

Statement for Listed Building Consent

Manchester Central
Installation of Solar renewables
Prepared by Taylor Design Architects Ltd – April 2026

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Area where photovoltaic panels will be installed

Manchester Central aerial gable views

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Preface

This Heritage Statement has been prepared by Taylor Design Architects Ltd on behalf of Manchester Central as a supporting document to accompany an application for listed building consent.

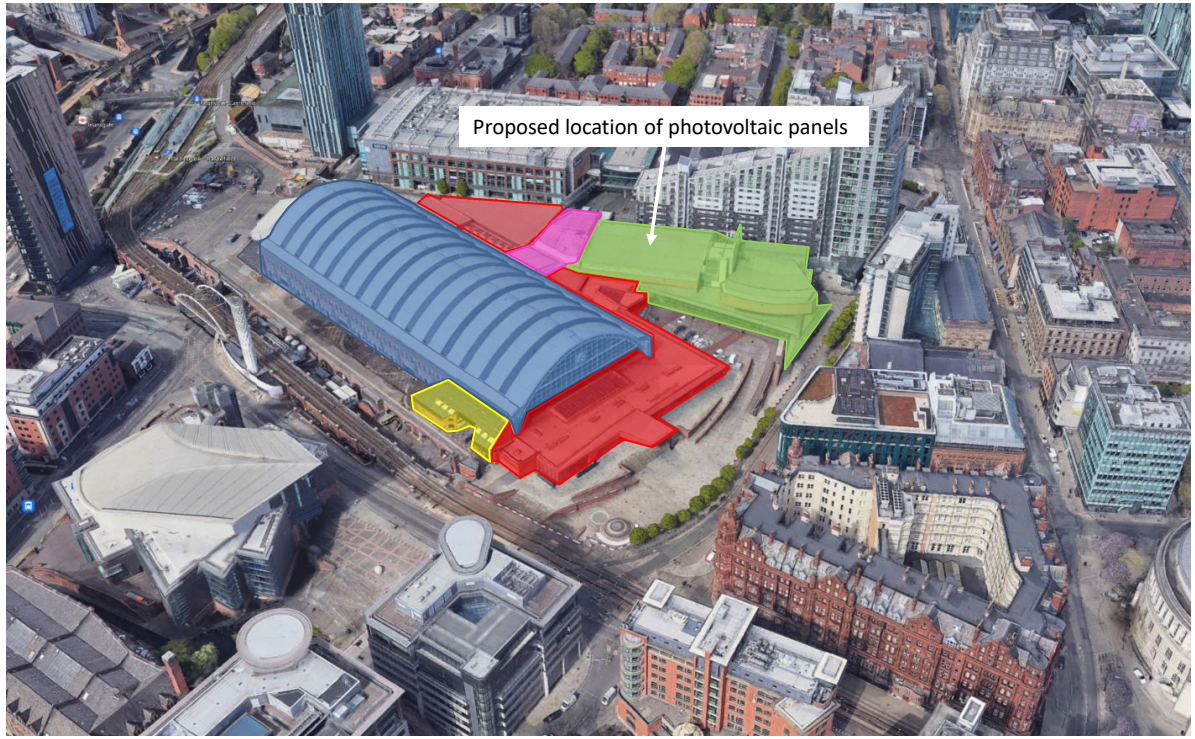
Manchester Central Convention Centre has operated for many years as a successful conference business and the venue has been established as a national destination. The success of the business has established sustainability for the heritage asset. Previously the venue was a train station and prior to its rejuvenation as a conference centre the building had lay vacant and dilapidated for over a decade.

The purpose of this statement is to assess the heritage implications of the proposed installation of photovoltaic (PV) panels on the existing Exchange Hall roof.

The assessment concludes that the proposal will not result in harm to the building's Grade II* listed status or its heritage significance. The works are designed to be sensitive, reversible where possible, and compatible with the continued conservation of the historic fabric, supporting the sustainable future use of this important landmark.

