adapt heritage

Heritage Technical Note

Land at Baird Street, Manchester

July 2026

Introduction

1.1 Adapt Heritage Ltd has been instructed by Padel 16 Limited to prepare this Heritage Technical Note in connection with a planning application for the temporary redevelopment of land bounded by Chapeltown Street, Baird Street and Congou Street, Manchester (hereafter referred to as 'the Site').

1.2 The 'Proposed Development' comprises the temporary redevelopment of an existing surface car park to provide indoor and outdoor padel courts together with associated health and wellbeing facilities, reception, café/bar, changing facilities and associated servicing. The development is proposed as a temporary meanwhile use for an initial period of up to three years.

1.3 The purpose of this report is to provide a proportionate assessment of the likely effects of the proposals upon nearby designated and non-designated heritage assets. The assessment has been prepared in accordance with the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2024), local planning policy and relevant Historic England guidance.

1.4 The level of detail contained within this report reflects the requirements of Paragraph 207 of the NPPF, which requires heritage assessments to be proportionate to the significance of the heritage assets affected and the nature of the proposals.

Site and Heritage Context

1.5 The Site extends to approximately 0.36 hectares and comprises an existing surface car park located between Chapeltown Street, Baird Street and Congou Street, immediately to the east of Manchester Piccadilly Station. The Site is generally level and is currently used for vehicle parking.

1.6 The Site does not contain any designated or non-designated heritage assets, nor does it fall within a designated conservation area. The nearest designated heritage assets comprise:

- Manchester Piccadilly Station (Grade II Listed), located immediately to the west; and
- Crusader Works (Grade II Listed), located to the east on Chapeltown Street.

1.7 In addition, the wider townscape contains a number of buildings which, whilst not statutorily designated, have previously been identified by Manchester City Council (MCC) as holding some heritage interest. These include Neptune Mill, a prominent former industrial building located to the east of the Site.

1.8 The surrounding townscape is characterised by a varied urban environment in which surviving 19th century railway and industrial buildings sit alongside 20th and 21st century redevelopment, including modern industrial and commercial premises, transport infrastructure and large-scale residential development.

Overview of Historic Development

1.9 Historically, the Site formed part of the eastern fringe of Manchester prior to the rapid expansion of the city during the 19th century. Its development was closely associated with the arrival of the railway and the remarkable industrial growth that transformed Manchester into one of Britain's principal manufacturing centres.

1.10 The opening of the Manchester and Birmingham Railway during the 1840s established London Road Station (now Manchester Piccadilly) as an increasingly important passenger and freight interchange. Continued growth in railway traffic quickly necessitated expansion, culminating in the construction of the present Victorian train shed and extensive goods handling facilities between 1862 and 1866. Further enlargement followed during the 1880s, reflecting Manchester's continued commercial prosperity and the increasing importance of both passenger and freight transport. During the latter half of the 19th century, and as shown on Figure 1, the Site itself was occupied by a series of terraced residential streets associated with the expanding city.

