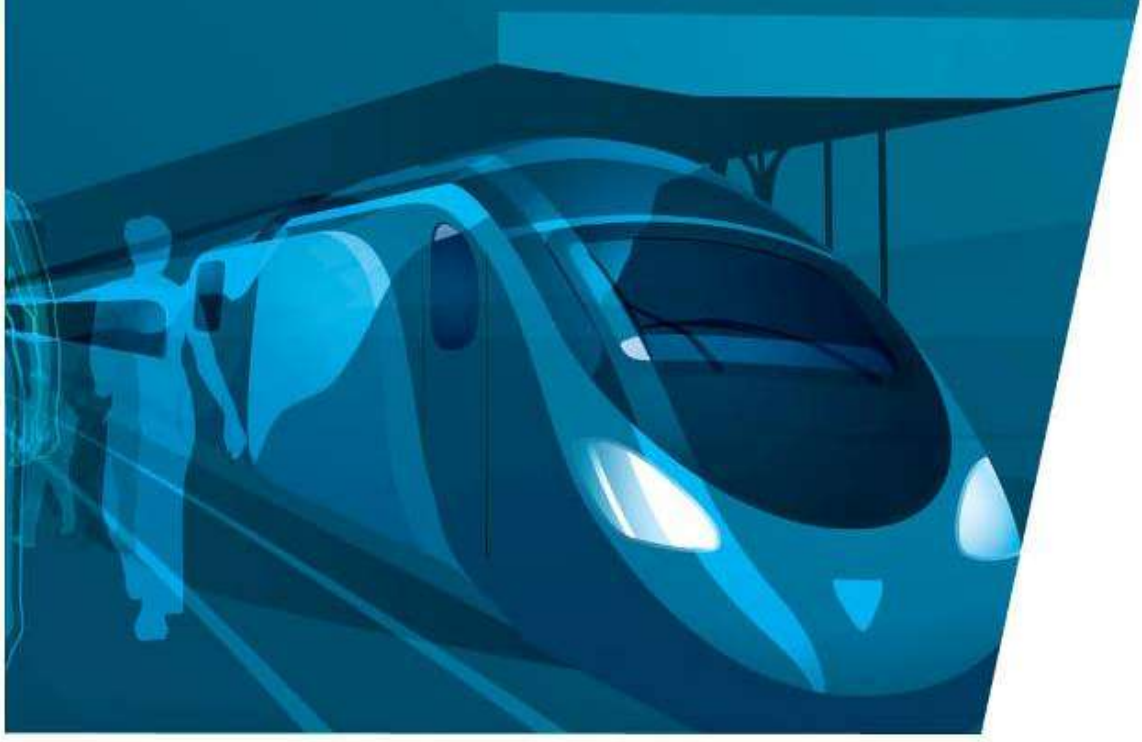
DESIGN, ACCESS AND HERITAGE STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF PROPOSED INSTALLATION OF PAINTED ARTWORK TO THE REAR WALL OF PLATFORM ONE AT OXFORD ROAD RAILWAY STATION, MANCHESTER

August 2026



INTRODUCTION

This statement has been prepared in order to support a Listed Building Consent (LBC) application in relation to the proposed installation of painted artwork on platform 1 at Manchester Oxford Road railway station.

The proposals section below explains the works in further detail, setting out the rationale and narrative for the artwork. The statement will include analysis of the proposals heritage implications to satisfy the National Planning Policy Framework and relevant Local Planning Policy.

SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

Manchester Oxford Road station lies towards the south of Manchester city centre. The station is Manchester's 3rd busiest station, handling approximately 6,392,614 entries and exits in 2024/2025, a 25% increase in usage from 2023/2024.

The station serves the southern part of Manchester city centre, the University of Manchester and Manchester Metropolitan University, on the line from Manchester Piccadilly westwards towards Warrington Central, Chester, Llandudno, Liverpool, Preston and Blackpool North. Eastbound trains continue beyond Piccadilly to Crewe, Leeds, Sheffield, Nottingham, Peterborough and Norwich.



