MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

Planning

Delegated Officer Report

Summary of application details

Application reference:	PLA-2026-000080
Application type:	Lawful development: Proposed use
Proposal:	Existing cladding remediation works, and balcony surface replacement works
Site address:	Great Northern Tower 1 Watson Street Manchester
Ward(s):	Deansgate
Date application valid:	27 April 2026
Applicant name:	Mr Idris Bapu
Agent (if any):	Mr Yousaf Qazi
Case officer:	Robert Tyrer
Recommendation:	Grant
Date of recommendation:	18 June 2026

Description of site, building and/or area

Application site relates to a 72 metre sloped high rise apartment building located on Watson Street in Manchester City Centre.

Description of development

The applicant is seeking a certificate of lawfulness to allow for existing cladding remediation works, and balcony surface replacement works.

Consultation, notification and publicity responses

Consultations

None Required - There is no statutory requirement to consult third parties including neighbours; views expressed by third parties on the planning merits of the case, or on whether the applicant has any private rights to carry out the operation, use or activity in question, are irrelevant when determining the application.

Legislative Issues

Sections 191 and 192 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 provide for anyone (not just a person with a legal interest in the land) to apply to the local planning authority (LPA) for a lawful development certificate (LDC). A certificate is a statutory document certifying:

(1) in the case of an application under section 191, the lawfulness, for planning purposes, of existing operations on, or use of land, or some activity being carried out in breach of a planning condition; or

(2) in the case of an application under section 192, the lawfulness of proposed operations on, or use of land.

The onus of proof in regard to (1) is firmly on the applicant and the issue of a certificate will depend on the on factual evidence provided about the history and planning status of the building or other land and the interpretation of any relevant planning law or judicial authority. The relevant test of the evidence in this matter is “the balance of probability” and the applicants own evidence does not need to be corroborated by independent evidence. If the LPA have no evidence to contradict the applicants version of events or make them less then probable, there is no good reason to refuse the issue of a certificate.

In regard to (2), this provides that, if the LPA are supplied with information satisfying them that the use or operations described in the application would be lawful, if instituted or begun at the time of the application, they shall issue a certificate to that effect; and, in any other case, they shall refuse the application.

In short, the purpose section 192 is to enable any person who wishes to find out whether any proposed use or operations would be lawful to apply to the LPA for that purpose

The application needs to describe the proposal with sufficient clarity and precision to enable the LPA to understand (from a written description and plans) exactly what is involved in the proposal; and to submit whatever supporting information or legal submission that are to be relied upon in order to satisfy the LPA that a certificate should be granted for the proposal.

In making their decision on an application under section 192, the LPA ask themselves the hypothetical question - *"If this proposed change of use had already occurred, or if this proposed operation had commenced, on the application date, would it have been lawful for planning purposes?"* In doing so, the LPA will not only consider whether the proposal would involve "development" requiring an application for planning permission, but whether it would involve a breach of any existing condition or limitation imposed on a grant of planning permission which has been acted upon, and which therefore constrains what can be done on the land. The LPA will not make a proposal fit a scenario; the only question is whether the proposal made by the applicant is lawful at the time of submission.

Assessment

This application is pursued under subsection (1) of section 192, which provides for an application to determine whether any proposed use or operations would be lawful for planning purposes. The application is accompanied by a design and access statement which explains the scope of the works to improve the fire safety performance of the building. This involves the following:

- Existing cladding materials to be removed, new cavity barriers to be installed and existing cladding then re-instated;
- The timber decked balconies are proposed to be replaced with an AluDeck decking board or similar

The submitted drawings illustrate the extent of the proposed cavity barriers, following the installation of which the existing cladding will be reinstated. The drawings also show the

replacement of the timber decked balconies with an AluDeck decking board which will be grey to match the timber decking that is to be removed from the balconies.

Section 55(1) of the Act states:

Subject to the following provisions of this section, in this Act, except where the context otherwise requires, “development,” means the carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operations in, on, over or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of any buildings or other land.

Section 55(1A) states:

For the purposes of this Act “ building operations ” includes—

(a) demolition of buildings;

(b) rebuilding;

(c) structural alterations of or additions to buildings; and

(d) other operations normally undertaken by a person carrying on business as a builder.

Section 55(2)(a) states:

The following operations or uses of land shall not be taken for the purposes of this Act to involve development of the land— (a) the carrying out for the maintenance, improvement or other alteration of any building of works which—

(i) affect only the interior of the building, or

(ii) do not materially affect the external appearance of the building, and are not works for making good war damage or works begun after 5th December 1968 for the alteration of a building by providing additional space in it underground;

In this case the existing cladding will be reinstated following the installation of the new cavity barriers and the external appearance of the replacement decking to the balconies will not be materially different in appearance to the existing. Whilst the proposed works could be considered to be operations normally undertaken by a person carrying on business as a builder, it is considered that the works will not materially affect the external appearance of the building.

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.

Conclusion

The certificate should be granted based on the outcome of this assessment.

Recommendation: **Grant**

Reasons for approval

1) The proposed works would not materially affect the external appearance and as such, they do not involve development of the land as set out in Section 55(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), and would therefore not require planning permission.