



Historic England

NORTH WEST OFFICE

Mr David Brettell  
Manchester City Council  
PO Box 532  
Town Hall  
Manchester  
M60 2LA

Direct Dial: 0161 242 1407

Our ref: P00552421

25 January 2018

Dear Mr Brettell

**T&CP (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015  
& Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Regulations 1990**

**LAND BOUNDED BY JACKSON'S ROW, BOOTLE STREET, SOUTHMILL STREET  
AND 201 DEANSGATE, MANCHESTER**

**Application No. 114664/FO/2016**

Thank you for your letter of 20 December 2017 regarding further information on the above application for planning permission. On the basis of this information, we offer the following advice to assist your authority in determining the application.

**Summary**

The Jackson's Row site sits right in the core of the city centre, within the Peter Street/Deansgate Conservation Area and close to the highly significant civic complex of buildings and spaces. This is the heart of Manchester and these historic assets are valued both for their wonderful architecture and their history. Manchester's Town Hall (Grade I listed) is one of the finest in the country and an expression of the ambition of the city during the Industrial Revolution. The buildings that currently occupy the site, the Sir Ralph Abercromby Public House, the former Police Headquarters and the Synagogue, represent very different layers in history and, whilst unlisted, all make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Peter Street/Deansgate Conservation Area.

We acknowledge that the site has a potentially significant role to play in the regeneration of this part of Manchester. We have always recognised the need for enhancement of this particular area of the city centre, particularly in terms of providing connectivity through the block and more activity along the building edges.

The proposed new development would in some ways enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area by creating new routes and active edges in a failing and impenetrable area. However, the proposed tower element in particular, would have a significant harmful impact on a number of highly graded listed buildings. The harm would vary for each listed building and would cumulatively be less than



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substantial harm, to use the terminology of the National Planning Policy Framework. Any harm identified must have a clear and convincing justification and should be outweighed by public benefits.

We are unable to support the application on heritage grounds due to the cumulative harm that would be caused to highly graded listed buildings. The City Council has to be convinced that the potential wider public benefits delivered by the development convincingly outweigh the harm caused to the significance of the heritage assets before coming to a decision.

**Historic England Advice**

Since our last formal advice letter (15 February 2017), the developer has engaged a new design team and new design concept for the site, taking on board our comments set out in that letter. We acknowledge the response and some of the positive changes that have been made to the proposal. The new development proposal is mixed use, retaining the pub and converting the Police Headquarters to a boutique hotel. The site also includes a five-star hotel and residential apartments in a tall building above a new synagogue; a mid-rise office building; retail uses at ground and first floor; and a new public square at ground level with further public amenity space above on several levels.

The site sits right in the core of the city centre, within the Peter Street/Deansgate Conservation Area and close to the highly significant civic complex of buildings and spaces. This is the heart of Manchester and these historic assets are valued both for their wonderful architecture and their history. Manchester's Town Hall (Grade I listed) is one of the finest in the country and an expression of the ambition of the city during the Industrial Revolution. The Central Library (Grade II\* listed) formally addresses St. Peter's Square. These streets and spaces around the wonderful civic buildings, and containing a stunning collection of listed statues and monuments including the Albert Memorial (Grade I listed), collectively have enormous communal value to the people of Manchester and beyond.

St. Ann's Church (Grade I listed), further to the north, is an illustration of the former elegance and importance of Manchester in a time before the Industrial Revolution. The church and its tower, which is the most visible expression of its civic and religious function, are of a different scale compared to the decorative civic buildings of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The church is the principal building within the St. Ann's Conservation Area forming the focal point of the Georgian town plan, the most important element of its setting being the view southwards.

The buildings that currently occupy the site, the Sir Ralph Abercromby Public House, the former Police Headquarters and the Synagogue, represent very different layers in history and all make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the



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Peter Street/Deansgate Conservation Area. We have always recognised the potential, and indeed need, for enhancement of this particular area of the city centre, particularly in terms of providing connectivity through the block and more activity along the building edges. The site has a potentially significant role to play in the regeneration of Manchester and the scale of the site in this location we recognise is an unusual opportunity.

