MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

Planning

Delegated Officer Report

Summary of application details

Application reference:	PLA-2026-000547
Application type:	Listed building consent (Alt/Ext)
Proposal:	Listed Building Consent for installation of internal partitions.
Site address:	Third Floor Merchants Warehouse Castle Street Manchester
Ward(s):	Deansgate
Date application valid:	01 June 2026
Applicant name:	Mr Mark Weare
Agent (if any):	Mr Joseph Raper
Case officer:	Sam Elliott
Recommendation:	Approve
Date of recommendation:	20/07/2026

Description of site, building and/or area

The warehouse forms a simple, brick-built, rectangular building in English garden wall bond, that is of three-storeys to the Castle Street elevation (east) and four-stories to the canal elevation (west).

The west elevation directly fronts the canal, where it would have only been accessible by boat. To the centre of the elevation are two “shipping holes”, common to Castlefield warehouses during the 18th and 19th centuries. As used on the other warehouses around the canal basin, the building was designed with small, round-headed windows containing multi-pane, timber casements with pivot windows to the bottom half on its two principal elevations to the east and west, with six vertical loading bays, or 'loopholes', to each of these elevations.

Merchants Warehouse yields high historic interest through its early date and unusual building type, which now forms only one of two such warehouses surviving in the Castlefield Basin. The warehouse has strong historical ties and associations with the Duke of Bridgewater and to the formation and early success of the Basin at Castlefield, and of trading in the wider city.

Internally, the building formed a functional and utilitarian warehouse that was divided into six bays by the use of brick walls constructed east-west across each floor level with arched openings linking the bays. The significance of the interior is derived from the original, open-plan spatial character of bays repeated on all floor levels, the original internal walls (largely now covered by c1990s plasterboard/plaster, the original timber ceiling structure/locations of original hoists.

Level 3 of Merchants Warehouse was substantially altered and refurbished in the mid-1990s, which involved replastering all internal walls, inserting new floor coverings, new M&E throughout, all windows/doors replaced, and new toilet facilities. To the north and south ends of

the building are two mid-1990s extensions, which accommodate an entrance, reception, and circulation, with new hard and soft landscaping around the perimeter. Internally, building has been restored to retain its original spatial character of open, yet interconnected, warehouse bays.

Merchants Warehouse is located in Castlefield, Manchester, and is bounded to the east by Castle Street, to the north and south by areas of soft and hard landscaping, and to the west by the Bridgewater Canal.

It is located within the Castlefield Conservation Area, which forms the largest conservation area in Manchester. Given its siting and relationship with the historic canal infrastructure, it makes a positive contribution to the setting of the Conservation Area.

Background

Listed building consent was obtained in 2015 for shell and core works to Levels 1 to 3 (ref. 107844/LO/2015/C1). Prior to entering into the leases in 2015, the Applicant secured listed building consent for a tenant fitout (ref. 108241/LO/2015/C1); however, some elements of the consented works were not implemented strictly in accordance with the approved drawings. Following the implementation of the consented works, additional works have also been implemented.

These include additional glazed partitioning to create meeting rooms at the centre and towards the west of the floorplate; a relocated meeting room further to the west of the floor plate and away from the wall; additional cupboards; opaque film has been added to glazed partitions at the north and south ends of the floorplate to conceal a prayer room and server room; as well as brick slip cladding has been applied to two existing walls at the north and south ends of the floorplate.

Description of development

Listed Building Consent is sought retrospectively to regularise the unauthorised works described above.

As per amended drawing received 20/07/2026, existing unauthorised laminate doors would moreover be replaced with glazed variants.

Consultation, notification and publicity responses

Consultations

No consultations.

Notifications and publicity

Occupiers of neighbouring buildings were notified of the proposal via notification letters, the application was advertised as affecting a listed building, and was also publicised in the Manchester Evening News. No representations have been received as a result of this publicity.

Relevant policies

The following policies are considered relevant to this application:

Places for Everyone

- JP-Strat1 – Core Growth Area

- JP-Strat2 – City Centre
- JP-J1 – Supporting Long-Term Economic Growth
- JP-J2 – Employment Sites and Premises
- JP-J3 – Office Development
- JP-P1 – Sustainable Places
- JP-P2 – Heritage

The Adopted Core Strategy for the City of Manchester
- SP1 – Spatial Principles
- EC1 – Employment and Economic Growth in Manchester
- EC2 – Existing Employment Space
- EC3 – The Regional Centre
- CC1 – Primary Economic Development Focus : City Centre and Fringe
- CC9 – Design and Heritage
- EN1 – Design Principles and Strategic Character Areas
- EN3 – Heritage
- DM1 – Development Management

The Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester
- DC19 – Listed Buildings

NPPF
- Section 12 (Achieving Well Designed Places)
- Section 16 (Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment)

Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990
- Section 16 (Decision on Application)

Draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2025)

- The government has published a consultation National Planning Policy Framework which is intended to improve housebuilding rates through a clearer, more predictable and faster policy basis for decision and plan making.