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Manchester Central North-East (front) aerial gable view – development dates

- Main historic Manchester Central train station 1880
- Stephenson Bell foyer additions 2007 - 2010
- EGS refurbishments 1986
- Exchange Building Stephenson Bell / Shepherd Robson 2001
- EGS Charter suite addition 1994

2.0 Purpose

The purpose of this report is to accompany an application for listed building consent seeking to install photovoltaic panels to an existing roof area at the Manchester Central Convention Centre.

Under the National Planning Policy Framework, this report recognises the requirement of the Local Planning Authorities to account for:

- The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation.

- The wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefit that conservation of the historic environment can bring.

- The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness and

- Opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.

This report will review the proposal in connection with the historical asset of the listed building and its context; further detailed information on the proposals can be found in the design and access statement and drawings comprising the planning application.



Station entrance showing original façade buildings (image Manchester Central)



Internal view of the train station in the first decade of the 20th century (image John Alsop collection}

3.0 Historical Background

In the late 1800s, Manchester was served by two mainline railway stations, Hunt's Bank (now Victoria) and Store Street (now Piccadilly). There was demand for a third passenger station and so the Cheshire Lines Committee, a joint venture between the three railway companies at the time, took responsibility for building a third station in Manchester.

The new railway station was built between 1875 and 1880, officially opening on 1 July 1880. The station structure comprises a series of wrought iron arches with red brick facades and was designed by Cheshire Lines engineer Lewis Henry Moorsom, overseen by Sir John Fowler (1817-1898) the chief engineer of the Manchester, Sheffield & Lincolnshire railways company (MS&L).

The main train hall is rectangular in plan and is constructed over two floors of interconnected brick arch vaults which were used for storage. The arched wrought iron truss of the main station building spans 210 feet (64m) and is 90 feet (27m) high at the apex. The structures were built by Andrew Handyside and Co.

The station's entrance faced Windmill Street and a two-storey building was erected to the arched facade comprising ticket offices, waiting rooms and shops. The building facade presented advertising boards and the iconic station clock.

This facade building was originally a temporary construction and was to be replaced by a hotel and ancillary station facilities, which were to be similar to London's St Pancras station; however the temporary building remained.



View to front façade with covered link to Midland Hotel in 1910 (Image Manchester Evening News)

(c) Manchester Libraries



View to front façade with link to Midland Hotel, (Image Manchester Libraries)

3.0 Historical Background

To the front of the station there was a concourse and covered link towards the Midland Hotel sited on the opposite side on Windmill Street. The Midland hotel was designed by Charles Trubshaw in 1898. The concourse at the time was fully enclosed by walls and fences and was adorned with various billboard advertising.

Its use as one of Manchester's' main railway stations continued until its closure in 1969. The Beeching report of 1963 "The Reshaping of British Railways" led to the restructuring of the railway network. Manchester Central Station was deemed surplus to requirements and in the same year, 18th December 1963, the station achieved listed building status. The station finally closed to passengers on Monday 5th May 1969.



Manchester Central Station from Windmill Street, around 1975
(Image MMU Visual Resources)



G-MEX Exhibition Centre in Manchester. 17th November 1987. (Image Mirrorpix)

Expected plans for reuse of the building during this time did not materialise and the building began to fall into disrepair, being used as a car park for many years. In 1978, Greater Manchester County Council purchased the building, and plans were announced to develop the station into an exhibition centre. In 1982, and with the building now in poor condition, work started in converting the former railway station into an exhibition centre, eventually opening as GMex in 1986.

The GMex refurbishment cleared the ancillary buildings from around the rectangular train shed and created a new level floor within the station building. New extensions provided new front foyer accommodation. The extensions were constructed of steel frame and featured a translucent black patent glazing to sloping roof and facade walls these extensions wrapped around the north east and west of the building. The glazed arch at each end of the building was infilled with new glazing.



