Manchester Metropolitan University

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

Proposed Replacement Service Yard Fencing with Branded Artwork
Righton Building, Higher Ormond Street, Manchester M16 6BX



Job No 25-033 Document 1050 Rev C
January 2026

BowkerSadler

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Righton Building Service Yard, MMU

Righton Building, Higher Ormond Street, Manchester M16 6BX

Rev.	Date	Description	Wrtn / Chckd
A	24/11/25	Initial issue	DJW / DL
B	16/12/25	Planning issue	DJW / DL
C	05/01/26	Duration of permission sought amended to three years.	DJW/ DL

Applicant

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1. Introduction

This statement accompanies and supports the application for Full Planning & Display of Adverts, for a temporary period of three years, for the replacement of the existing, life-expired timber fence and hoardings, at the service yard adjacent to the existing Righton Building on the main MMU campus at the corner of Higher Ormond Street and Boundary Street West, with a new 2.4m fence and laminated aluminium artwork over-panels, of improved appearance, security and robustness. The application is necessary because the proposals fall outside permitted development rights.

Bowker Sadler Architecture have a history of undertaking architectural project work for Manchester Metropolitan University dating back to 2017 and are pleased to present this submission on behalf of our client.

2. Site Location and Access

The site comprises the small corner plot between the Righton and Cavendish Buildings of the Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU), on Higher Ormond Street and Boundary Street West, which are a short walk form the main Oxford Road bus corridor. The main A57(M) Mancunian Way lies approximately 400m to the north.

It fronts directly on to the adopted highway from where it can be readily viewed. There are two existing pedestrian gates, one on each street, and a gate to the courtyard behind Cavendish and Righton Buildings to the northwest. A double vehicular gate opens off Boundary Street West.

Emergency escape routes from both the Cavendish and Righton Buildings are routed through the service yard with egress via the pedestrian gates.

3. Existing Site Assessment and Use

The site sits at the corner of Higher Ormond Street and Boundary Street West, at the heart of MMU's Manchester campus, just off Grosvenor Square. It is bounded on the north and west sides by the Grade II–listed Righton Building and the Cavendish Building, both part of the MMU estate.

Historically the site appears to have been undeveloped since the date of the earliest available mapping data.[1] Shown as part of a larger garden (1848 OS Six Inch map), the same plot is later marked as a timber yard (1891 OS 1:500) until the Righton department store was constructed to the north part in circa 1905 leaving the current area vacant. It appears to have been enclosed with a tall, solid boundary on most maps (depicted as a solid line) with historical aerial imagery from the 1940s to the 1960s[2] showing it as a solid fence, and is likely to have formed the service yard for the shop as evidenced by the now bricked-up loading bay and later addition of the goods lift and loading platform to the south elevation which appears by the 1963 OS 1:2500. From the strong shadows in an aerial image from April 1949[3] it can be determined that the fence was c.40% the height of the Righton Building, which equates to 3.8-3.9m above ground level. Prior to the construction of the Cavendish Building, the western boundary was formed by the Sunday School of the adjacent Cavendish Congregational Chapel, later used by the Regional College of Art.

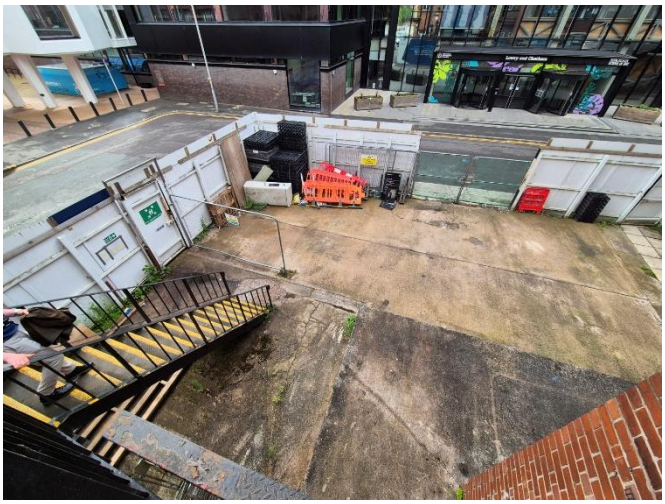
1 National Library of Scotland; 2 Historic England aerial imagery; 3. Historic England aerial imagery Flight ref,EAW022002 14/4/49



South elevation to Boundary Street West.



South and east elevation to Boundary Street West and Higher Ormond Street respectively.



Elevated overall internal view looking southeast.



