MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

Planning

Delegated Officer Report

Summary of application details

Application reference:	PLA-2026-000087
Application type:	Change of use
Proposal:	Change of use from Class E(g)(i) (office) to Class F1(a) (education) at first-floor.
Site address:	First Floor Virginia House, 7 Great Ancoats Street, Manchester, M4 5AE
Ward(s):	Ancoats & Beswick
Date application valid:	27 April 2026
Applicant name:	Saliha Lefevre
Agent (if any):	
Case officer:	Michael Pearson
Recommendation:	Approve
Date of recommendation:	15/06/2026

Description of site, building and area

The application relates to the first floor of the five storey end terrace building at 7 Great Ancoats Street, Virginia House. The application property itself is an early 20th century building with tiled front façade and brick rear elevations. The property, whilst not listed, is considered to be of some heritage significance with the ornate detailing to its front façade and is therefore classified as a non-designated heritage asset. The property originally four storeys. features a contemporary roof extension, completed in glazed curtain walling and composite cladding, approved under permission 061386/FO/NORTH1/01. The site's ground floors have been altered to feature modern full height glazed openings. The application site features a gym use at ground floor, with offices uses and a recreation use above.

The neighbouring area lies along the northern border of Manchester City Centre, spanning across Swan Street and Great Ancoats Street. The area that lies along the north-eastern side of Great Ancoats Street lies within the Ancoats Conservation Area, with the area to the south-west across said street lying in part in the Stevenson Square Conservation Area. The neighbouring area also features a high number of listed buildings including the Grade II listed Former Midland Bank and Crown and Kettle Public House, as well as the Grade II* listed Express Building. Notwithstanding the presence of listed buildings and conservation areas, a high number of contemporary buildings feature within the local street scene, giving it a varied appearance in regard to the size, height and materiality of buildings that comprise it. Neighbouring uses are largely a variety of Class E retail and office uses, though residential development and a hotel use also feature.

Description of development

The application seeks consent for the change of use of the application property's first floor, from offices (Class E(g)(i)) to education (Class F1(a)).

The proposed use would encompass the entirety of the site's first floor, consisting of 5no classrooms, 2no offices, a meeting room, kitchen and WCs. Waste collections would be undertaken via a bagged collection.

The proposed occupier would be that of a French language school.

Relevant planning history

068539/FO/2003/N1 - Creation of new entrance doorway and disabled accessible entrance – Approved August 2003.

067448/FU/NORTH1/03 - Change of use from offices (Class B1) to art gallery (Class D1) – Approved April 2003.

061386/FO/NORTH1/01 - Single storey extension at roof level and elevational alterations – Approved June 2001.

Consultation, notification and publicity responses

Publicity – A site notice was published. Neighbouring properties were notified of the proposals by letter. No representations were received.

Environmental Health – No objection subject to conditions relating to hours of fit out works and operation, and waste storage.

Flood Risk – No objection subject to an informative relating to flood resilience measures and a culvert.

Highways – No objection received.

Relevant policies

The Places for Everyone Plan - Joint Development Plan Document, for nine of the 10 boroughs which make up Greater Manchester adopted on 21st of March 2024:
- Policy JP-Strat 1 – Core Growth Area
- Policy JP-Strat2 – City Centre
- Policy JP-S4 – Flood Risk and the Water Environment
- Policy JP-P2 – Heritage

The Manchester Core Strategy – Development Plan Document 2012-2027 ("the Core Strategy") was adopted by the City Council on the 11th of July 2012:
- Policy SP1 – Spatial Principles
- Policy EC1 – Employment and Economic Growth in Manchester
- Policy EC2 – Existing Employment Space
- Policy EC3 – The Regional Centre
- Policy CC1 – Primary Economic Development Focus (City Centre and fringe)
- Policy CC9 – Design and Heritage
- Policy EN1 – Design Principle and Strategic Characters Areas
- Policy EN3 – Heritage

- Policy EN14 – Flood Risk
- Policy EN19 – Waste
- Policy DM1 – Development Management

The Unitary Development Plan for Manchester – For the reasons outlined below the following saved UDP Policies are of relevance to this application:
- Policy DC18 – Conservation Areas
- Policy DC19 – Listed Buildings
- Policy DC26 – Development and Noise

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- Chapter 6 – Building a Strong, Competitive Economy
- Chapter 9 – Promoting Sustainable Transport
- Chapter 12 – Achieving Well-Designed Places
- Chapter 16 – Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment

Other Legislative Requirements
Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990
National Planning Policy for Waste

Assessment

Principle of the Development

The application would see the change of use of part of the first floor of an early 20th century office building from an office use to an education use (Class E(g)(i) to Class F1(a)). It is understood that high vacancy rates on site persist and the proposed occupier would assist in developing a desirable business that would then contribute further to the ongoing regeneration of the City Centre. The facilities on site feature lower grade office space that is not at the forefront of consumer demand.

The proposed use would see the floor occupied, enabling the site to have a sustainable use moving forward, as well as allowing it to contribute to the City Centre's economy. Indeed, the use would allow educational training for those seeking professional and internationally recognised qualifications in the French language.

On this basis, it is considered the proposal would enable the occupation of part of a building that has struggled with occupancy rates, thereby contributing to the City Centre's economy and improving local regeneration efforts. Therefore, the proposal accords in principle with Places for Everyone Plan Policy JP-Strat1 and JP-Strat2, and Core Strategy Policies SP1, EC1, EC2, EC3, CC1 and DM1 subject to the matters discussed below.