Manchester International Conference Centre MICC by Stephenson Bell 2001 .
(Image Stephenson Bell)

3.0 Historical Background

Where the brick offices were demolished on the north-east and north-west corners of the shed, the exterior face was rebuilt in brickwork to match the original, with some of the detailing executed in GRP to replicate moulded stonework. A new public plaza was created which set the building entrance a level above street level with steps to the front entrance.

GMex was opened in March 1986 by HM Queen Elizabeth II , and the design attracted several design and industry awards including a Civic Trust Award in 1987. The work was one of the first major regeneration projects of its kind and was designed by Architect Jack Bogle of Manchester firm EGS.

In 2001, the Manchester International Convention Centre (MICC) was built adjacent to the GMex building adding separate, but additional, facilities to the complex.

During 2005, the company running the GMex and MICC was bought by Manchester City Council and in January 2007 the venue was rebranded as Manchester Central, evoking the memory of the former Manchester Central railway station. Under Manchester City Council, control plans were developed for an updating and refurbishment of the convention centre facilities. In 2009, the works to the Manchester Central building were undertaken by Manchester practice Stephenson Bell Architects and constructed by Laing O'Rourke. The alterations included significant demolitions of the 1980s additions, whilst leaving intact the historical fabric of the train shed. The project was seen as a consolidation project, not only updating the ageing fabric of the 1980s extension, but also linking the facilities of the historical train shed with the 2001 MICC building, combining these buildings into the Manchester Central Convention Complex.



Views of front façade Stephenson Bell extension and MICC (Image Manchester Central)

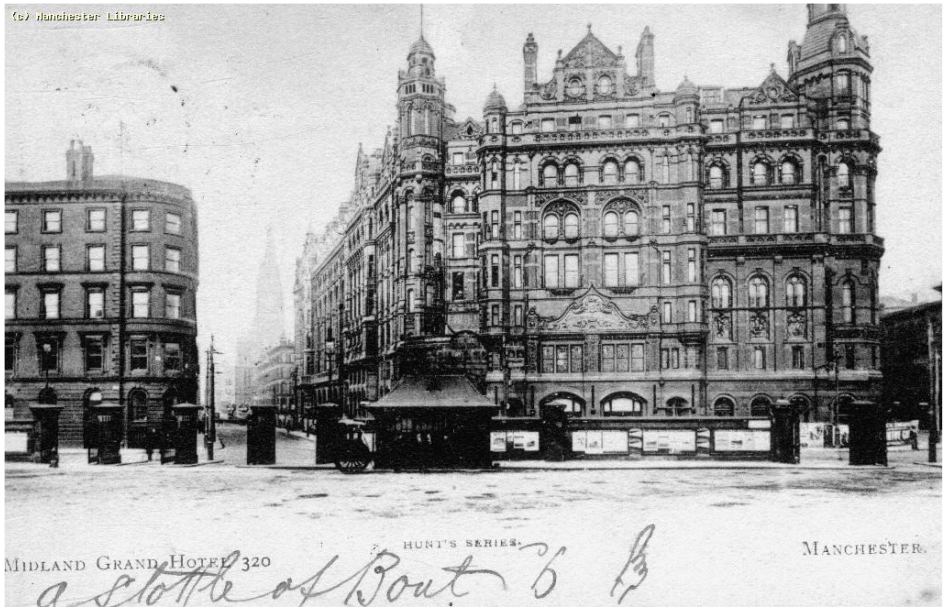


Views of front façade Stephenson Bell extension (Image Manchester Central)

3.0 Historical Background

The design of these additions visually connects the two buildings, replicating the design aesthetic of the 2001 MICC - horizontal facade glazing with red sandstone features. The low pitch of the new extension revealed more visibility of the Windmill Street arched glazed facade.

The Stephenson Bell additions feature a large projecting entrance canopy located above the entrance steps and central to the building facade.



Midland Hotel in 1903 (Image Manchester Libraries)


Manchester Central on the left and Midland Hotel on the right

4.0 Context

The former train shed at Manchester Central is one of the finest examples of railway engineering and design in Britain and for this reason was listed in 1963 and is Grade II* listed. However, we also need to acknowledge the assets historic context and setting. The Midland hotel, also Grade II* listed, faces towards the Manchester Central entrance.