Internal view looking east.



Internal view at junction with Cavendish Building wall.



Internal view at junction with Righton Building.

Photography commissioned in 1973,[1] prior to the demolition of the Chapel and Sunday School to facilitate development of the current Cavendish Building, records the yard as fenced with wire mesh on concrete posts circa 2.8m high. More recent street view imagery[2] shows the site to have been open to the pavement in the 2000s, with occasional Heras-type temporary fencing until circa 2014 when the current timber posts and panel fence, was erected. The latest over-panelling with artwork on composite sheets was installed circa 2022.

The site currently functions as a service yard for staff and contractors and is utilised for temporary storage of construction materials and equipment for estate building and maintenance works. The vehicle gates on Boundary Street West form the primary means of access for this purpose. The space therefore needs to be both secured and screened from view, as per the current fence arrangement.

In addition to its primary function, the yard also serves as an escape route from the adjacent buildings. An egress door opens out at ground floor level from the Cavendish Building, at the southwest corner of the site and the route therefrom utilises the gate to Boundary Street West. The courtyard between Righton and Cavendish also has a means of escape which passes through the yard, from the northwest corner to the same gate on Boundary St West.

At the northeast part of the yard, an external escape stair descends from the first floor of the Righton building to the second pedestrian gate at the eastern boundary, leading onto Higher Ormond St.

The site is surfaced principally in poured concrete, with a concreted-paved path leading from the courtyard and a brick step to the Cavendish Building egress door.

The proposed works to the site are minimal in terms of impact on the site itself and the usage is not vulnerable to ground contamination. A full geophysical site investigation is not therefore deemed necessary.

4. Use, size and extent

No change of use is proposed. The site will continue to function as a service yard/compound to facilitate the current building works across the MMU estate. The Righton building, including the application site, will ultimately form part of the MMU's long term masterplan/estates strategy, to be the subject of a future application, and the current proposals are therefore intended to remain in place only for the duration of the current estate works.

Following consultation with Manchester CC Planning, it is understood that the proposals detailed within this application can only be considered on a temporary basis of a maximum of three years and the submission is therefore in line with this restriction.

The application is thus solely for the replacement of the existing composite-panelled timber fence, which is life-expired, with one of improved appearance, security and robustness. This will occupy the same alignment as the current arrangement with posts erected in similar locations, at maximum 2.5m centres. The height will be 2.4m, approximately the same as the current over-panelling. This is lower than previous iterations of fencing, which as refereed to in Section 3 above, have historically been as high as 3.9m above ground level. Total length of the fence and gates is approximately 29.5m.

1 Manchester Image Library; 2 Google Streetview historical imagery 2008-present

The fence and gates will be constructed of weld-mesh and metal post construction and will be finished in black paint/powder-coating. The full fence, including gates will be fully over-clad to the street elevation using solid, flush-jointed composite panels attached with concealed security fixings as a part of the same proprietary system.

The panels will be printed with MMU branding and artwork. As such, full planning permission with approval for display of advertisements is sought for the life of the fence. The precise details of the artwork are not available at the time of the application. To avoid delay to the erection of the fence to which it is to be attached, it is, therefore, requested that the artwork element be conditioned for later submission and approval prior to installation,

5. Heritage Assessment

The site sits adjacent to the Righton Building, listed Grade 2 under reference 1197781, dated 11/6/91 (amended 6/6/94).[1] Whilst the proposed new boundary treatment will not touch the listed building at the junction between the two, which obviates the requirement for Listed Building consent, the proposals must be considered as having an impact on the setting of the building, and as such the application is obliged to include a heritage assessment to consider the effect of the proposed works on the setting of the listed building.

The Righton building was constructed on the last unoccupied plot of Grosvenor Square, formerly a timber yard. It was completed in 1905 for William Righton, a draper, whose name is recorded on the relief panels to the decorative parapet. The business occupied the premises until liquidation in 1959, after which they were acquired by an ironmonger and builders' merchant. Ownership changed to Manchester City Council in 1969, and it now forms part of the Manchester Metropolitan University main campus.[2]

The building is an important survivor of the former Chorlton on Medlock local commercial centre, now largely occupied by the University. It is the last remaining building of a block that formerly comprised the Cavendish Street Congregational Chapel and Sunday school, demolished in 1973.[3] Together with the extant School of Art, retained former Town Hall frontage and the Ormond building it forms cluster of historical buildings around the southwest corner of Grosvenor Square against which the more recent buildings of the campus are grounded.