Manchester Oxford Road railway station comprises five platforms elevated on the Castlefield Viaduct, facilitating through and terminating services on key regional lines. The layout includes four through platforms for bidirectional traffic and one bay platform primarily for terminating trains.

Access to the station occurs mainly via the primary entrance on Station Approach, directly off Oxford Road, with secondary entry possible through Wakefield Street. The street-level concourse connects to the elevated platforms via staircases and lifts, reflecting the viaduct's structure built in 1839.

The station lies on a Grade II listed viaduct, which was built in 1839 as part of the Manchester, South Junction and Altrincham Railway. Although not the original Oxford Road station, this current station was built in a way to reduce load on this viaduct, by unusually utilising laminated wood structures as opposed to masonry, concrete, iron or steel. English Heritage describes it as a "building of outstanding architectural quality and technological interest; one of the most dramatic stations in England." It was Grade II listed in 1995. Architectural critic Nikolaus Pevsner described the station as "one of the most remarkable and unusual stations in the country".

The site consists of a section of the rear platform wall of platform 1 of Oxford Road railway station. Platform 1 is located to the southwest of the station complex.

HISTORIC CONTEXT

The Manchester Oxford Road railway station has a rich history, dating back to the mid 1800s. The original station was built and opened in July 1859 by the Manchester, South Junction and Altrincham Railway Company, acting as its headquarters until 1904.

The 1849 station was built on the site of ‘Little Ireland’; a slum which housed four thousand people, and a gas works, which was relocated to the west of the station site. The slum area spanned just four acres, it was a cramped enclave bordered by the River Medlock and the railway. Though it existed for only two decades between 1827 and 1847, it left a notorious legacy as the archetypal industrial slum.

The original station buildings, which were temporary wooden structures, were accessed by an inclined esplanade winding to the right from Gloucester Street (now Whitworth Street West) to reach their north front.

There was a single platform on the north side of the line through to Manchester London Road and a second platform on a west-facing siding. To allow for extra trains in connection with the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition in 1857, extra platforms and sidings were built but removed afterwards. A meeting of MSJAR contract ticket holders in 1863 included in its list of complaints the want of punctuality "especially as at Oxford Road station there is only one platform used for both passengers and milk".

From 1854 onwards, Oxford Road served as the terminus for a service to Liverpool, independent of the London and North Western Railway(LNWR) (one of the joint owners of MSJAR). The rail service went no further than Garston, with the final leg of the journey being made by steamer, but it alerted the LNWR to the possible use of the MSJAR by its co-owner, the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway (MS&LR) to reach areas west of Manchester. Consequently, in 1857, when the MSJAR began (the decision being taken on the casting vote of the board's chairman, by rotation) running an Oxford Road – London Road service, the LNWR took strenuous measures to discourage it. Every train of the service was flagged down just short of the London Road platform

and not allowed to proceed further, passengers being told they were liable to prosecution for trespass if they got out.



Approach to Oxford Road station 1908 (Image: @Manchester Libraries and Local Archives)

The MS&LR pressed ahead with the joint lines to give it direct and independent rail access to Liverpool, but the LNWR blocked any matching improvement to the MSJAR and to Oxford Road, only offering to let these go ahead when the scheme for Manchester Central station was brought forward. To defeat the bill for the scheme, the LNWR then promised to cooperate with the MS&LR in widening the MSJAR and enlarging Oxford Road.

In October 1874, with Liverpool Central railway station now open, a letter to the press complained that with the additional services over the Cheshire Lines now using Oxford Road it was dangerously overcrowded. In the two and a half hours from 8 am, thirty-seven trains were booked to call at Oxford Road: this was far too many considering there was but one platform. Frequently, passengers were compelled to alight outside the station, sometimes on the siding rails, at risk of personal injury, because of "the blocked-up state" of the station.