Manchester Central is not within a conservation area but it is adjacent to St Peter's Square and Deansgate conservation area.

The open space to the north of the building provides an important setting for both Manchester Central and the Midland Hotel. This area has been remodeled on two occasions since the railway station closed and most recently as part of the 2001 works to build the MICC building. The setting of these buildings has been significantly altered in the past 30 years – historically, the station was approached across a sloping forecourt defined by perimeter walls and gateways. This space was used for transport drop off but is now a two-level open space with retaining walls and steps separating the Manchester Central entrance podium from the public plaza below.

The service area to the south of the building is important in terms of functionality, and currently operates as a car park and service area.

5.0 Planning Guidance

5.1 National Planning Policy Framework 2024

Section 16
Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

207. *In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.*

This statement has included a brief historical description of the historical asset, and the significance of the venue and its context is recognised.

208. *Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage assets conservation and any aspect of the proposal .*

It is our belief that the proposals have been considered in the full context of the Manchester Central Train Hall. We accept that the main train hall is of primary importance to the listed asset and as such the heritage asset is isolated from the proposal as the PV panels will be fully sited on the 2001 Exchange building, this mitigates any adverse risk of physical deterioration of the primary aspect of the primary aspect of the asset.

The PV panels represent a neutral addition in visual terms and are not considered to detract from the appearance or setting of the venue. While the Exchange Building is included within the listing, the discreet and neutral character of the PV installation ensures that there is no detrimental effect on its roofscape or on the contribution this part of the complex makes to the overall heritage value.

The installation of PV panels to the Exchange roof is a fully reversible and can be removed without physical detriment to the structure at a future date.

210. *In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:*

a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

It is our view that the proposal is fully consistent with the ongoing conservation of Manchester Central and preserves the positive contribution that the building continues to make to the city's historic environment.

The introduction of photovoltaic (PV) panels will support the long-term sustainability of the venue by improving its energy efficiency and reducing operational costs. This enhancement will, in turn, strengthen the overall viability of the site and help secure the continued, active use of this important heritage asset

5.0 Planning Guidance

5.1 National Planning Policy Framework 2024

Section 16
Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

212. *When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the assets conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.*

It is our belief that the proposal will result in no harm to the heritage asset. The works, are considered neutral in appearance and fully reversible. Their affect on the asset is negligible both aesthetically and materially.

