP1, policies JP-P2 and JP-S1 of the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan, saved UDP policy DC19 and Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990: Section 72(1).

Heritage Conclusion

It is considered that this application is considered acceptable, as the works are considered to cause a low level of less than substantial harm to the special interest and the historic character of the Grade II listed building which would be outweighed by the public benefits outlined above and therefore are in accordance with Places for Everyone Plan policies JP-Strat2, JP-P1, and JP-P2, Manchester Core Strategy policies CC9, EN1, EN3, DM1 and SP1, Saved Unitary Development Plan for Manchester policies DC18 and DC19, section 16 of the NPPF, and Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Visual Amenity

The PV panels are sufficiently set back on all elevations in order to not be visible from the surrounding street scene.

They are set back 5 metres from the parapet of the outward facing west elevation and 4.5 metres from the parapet of the inward facing west elevation.

Set back 2.4 metres from the parapet of the outward facing north elevation and 4.2 metres from the parapet of the inward facing north elevation and most of the east elevation.

There is a section of the building that protrudes further out east from the east elevation. The PV panels installed here are set back 3.8 metres, 3.2 metres and 2.7 metres back from respective parapets of this section of the building.

The submitted sections of the panels themselves show that they are barely higher than the parapet of the building.

Glint and Glare

The NHS helipad is located on the roof of the multi-storey car park on Grafton Street.

The Helipad Manager has been consulted on the application and confirmed that there are no objections or further comment from either the helipad or helicopter operator regarding the installation of the PV panels on Cobbett House.

Conclusion

Given the above, the proposal is considered to be consistent with the relevant policies set out above and is therefore approved with conditions attached.

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

Officers have worked with the applicant/agent in a positive and proactive manner based on seeking solutions to problems arising in relation to dealing with the application.

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, received by Manchester City Council as the Local Planning Authority on 13 January 2026:

- Location Plan
- Proposed PV Roof Layout Sheet 2 of 2 RES00361-94
- Heritage Impact Statement

Received by Manchester City Council as the Local Planning Authority on 11 February 2026:

- Proposed PV Roof Layout Sheet 1 of 2 RES00361-53
- Proposed PV Roof Layout RES00361-92
- Forgesolar Glare Analysis

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 DC19 of the Unitary Development Plan for Manchester.

3) The solar PV equipment or solar thermal equipment will be removed as soon as reasonably practicable when they are no longer required.

Reason - In the interests of visual amenity and because the proposed works affect buildings which are included in the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest and careful attention to building work is required to protect the character and appearance of this building and to ensure consistency in accordance with policy and EN3 of the Core Strategy and saved policy DC19.1 of the Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester.

Informatives

1) The applicant's attention is drawn to the procedures for crane and tall equipment notifications, please see: <https://www.caa.co.uk/Commercial-industry/Airspace/Event-and-obstacle-notification/Crane-notification/>

Appendix 1 – List of consultees & neighbours notified

Environmental Health
Manchester Airport Safeguarding Officer
Helipad Manager

Marks And Spencer, Manchester Royal Infirmary, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9WL
Chest Clinic, 352 Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9NL

Appendix 2 – Planning constraints

[illegible]