In 1876, the station was enlarged, to include the provision of a refreshment room; the station was then said to be handling about a hundred thousand passengers a week. Train-handling congestion was eased when Manchester Central station came into use, and in 1892 the MSJAR, under pressure to greatly improve Knott Mill, rejected the suggestion of Manchester Corporation that it

could kill two birds with one stone by replacing its two existing unsatisfactory stations with a single new, thoroughly satisfactory, station somewhere between them. The MSJAR offered instead a limited reconstruction of the waiting rooms and booking hall; it also rejected the council's offer of assistance with providing a more suitable approach to the station only to accept it two years later.

Reconstruction took place during 1903–04. The approach was further improved, the ticket office and the refreshment room were expanded, and the MSJAR offices were removed. An island platform was also added on the through lines, coming into use in November 1904.

The station had become dilapidated by the 1950s and, in connection with the electrification and modernisation programme of the Manchester to London Euston line in 1960, the old buildings were replaced by the current structure by architects William Robert Headley and Max Clendinning and structural engineer Hugh Tottenham. The reconstruction of Manchester Oxford Road railway station in the late 1950s addressed the limitations of the original 1849 structure built by the Manchester, South Junction and Altrincham Railway, which sat atop a viaduct unable to bear heavier loads. British Railways initiated a complete redesign to modernize the facility while respecting structural constraints, resulting in a lightweight timber-framed building that replaced the outdated Victorian-era station.

The design featured distinctive conoid shell roofs over the platforms, formed from timber laminates to provide expansive coverage without internal supports, enhancing passenger flow and shelter. This approach not only minimized weight—critical for the viaduct's stability—but also introduced a modernist aesthetic rare in British railway architecture of the period.

The station reopened on 12 September 1960, marking a significant upgrade that included new platform canopies and a simplified layout to handle increasing commuter traffic. The timber elements, sourced for durability and ease of assembly, demonstrated postwar engineering ingenuity in reusing elevated infrastructure rather than demolishing it. This reconstruction preserved the site's operational role while pioneering sustainable material use in transport hubs.

When Manchester Central station closed in 1969, as part of the Beeching rationalisation, several remaining services—including the Heysham boat train—were transferred to Manchester Oxford Road and Piccadilly stations, thereby augmenting Oxford Road's operational load with additional southbound and regional traffic. Further rebuilding took place: one of the bay platforms was taken out of use and a new through platform provided (platform 1), the others being renumbered accordingly.

Sustained growth in passenger entries and exits—exacerbated by urban development along the Oxford Road corridor—has rendered the station a persistent bottleneck, with tight track geometry restricting line speeds and train lengths.



Oxford Road Station being rebuilt in June 1959(Image: @Manchester Libraries and Local Archives)

The station was designated a Grade II listed structure in November 1995. The listing description states:

'The creation of British Railways in 1948 amalgamated four companies: the Great Western Railway (GWR), London, Midland & Scottish Railway (LMS), London & North Eastern Railway (LNER) and Southern Railway (SR). Each company had its own architects' department, and this did not change after nationalisation. Leslie Martin established the LMS as the 'cradle of prefabrication' when he designed three stations in 1945, which was followed by his successors adopting a lightweight steel system for a series of small stations north of Crewe when the lines between London, Manchester and Liverpool began to be electrified in 1957.

Manchester Oxford Road Station, which was constructed in 1958-60 on top of the Manchester South Junction & Altrincham Railway viaduct and replaced an earlier station of 1874, was the only large-scale station in England rebuilt using prefabricated methods. The station building and platform structures were designed by Max Clendinning of British Railways' Midland Region in conjunction with the engineer, Hugh Tottenham of the Timber Development Association who had been researching timber-shell roofs since 1956; the building's lightweight roof structure partly being designed to reduce loads on the viaduct beneath. Following his work with British Railways' Midland Region, Clendinning went on to become a successful interior and furniture designer.