**Impact of the development upon heritage assets: Civic buildings, spaces and monuments**

We have concentrated on assessing the impact primarily upon the highest graded assets and, in particular, how the taller element of the development affects the contribution that the current setting makes to the special architectural and historic interest of these buildings and structures. Specifically these are: the Town Hall (Grade 1); the Town Hall Extension (Grade II\*); the Central Library (Grade II\*); St. Ann's Church (Grade 1); and the Albert Memorial (Grade 1).

Manchester Town Hall is regarded as the masterpiece of Alfred Waterhouse, its architect, and a supreme example of Gothic Revival civic architecture. The architectural style has symbolic meaning as well as expressing civic pride through ornament and high quality materials. The relationship between the square and the Town Hall lies at the heart of their significance, providing the setting for public celebrations, commemorations and national events. The importance of this enduring relationship is illustrated by the placement of a series of statues and memorials over a number of years. At the centre of this group is the Albert Memorial, a national expression of mourning and respect for the Prince Consort, and the fore-runner for the larger memorial in London. The memorial is a stunning example of Gothic Revival architecture, the form and elaborate detailing of which focusses the eyes upwards towards heaven. Albert Square is the best place to understand and experience the full extent of the architectural, historic and communal or civic interest of the Town Hall.

The experience of the relationship between the buildings and Albert Square varies depending upon where you enter the square; the impact of the proposed tower will also therefore vary. The narrow and constricted approach down Lloyd Street between the Town Hall and its extension to the south means that significant views of the new tower would not be possible until you are in Albert Square. The more open entrance to the square from Princess Street in the north-east corner is where the new tower would have its greatest impact upon the setting of the Town Hall and the listed statues. The tower would rise significantly behind and above Heron House which forms the western edge of the square. The greatest impact would be where the tower would rise immediately behind the Albert Memorial in what is currently open sky, changing the appreciation of the rich architectural detailing and the silhouette of the canopy. Our experience of the memorial within Albert Square is dynamic as you move through and around the space however, the tower would have an overbearing impact due to its



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proximity to the square and height, and would detract from the architectural presence of the most significant memorial in the square.

The impact of the tower upon the experience of the Town Hall extension (and the Town Hall collectively as they have a clear functional relationship and association) is most clearly seen looking westwards from the junction of Princess Street with St Peters Square. This view of the Town Hall is the best one to appreciate the architectural ingenuity of Waterhouse in responding to the irregular shape of the site as well as appreciate the continued expansion of the civic centre which is illustrated by the extension that is placed to the south and physically connected over Lloyd Street. The Jackson's Row tower would be visible in this view intruding into the sky space between the two buildings and above the roof of the Town Hall Extension. The currently clear sky allows easy appreciation of the architectural qualities of the two buildings and the contrast between the two that illustrates how fashions for civic buildings changed over time. The functional relationship of the two buildings would remain appreciable however the visibility of the tower would impact upon the dominance and status of these buildings and therefore the harm is assessed as less than substantial.

The tower would not affect our ability to appreciate the architectural detailing and significance of the Town Hall. However, it would harm our appreciation of the building and its visual and symbolic dominance in the civic core of the city. It could be said that the tower in this location has a similar relationship to the civic core as other towers in the city, being read as part of the wider cityscape behind existing buildings. Nevertheless, the proposed tower is taller and closer than any others to the civic core and does cause harm to the significance of these buildings and spaces. That harm, in the terms of the National Planning Policy Framework, is 'less than substantial', but it is still harm which requires clear and convincing justification.

The visual impact of the tower on the other elements of the civic campus, the Town Hall Extension and the Central Library is now much less prominent. The tower would appear rising above the commercial buildings in the background to the library, but, unlike the previous proposal, not intruding upon the clear sky above it and would therefore be appreciated as part of the wider cityscape. In the view from St. Peter's Square (*view7*) the very top of the tower just appears above the highest point of the domed roof of the library, although from within the overwhelming majority of the public space the tower would not be visible. The intrusion in this view would be harmful to the contribution made by the setting of the building at present but it is now minor.

