

Application Number	Date of Appln	Committee Date	Ward
124918/VO/2019	25th Nov 2019	16 January 2020	Deansgate Ward

Proposal CITY COUNCIL DEVELOPMENT Refurbishment and expansion of Albert Square public realm, including its continued use for temporary events and activities throughout the year; works to include: the installation of a new surface water drainage scheme, removal of existing trees and replacement tree planting and soft landscaping; installation of new lighting columns, wayfinding signage and street furniture; creation of new sloped access to the Town Hall entrances; highways and servicing access works, and associated works.

Location Albert Square, Manchester, M2 4JW

Applicant Manchester City Council, Town Hall, Albert Square, Manchester, M60 2LA,

Agent Mr John Cooper, Deloitte LLP, 2 Hardman Street, Spinningfields, Manchester, M3 3HF

Introduction

This proposal is one of two related applications relating to Albert Square and the refurbishment of the Town Hall. There is a separate report on the agenda regarding the works to the Town Hall.

The public realm is an essential component of the Town Hall complex and should create an appropriate setting for the Town Hall and improve the functionality of Albert Square. The objectives for Albert Square and surrounding public realm proposals are as follows:

1. Create an enhanced destination and external setting for the Town Hall
2. Improve the function and operation of the Town Hall and Albert Square.
3. Protect and enhance the heritage assets including the Town Hall, Albert Memorial and monuments.
4. Improve access to and across the Square, and into the building. Improve entrance accessibility and remove trip hazards.
5. Provide high quality public and civic spaces that open up the city and provide places for people to meet and spend time.
6. Provide security measures appropriate to the use of the Square.
7. Consider opportunities to provide green space to enhance quality of life and achieve carbon reduction objectives.
8. Encourage walking, cycling and public transport use.

Description

The application includes Albert Square, Lloyd Street, Mount Street, Southmill Street, Brazenose Street and Princess Street.

Albert Square is within the Town Hall Complex along with St Peter's Square, the Grade I Listed Town Hall, the Grade II* Listed Central Library and Town Hall Extension and Library Walk. The Town Hall Extension and Central Library were extensively refurbished between 2010 and 2014 and St Peter's Square was redesigned between 2012 and 2017. The site includes adopted highways and footpaths of parts of Cooper Street, St Peter's Square, Lloyd Street, Princess Street, Central Street, County Street, Southmill Street, John Dalton Street, Clarence Street and Cross Street.

There would also be changes to the traffic signage, road markings and parking on streets including Jackson's Row, Lloyd Street, Mount Street, Southmill Street and Clarence Street.

The main area is within the Albert Square Conservation Area, with the wider site works also affecting the St Peter's Square, Deansgate, St Ann Square and Upper King Street Conservation Areas. The Grade I Listed Town Hall; the Grade II* Listed Town Hall Extension, Central Library and Cenotaph, 1-3 Southmill Street and 2-4 Mount Street; and the Grade II Listed Friends Meeting House and 16, 18 and 20 Albert Square, 1 Albert Square, 61 Cross Street, 8-6 Clarence Street, 31 Princess Street and 61-75 Princess Street and 18-22 Lloyd Street are located adjacent to the site.

The adjacent Grade I Listed Manchester Town Hall opened in 1877, and is considered to be one of the masterpieces of Victorian Neo-Gothic architect, Alfred Waterhouse. Many aspects of the building are showing their age and studies show that some elements are reaching their natural lifespan and are in need of attention.

There are listed structures within Albert Square including the Grade I Listed Albert Memorial and the Grade II Listed Fraser's Statue, Jubilee Fountain, Bright's Statue, Heywood's Statue and Gladstone's Statue. The Albert Memorial was also designed by Alfred Waterhouse and is an elaborate 73 foot tall Gothic enclosure with a marble statue in the centre. The condition of the Memorial has deteriorated and needs attention.

Albert Square was formed around 1877 and its original character was open with free movement. However, it quickly became an island dominated by traffic and the fabric of the square has seen considerable change and replacement.

The listed structures have been located in the area that became Albert Square since 1867, the first being the Albert Memorial and the last addition being the last being Gladstone's Statue. The Jubilee Fountain returned to The Square from Heaton Park in 1997.

Despite the improvements to The Square in the 1980's, there is still intrusive traffic which restricts movement and creates a barrier. The concrete hostile vehicle mitigation barriers detract from the significance of the Square. Throughout the year Albert Square caters for a wide variety of events, and its surface is subjected to regular HGV trafficking and high vehicle point loadings. Despite this, it makes a positive contribution to the surrounding Conservation Area and the City's image.

It is Manchester's primary civic space, which is used as a gathering and social space and is frequently used for civic functions, cultural and seasonal events including:

- Manchester Day Parade.
- Remembrance Sunday.
- Christmas Lights Switch On.
- Manchester International Festival
- Manchester Jazz Festival.
- Manchester Food and Drink Festival.
- Manchester Christmas Markets.
- Chinese New Year.
- Diwali.
- Oktoberfest.
- Spanish Festival.
- Cityride cycling.
- Manchester Half Marathon.
- Armed Forces Day.
- Irish Festival.

A Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) in front of the Town Hall would be retained to retain full pedestrian access during events in the Square.

Surrounding uses include retail, offices, hotels, bars, restaurants, financial and professional services and cafes and there is external seating outside many of the surrounding leisure uses.

Planning and Listed Building Consent (applications ref: 125552/VO/2019 and 125553/LO/2019) are relevant to this application and are due to be considered at the Planning and Highways Committee on 17 January 2020. These applications would allow the restoration and refurbishment of Manchester Town Hall to facilitate its continued use as the primary civic building in Manchester, incorporating Council offices, civic spaces, Coroner's Courts and accommodation, state rooms and back-of-house support functions, together with ancillary functions, including events, visitor tours, cafe, visitor space and retail area (Sui Generis Use); works to include: revised entrance arrangements including new slopes to Albert Square and Cooper Street entrances; upgrade of catering facilities; roof works; new services, plant and equipment; installation of new building lighting; and associated works.

There is a small area of overlap with this application comprising the extent of land required to deliver the proposed new entrance slopes to the Albert Square and Cooper Street entrances of the Town Hall.

Planning Permission is sought for the reconfiguration and redesign of Albert Square, comprising the following:

- The pedestrianisation of Albert Square between Lloyd Street and John Dalton Street and Lloyd Street and Princess Street and Mount Street between Lloyd Street and Southmill Street to all traffic. Albert Square would only be

accessible to emergency vehicles, service vehicles and vehicles required to set up the events in the Square.

- Resurfacing of the Square with natural stone with a smooth sawn, flamed or fine picked finish that is compliant with British Standards for slip resistance, to include Portuguese granite, Burlington (Cumbrian) stone and Scottish green schist.
- Cobbles reused on Mount Street and other areas.
- Yorkstone paving lifted and relayed,
- 21 trees replaced with 25 new trees. 2 of the additional trees would be in Albert Square and 2 on Princess Street. 9 trees would be retained, including 4 of the London Plane Trees that were planted in the 1960s.
- Electronic bollards on Mount Street, Brazenose Street, Princess Street, Cooper Street and Southmill Street.
- Raised planting beds along Princess Street.
- 10 high level lighting columns (14m tall) and 4 lower level columns around the edges of the Square incorporating CCTV, catenary fixing and power, low level data connectivity, Wi-Fi and anemometer.
- Ground luminaires in the paving to illuminate the monuments and planting in the Square.
- Two lighting totems adjacent the Fountain.
- Lighting integrated into seating.
- The entrance steps at the Albert Square entrance to the Town Hall would be overlaid to create a 1:24 gradient to allow inclusive access through the primary entrance. The steps and slope would be granite and Burlington Stone.
- The Cooper Street entrance would be reopened and the pavement extended to allow a 1:21 ramp to be installed to create inclusive access.
- The existing ramp on Lloyd Street would have an improved gradient.
- All existing street furniture including seating, cycle stands, and litter bins would be removed.
- 10 large seating plinths with hard wood timber tops would be installed in the perimeter of the Square.
- Seating provided within the planting areas and along the moat.
- Taxi ranks relocated to Central Street via Mount Street and Clarence Street.
- 32 new cycle stands, providing 64 spaces for cycle parking with the option to accommodate more cycle spaces in the future to be located within the perimeter zones of the Square.
- Wayfinding totems at key arrival and orientation points.
- The height of the kerb on Lloyd Street reduced with a contrasting colour.
- Loading bays set back from the carriageway on Mount Street and Lloyd Street.
- The removal of the existing hostile vehicle mitigation barriers.