Since its construction the station has been subject to improvements works, including the installation of new passenger shelters and disabled toilets, the erection of a new customer information point, and re-surfacing of the concourse area and footbridge steps, predominantly in the early-C21.

Details

Railway station building and platform structures, 1958-60, by Max Clendinning of British Railways' Midland Region with Hugh Tottenham of the Timber Development Association. Laminated-timber structure of three conoid shells with hardwood strip ceilings to the shell roofs and canopies. Single-storey.

DESCRIPTION: the main station building is covered by three shell roofs of diminishing size (the largest being at the eastern front and the smallest at the western rear) that range between 13m and 29m in span and are supported on a cruck-like frame. The front (east) elevation is reminiscent of the styling of Sydney Opera House and has a recessed, glazed upper section, underneath which lies the main entrance and eastern end of the booking office. The station's booking office, buffet, toilets and staff facilities are constructed of timber and concrete, with the two former facilities forming a lozenge-shaped island along the southern side of the main building.

The main building sits between two railway tracks with tall, curved canopies that extend out over the platforms and are supported by similarly styled crucks to the main building. Similar canopies incorporating a central spine with raised, arched glazing cover the station's two central island platforms, which, along with a far platform, are accessed via an enclosed footbridge, which is not of special interest. All the canopies have lozenge shaped skylights that echo the lozenge shape of the booking office and buffet in the main building, and deep fascias to their front edge. The main concourse incorporates an original semi-circular, concrete and timber bench and two curved, back-to-back timber benches exist to the central island platforms. Two sympathetically styled waiting shelters of c2011 located on the central island platforms and far platform are not of special interest.'

ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The requirement for applicants proposing to undertake works to heritage assets to describe the significance of the heritage asset affected is set out in the NPPF. Guidance to assist with assessing the asset's significance is provided in the Historic England document 'Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment'.

Paragraph 7 of this document states 'Being able to properly assess the nature, extent and importance of the significance of a heritage asset and the contribution of its setting early in the process is very important to an applicant in order to conceive of and design a successful development and to the local planning authority in order to make decisions in line with legal requirements and the objectives of the development plan and the policy requirements of the NPPF'. When evaluating the existing significance of an asset, the Guide recommends assessing the nature of significance, extent of fabric and level of importance. These are all considered below.

Following electrification of the line in the C20 the viaduct now incorporates a series of C20 and early-C21 gantries along its course. Also along the viaduct's course are a number of attached or

abutting buildings, most of which are later in date and are un-related to the viaduct's use; all are excluded from the listing, which relates solely to the viaduct. Manchester Piccadilly Station, Deansgate Station and Manchester Oxford Road Station (the two latter stations being constructed on top of and to the side of the viaduct) are all separately listed at Grade II.

Nature of Significance

The Historic England document 'Designation Listing Selection Guide: Transport Buildings' (2011) is of particular importance when assessing the historic value associated with railway infrastructure. This sets out four 'ages' of railway construction which, in descending importance, is as below:

- The pioneering first phase, 1825–41;
- The heroic age, 1841–50;
- The third phase 1850s–1870s, the consolidation of the network; and
- The fourth period, up to 1914, the completion of the network.

Given the original construction date of circa 1958-60, it is apparent that current Manchester Oxford Road station stems from the fourth period of railway construction. However, the original station was opened in 1849 by the Manchester South Junction and Altrincham Railway. It had 2 platforms and 2 sidings and temporary wooden buildings. As a result the original station would have constructed during the heroic age of railway construction, referred to as the period of 'railway mania' in which commercial speculation and the competition for routes led to the frantic construction of lines,

It is apparent that the station possesses significance due to its architectural and historical value, alongside its technological importance due to its dramatic example of the use of a timber shell roof in England.