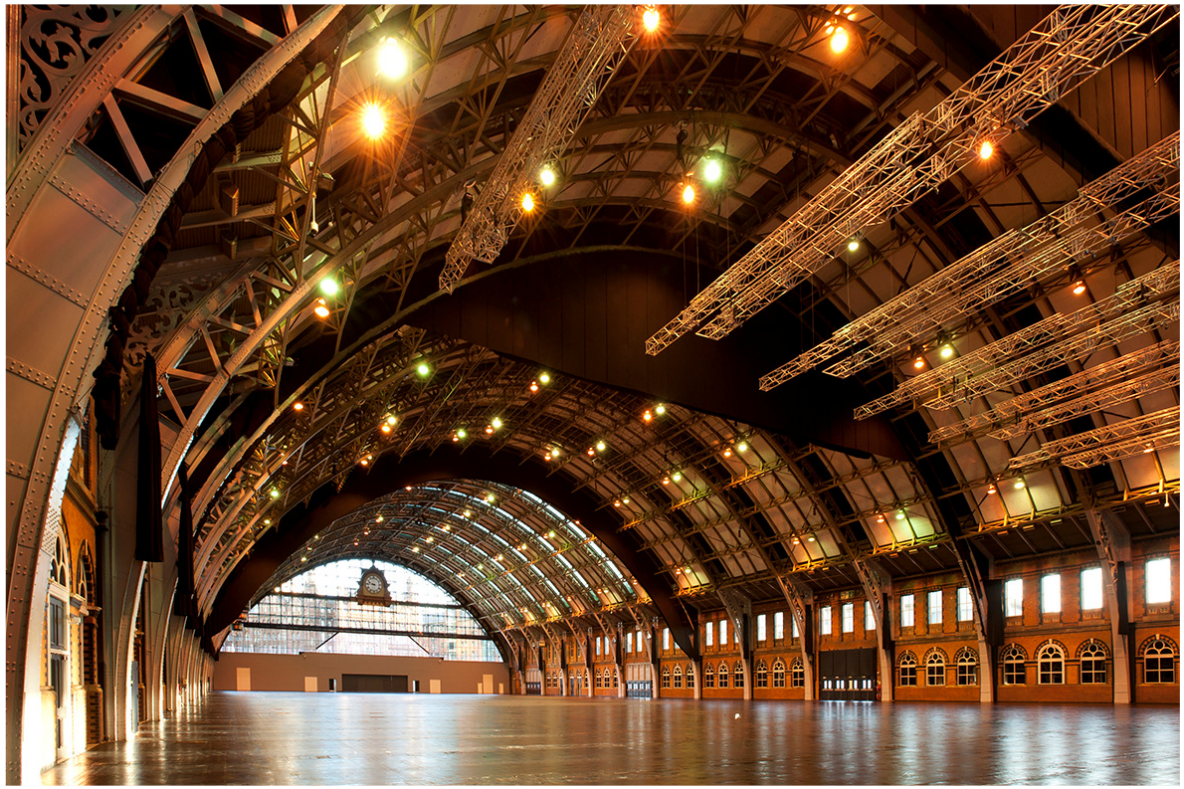
We suggest that following the works to install the PV panels the heritage asset will remain of major significance nationally and it is our opinion these proposal has no adverse effect on either the conservation of the asset or its significance.

214. *Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.*

As the proposed works are considered to result in negligible harm, we believe that the public benefits they deliver clearly outweigh any impact on the significance of the asset.

Manchester Central continues to invest in regular upgrades to ensure the venue remains competitive and viable within a challenging commercial sector.

Enhancing the building's energy efficiency and sustainability is regarded as essential to maintaining its status as a leading, long-term event destination.



Current view of the main hall (Image Manchester Central)