In support of the overall proposals, the applicants have stated the following:

The public realm contributes to the project objectives by improving the functionality of Albert Square as a civic space for events; and, creating a wholly accessible space for all users to feel comfortable moving through.

The investment would support investment and job creation nearby. This design is informed by site intrusive and due diligence surveys including the condition of hard landscaping, trees and locations of existing utilities' servicing routes.

The design has been defined by thorough investigation of the space and through the numerous stakeholder engagements, consultation events and design workshops.

The removal of traffic would substantially increase the size of the Square from 5,570 sq.m to 8,600 sq.m.

Albert Square would continue to be civic space capable of hosting a range of events and activities.

The proposals have been based on a thorough understanding of the historic significance of the Site.

Land Interest

The City Council has a land ownership interest in the site and Members are reminded that in considering and determining these applications they are discharging their responsibility as Local Planning Authority and must disregard the City Council's land ownership interest.

Consultations

Publicity – The application was advertised in the local press as affecting the setting of a listed building and as affecting a conservation area, affecting a right of way and as being a major development. Site notices were displayed on site and letters sent to surrounding occupiers. 2no. responses have been received and are summarised as follows:

The first believes this is exactly what Albert Square, the Town Hall and Manchester deserves. A proper European square and a large section of uninterrupted, pedestrianised and high quality public space from Spinningfields all the way up through Lincoln Square, Albert Square and into St Peter's Square. However, vehicles should not drive on the square at any time. The paving in St Peter's Square is damaged quite severely in places because of vehicles parking on it. Deliveries should park up on the periphery and a new access strategy should be devised which means minimal damage is done to the new paving flags.

The second is opposed to the removal of trees and the replacements proposed. This is a terrible and lazy solution to landscaping in a time when we're desperately trying to engage with a climate change emergency. This seems like a big step back despite the project removing cars from the area.

The existing trees should be kept and more planted to benefit the environment and peoples overall well-being. It would be much more encouraging to hear this is being changed in an overall positive project.

I would also like to recommend the full pedestrianisation of Lloyd Street. This quite stunning thoroughfare exhibits some of Manchester's best architecture. I would like to see small restaurant/bar units encouraged here to pull tourists in - possibly in the form of a market? This would be quite a stunning location for such a thing and would inevitably draw people in and leave people with a positive impression of Manchester.

Historic England – Manchester's Grade I listed Town Hall embodies the city's pride, a clear gesture of the power and wealth derived from industry in the 19th century. The Albert Square allows the building to be appreciated, but also to allow the public to gather to mark significant events. The space forms a key part of the Albert Square Conservation Area.

The current proposal would remodel Albert Square to create a larger area, better used as a public events space, whilst creating an attractive setting to the listed Town Hall and statues within the square. The square would remain largely hard standing, laid in natural stone, whilst there would be new carefully located trees and planters, which would be positioned to help frame key views of the Town Hall and improve the context of the statues. These elements would help guide the movement of people, delineate the public space along Princess Street, as well as providing safety measures.

One of the main drivers for change is the removal of the roadways to allow greater levels of pedestrian movement. We consider the removal of the highway is a highly positive step which helps to create a more people focused space, underpinning the fundamental significance of the square.

The scale and ambition of the works proposed has required extensive pre application discussions, in which Historic England has been involved alongside a team of fellow specialists ranging from the project architects to the Victorian Society. The present application is a result of those detailed discussions, which have shaped and influenced the designs to ensure that the significance of the assets and their setting is sustained and enhanced.

Historic England considers that the public realm scheme for Albert Square has been carefully considered to create a space that sustains the contribution setting makes to the significance of the identified assets including Manchester Town Hall and the Albert Memorial and we have no objection to the application.

The Victorian Society – Note that the scheme has some positive aspects including the pedestrianisation of most of the Square and the removal of vehicular traffic. This allows the Square to be defined by buildings and will eliminate the contrast in materials. The opportunity has been taken to push street furniture towards these edges and consideration has been given to the visibility of the Town Hall.

The ramps would have a small adverse effect on the significance of the Town Hall but are a good response to the access needs. The value of these parts of the proposals is compromised, however, by other aspects of the scheme, as follows:

The surface treatment is fussy. None of the setts are from local sources and the diagonal banding pattern would distract attention from the surrounding buildings and

draw unwanted attention to the irregular shape of the square and the arrangement of the monuments. The justification for this is weak and does not draw pertinent lessons from the Town Hall, which shows what can be achieved with a single material, handled consistently with confidence and skill.

The choice of materials concerns them greatly. The setts are from Portugal, Cumbria and Scotland. None is local, and there is no meaningful precedent for using them here in such a large expanse. The materials of a place both reflect and inform its character, and these stones show a lack of consideration for what makes Manchester special. It is doubtful that shipping large quantities of granite from Portugal is ecologically sustainable.

The entrance ramps negotiate the transition between Waterhouse's building and the new public realm, and must do so with great tact and subtlety. They consider that the Scottish Green Schist would be intrusive. They seek assurances that the wrought iron for the railings is not substituted for mild steel, which is commonly substituted in modern work. The hardwood for the handrails may not be sustainable or appropriate in a historical built context where there is a preponderance of Oak and Fir.

The planting is the most disappointing aspect of the public realm proposals which would detract from the positive aspects of the scheme. The trees and planting beds intrude upon the openness of the square, compromise the hard quality of the streetscape, complicate the simplicity of the forms and materials, and will be a heavy future maintenance burden. The planting would make no difference to air quality, or to make any meaningful contribution to the absorption of carbon dioxide. Whilst more green space is needed in Manchester, the planting proposed is a token response. The proper provision of a new park might address but the provision of a few beds on the north side of Albert Square will not. The security requirements for the Square and the Town Hall could be achieved by carefully and thoughtfully designed bollards.

They understand the requirements for these totems, but consider their design somewhat brutal. They are extremely tall, and will affect the character of Albert Square greatly; there is a clear risk that they will compete for dominance with the Albert Memorial and the other statues in the square.

It is overwhelmingly important to consider communal and social character. Manchester is one of Europe's most significant and dynamic cities, and the documents quite rightly refer to major public spaces in other cities around the continent as exemplars. The phrase once in a lifetime opportunity has a proper application here. An acceptable scheme must be of the highest quality and celebrate what is unique to Manchester. The scheme for Albert Square could be anywhere and doesn't reflect the unique qualities of the space. Manchester deserves better, and are convinced that these proposals are given approval it will be a matter of much later regret,

The Victorian Society is explicitly not registering a formal objection in this response. We cannot support the proposals, however, and want to take this opportunity to urge your authority to reconsider. The scheme for Albert Square represents a serious error, one which will detract from the success of the Our Town Hall project and will have a lasting effect on the qualities of Manchester's most important public space.

Twentieth Century Society – No comments received

The Ancient Monuments Society – No comments received

The Georgian Group – No comments received

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings – No comments received

The Council for British Archaeology – No comments received

Guide Dogs for the Blind Association - Are concerned about the creation of a shared space for cyclists and pedestrians. These spaces rely on vision to inform pedestrians of obstacles, including cyclists, which allows them to move out of the way or navigate around an obstacle. The majority of people with sight loss cannot take evasive action to prevent a collision.