The station has strong group value with neighbouring railway structures (both contemporary and later), mainly the Manchester South Junction & Altrincham Railway viaduct, constructed in 1846-9 by David Bellhouse Junior for the Manchester South Junction & Altrincham Railway (MSJ&AR) Company. The viaduct carried the MSJ&AR railway line through the city of Manchester. Manchester Oxford Road station sits on a section of the MSJ&A viaduct, alongside Whitworth Street.

Additional important railway assets include two other railway bridges crossing the River Irwell (the 1830 Grade I listed stone bridge and the 1869 Grade II listed girder bridge) and their associated viaducts, the Grade II listed Castlefield Viaduct (c1880), the Grade II listed stations of Manchester Oxford Road (1958-60) and Deansgate (1896), and the Grade II listed former goods offices (c1850-60) and train shed (c1881) at Manchester Piccadilly Station.

The English Heritage listing description describes the following:

'Manchester Oxford Road Station, including platform structures, is designated at Grade II for the following principal reasons:

** Architectural interest: it is one of the best post-war railway stations in the country, with a striking and highly elegant design constructed of laminated timber;*

** Design interest: the station's unique design employs a high level of sophistication and innovation through its use of conoid shells supported on a cruck-like frame, which not only create a dramatic aesthetic form, but endow the building with a light and spacious interior;*

** Architect: it was designed by Max Clendinning of British Railways' Midland Region and Hugh Tottenham of the Timber Development Association, and represents Tottenham's finest work;*

** Technological interest: it is the most dramatic example of the use of timber-shell roofs in England; utilising techniques pioneered and developed by the Timber Development Association;*

** Rarity: it is the only large station in Britain to have been re-built in prefabricated materials.'*

PROPOSAL

Network Rail propose to commission and install a mural which will be orientated along a section of the rear platform wall on platform 1. The artwork will be applied directly onto the façade.

The mural will measure approximately 40m in length x approximately 1.5m in height. The mural will sit just below the lip of the existing coping stone, and approximately 10 centimetres off the floor to avoid damage to the artwork from pooling water.

The proposed artwork is intended to operate like a visual journey which joyously celebrates children's visions of the future of transport.

A central facet of the mural is the thoughtful collaboration between the artist and young people participating in the Our City and Beyond project. Through a series of artist-led sessions, the young people creatively responded to the question 'Where are you going?'

Participants were encouraged to think about this question both in terms of their whole life journey, and the smaller everyday journeys that they make in and around Manchester.

As a co-created artwork, the mural will create a sense of connection and ownership with Oxford Road Station, placing young people at the heart of a significant public artwork, and contributing to their connection to public life more generally.

Overlaying the large block letters are a series of translucent speech bubbles containing real quotes collected through artist-led session with Manchester's young people, which include plans for future careers and ambitions for the world, alongside more prosaic answers about everyday life. The names of these young contributors will form part of the mural, humanising the artwork whilst also placing them at the forefront of the creation. To the left handside of the mural will be the Our City and Beyond branding and the co-contributors of this community artwork programme.

This mural forms part of a wider programme of creative engagement and art led placemaking across the city (namely Our City and Beyond). The proposal intends to bring 'new life' into a largely overlooked area of Manchester, which was once prominent in the creative character of the city.

LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY CONTEXT

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) governs the designation and works to listed buildings in England. The Act states in **s.1 (5)**:

> *'In this Act "listed building" means a building which is for the time being included in a list compiled or approved by the Secretary of State under this section; and for the purposes of this Act—*
>
> *a) any object or structure fixed to the building;*
> *b) any object or structure within the curtilage of the building which, although not fixed to the building, forms part of the land and has done so since before 1st July 1948, shall be treated as part of the building.'*

Under the Act, no one is permitted to undertake or cause to be undertaken any works that would affect the character of a listed building unless the works are authorised. Section 16 of the Act identifies that whether such works can be carried out is determined by the local planning authority or the Secretary of State:

1. *Subject to the previous provisions of this Part, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State may grant or refuse an application for listed building consent and, if they grant consent, may grant it subject to conditions.*
2. *In considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works the local planning authority or the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.*
3. *Any listed building consent shall (except in so far as it otherwise provides) ensure for the benefit of the building and of all persons for the time being interested in it.'*