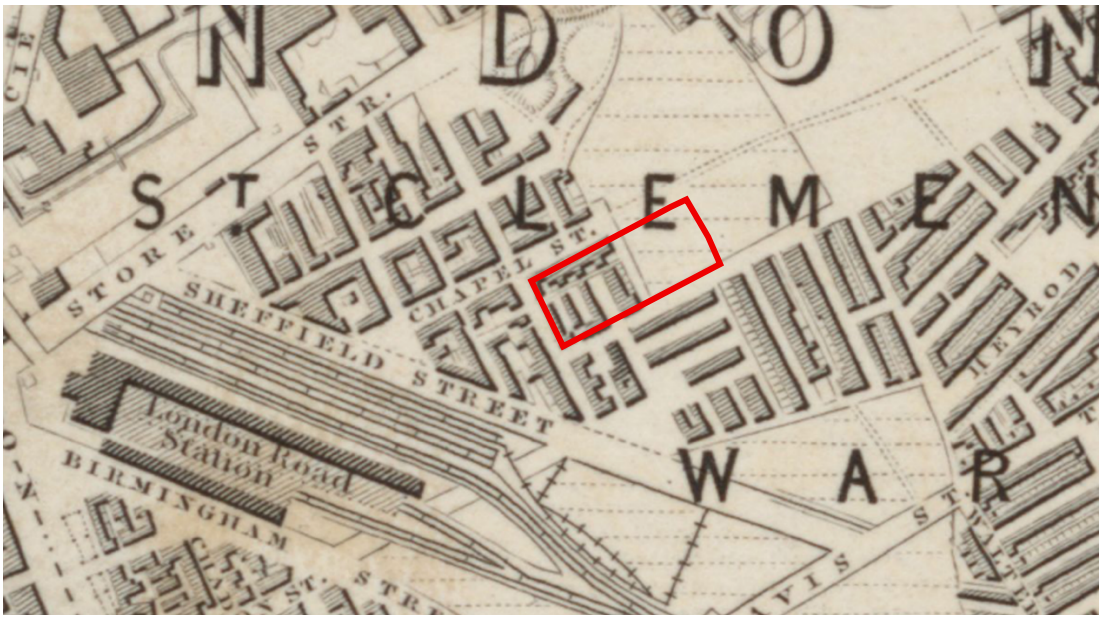


Figure 1: Ordnance Survey of Manchester, surveyed in 1845 and published in 1848 © National Library of Scotland

1.11 The railway stimulated extensive industrial development throughout the surrounding area. Cotton mills, warehouses, engineering works and associated commercial premises were constructed in close proximity to the station, taking advantage of the exceptional transport connections provided by the expanding rail network. Surviving buildings such as Crusader Works and Neptune Mill illustrate this phase of Manchester's industrial development and continue to contribute to the historic townscape.

1.12 Throughout the 20th century, however, the area experienced considerable transformation. Changing patterns of industry, railway modernisation and post-war redevelopment resulted in the loss or alteration of many historic industrial buildings and associated railway infrastructure. Manchester Piccadilly Station itself underwent several significant phases of alteration, including substantial rebuilding during the 1960s and again between 1998 and 2002, when a new station concourse and associated facilities were introduced. During the mid to late 20th century, the former residential streets occupying the Site were cleared, along with much of the surrounding area, and redeveloped with a large single-storey industrial building (Figures 2 and 3).



Figure 2: Photograph of the Site, 1966 © Manchester City Council (Ref: m00294)

1.13 The industrial building was subsequently demolished in around 2008–2009, leaving the Site as an open parcel of land which has since been used for surface car parking. More recently, the surrounding area has become the focus of extensive regeneration, characterised by the construction of large-scale residential development, commercial premises and transport infrastructure. The Site now survives as one of a number of cleared or redeveloped plots within this evolving part of the city.



Figure 3: Photograph of the Site, 1968 © Manchester City Council (Ref: m01052)

1.14 Whilst the Site historically formed part of Manchester's wider railway and industrial landscape, successive phases of redevelopment have substantially altered its historic character. Today it occupies a transitional urban environment in which surviving 19th century buildings coexist with later 20th and 21st century redevelopment. This evolving townscape provides the context within which the current proposals should be understood and assessed.

Summary of Significance

Manchester Piccadilly Station (Grade II)

1.15 Manchester Piccadilly Station derives its significance principally from its architectural and historic interest as one of Britain's principal Victorian railway stations. Of particular importance are the surviving 19th century train shed, its wrought-iron roof structure, polychromatic brick elevations, decorative cast-iron columns and the extensive brick-vaulted goods undercroft, all of which demonstrate the exceptional engineering and architectural ambition of the period. Collectively these surviving elements illustrate the importance of both passenger and freight transport to Manchester's 19th century commercial and industrial development and remain the principal attributes which justify the building's statutory designation.

1.16 The Station has evolved considerably throughout its history, with substantial redevelopment during the mid-20th century and again between 1998 and 2002. These later interventions introduced modern station buildings, highways, transport infrastructure and commercial development. Consequently, the setting of the Station comprises a complex and evolving urban environment in which historic railway infrastructure coexists alongside successive phases of 20th and 21st century redevelopment, reflecting its continued role as Manchester's principal railway station.

Crusader Works (Grade II)

1.17 Crusader Works is designated for its special architectural and historic interest as a surviving mid 19th century industrial building, believed to have originated as a cotton spinning mill. Its significance derives principally from its surviving historic fabric, robust red-brick elevations, scale, proportions and its ability to illustrate Manchester's industrial expansion during the Victorian period. As one of a diminishing number of surviving industrial buildings within the locality, it provides an important tangible reminder of the area's manufacturing heritage.