The 'Share with Care' principle principally relies on visual cues between cyclists and pedestrians as to who will have priority and which direction each will travel to avoid a collision. Many people with a visual impairment will not be able to note such cues making collisions more likely.

The intention for Albert Square to cease to be the primary cycle route between Mount Street and Cross Street, with routes along Quay Street and Princess Street being promoted as alternatives. Is a useful aim, but there are no physical features would encourage this. Therefore, it is possible, if not probable, that it will continue as the primary route, as it will continue to be an attractive short cut. Also, Albert Square will still be the main route for those accessing offices adjacent and the central shopping district. Therefore, the issue that there are no 'safe spaces' for pedestrians, including people with sight loss, remains.

The submission indicates that design features used in St. Peter's square will be utilised for the development of Albert Square with respect to cyclists and pedestrians both having the freedom of the square. Unfortunately, a number of our Guide Dog Owners have had significant issues navigating and utilising St. Peter's Square, due to its design.

The consultation exercise which was conducted earlier this year included GM Coalition of Disabled People, Manchester Disabled People's Access Group and the Disabled Young People's Group. Whilst these groups may include people who have a visual impairment, it appears that no organisations belonging solely to the sight loss sector were involved in the consultation. Therefore, whilst many issues were raised, there was no opportunity to widen the consultation to include organisations whose policy positions are informed by the lived experience of hundreds of people living with sight loss.

These are the major concerns, but this is not exhaustive. We also have concerns regarding other areas of the scheme, including the design of the security bollards and how wayfinding will work across the scheme and what the key reference points will be for the purpose of orientation.

City of Trees - Objected about the loss of trees, but have advised that discussions are on-going to resolve these concerns.

United Utilities – No comments received.

Electricity North West – No comments received

Cadent Gas – No comments received

The Wildlife Trust – No comments received

The Environment Agency – No comments received.

Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service – Advised that an archaeological watching brief has been undertaken by Salford Archaeology during exploratory works in Albert Square. This shows that archaeological interest is limited due to services and other previous ground moving operations and further archaeological mitigation is not required.

Greater Manchester Police (Design for Security) – Recommend a condition to reflect the physical security specifications set out in the Crime Impact Statement.

Greater Manchester Police (Counter Terrorism) – No comments received.

Greater Manchester Ecology Unit – Commented as follows:

There are unlikely to be any ecological issues associated with this development. Issues relating to nesting birds and landscaping can be resolved via condition and or informative.

Nesting Birds

There are a number of semi-mature trees that provide theoretical but low risk bird nesting habitat. I recommend that an informative to address this is applied to any permission.

Contributing to and Enhancing the Natural Environment

Section 170 of the NPPF 2018 states that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment. The Square has negligible ecological value, the only interest being the non-native trees around the square. Mitigation should be provided for any that are removed. The addition of bird boxes within each group to be retained i.e. 2 bird boxes. The existing plans can be conditioned with a condition requiring 2 bird boxes on retained trees to provide enhancement.

Greater Manchester Pedestrians Society - No comments received.

Transport for Greater Manchester – Metrolink have confirmed that acceptability of the Construction Management Plan and recommend a condition to require this to be implemented.

Head of Regulatory and Enforcement Services (Contaminated Land) – A verification report is required to validate that the work undertaken conforms to the remediation statement and a low permeability hard standing has been provided.

Highway Services –The proposed public realm scheme removes general through traffic from Albert Square, whilst maintaining access for servicing, events, emergency vehicles and general maintenance. The changes are subject to a S247 stopping up closure being granted.

The removal of pay and display bays will be subject to commuted sums, this should be agreed with Manchester Parking as part of the Section 278 process. The relocation of the taxi ranks will require new TROs.

The bollards and other edge protection measures should be agreed as part of the proposed Section 278 agreement and will be subject to commuted sums for ongoing maintenance. A management strategy for the use of the bollards should also be conditioned should planning approval be granted.

A Servicing Management Plan is required to ensure that all businesses can safely and efficiently access various loading areas around and within the Square. This should ensure that there are sufficient loading bays for all servicing requirements.

A S278 agreement will be required for all amendments to the adopted highway which would need to be funded by the applicant. If non-standard materials are used in the adopted highway a commuted sum would be required as part of the S278 agreement. Trees on the adopted highway the trees would require commuted sums and should maintain a minimum 2.0m footway.

The Highways preference is for open channel drainage in Albert Square which should be clarified prior to planning approval being granted.

The CMP will need to be conditioned.

Head of Neighbourhood Services (Public Realm) – No comments received

Head of Manchester City Galleries – Requested definitive confirmation of the proposals for Adrift.

The City Arboriculturist – No comments received

Corporate Property – No comments received

City Centre Regeneration –The proposed paving sample in terms of colours with a blend of buff and grey coloured granite would require constant maintenance, which is inappropriate. Albert Square is planned to be a major events space we do not consider that the proposals are appropriate for this type of use. We would therefore like to see other more practical options developed, which may include darker materials.

We also have concerns in relation to the proposed bollards. Whilst we understand the need for secure line at the entrances to the public space, we believe that there is an over-emphasis on the use of bollards and trees, planting and street furniture could achieve the same effect without the detrimental impact.

The specifications for the active bollard locations need to be worked up with the City Council's Public Realm Team to ensure that the right solutions are found. There is an opportunity to remove the proposed bollards between Brazennose Street and Albert Square by coordinating the design with the Lincoln Square scheme. Both schemes need to be compatible and could be managed by one contract.

City Galleries – No comments received.

Parks, Leisure and Events – No comments received.

Manchester Historic Buildings and Conservation Areas Panel - The Panel praised the subtlety of elements of the scheme such as the continuity of patterns and materials, but felt that the treatment of the edges of the square needed further work. They asked that greater consideration and rationalisation be given to the siting and design of elements such as the bollards, cycle parking, lighting totems, planting areas and trees as these have had an impact on the quality of the space.

Issues

Relevant Local Policies

Core Strategy

The proposals are considered to be consistent with Core Strategy Policies SO1 (Spatial Principles), S02 (Economy), S05 (Transport), S06 (Environment), SP1 (Spatial Principles), EC1 (Land for Employment and Economic Development), CC1 (Primary Economic Development Focus (City Centre and Fringe), CC4 (Visitors – Tourism, Culture and Leisure), CC5 (Transport), CC8 (Change and Renewal), CC9 (Design and Heritage), CC10 (A Place for Everyone), T1 (Sustainable Transport), T2 (Accessible Areas of Opportunity and Need), EN1 (Design Principles and Strategic Character Areas), EN3 (Heritage), EN4 (Reducing CO2 Emissions), EN8 (Adaptation to Climate Change), EN9 (Green Infrastructure), EN14 (Flood Risk), EN15 (Biodiversity and Geological Conservation), EN16 (Air Quality), EN17 (Water Quality), EN18 (Contaminated Land), EN19 (Waste) and DM1 (Development Management).

The Core Strategy Development Plan Document 2012-2027 was adopted in July 2012 and is the key document in the Local Development Framework. It sets out the long term strategic planning policies for Manchester. A number of UDP policies have been saved until replaced by further development plan documents to accompany the Core Strategy. Planning applications in Manchester must be decided in accordance with the Core Strategy, saved UDP policies and other Local Development Documents. The adopted Core Strategy contains a number of Strategic Spatial Objectives that form the basis of the policies contained therein, as follows:

SO1. (Spatial Principles) – This is a highly accessible location and traffic would be removed and tree and soft landscaping would be increased.

SO2. (Economy) – The scheme would provide construction jobs in a highly accessible location. It would also provide improved event space.

SO5. (Transport) – The development would be highly accessible, reducing the need to travel by private car and would make the most effective use of public transport.

SO6. (Environment) – The design would protect and enhance the natural and built environment and use natural resources sustainably. It would help to: mitigate and adapt to climate change; support biodiversity and wildlife; improve air, water and land quality; improve recreational opportunities; and ensure that the City is inclusive and attractive.