In relation to the granting of Listed Building Consent, Section 17 of the Act stipulates that conditions attached to Listed Building Consent may include those with respect to:

> *a. the preservation of particular features of the building, either as part of it or after severance from it;*
> *b. the making good, after the works are completed, of any damage caused to the building by the works; [and]*
> *c. the reconstruction of the building or any part of it following the execution of any works, with the use of original materials so far as practicable and with such alterations of the interior of the building as may be specified in the conditions*'.

It is also defined in s.17 (2) that a condition '*may also be imposed requiring specified details of the works (whether or not set out in the application) to be approved subsequently by the local planning authority or, in the case of consent granted by the Secretary of State, specifying whether such details are to be approved by the local planning authority or by him*'.

The Act also states in s.66 (1):

> *'In considering whether to grant planning permission or permission in principle for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses'.*

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) also governs duties of the local planning authority relating to conservation areas, particularly Sections 69, 72 and 74.

- Section 69 requires local planning authorities to define as conservation areas any *'areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*'.

- Section 72 confers a general duty '*with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area… special attention shall be paid to the desirability or preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area*'.

- Section 74 defines that demolition of a building in a conservation area is not permitted '*without the consent of the appropriate authority*'.

The key statutory test in the determination of an application for Listed Building Consent is set out in Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Act 1990), this states:

'In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.'

Relevant National and Local planning policy is set out below.

National Planning Policy Framework

The NPPF was first published in March 2012 and established the Government's vision for planning to help achieve sustainable development. The document sets out the government's policies for

plan making and for making decisions on development proposals in England. It is a material consideration of critical importance in both contexts. The current version (August 2026) replaces the previous National Planning Policy Framework published in December 2024.

Chapter 20 (Conserving and enhancing the historic environment) details policies which aim to conserve and enhance the historic environment. Heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource, and range from sites and buildings of local historic value to those of the highest significance, such as World Heritage Sites which are internationally recognised to be of Outstanding Universal Value. These assets should be 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. Policies HE5 and HE6 are relevant to this application.

HE5: Assessing effects on heritage assets

1. Development proposals affecting heritage assets should be accompanied by an assessment of the significance of the assets affected (including any contribution made by their setting) and of the potential effect of the proposal on their significance. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is necessary to understand the potential effect of the proposal on their significance. The relevant historic environment record should be referred to in making this assessment, and appropriate expertise employed where necessary.

2. Assessments of the potential effects of development proposals on the significance of heritage assets (including through effects on their setting) should identify whether proposals would be likely to:

> *a. Have a positive effect, which is where the significance of a heritage asset would be enhanced, or better revealed; or*
>
> *b. Have no effect on the significance of a heritage asset; or*
>
> *c. Result in harm to the significance of a heritage asset, either from work affecting the asset itself or from development within its setting. The degree of harm should be identified: substantial harm would occur where the development proposal would seriously affect a key element of the asset's significance; or*
>
> *d. Cause the total loss of the significance of a heritage asset.*

3. In making this assessment it is the effect on a heritage asset's significance rather than the scale of the development which should be considered.

4. Decision-makers should be satisfied that assessments accurately reflect the effects on heritage assets caused by development proposals.

5. Where a development proposal involves, or has the potential to involve, a heritage asset with archaeological interest, an appropriate desk-based assessment should be undertaken and, where necessary, a field evaluation. These should be used to help understand the asset's significance and

the potential effect of the proposal on this, which should inform the design, mitigation and implementation of the development.

HE6: Proposals affecting designated heritage assets

1. When considering the potential effect of a development proposal on the significance of a designated heritage asset, substantial weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential effect amounts to a positive effect, harm, substantial harm, or total loss of its significance.