  Whilst this is a draft NPPF for consultation it is considered that the development proposals are in accordance with the general thrust of policy contained within it. As set out in the printed report no adverse impacts have been identified through consideration of the application proposals that would outweigh a positive decision in this instance.

Assessment

Impact of unauthorised works upon the Heritage Asset

Listed Building Consent was not sought for the above works prior to their installation, nor a methodology statement submitted outlining a careful and considered procedure for carrying out these works, workmanship or making good. It is considered that the unauthorised works have altered the character of the space, resulting in less than substantial harm to the listed asset in what would have been an open plan warehouse building .

However, the floor plan still retains a good level of openness despite the interventions. Partitions have also been located in an organised way which allows a clear view through the main floorplate and allows spaces between then rather than them being in a long run.

Many partitions are lightweight and open in nature, though it is acknowledged that some partitions have had an opaque film or are obscured by freestanding cabinets.

The applicant has submitted amended plans received 20/07/2026 which replace the laminate doors with glazed variants, removing these irregularly coloured doors which form awkward opaque features within the otherwise glazed partitions.

Brick slip cladding would be reversible and is not unacceptably out-of-keeping with the appearance of the building.

Assessment of Harm

As outlined above, there would be a low level of less than substantial harm as a result of the partitioning of the formerly open warehouse floorplate. Harms would be mitigated through a lightweight glazed design, with existing laminate doors to be replaced with glazed variants.

In consideration of the proposal's public benefits as per the requirements of Paragraph 215 of the NPPF, the proposal would facilitate the ongoing office use in line with Places for Everyone Policies JP-Strat1, JP-Strat2, JP-J1, JP-J2, JP-J3 and JP-P1; as well as Core Strategy Policies SP1, EC1, EC3 and CC1.

As such, the less than substantial harms resulting from the works are at a level where the public benefits of facilitating the occupancy of a viable use outweigh the harm. On this basis, the proposal is considered to meet the statutory test to preserve as required by Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The proposal is moreover considered to be in accordance with Places for Everyone Policies JP-Strat2, JP-P1 and JP-P2; Policies SP1, CC9, EN1, EN3 and DM1 of the Core Strategy; and saved UDP policy DC19; sections 12 and 16 of the NPPF; as they relate to the preservation and enhancement of heritage assets.

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

In consideration of the above, the proposed works are considered to not have an unacceptable adverse effect on the listed asset's architectural and historic character. On this basis, the proposal is considered to meet the statutory test to preserve as required by Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

The proposal would also meet the requirements set out in Places for Everyone Policies JP- JP-Strat1, JP-Strat2, JP-J1, JP-J2, JP-J3, JP-P1 and JP-P2; Policies SP1, EC1, EC2, EC3, CC1, CC9, EN1, EN3 and DM1 of the Core Strategy; saved UDP policies DC18 and DC19; and sections 12 and 16 of the NPPF as they relate to the development and the sustaining, preservation and enhancement of heritage assets.

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 18 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

2)
The development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with the following drawings and documents received by Manchester City Council as the Local Planning Authority:

Plans

- 400831-NIR-B01-00-DR-A-90 01 Rev.P01
- 81400831-NIR-B01-00-DR-A-PT 01 Rev.P02 – Existing Layout As Built
- 81400831-NIR-B01-00-A-PT-10 Rev.P02 – Partition and Abutment 1of2 As Built
- 81400831 NIR B01 00 A PT-11 Rev.P02 - Partition and Abutment 2of2 As Built

All received 01/06/2026

- 81400831-NIR-B01-00-A-DS-01 Rev.P04 – Proposed Door schedule
- 81400831-NIR-B01-00-A-PE-01 REV.P03- Proposed Partition Elevations 1
- 81400831-NIR-B01-00-A-PE-02 REV.P03- Proposed Partition Elevations 2

All received 20/07/2026

Documents

- Heritage Statement prepared by Turley dated June 2026 and referenced 04183

All received 11/06/2026

Reason - To ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the approved plans. Pursuant to Places for Everyone Policies JP- JP-Strat1, JP-Strat2, JP-J1, JP-J2, JP-J3, JP-P1 and JP-P2; Policies SP1, EC1, EC2, EC3, CC1, CC9, EN1, EN3 and DM1 of the Core Strategy; saved UDP policies DC18 and DC19; Sections 12 and 16 of the NPPF; and Section 16 of the Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990