Policy SP 1 – Spatial Principles – Albert Square would be well-designed, make a positive contribution to the safety and wellbeing of residents and consider the needs of the community.

Policy CC1 – Primary Economic Development Focus: City Centre and Fringe – The proposals would provide an improved leisure, cultural and tourism space and would contain listed structures.

Policy CC4 – Visitors, tourism, culture and leisure - The proposals would improve facilities for visitors residents and business and would improve the Square.

Policy CC5 – Transport – Cars and buses would be removed from Albert Square providing a safe pedestrianised environment. The proposals have been designed to integrate with current and future public transport services.

Policy CC8 - Change and Renewal – The pedestrianisation would improve the accessibility and legibility of the area and improve access.

Policy CC9 – Design and Heritage – The proposals would enhance setting of the listed and historic buildings surrounding the Square and those within it. They would enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area through the introduction of high quality natural surface treatments, the use of coordinating features, the consistency of treatment through the square and on surrounding routes, the integration of services, the opening up of view of listed building and structures and the removal of vehicular traffic from the Square.

There would be a temporary negative impact on the setting of the listed buildings and the character of the conservation areas during the construction works which would be justified by the benefits of the proposals.

Policy CC10 - A Place for Everyone – The proposals would appeal to a wide range of residents and visitors.

Policy T1 – Sustainable Transport – The proposal would improve the pedestrian environment and would improve access to surrounding public transport services.

Traffic would be removed from the Square with servicing operations, taxi ranks and bus routes relocated.

Policy T2 - Accessible Areas of Opportunity and Need – Albert Square is accessible to all forms of sustainable transport including walking, cycling, buses, the tram and heavy rail.

Policy EN1 - Design Principles and Strategic Character Areas - The proposal would enhance the City's image. It respects the City's heritage and would enhance the open space and improve permeability.

Policy EN 3 – Heritage – The proposal would enhance the setting of surrounding listed and historic buildings and listed structures. They would enhance the character and appearance of Albert Square and the conservation areas.

There would be a temporary negative impact on the setting of the listed buildings and the character of the conservation areas during the construction works which would be justified by the benefits of the proposals.

The construction works are unlikely to have an adverse impact on archaeological remains; and mitigation measures would be in place should material of archaeological interest be found.

EN4 (Reducing CO2 Emissions) – The materials would be durable and able to withstand the function and use of the Square. The existing hard landscaping would be re-used in the area.

EN8 Adaptation to Climate Change - The site is in Flood Zone 1 and has a low probability of flood risk from fluvial and tidal sources, as well as groundwater and reservoir and canal sources. The drainage solution includes an underground attenuation tank and planting areas to the Princess Street edge, with surface water directed to them. The attenuation will be calculated based upon a 1 in 100-year storm event plus 40% increase to allow for Climate Change

The number would increase from 30 to 34. 300 sq.m. of soft landscaping would incorporate improved biodiversity and enhanced wildlife habitats allow the trees and soft landscaping to link to established wildlife corridors forming links between recent landscaping enhancement at St. Peter's Square and Brazenose Street.

The Environmental Management System in the Construction Management Plan would minimise impacts through registration with the Considerate Constructor Scheme, implementation of pollution prevention policies; and, implementation of a Sustainable Procurement Plan to ensure key materials are responsibly sourced. The materials would be durable and able to withstand the function and use of the Square and include the reuse of existing materials.

EN9 Green Infrastructure - The development would increase the quantity, quality and multiple function of green infrastructure. The street trees and planting beds are part of the draining solution and the soft landscaping would link to established and proposed wildlife corridors.

EN14 Flood Risk - The Site is in Flood Zone 1 with a low probability of flood risk from fluvial and tidal sources, as well as groundwater and reservoir and canal sources. The drainage solution includes an underground attenuation tank and surface water would be directed to the planting areas on Princess Street. The attenuation will be calculated based upon a 1 in 100-year storm event plus 40% increase to allow for Climate Change

Policy EN15 – Biodiversity and Geodiversity - The number would increase from 30 to 34. 300 sq.m. of soft landscaping would incorporate improved biodiversity and enhanced wildlife habitats allow the trees and soft landscaping to link to established wildlife corridors forming links between recent landscaping enhancement at St. Peter's Square and Brazennose Street.

An ecology report concludes that no potential roosting features have been identified for bats and that there are no nesting birds in existing trees. No works would take place to trees during bird nesting season (March to September). If works are required during this time, then a suitably qualified ecologist would undertake a site walkover in advance of works commencing.

EN16 Air Quality – All through traffic would be removed from the Square. 64 cycle parking spaces would be provided in the public realm. The proposals would improve linkages for pedestrians and cyclists.

Policy EN17 Water Quality – The development would minimise surface run off and maximise the use of appropriate sustainable drainage systems.

Policy EN18 Contaminated Land and Ground Stability – A Phase 1 and 2 Ground Conditions report has been submitted and the condition recommended by Environmental Health should be applied.

Policy EN19 Waste – Waste classification would be confirmed prior to disposal by the receiving landfill, under Duty of Care. Any hazardous or inert material would have WAC analysis to confirm appropriate landfill class. Earthworks would be undertaken in accordance with a Material Management Plan in accordance with the CL: AIRE, 2011 Waste Code of Practice.

MCC would issue requirements to all users who hold events in the space. This would include requirements for how the Square must be kept during the event, the methods for waste removal and how the requirements would be measured. The plan should demonstrate how the waste disposal would have minimal impact on the environment and promote sustainability.

Policy DM1 (Development Management) – This policy sets out the requirements for developments and outlines a range of general issues that all development should have regard to. Of these the following issues are or relevance to this proposal:

- Appropriate siting, layout, scale, form, massing, materials and detail;
- Design for health;
- Adequacy of internal accommodation and amenity space.

- Impact on the surrounding areas in terms of the design, scale and appearance of the proposed development;
- That development should have regard to the character of the surrounding area;
- Effects on amenity, including privacy, light, noise, vibration, air quality and road safety and traffic generation;
- Accessibility to buildings, neighbourhoods and sustainable transport modes;
- Impact on safety, crime prevention and health; adequacy of internal accommodation, external amenity space, refuse storage and collection, vehicular access and car parking; and
- Impact on biodiversity, landscape, archaeological or built heritage, green infrastructure and flood risk and drainage.

The application is considered in detail in relation to the above issues within this report and is considered to be in accordance with this policy.

Unitary Development Plan -The following saved policies of the Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester (UDP) are of relevance to these applications:

Saved Policy DC18.1 Conservation Areas - The use of high quality paving, the coordination of features, the consistency of treatment through the square and on surrounding routes, the integration of lighting into street furniture and the removal of vehicular traffic from Albert Square would enhance the setting of the character and appearance of the affected conservation areas.

Saved Policy DC19.1 Listed Buildings - The improvements identified above would enhance the setting of the Town Hall, Town Hall Extension, Central Library, Albert Memorial and other surrounding listed and historic buildings.

Saved Policy E3.4 Environmental Improvement and Protection - The proposals would provide a network of safe and attractive linear spaces and link and make better use of an appropriate area of open space.

Saved Policy DC26.1 and DC26.5 (Development and Noise) – Acoustic assessments have been submitted.

Relevant National Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework sets out Government planning policies for England and how these are expected to apply. The NPPF seeks to achieve sustainable development and states that sustainable development has an economic, social and an environmental role (paragraphs 7 & 8). Paragraphs 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14 of the NPPF outline a "presumption in favour of sustainable development". This means approving development, without delay, where it accords with the development plan. Paragraphs 11 and 12 state that:

“The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making. Where a planning application conflicts with an up-to-date development plan

(including any neighbourhood plans that form part of the development plan), permission should not usually be granted. Local planning authorities may take decisions that depart from an up-to-date development plan, but only if material considerations in a particular case indicate that the plan should not be followed.”