6.0 Summary

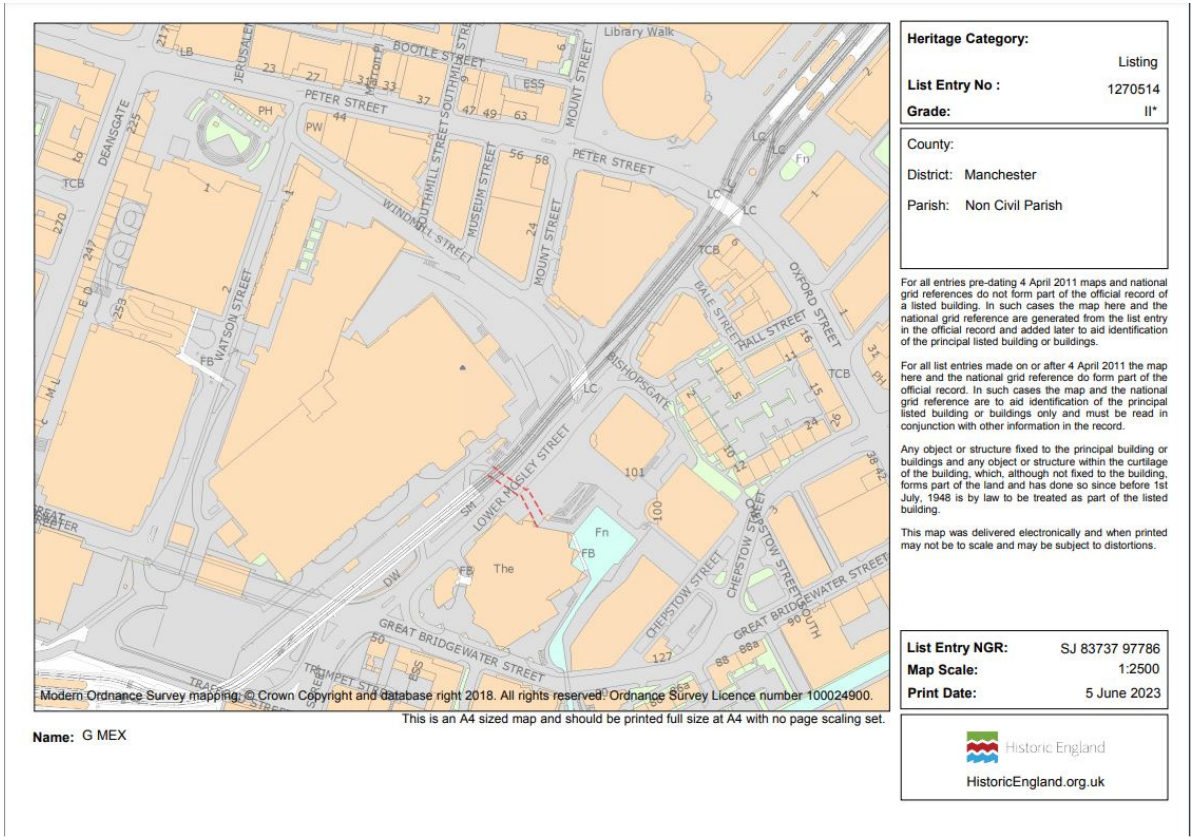
Manchester Central was built between 1875 - 80 and operated as a train station until 1969. Since its closure as a station, the building has undergone two major alteration and extension projects and now continues to operate as a successful conference and exhibition centre. The building hosts major events, notably both Conservative and Labour Party conferences, as well as large-scale concert and trade shows.

Every year, thousands of visitors attend functions at the venue, continuous investment in both maintenance and enhancement of the Grade II* listed building and its performance are fundamental to the heritage asset's protection and conservation.

This proposal constitutes a step forward in strengthening the functionality and ensuring the future of this historic asset.

The building is of significance nationally and is iconic in representing the city of Manchester

Within the context of the National Planning Policy Framework, we believe that the proposed works will not have a detrimental effect on the listed building and they will contribute to the conservation of the heritage asset.



The copy shows the entry on 05.06.23

7.0 Heritage Asset Listing

7.1 Overview

Heritage Category: Listed Building
Grade: II*
List Entry Number: 1270514
Date first listed: 18-Dec-1963
Date of most recent amendment: 06-Jun-1994
Statutory Address: G MEX, WINDMILL STREET

7.2 Map

The map attached shows the entry on 05.06.23

7.3 Location

Statutory Address: G MEX, WINDMILL STREET
The building or site itself may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.
District: Manchester (Metropolitan Authority)
National Grid Reference: SJ 83737 97786

7.4 Details

MANCHESTER

SJ8397NE WINDMILL STREET 698-1/31/443 (South West side) 18/12/63 G-Mex (Formerly Listed as: WINDMILL STREET (South West side) Former Central Station)

GV II*

Railway station, now exhibition hall and car park. 1876-9, by Sir John Fowler, for Midland Railway Company; altered. Iron and glass on brick undercroft, with brick side walls. Rectangular plan. Single segmental-vaulted vessel of 15 bays with 210-foot span, built on extensive undercrofts; pilastered 2-storey south side with 3 windows on each floor of each bay, those at ground floor round-headed and those above square-headed; segmental arched roof with ridged bands of glazing. C20 glazed canopy to entrance at north end. Vaulted undercroft with intersecting tunnel vaults. Intended entrance block at north end never built.