2. Development proposals which would have a positive effect on a designated heritage asset should be supported.

3. Any harm to a designated heritage asset will be a matter of considerable importance and weight, which should be dealt with in accordance with paragraphs 4 to 6 of this policy.

4. Where a development proposal would harm the significance of a designated heritage asset the effect on the asset and its significance should be weighed against any public benefits resulting from the proposal. Important public benefits can include securing the long-term reuse of a vacant or underused listed building, and enabling energy efficiency and low carbon heating measures to be employed.

5. Where a development proposal would cause substantial harm to, or the total loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset, consent should be refused unless it can be demonstrated that the harm is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh the harm or loss, or if all of the following apply:

a. The nature of the heritage asset would otherwise prevent all reasonable uses of the site;

b. No suitable use for the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation;

c. Conservation by grant-funding or some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is not possible; and

d. The harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the asset back into use.

6. Within this context, development which would cause substantial harm to, or the total loss of, the significance of grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional; while development which would cause substantial harm to, or the total loss of, assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, registered battlefields, grade I and II listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional.*

Local Planning Policy

The relevant planning policy document is the Manchester Core Strategy. The following core policies contained within the Manchester Core Strategy are relevant:

Policy EN 3 - Heritage

Throughout the City, the Council will encourage development that complements and takes advantage of the distinct historic and heritage features of its districts and neighbourhoods, including those of the City Centre.

Policy EC 1 - Employment and Economic Growth in Manchester (supporting text)

Ensuring access to job opportunities via sustainable transport such as walking and cycling, and public transport, such as bus routes, Metrolink and heavy rail is vital to improving the quality of life of residents through job opportunities, raising residents' wages and thereby increasing wealth.

Policy T 1 -Sustainable Transport

To deliver a sustainable, high quality, integrated transport system…the Council will support proposals that: -Contribute to improvements to the extent and reliability of the public transport network.

Policy EN 1 -Design Principles and Strategic Character Areas

Developers will be expected to consider the City's heritage and continue the rich pattern of activity in the core area.

These policies should be read in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) with reference to section 16 'Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment'.

ASSESSMENT AGAINST PLANNING POLICY

The mural on platform one is part of the Early Deliverables Portfolio developed as part of the Greater Manchester 7 stations (GM7) programme. The scheme forms part of the 'Our City and Beyond' programme, which is a creative collaboration between artists, schools and communities that is to be delivered in partnership with HOME and Network Rail.

A central facet of the mural is the thoughtful collaboration between the artist and young people participating in the Our City and Beyond project. Through a series of artist-led sessions, the young people creatively responded to the question 'Where are you going?'

Participants were encouraged to think about this question both in terms of their whole life journey, and the smaller everyday journeys that they make in and around Manchester.

As a co-created artwork, the mural will create a sense of connection and ownership with Oxford Road Station, placing young people at the heart of a significant public artwork, and contributing to their connection to public life more generally.

The project propose to install a mural which will stretch 40m along the length of the rear platform wall for platform 1 at Manchester Oxford Road station.

The annual Culture Report (2025) outlined the importance of Manchester's cultural offering as a key driver for economic growth – as well as the ongoing happiness and wellbeing of the city's residents. Cllr Garry Bridges (Deputy Leader of Manchester City Council, 2025) stated: 'Big or small, culture is the beating heart of Manchester. But we need to do more. We want to celebrate culture in our communities, we want to make sure that as many people as possible can take part and we want to changes lives. This is what culture can do.'

Public art has played a significant role in the cultural and historical landscape of Manchester for centuries. From the iconic sculptures and murals that adorn the city's streets to the grand architectural landmarks, public artwork has been a reflection of the city's rich history and heritage.

Public art plays a vital role in shaping and defining the identity of a community. It has the power to bring communities together and create a sense of identity and belonging.

The mural is the result of a series of artist led sessions with local young people participating in the Our City and Beyond project. Through a series of artist-led sessions, the young people creatively responded to the question 'Where are you going?'