### **Impact of the development upon heritage assets: St. Ann's Church**

Over time, the visual dominance of the church in the view down Exchange Street has been eroded (*view 18 in the Heritage Report Impact Assessment*) particularly by the Beetham Tower which rises immediately behind the church tower, although slightly



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offset. The proposed tower would similarly rise behind the church tower, now presenting its slimmest profile to the viewer. It would partially mask the Beetham Tower, but is in closer proximity to the church. The visual impact of the new tower would vary depending upon environmental conditions with the greatest impact probably at dusk and night, when the internal lighting would make it more prominent. The previous scheme had the broadest elevation rising behind the church tower, in a colour similar to that of the church, resulting in the church merging into the background of the tower. The revised scheme is better in this respect but is still an eyecatcher in the background to the church, is closer than the Beetham Tower and blurs the silhouette of the church as the focal point in the view. The additional harm caused to the setting of the church in this view, over and above that already caused by the Beetham Tower would be noticeable, but not substantial.

### **Impact of the development upon heritage assets: Peter Street/Deansgate Conservation Area**

The proposed redevelopment now includes the retention of two of the three buildings currently on site: the Sir Ralph Abercromby Pub and the front range of the former Police Headquarters. This is welcomed and provides continuity between the history of the site and the future redevelopment. The conversion of the front range of the former Police Station maintains the strong building line along Southmill Street as well as the link with the civic functions of the Town Hall complex. The public house is a delightful reminder of the former scale of this part of the city and an eye-catcher in the view along Bootle Street. As part of the proposed development the Synagogue is being proposed for demolition. This would cause some harm in the loss of a building which makes a positive contribution to the conservation area. We are disappointed that the scheme does not retain the synagogue building.

The re-design of the proposal now allows for a public square and route across the site from Bootle Street to Jackson's Row, thus providing the true connectivity desired by the Council's Strategic Planning Framework. The proposed buildings provide activity to the surrounding streets through ground floor uses, improving on the current blank facades and fragmented townscape. The mid-rise office building, which would appear in some longer-range views due to its scale and form, would have a neutral impact upon the significance of adjacent listed buildings and would not cause harm to their significance. Notwithstanding the demolition of the synagogue, in our view, the retention of two historic buildings, creation of an enclosed public square and active edges would enhance the significance of the conservation area.

### **Legislation and Policy**

A decision-maker is under a statutory duty under ss16, 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to:

- (a) have special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building or its



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- setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses; and,
- (b) pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that conservation area.

One of the principal principles of the National Planning Policy Framework is the conservation of heritage assets (paragraph 17) and the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and to achieve sustainable development, economic, social and environmental gains should be sought simultaneously. The planning system should therefore play an active role in guiding development to sustainable solutions (paragraph 8).

A decision-maker should identify and assess the particular significance of the heritage assets that are affected by a proposal. They should take account of this assessment to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage assets' conservation and any aspect of the proposal (paragraph 129). Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal (paragraph 134). In addition, Local Planning Authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and within the setting of listed buildings to enhance significance or better reveal their significance (paragraph 137). Loss of a building which makes a positive contribution to the significance of a conservation area should be treated as harm (paragraph 138).

## Conclusion

In this case these regeneration proposals bring some heritage benefits, including bringing back into use the vacant former Police Headquarters, and enhancing the setting of the Abercromby Public House by creating space around it. However, they cause harm to other listed buildings, including three which are highly graded. The level of that harm is less than substantial, although at the upper end of that scale for the Albert Memorial. Cumulatively, we judge that the harm, whilst significant, is less than substantial in terms of the National Planning Policy Framework. Less than substantial harm should still be avoided but where it cannot, it should be mitigated or minimised. It requires clear and convincing justification to overcome the great weight attached to preserving heritage assets.

## Recommendation

Historic England has concerns regarding the application on heritage grounds. We are unable to support the application on heritage grounds due to the cumulative harm that would be caused to highly graded listed buildings. The City Council has to be convinced that the potential wider public benefits delivered by the development convincingly outweigh the harm caused to the significance of the heritage assets



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before coming to a decision.

Yours sincerely

**Catherine Dewar**

Planning Director North West

E-mail: [Catherine.Dewar@HistoricEngland.org.uk](mailto:Catherine.Dewar@HistoricEngland.org.uk)

cc: Dave Roscoe, Manchester City Council  
Stephen Hodder, Hodder + Partners



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