Residential Amenity

The application site, as existing, is in mixed use as offices (Class E(g)(i)) and a gym (Class E(d)). Neighbouring uses are primarily commercial. Environmental Health do not object to the proposal subject to conditions relating to construction/fit out hour and opening hours.

It is considered that the noise level differences between the existing office use and education use are so slight, especially given the proposed occupier being a French language school, that any impact on neighbouring amenity would be considered to be negligible that the development is acceptable in regard to its impact on neighbouring amenity. The proposed operating hours are not known to be vastly different to that of existing operations and thus no such condition will be attached in the event of the approval. Additionally, the limiting of construction hours via planning

condition is considered would be unreasonable given the minor nature of the proposed works, and how noise stemming from construction/fit out works would fall under Environmental Health legislation. In light of this, no such condition will be attached in the event of an approval. In light of this, it is considered that the development is acceptable in this regard and therefore accords with Core Strategy Policy DM1, Saved Unitary Development Policy DC26 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Visual Amenity & Heritage

No external alterations are proposed on site. Therefore, the development would not have a material impact on the appearance of the local street scene nor the setting or significance of the neighbouring Ancoats Conservation Area, Stevenson Square Conservation Area, Grade II* listed Express Building and the Grade II listed Crown and Kettle Public House to west and east of the site. The proposal therefore is acceptable in this regard and accords with Core Strategy Policies CC9, EN1, EN3 and DM1, Saved Unitary Development Plan Policies DC18 and DC19, Places for Everyone Plan Policy JP-P2, the Framework and the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Flood Risk

The application site lies within an area at risk of surface water flooding. Flood Risk do not object to the proposals subject to informatives that notify the applicant to adopt flood resilience measures 150mm above the surface water flood level, and that a culvert lies in close proximity to the site. Subject to said informatives, the development is acceptable in this regard and accords with Policy JP-S4, and Core Strategy Policies EN14 and DM1, and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Highway Safety

The application site is located in a highly sustainable location, lying within walking distance of bus, tram and rail infrastructure. The proposed use is also considered would be unlikely to lead to a notable increased in carborne journeys to and from the application site when compared to the existing office use. No objection has been received from Highway Services. In line with the above, the proposal is acceptable in this regard and accords with Core Strategy Policy DM1 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Waste Management

The application site does not feature a bin store, having waste and recycling being disposed of through bag collection. The proposed use would also have bagged waste and recycling collections. Environmental Health do not object to this arrangement. Subject to a planning condition that would require the development to store and dispose of its waste and recycling in accordance with this policy, the development is acceptable in this regard and accords with Core Strategy Policies EN19 and DM1, and the National Planning Policy for Waste.

Conclusion

In light of the above and subject to appropriate planning condition, it has been found that the development is acceptable and is therefore in accordance with Places for Everyone Plan Policies JP-Strat1, JP-Strat2, JP-S4 and JP-P2, Core Strategy Policies SP1, EC1, EC2, EC3, CC1, CC9, EN1, EN3, EN14, EN19 and DM1, Saved Unitary Development Plan Policies DC18, DC19 and DC26, the National Planning Policy for Waste, the National Planning Policy Framework, and the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. On this basis the application is recommended for approval.

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 polices 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.

Article 35 Declaration

Officers have acted positively in determining this application by assessing the proposal against relevant planning policies and all material considerations. The nature of the scheme has not necessitated further discussions with the applicant. On this basis it is decided to grant planning permission in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Recommendation: **Approve**

Conditions attached to this decision

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:

   - Location Plan (Planning Portal Reference PP-14874982v1)
   - First Floor Plan
   - Supporting Statement (Prepared by Alliance Française Manchester)
   - Waste Management Strategy Proforma

   Marked as received by the City Council as Local Planning Authority on 27/04/2026.

   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.

3) The application site shall be used for education use (Class F1(a)), and for no other purpose (including any other purpose within Class F1 of the Schedule to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2020 (SI 2020 No.757) or in any provision equivalent to that Class in any statutory instrument revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification).

   Reason - The use of the premises other than in accordance with the approved use would require further consideration by the Local Planning Authority and may not be appropriate in this locality in accordance with Core Strategy Policies SP1, EC2 and DM1, and the National Planning Policy Framework.

4) The development hereby approved, shall store and present its waste and recycling for collection in accordance with the submitted Waste Management Strategy Proforma (Received 27/04/2026) for its lifetime.

   Reason - To ensure proper waste storage on site in accordance with Core Strategy Policy EN19 and DM1.

Informatives

1) The applicant is advised to incorporate Property Flood Resilience (PFR) measures to a minimum of 150mm above the surface water flood level or a minimum of 600mm above the fluvial flood level.

2) Manchester City Council (MCC) records highlight that the underground River Tib is located within close proximity to the site (approximately 90 m to the northeast of the site), while our records are frequently updated to ensure the highest level of accuracy, the records cannot guarantee 100% accuracy for all culverted assets. Therefore, we would request that the applicant informs the onsite contractor to

remain observant and to take the appropriate safety precautions during excavation works. If any major unknown drainage assets are found beneath the site, then further investigation works should take place to identify the asset and MCC Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) should be contacted immediately. Any alterations to an ordinary watercourse will require consent from MCC LLFA under Land Drainage Act 1991. The developer can apply for land drainage consent (if required) via the following link: https://manchester.portal.uk.empro.verintcloudservices.com/site/myaccount/request/pr_watercourse_land.