Participants were encouraged to think about this question both in terms of their whole life journey, and the smaller everyday journeys that they make in and around Manchester. Lead artist 'Oskar with a K' then used the creations and responses as the foundations for the mural.

As a co-created artwork, the mural will create a sense of connection and ownership with Oxford Road Station, placing young people at the heart of a significant public artwork, and contributing to their connection to public life more generally.

The central message 'Where are you going?' is rendered in the artist's signature bold and colourful style. Posed to everyone who passes through the station, it creates a moment of playful thoughtfulness.

Overlaying the large block letters are a series of translucent speech bubbles containing real quotes collected through artist-led session with Manchester's young people, which include plans for future careers and ambitions for the world, alongside more prosaic answers about everyday life. The names of these young contributors will form part of the mural, humanising the artwork whilst also placing them at the forefront of the creation.

The design encourages viewers to take a quiet moment for reflection on their own journey, including the literal journey that they are on at that moment, and the wider journey of their life.

It is assumed that whilst most passersby will be able to read the larger lettering, the writing in the speech bubbles will be caught incidentally, offering a moment of interest for people who are perhaps waiting in the station on a train and gazing out of the window, or standing on another platform and facing towards platform 1.

The mural brings the voices of young people into Oxford Road Station, further communicating their creativity and messages to everyone passing through the station, reminding us all that our futures hinge on the journeys of today's young people.

The artwork will be painted directly onto the existing rendered wall. This light-touch, non-intrusive initiative is designed to not alter the historic fabric or structure of the building.

The proposal mural would be a temporary installation for a period up to three years. The site forms part of a wider strategy for the Manchester stations. It is hoped that the area will become a vibrant, dynamic area for the local community.

The mural will significantly improve perceptions of cultural identity and provide a sense of place; whilst connecting with the local communities through artwork that has been designed by them. It is considered that the proposed mural will contribute to the social culture and help create a more vibrant and engaging public realm for passengers and the city.

This project delivers immediate improvement, fosters community connection, and lays the foundation for a more inclusive and cared-for station environment. It aims to demonstrate what is possible when heritage, culture and partnership come together to reimagine public space, with minimal intervention and maximum public benefit.

The public benefits of this project are significant:

- **Enhanced Station Environment**: Improves the visual condition of a prominent and vibrant gateway to the city.
- **Creative Placemaking**: Demonstrates how low-cost, high-impact interventions can positively transform public space and uplift daily experiences for passengers and pedestrians.
- **Cultural Identity & Storytelling**: Reflects and celebrates the imaginations of children within Manchester. Exploring the concepts of energy, movement and transport.
- **Community Ownership**: Lays the foundation for meaningful, longer-term engagement by inviting local voices to shape future creative outcomes.
- **Partnership in Action**: Embodies cross-sector collaboration between transport, arts and civic partners, showcasing collective ambition and shared care for the public realm.

- **Reversible & Non-Intrusive**: A sensitive, paint-only intervention that preserves the historic structure and respects the character of the listed building.
- **Civic Pride & Visibility**: Contributes to a high-profile cultural moment that will bring national attention, footfall, and a sense of celebration to the area.

The proposals are therefore in accordance with the thrust of MCC Core Strategy policies Policy EN 3 – Heritage, Policy EC 1 - Employment and Economic Growth in Manchester, Policy T 1 - Sustainable Transport and Policy EN 1 - Design Principles and Strategic Character Areas. It is thus concluded that the proposal would result in less than substantial harm in line with the NPPF (para 215) and meet the test of achieving public benefits which outweigh the harm to the significance of the station.

CONCLUSION

It is considered that the works are respectful to the character and appearance of the listed structure; and there are sound justification and strong public benefits associated with the scheme. This will be done in a manner that is respectful to the heritage significance of the station.

In light of the above, the proposals are considered to be in accordance with relevant policy stipulated by the NPPF and the Manchester Core Strategy. The proposals therefore satisfy both