The proposed development is considered to be consistent with sections 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15 and 16 of the NPPF for the reasons outlined below:

Section 6 – (Building a strong and competitive economy) – The proposal would support economic growth and create jobs and prosperity through construction and maintenance works.

Section 7 (Ensuring the Vitality of Town Centres) - The proposal would improve the character and appearance of the conservation area and the setting of the surrounding listed buildings encouraging further investment in the locality including the reoccupation of vacant properties.

Section 8 (Promoting healthy and safe communities) – The proposals would remove traffic from the square, including the associated fumes. The Square would be fully accessible and inclusive and the proposals include fully inclusive access into three Town Hall entrances. Enhanced security measures are proposed to make the Square safer and more secure. These benefits would also be maintained during events through a management strategy.

Section 9 (Promoting Sustainable Transport) – This site is close to Victoria, Piccadilly and Oxford Road railway stations, St Peter’s Square Metrolink Station, Metroshuttle Services and bus routes on Oxford Road and Deansgate. The development would be sustainable and would contribute to wider sustainability and health objectives and would give people a choice about how they travel. The Square would continue to be easily accessed by sustainable transport methods, including all forms of public transport, walking and cycling and would create an improved environment for pedestrians and cyclists due to the removal of vehicular traffic from the Square.

Section 11 (Making Effective Use of Land) – The proposal includes an improved drainage solution and the extension of vehicle free public open space.

Section 12 (Achieving Well-Designed Places) – The proposals would result in public realm of a high quality. The development would improve connections with local communities and be integrated into the natural, built and historic environment and would be fully inclusive.

Section 14 (Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change) – The site is in flood risk zone 1 and therefore has a low risk of flooding. Additionally, the proposal includes an improved drainage solution.

Section 15 (Conserving and enhancing the natural environment) - The potential risks of various forms of pollution, including ground condition, have been considered. The proposals, with appropriate mitigation measures, would not have any significant adverse impacts on the natural environment and includes measures to protect and

enhance the natural environment. The proposals increase the number of trees that currently exist in the location throughout the square and on surrounding streets. They would also provide 300 sq.m. of soft landscaping, which equates to 3% of the overall area of the new pedestrian square (excluding the area beyond the Princess Street kerb line).

Section 16 (Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment) - The site is within the Albert Square Conservation Area and would affect the setting of the Grade I Listed Town Hall and Albert Memorial, the nearby Grade II and II* listed buildings and sculptures and the non-designated heritage assets. The applicant has submitted a heritage statement that assesses the impact on the surrounding heritage assets. The proposal would have a beneficial impact on the setting of the surrounding heritage assets. This enhancement would be achieved through the introduction of high quality natural surface materials, the use of coordinating features, the consistency of treatment through the square and on surrounding routes, the minimised impact of trees, the integrated services, the increased amount of soft landscaping and the removal of vehicular traffic from the Square.

There would be a temporary negative impact on the setting of the surrounding heritage assets during the construction works, however this would be temporary and justified by the benefits of the proposals.

The construction works also have the potential to have adverse impacts on archaeological remains, however mitigation measures would be in place should material of archaeological interest be found.

The Guide to Development in Manchester SPD – This Supplementary Planning Document supplements guidance within the Adopted Core Strategy with advice on development principles including on design, accessibility, design for health and promotion of a safer environment. The proposals comply with these principles where relevant.

Manchester City Centre Strategic Plan - The Manchester City Centre Strategic Plan presented a vision for the City Centre and set out the strategic action required to work towards achieving this over the period from 2015 – 2018. This document remains relevant until superseded by a new strategic plan for the City Centre.

The Plan considers the contribution to be made towards achieving the overall vision by each of the district components of the City Centre and recognises the key role of Manchester City Centre in providing a positive image and framework for inward investment and explains that its continued strong economic performance within a high quality urban environment will be fundamental to the prosperity of both Manchester and its city region.

The application site falls within the area designated as the Central Business District and is located with the Civic Quarter. This area is home to a wide range of companies of varied sizes across a range of business sectors and is fundamental to the City remaining a business destination. The key priorities for this area are:

- Encouraging the supply of more Grade A floor space, particularly through supporting the delivery of commercial developments around the Civic Quarter.
- Co-ordinating the major transport work in the area with the commercial and public realm developments taking place.
- Implementing a strategy to continue to attract major conferences to Manchester Central. Investigating and encouraging further development and investment at the centre, including the Radisson Blu Hotel's plans for the Theatre Royal on Peter Street.
- Delivering the landmark St Michael's development, which includes proposals for a range of uses, including commercial, residential, retail and leisure amenities.
- Working with partners to finalise regeneration proposals, and bring forward development at the Grade II Listed Great Northern Warehouse.
- Delivering the Peterloo Memorial within the Civic Quarter prior to the 200th anniversary of the event.

The proposed development would support the delivery of these priorities, including by providing enhanced public realm and improved events space within the Civic Quarter and improved connectivity across the Square and to the above sites.

Manchester Residential Quality Guidance (July 2016) (MRQG) – The City Council's has endorsed the Manchester Residential Quality Guidance which is now a material planning consideration. The document provides specific guidance for Manchester and includes a section on the consideration of how to animate streets and spaces.

It states that residential design should always make a positive contribution to Manchester's streets and spaces to make *a safe and inviting place for everyone*

It sets our requirements for well-considered public realm as an integral as part of all new residential developments and is critical in ensuring that Manchester's neighbourhoods are attractive, vibrant and successful.

It states that the design of the public realm can have a significant impact upon how spaces between buildings are used, on who uses them and also how frequently.

During the day, street furniture encourages adaptable and flexible use, encouraging people outside and helping to establish a sense of place. In the evening, lighting has a significant part to play in ensuring that neighbourhoods, blocks and streets function well and feel safe.

It stresses the importance of ensuring that public realm is designed with management and maintenance in mind. Without successful management, well designed spaces can have the tendency to have a negative impact on the environment and by association, the people and community that surround it.

The proposal is broadly in keeping with the aims and objectives set out in the guidance.

Climate Change

Our Manchester Strategy 2016-25 – sets out the vision for Manchester to become a liveable and low carbon city which will:

- Continue to encourage walking, cycling and public transport journeys;
- Improve green spaces and waterways including them in new developments
- to enhance quality of life;
- Harness technology to improve the city's liveability, sustainability and connectivity;
- Develop a post-2020 carbon reduction target informed by 2015's intergovernmental Paris meeting, using devolution to control more of our energy and transport;
- Argue to localise Greater Manchester's climate change levy so it supports
- new investment models;
- Protect our communities from climate change and build climate resilience

Manchester: A Certain Future (MACF) is the city wide climate change action plan, which calls on all organisations and individuals in the city to contribute to collective, citywide action to enable Manchester to realise its aim to be a leading low carbon city by 2020. Manchester City Council (MCC) has committed to contribute to the delivery of the city's plan, and set out its commitments in the MCC Climate Change Delivery Plan 2010-20.

Manchester Climate Change Board (MCCB) Zero Carbon Framework - The Council supports the Manchester Climate Change Board (MCCB) to take forward work to engage partners in the city to address climate change. 1.3 In November 2018, the MCCB made a proposal to update the city's carbon reduction commitment in line with the Paris Agreement, in the context of achieving the "Our Manchester" objectives and asked the Council to endorse these ambitious new targets.

The Zero Carbon Framework - outlines the approach which will be taken to help Manchester reduce its carbon emissions over the period 2020-2038. The target was proposed by the Manchester Climate Change Board and Agency, in line with research carried out by the world-renowned Tyndall Centre for Climate Change.

Manchester's science-based target includes a commitment to releasing a maximum of 15 million tonnes of CO₂ from 2018-2100. At 2 million tonnes per year, Manchester's 'carbon budget' will run out in 2025, unless urgent action is taken.

Areas for action in the draft Framework include improving the energy efficiency of local homes; generating more renewable energy to power buildings; creating well-connected cycling and walking routes, public transport networks and electric vehicle charging infrastructure; plus the development of a 'circular economy', in which sustainable and renewable materials are reused and recycled as much as possible.