Listing NGR: SJ8373797786

7.5 Legacy

The content of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

Legacy System number: 458616
Legacy System: LBS

7.6 Legal

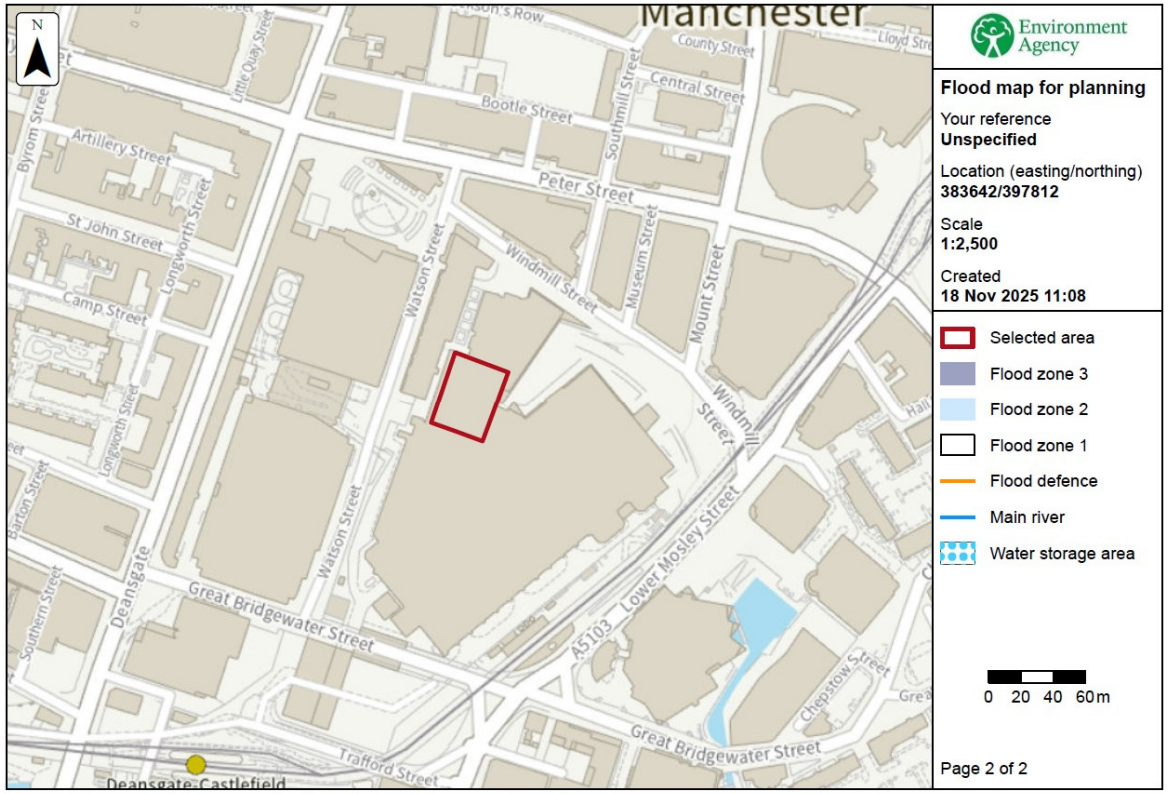
This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

8.0 Environment Agency

8.1 Flood map

Attached flood map from Environment Agency indicates Manchester central is located in a Flood zone 1

This proposal at Manchester Central will not increase surface run off, and the site is less than 1 Ha. On the basis of the attached flood map we, therefore, confirm that no flood strategy is required.



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Flood map – Environment Agency

9.0 References

9.1 Bibliography

C.Hartwell - Pevsner Architectural Guides, Manchester, Yale 2001

N.Spooner, The development of the Central Station site into the GMex Centre,1987

Proposed signage :PPG15 statement **-AHP** (Architectural History Practice) February 2010

Building Appraisal and PPG15 Report - Manchester Central September 2007

9.2 Websites

Manchester City Council - www.manchester.gov.uk - info conservation areas

Manchester Central website - www.manchestercentral.co.uk - about Manchester Central history

Historic England - www.historicengland.org.uk -

National Heritage list for England
GOV.UK – www.flood-map-for-planning.service.gov.uk – Flooding area information