1.18 The setting of Crusader Works contributes to an understanding of its historic industrial function and relationship with the wider manufacturing district that developed around Manchester Piccadilly during the 19th century. Although the surrounding townscape has changed considerably, the building continues to be appreciated within a predominantly commercial and industrial environment.

Neptune Mill (Non-Designated Heritage Asset)

1.19 Neptune Mill has previously been identified as a non-designated heritage asset that makes a positive contribution to the historic character of the surrounding area. It retains architectural and evidential interest as a surviving industrial building associated with the historic commercial and manufacturing development of this part of Manchester. The significance of the building is derived principally from its surviving industrial form, scale, architectural character and evidential value.

1.20 Similar to Crusader Works, the setting of Neptune Mill contributes to an appreciation of its historic industrial function and relationship with the surrounding townscape. Although modern redevelopment has altered parts of this setting, the building continues to be experienced within an area that retains a recognisable industrial and commercial character.

Contribution made by the Site

1.21 Overall, the Site makes only a negligible contribution to the setting and significance of the identified heritage assets. Historically, it formed part of the dense urban grain associated with Manchester's 19th century expansion; however, successive phases of redevelopment have removed this historic townscape. The Site now comprises an area of surface car parking and hardstanding which neither reflects the historic pattern of development nor contributes positively to the appreciation of the nearby heritage assets.

Legislative and Planning Policy Context

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

1.22 Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a statutory duty on decision-makers, when considering whether to grant planning permission for development affecting a listed building or its setting, to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building, its setting and those features which contribute to its special architectural or historic interest. This statutory duty is a primary consideration in the determination of planning applications affecting listed buildings.

National Planning Policy

1.23 National planning policy relating to the historic environment is set out within Chapter 16 of the NPPF (2024), Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment. The NPPF seeks to ensure that heritage assets are conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations.

1.24 Paragraph 207 of the NPPF requires applicants 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 necessary to understand the potential impact of the proposals on their significance.

1.25 Paragraph 215 confirms that great weight should be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets, irrespective of the level of potential harm. Paragraph 216 states that where a development proposal would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, that harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

Local Planning Policy

1.26 At the local level, the statutory Development Plan comprises the Manchester Core Strategy (2012), as updated by the Addendum to the Manchester Core Strategy (2024), together with the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan (2022–2039). In heritage terms, Core Strategy Policy EN3 (Heritage) remains the principal local policy and seeks to ensure that development preserves or enhances Manchester's heritage assets and their settings through proposals informed by an appropriate understanding of their significance. The strategic policies of the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan are also material and are read alongside the retained policies of the Core Strategy.

1.27 The Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan is also material to the determination of the application. In particular, Policy JP-P2 (Historic Environment) seeks the conservation and enhancement of heritage assets in accordance with national policy whilst recognising the contribution they make to local character, identity and place-making.

Guidance

1.28 Historic England's guidance, The Setting of Heritage Assets (GPA3), confirms that the setting of a heritage asset comprises the surroundings in which it is experienced and that the extent to which setting contributes to significance will vary between assets. The guidance also recognises that development within the setting of a heritage asset does not necessarily result in harm; rather, proposals should be assessed by considering whether they affect those attributes of setting that contribute to an asset's significance.

Summary

1.29 The assessment below has therefore been undertaken having regard to the statutory duties of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the relevant provisions of the NPPF, Historic England guidance and the policies of the statutory Development Plan.

Impact Assessment

1.30 As set out, the Proposed Development comprises the temporary redevelopment of an existing surface car park to provide a padel and wellbeing facility for a period of three years. The proposals include a single-storey indoor sports hall accommodating five padel courts together with associated reception, café/bar, shop, changing facilities and ancillary accommodation. Externally, the development includes two uncovered padel courts, a Pilates studio, sauna, storage containers, refuse and recycling facilities, seven car parking spaces and twenty cycle spaces. Existing vehicular access would be retained and supplemented by areas of soft landscaping and tree planting.

1.31 Architecturally, the development adopts a simple and functional appearance appropriate to its intended temporary use. The principal indoor facility comprises a prefabricated, single-storey structure with a gently curved roof form, profiled metal-clad elevations, limited areas of glazing and lightweight ancillary structures positioned around the perimeter of the site. The external courts and associated wellness facilities are similarly modest in character. Collectively, the proposals represent a contemporary yet understated intervention that responds appropriately to the site's established industrial and commercial character.