Climate Change and Low Emissions Implementation Plan (2016-2020) - This Implementation Plan is Greater Manchester's Whole Place Low Carbon Plan. It sets out the steps we will take to become energy-efficient, and investing in our natural environment to respond to climate change and to improve quality of life. It

builds upon existing work and sets out our priorities to 2020 and beyond. It includes actions to both address climate change and improve Greater Manchester's air quality. These have been developed in partnership with over 200 individuals and organisations as part of a wide ranging consultation

The alignment of the proposals with the policy objectives set out above is detailed below.

Manchester Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy 2015

The Manchester Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy (G&BIS) sets out objectives for environmental improvements within the City within the context of objectives for growth and development.

The landscape proposals incorporate appropriate trees and planting. The proposals are based upon the removal of 21 trees within Albert Square and on Princess Street to be replaced with 25 new trees in engineered cellular tree pits that have tailored drainage attenuation features, significantly increasing the growth potential, overall health and species palette available. Four of the Category A London Plane Trees would be retained.

The proposed works also include the removal of the Albert Square highway from the scheme and regrading and resurfacing of the entire Albert Square area to face of buildings. Remedial works are also to be undertaken to the footpaths on Lloyd Street, Cooper Street and Mount Street, further improving the accessibility of the space for pedestrians and cyclists.

Pedestrian linkages across Albert Square would be enhanced in all directions by the development. Pedestrian and cycle access would also be consistent with that adopted within St Peter's Square where pedestrians and cyclists have shared freedom within the Square, creating a mutual respect for the other user. These measures would help make Albert Square a pleasurable environment and encourage visitors to interact with and create a more vibrant public space.

Albert Square Conservation Area Declaration

The Albert Square Conservation Area is bounded by Princess Street, Cooper Street, Kennedy Street, Clarence Street, Bow Lane, Tib Lane, Cross Street, John Dalton Street, Deansgate, Lloyd Street, Jackson's Row, Central Street, Manchester Central Library and Manchester Town Hall Extension.

It contains many listed buildings, including the Grade I Listed Town Hall, but also contains a number of more recent buildings such as Heron House. There is much variety in the building materials used in Albert Square. Generally buildings on the eastern side of the Square are built of yellow stone whilst those on the west side, opposite the Town Hall, are finished in red brick. This helps to emphasise the civic importance of the Town Hall.

The principal characteristic of the conservation area is the view looking east along Brazenose Street which focuses on the dominant tower of the Town Hall, framed by commercial buildings on either side.

A large amount of the Conservation Area in particular around the Town Hall and on Brazenose Street is pedestrianised. The architectural emphasis of corners is a characteristic of Manchester buildings which contributes to the urban design character of the city centre. It is evident in the Albert Square area and its use in new developments will therefore be encouraged.

Designers should respect the architectural character of the existing historic buildings and create proposals which harmonise with them. This does not mean producing pastiche or a copy of an old building, since each building should have a vitality of its own and reflect the period in which it is built.

St Peter's Square Conservation Area Declaration

St Peter's Square conservation area is situated in Manchester city centre. It is an area which contains a mixture of commercial, cultural and civic buildings. The name derives from St. Peter's Church, which stood in the centre of St Peter's Square from 1788 to 1907.

The main characteristic of St Peter's Square conservation area is primarily one of civic grandeur, but it also contains some commercial property. The earliest building in the conservation area is the Friends' Meeting House on Mount Street, designed by Richard Lane and completed in 1830. It is in Greek Classical style with Ionic pedimented portico and replicates the Temple of Ilissus in Attica, a province of Greece. The area also contains a number of other listed buildings, including the Midland Hotel (Grade II* Listed), which is the epitome of the grand style in late Victorian architecture.

When opened in 1934 by King George V, the Central Library (Grade II* Listed) was the largest public library in the country. It is a Classical-style building in Portland Stone which takes inspiration from the Pantheon in Rome, with its circular plan and the central lantern light at the top of the dome. Its huge portico, supported by six Corinthian columns, emphasises the importance of St Peter's Square.

The Central Library and the Town Hall Extension were designed at the same time, and together they form a single composition with a walkway between them. Scope for improvements in St Peter's square is limited to refurbishment of listed buildings and redevelopment of the others. Any proposals should relate to the existing building context in form, scale, height, massing and material, and be complementary to the character of adjacent listed buildings.

New and refurbished buildings in the area should be neither diluted nor superficial reflections of historic buildings but should have a vitality of their own. Bland copies would make no positive contribution but would simply devalue the historic character of the area.

Upper King Street Conservation Area Declaration

The Upper King Street Conservation Area lies at the heart of Manchester's business and commercial district and aims to preserve and enhance the impressive grandeur of this part of the City historically associated with major banking, insurance and other financial institutions for the North of England. The area today is remarkable for buildings which whilst of a variety of architectural styles stand well together. The buildings are generally large and although the architectural styles vary greatly they do for the most part create a harmonious street scene. In view of the existing excellent quality of the area any new building or extension will be required to meet a similar high standard of design. New development should generally be aligned to the back of pavement in order to preserve the linear quality of the streets. The area was designated in November 1970 and extended in June 1986

St Ann's Square Conservation Area Declaration

The St Ann's Square Conservation Area is in the commercial heart of the City, where almost all buildings accommodate shops on the ground floor. It was the first conservation area to be designated by the City Council on 29 July 1970.

St Ann's Square is the focal point of this conservation area. It was laid out in the Georgian period, however the Grade I Listed St Ann's Church is the only surviving building of this time. The remaining buildings are later replacements that continue to enclose the square in a satisfactory and coherent manner, constructed in various styles over a long period and creating a rich tapestry of built form.

Each new building has been designed with due regard for the existing buildings and together they create an imposing street wall. This is also true of other areas of the conservation including King Street, which has a rich variety of buildings due to the renewal and repair of individual properties over a long time period. John Dalton Street however has been subject to more radical development and few of the buildings now have the narrow frontage that characterises the remainder of the conservation area.

Encouragement of variety will help to maintain the character of the area. Where buildings need to be replaced, high quality modern designs, taking cues from the remaining buildings are promoted. Building proposals should be designed to enhance the existing quality of the built environment.

Deansgate Conservation Area Declaration

Deansgate Conservation Area includes much of the area surrounding Peter Street and the junctions of Deansgate with both Quay Street and Bridge Street. The area is situated on ground which is mostly flat, although there is a gentle slope down Peter Street in a westerly direction towards the river. Peter Street, and its continuation into Quay Street, is the most important junction in the area. Acute and oblique angles affect the plan form of buildings; since land in the city centre is at a premium, buildings totally cover their site and as a result more interesting buildings occur, many with corner entrances which are typical of Manchester.

Generally, buildings in the area display the Manchester characteristic of a tri-partite subdivision of the elevations, consisting of an over-large ground floor, a less highly

modelled middle section and a varied top level seen against the sky. Buildings on Peter Street, Quay Street and part of Deansgate are of different ages and styles, but retain a positive relationship with one another.

Where redevelopment proposals are put forward, the City Council will seek designs which are consistent with the character of surrounding buildings.

Legislative requirements

Section 66 of the Listed Building Act provides that in considering whether to grant planning permission for development that 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.

Section 72 of the Listed Building Act provides that in the exercise of the power to determine planning applications for land or buildings within a conservation area, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

S149 Equality Act 2010 provides that in the exercise of all its functions the Council must have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between person who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not. This includes taking steps to minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a protect characteristic and to encourage that group to participate in public life. Disability is a protected characteristic.

S17 Crime and Disorder Act 1998 provides that in the exercise of its planning functions the Council shall have regard to the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder.