The building is two storeys over a cellar comprising a white glazed brick background and buff terracotta features including a cill band, plain frieze, cornice, and, variously, oval, oriel and transomed windows. Parapet details include the business name and William Righton's initials moulded into buff terracotta arched pediments.

The original shop frontage windows have been replaced sympathetically with similar large plate glass windows and signage, occupying the frontage to Cavendish Street and continuing around the corner onto Higher Ormond Street. The rear (west) elevation to the courtyard and that to the south, facing the application site, are much plainer in terms of appearance, using a red-brown multi-toned brick. Internally there is an ornate cast iron gallery around a two-storey, top-lit lightwell.

The south elevation shows evidence of a large loading bay opening, since bricked-up incorporating smaller additional windows. Adjacent to this is a later lift shaft and loading platform, circa 1950/60s, and an external metal stair from a first-floor egress door.

1 Historic England listing details; 2 mancheservictorianarchitects.org website; 3 Manchesterhistory.net



Google Streetview 2012.



Google Streetview 2014.



Google Streetview 2015.



Google Streetview 2019.



Google Streetview 2023.

The south elevation shows evidence of a large loading bay opening, now bricked-up, incorporating smaller additional windows. Adjacent to this is a later lift shaft and loading platform, circa 1950/60s, and an external metal stair from a first-floor egress door.

Since construction of the store in 1905, the site appears to have functioned continuously as a service yard for the building. Historical mapping[1] and imagery[2,3] show the site having been enclosed with a solid fence for much of its existence. Several of the historical images show what appear to be bill posters applied to the fencing, suggesting previous use for advertising. Other boundary treatment iterations over time include a wire mesh fence on concrete posts as seen in the 1973 images[2], and bollards in lieu of fencing on the Google Streetview historical imagery.

The current boundary treatment erected c.2014 follows the solid fence pattern seen in the earliest images. This has served as a canvas for various student artworks as evidenced by the Streetview imagery seen in the photos included in this document. The latest composite over-panelling, incorporating branded artwork listing well-known alumni of the University, amongst other themes, was added in 2022. This was installed to the outer face of the timber panel fence and increased its height slightly.

It is evident from the above that the proposed new temporary fence is not significantly different in principle to the boundary treatment which has existed at the site for much of the last 120 years. The usage of the site remains the same in the short to medium term and the replacement boundary treatment will not contact the listed building. It is considered therefore that the proposals are consistent with the current and historical use and appearance of the site, and will not cause harm to the listed building or its setting given the anticipated limited lifespan of the proposals.

6. Biodiversity Net Gain

There is no existing planting or habitat suitable for supporting endangered species. The site area is less than 25m². As such it is considered to be exempt from the requirements of Biodiversity Net Gain policy.

7. Flood risk and Drainage

The proposals do not include any new drainage, nor do they affect existing arrangements. The site is in Flood Risk Zone 1 and therefore not at risk of flooding. The proposals do not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere, nor is the use vulnerable to flooding.

8. Security

The proposals are specifically intended to improve the security of the site with the new fencing to be specified to LPS 1175 A1 (SR1) Issue 8 standard. The artwork boards are intended to improve the appearance of the finished fence which will discourage graffiti, and the surface finish will aid cleaning. The site is at the heart of the MMU campus, benefitting from natural surveillance. It is well lit by existing security and street lighting and is well covered by monitored CCTV systems and physical patrols by security staff.

1 National Library of Scotland; 2 Manchester Image Library; 3 Historic England aerial imagery

9. Conclusion

This application is for Full Planning & Display of Adverts for new fencing with branded artwork over-panelling to replace the existing life-expired boundary treatment on the same alignment, for temporary period of three years. It is intended to increase the security of the site which it bounds, improve the appearance and be more robust than the existing, for the remainder of the site's current use.

Whilst fencing would normally fall under Permitted Development (PD) rights, this submission is required due to the proposed 2.4m height being slightly taller than the allowable 2.1m maximum without an application, and the inclusion of the applicant's logo classing the proposed artwork as advertising.

The fence sits next to the existing Grade II listed Righton Building but will not be physically connected to this. The site has been in continuous use as a service yard for more than a century and for much of this time it was enclosed with a tall, solid fence. As such the proposals, whilst more modest in scale, are in keeping with the historical use and will therefore cause no harm to the listed building or its setting.

For the reasons cited above, it is considered that the proposals presented are a suitable response to the client's requirements, and the context of the site, for the temporary period sought, and it requested that the application be supported accordingly.

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