1.32 The Site occupies a highly urban location characterised by railway infrastructure, commercial buildings, surviving industrial premises and modern residential development. Although the indoor sports hall is necessarily broad in footprint to accommodate the proposed courts, it remains a single-storey structure and is comparable in scale and function to the industrial building that formerly occupied the site. The surrounding townscape is therefore already characterised by buildings of varied scale, form and age, within which the Proposed Development would be experienced as another functional commercial building within the established commercial and industrial townscape.

1.33 The proposed buildings employ a simple palette of profiled metal cladding, lightweight fabric roof structures and limited areas of glazing. Although contemporary in appearance, the proposals respond appropriately to the established commercial and industrial character of the surrounding townscape and would be readily understood as a temporary use within an evolving urban environment.

1.34 In respect of the Grade II Listed Manchester Piccadilly Station, the significance of the designated heritage asset is derived principally from its surviving Victorian train shed, decorative cast-iron structure, polychromatic brick elevations and extensive historic undercroft. As discussed previously, the Site makes only a negligible contribution to the significance of the Station through setting, comprising an area of modern hardstanding that has been extensively redeveloped during the 20th century. The proposals would neither physically affect the listed building nor obscure or diminish appreciation of the architectural and historic attributes which principally justify its designation. Whilst the proposed buildings would inevitably be experienced within the wider urban setting of the Station, they would be viewed alongside existing highways, Metrolink infrastructure, commercial development and modern station buildings which already define this part of Manchester. Consequently, it is not considered that the proposals would adversely affect the significance of the listed building or the contribution made by its setting.

1.35 Similarly, the significance of the Grade II Listed Crusader Works derives principally from its surviving industrial architecture, historic fabric and evidential value as a former Victorian cotton spinning mill. The Site forms only a small component of its wider setting and does not contribute to an understanding or appreciation of the listed building. The Proposed Development would not interrupt important views, compete with its architectural composition or diminish its ability to be appreciated as a surviving industrial building. Accordingly, the significance of Crusader Works would be preserved.

1.36 The local significance of the non-designated Neptune Mill is likewise embodied principally within its surviving industrial form, architectural character and evidential value, rather than its relationship with the

Site. Given that the Site currently comprises a surface car park, the proposals would not result in the loss of any aspects of setting which contribute to the significance of Neptune Mill. Furthermore, the Proposed Development would broadly re-establish the historic pattern of built development on the Site, which remained occupied by a substantial industrial building until its demolition in 2008–2009 (Figures 2 and 3). In this respect, the proposals would sit comfortably within the established urban grain and industrial character of the area without diminishing the appreciation of Neptune Mill.

1.37 The temporary and reversible nature of the proposals is also an important consideration. The development has been conceived as a meanwhile use for a limited period and would not introduce a permanent alteration to the townscape. Consequently, whilst the proposals would temporarily alter the appearance of the Site, they would not prejudice its longer-term redevelopment potential or permanently affect the way in which the surrounding heritage assets are experienced through their setting.

1.38 Overall, it is considered that the Proposed Development would preserve the significance of the nearby designated heritage assets, including the contribution made by their settings, and similarly preserve the significance of the identified non-designated heritage asset.

Summary and Conclusions

1.39 This Heritage Technical Note has considered the potential heritage implications arising from the proposed temporary redevelopment of land between Chapeltown Street, Baird Street and Congou Street, Manchester, to provide a padel and wellbeing facility.

1.40 The Site contains no designated or non-designated heritage assets and presently comprises an area of surface car parking within a highly urbanised part of Manchester that has undergone successive phases of redevelopment. The nearest heritage assets comprise the Grade II Listed Manchester Piccadilly Station, the Grade II Listed Crusader Works and the non-designated Neptune Mill.

1.41 The Proposed Development would not directly affect any designated or non-designated heritage asset, with the assessment therefore limited to consideration of the contribution made by the Site to their respective settings. As demonstrated above, the Site currently comprises an area of modern hardstanding which makes only a negligible contribution to the significance of the identified heritage assets. The proposals would introduce a temporary, contemporary and reversible form of development that responds appropriately to the established commercial, industrial and transport character of the surrounding townscape without affecting those attributes that principally contribute to the significance of the identified heritage assets.

1.42 In light of the above, the Proposed Development is considered to satisfy the statutory duty under Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Furthermore, the proposals accord with Chapter 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024), the relevant policies of the statutory Development Plan and Historic England's guidance The Setting of Heritage Assets (GPA3).