The Scheme's contribution to regeneration

Regeneration is an important planning consideration and the planning system should contribute to building a strong and responsive economy, to support strong and vibrant communities and protect and enhance the built and historic environment. Over the past twenty years the City Council has implemented high quality successful regeneration schemes at the City Centre Renewal Area, St Peter's Square, Piccadilly, Spinningfields, Manchester Central, the Northern Quarter and Castlefield. However, much remains to be done if the City Centre is to remain competitive and it will be important to ensure that investment in Manchester continues.

The public sector investment would create a new destination and provide the platform and catalyst for further improvements and help to achieve the Key Objectives of the City Centre Strategic Plan. The Town Hall will be refurbished to improve its appearance and functionality and would contribute to regeneration and encourage further investment. The Town Hall is subject of applications for planning permission and listed building consent.

Albert Square makes a positive contribution to the setting of the surrounding listed buildings and conservation areas, but improvements are needed. The proposal would remove traffic, incorporate more integrated security measures and provide a consistent and high quality treatment and further improve the 1980s works.

The Square caters for a wide variety of events and is subjected to regular HGV trafficking and high vehicle point loadings. Robust paving and an improved sub-base would allow the frequent usage and loading requirements of the Square. A level surface is also proposed, which would improve conditions for all users.

The regeneration of St Peter's Square has created a high quality environment and this proposal would continue this progress. The expansion of the Square and the high quality treatment would support the function of the Civic Quarter and Central Business District and the City Centre and create employment during construction and maintenance. The proposal would enhance the street scene, secure the Square and contribute to vitality.

The redesign and reconfiguration provide a consistent and high quality treatment of the Square and the surrounding streets, the provision of additional pedestrianised space and accommodate events. The provision of a level, smooth and fully accessible surface would improve the character and appearance of the area and create a more permeable and fully accessible environment.

For these reasons, the proposals would contribute to the objectives of the City Centre Strategic Plan 2012-2018. The proposals would also be in accordance with Sections 6, 7 and 8 of the National Planning Policy Framework, and Policies SP1, CC1 and CC4 of the Adopted Core Strategy for the City of Manchester.

Impact on the Historic Environment

Sections 66 and 72 of the Listed Buildings Act require members to give special consideration to the desirability of preserving the setting of listed buildings and preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas.

Development decisions should accord with the requirements of Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework which notes that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and emphasises that they should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. Section 16 of the NPPF establishes the criteria by which planning applications involving heritage assets should be assessed and determined.

Paragraph 189 advises that local planning authorities should require an applicant to submit sufficient information to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting.

Paragraph 192 identifies that in determining applications Local Planning Authorities should take into account the following considerations:

- The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation.

- The positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities, including their economic viability.
- The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

Paragraph 194 states that 'any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.

Paragraph 196 states that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.

Paragraph 197 states that 'The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.'

In this context the impact on the Albert Square Conservation Area, the Grade I Listed Town Hall, the Grade I Listed Albert Memorial and the Grade II* Listed Cenotaph and all other surrounding and included heritage assets must be assessed.

Albert Square is not a heritage asset, but it is an important historic element of the city, and a significant part of the group value of the Town Hall Complex and the Civic Quarter. Its importance is reflected in the surrounding Conservation Area being the namesake of Albert Square. Along with the Albert Memorial and the Town Hall, Albert Square was a key feature in the development of the civic heart of Manchester.

Albert Square was designed around the Grade I Listed Albert Memorial, first proposed in 1862, following the death of Prince Albert. After a long search the old Town Yard was chosen location which led to selection of the triangular site for the current Town Hall. The Town Hall opened and the Albert Memorial was unveiled in 1867. Albert Square was formed around the memorial with no traffic. The Square was formalised around 1877 and the original character of the Square was one of openness and free movement. However, it quickly became an island dominated by traffic. The fabric of the square has changed considerably with the most recent previous alterations taking place in the 1980s.

There is a strong link between the Grade I Listed Town Hall and the Grade I Listed Albert Memorial and their setting. The establishment of the Albert Memorial and Albert Square played a significant role in the location and design of the Town Hall on all elevations. Many civic pride experiences of the Town Hall Complex and collective memory are closely bound with its urban setting, in particular Albert Square. The strong relationship between the history and design of the Town Hall and its associated townscape makes a contribution to the significance of the Town Hall.

Albert Square retains a positive appearance, but improvements are needed in addition to those undertaken in the 1980's. The traffic creates a barrier and the hostile

vehicle mitigation barriers detract from the significance of the Square and reduce the positive contribution it could make to the Conservation Areas and the setting of the surrounding listed buildings.

The granite setts have been damaged by regular HGV trafficking and high vehicle point loadings and by tree roots. They cover the main area of the square and are laid in an attractive segmental arch pattern. They have provided a robust surface for the last 30 years. However, the sub-base is insufficient to accommodate the frequent usage and the loading requirements of the square.

The redesign and reconfiguration of the public realm would provide a consistent and high quality treatment of the Square and surrounding streets and create a more permeable and fully accessible environment.

The works would remove through traffic and better secure the area and reinstate and extend the high quality and consistent treatment. It would reinstate the original character of openness and free movement throughout the Square and enhance the character of the conservation areas and setting of surrounding listed buildings. The new surfaces would respect the heritage significance of both material and laying bonds found in Albert Square in the late 19th Century.

The external works to the Town Hall would cover the external steps on Albert Square and at Cooper Street with a ramp and steps to allow full access. This would obscure the steps and would cause harm. The works re-open Cooper Street as an entrance. Cooper Street is a key historic entrance that has been out of use for some years.

The external ramps and steps are of a high quality in keeping with the importance of these entrances. The materials and detailing would conserve the quality, character and composition of the entrance areas in a well-considered manner.

The alteration to the entrance would conserve the public character, sense of high quality and be legible and contextual. The harm would be limited to the covering of the original outer stone steps. The impact on the affected elevations is regrettable, but is necessary to make the ground floor of the Town Hall fully accessible. The original steps would be retained beneath the alteration.

All new footpath around the Town Hall would have a breathable membrane adjacent the moat to prevent further spalling of its stone surface and help to protect the condition of the Grade I Listed Town Hall. Its fabric would be protected during the public realm works.

The works adjacent the Grade II* Listed Cenotaph would be limited to the replacement and minor realignment of the bollards, which don't comply with current standards and would be realigned to accommodate vehicle access around the new Cooper Street entrance. This would have minimal impact on its setting.

The Square also accommodates the Grade II Listed Jubilee Fountain, and the Fraser, Bright, Heywood and Gladstone's Statues. These listed structures would be retained and protected during the public realm works. The previous damage would subsequently be repaired and all would remain in their original location.

The heritage light columns on Lloyd Street are thought to be original and would be retained in situ and protected. New columns cast in the same style would improve lighting levels to Lloyd Street where there are dark spots.

All non-original street furniture would be removed and replaced with new elements. The current lighting is detrimental in heritage terms. They are 12 Victorian-style lampposts laid out regularly across the square, but the upper section was replaced in the mid-late 20th century, and the lower parts are either modified or recast copies of an earlier 20th century design.

The proposed lighting columns would be modern and 14 meters high. They include bespoke features that have been designed to minimise their bulk as far as possible. Their locations have been selected to avoid detrimental clutter of the historically open space, but the 10 tall columns would cause a level of harm.

Their design would accommodate other necessary features such as CCTV and flexible infrastructure for high speed Wi-Fi and 5G and would therefore help to reduce clutter. They would only be located so as to preserve views of the Town Hall and would be surrounded by street furniture and trees that would help to minimise their impact. They would allow sight lines into the Square and of the Town hall façade and would replace standard highways lighting. The design would also provide even and efficient lighting making the area safe and accessible after dark forming an important part of the security plan. The lighting would emphasise and define architectural features and listed structures and event specific decorative lighting. The lighting of listed structures would better reveal and celebrate their design as part of the wider scheme.

The security strategy aims to minimise its visual impact on the setting of the Grade I listed Town Hall building and the listed structures within and surrounding the Square. The proposals would utilise the surrounding buildings, and 32 bollards would be positioned at the edges of Albert Square on Southmill Street and Brazennose Street, and outside of the Square on Mount Street. 47 bollards would be installed to protect the Princess Street carriageway and provide enhanced protection.

CCTV would be integrated with other elements such as the lighting columns to reduce clutter across the Square. The planting beds along Princess Street are uncharacteristic of the history of Albert Square, but would soften the impact of the large number of bollards in this location and would provide positive benefits to biodiversity, attenuation, pollution absorbance and people's wellbeing that would balance any harm that this change causes. All planting beds would be contained within a formal surround with a low level railing. The planting would not exceed 1 metre in height to avoid the obstruction of views of the Town Hall and other buildings and monuments.

The bollards would secure the Square and would be restricted to small numbers in small areas, other than the large number proposed along Princess Street. These would be broken up by the proposed planters.

The provision of coordinated, bespoke and high quality furniture would in general improve the Square. It would be within a 'perimeter zone' to minimise visual clutter

and restore the historically open character of Albert Square. The unified design would help to give the Square a consistent and coordinated appearance.

21 trees would be replaced with 25 of a different species increasing the total number to 34. They would have more space for root growth and would open up views of the listed buildings.

The large London plane trees situated to the north and south edges of the Square were planted in the late 1960s within the central traffic island. The lime trees were planted as part of the 1987 redesign scheme. Other trees have been planted subsequently, including on Mount Street and Cooper Street as part of the recent redevelopment of St Peter's Square and Central Library.

Four of the existing London plane trees, a more recently planted lime tree and trees to Mount Street and Cooper Street would be retained. Their roots would be carefully protected during construction works to ensure they are not damaged. New trees would be planted to the edges of the Square to provide views of the Town Hall façade. The trees would enhance the setting of the Grade I Listed building and Albert Memorial and the listed buildings and structures within and around the Square. The tree-pits would ensure that the tree roots would not impact the paving above. The proposed tree design creates a group of specimen trees to the south, a formal line of trees to create an 'avenue' and garden trees to the north of the Square.

The materials would be high quality and a maintenance strategy would ensure that the quality of design is maintained. The redesign would involve the resurfacing of surrounding streets improving the setting of additional listed and historic buildings and other parts of the conservation areas.

Taken as a whole, the works represent an improvement to visual amenity and would enhance the conservation areas and the setting of the surrounding listed buildings and associated listed structures.

The impact of events that take place in the Square on the setting of the affected heritage assets would be temporary and would be similar to the existing situation, but better supported, which could make a slight improvement.

Some elements of works would cause less than substantial harm to the listed building, however the majority of the works would be beneficial. Any harm caused would be justified by the creation of an enhanced destination and setting for the Grade I Listed Town Hall and the listed structures, the improved function and operation of the Town Hall and Albert Square, the improved accessibility both throughout the Square and into the Town Hall, the provision of an improved place for people to meet and spend time, the enhanced protection of the Town Hall and the listed structures through the provision of adequate security measures, the incorporation of green space to enhance biodiversity and achieve carbon reduction objectives and the implementation of an improved drainage scheme.

Conditions would require the final number of lighting columns to be agreed to try to reduce them. Conditions would require the use of Scottish Schist and Portuguese granite to be agreed and the number and design of bollards to be agreed.

Officers therefore consider that the proposals are consistent with paragraph 196 and 197 of the NPPF and address sections 66 and 72 of the Planning Act in relation to preservation and enhancement.

Given the above, the proposals are considered to be in accordance with sections 12 and 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework, Policies SP1, CC9, EN1, EN3 and DM1, the Design principle of the Guide to Development in Manchester SPD and Saved Policies DC18.1 and DC19.1 of the Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester.

Provision of a Well Designed Place

The high quality, safe and accessible would create an improved environment and continue the regeneration work in this area.

New landscape features would be provided and the public realm extended to make the Square car free, improving the environment for pedestrians and improving air quality. The Square would include planters, street furniture, new high quality paving and an increased number and improved quality of trees.

The design would establish vibrant, and welcoming spaces that support activities and encourage social interaction, to promote health, well-being, social and civic inclusion and an improved space for events.

The Yorkstone slabs and setts are hard wearing and durable and have an increased lifecycle, reducing the need for repairs. The paving would be laid upon a concrete slab with high strength mortar bedding and jointing system to create a robust surface to accommodate heavy vehicles accessing the Square.

The central space of Albert Square would be paved with Portuguese granite, with a small percentage of Burlington (Cumbrian) stone and Scottish green schist. The size of these paving stones would be 120mm wide by 180-300mm random lengths. The paving surface would also include a series of 400mm wide granite bands set out in a 'diamond' pattern across the central space of Albert Square.

At the interface between the central setts and the Yorkstone perimeter there would be a natural stone channel detail to delineate a clear pedestrian route around Albert Square. This will comprise two 300mm wide granite channels either side of a 200mm wide drainage channel with a ductile iron surface grating.

The Albert Memorial and other listed monuments are to be retained in their existing positions. They would all sit within hard standing with the exception of the statue of James Fraser that would sit within an area of planting.

All proposed natural stone surfaces would have smooth finish (sawn, flamed or fine picked) and compliant with British Standards for slip resistance.

It is proposed to retain the Yorkstone slab paving to Mount Street, Lloyd Street, Princess Street and Cooper Street, including selective areas of lifting/relaying. There

is an opportunity to re-use some of the existing 1980s granite setts removed from Albert Square, including areas such as Mount Street.

Many of the existing trees would be replaced with trees in engineered cellular tree pits, significantly increasing the growth potential, overall health and species palette. The positioning of the tree provides more open, usable space as well as clearer site lines of the surrounding building entrances and the listed buildings.

Planting beds have been placed along the edge of the Princess Street highway to create a small element of greenery within the Square. These would have pedestrian routes between them. The planting would be low level (up to 1m in height) and there will be new and existing tree planting within these areas.

From a security perspective the northern part of the Square is seen as the most vulnerable as it has the most open face and is less defensible than other entrances into the Square. For that reason, high impact bollards are seen as necessary along the entire seventy metre elevation.

Whilst planting of this nature is not characteristic of Albert Square's heritage it is a more welcoming inclusion than so many high impact bollards. Views of the Town Hall and of other buildings across the Square will not be impeded by planting due to the low-level nature of planting beds and high clear stems of new trees in the area.

The proposals would provide 300 sq.m. of soft landscaping, which equates to 3% of the overall area of the new pedestrian square (excluding the area beyond the Princess Street kerb line).

There would be a consistent palette of hard materials, planting and street furniture to create a public realm which is legible and defines a distinctive identity for the area.

The Square would be more open, be free of traffic and have improved lighting and would feel safer. This proposal would connect into existing routes and movement patterns.

Given the above, the proposals are considered to be in accordance with sections 12 and 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework, Policies SP1, CC9, EN1, EN3 and DM1, the Design principle of the Guide to Development in Manchester SPD and Saved Policies DC18.1 and DC19.1 of the Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester.

Inclusive Access

The proposal would provide a fully accessible environment and allow Albert Square to be used by everyone. The proposals have been discussed with access groups within Greater Manchester to ensure that the public realm would be accessible to all. This included the designs for the new entrances into the Town Hall. The following measures are proposed to achieve a fully accessible environment:

- Albert Square would have a consistent shallow gradient of 1:50 to 1:70 and a smooth surface across the whole of the Square.

- The steps of the Albert Square Town Hall entrance would be overlain with a slope at 1:24 to create inclusive access into this primary entrance and allow a pedestrian route to be retained during events. Handrails would meet the requirements of Part M building regulations. The handrails would have integrated lighting to help guide users across these steps and avoid trip hazards.
- The steps to the Cooper Street entrance would be overlaid with a 1:21 entrance slope. The pedestrian pavement would be extended towards the Cenotaph by 2m. Part M compliant handrails are proposed that would have integrated lighting to help guide users and avoid trip hazards.
- The Albert Square and Cooper Street entrances would include a sloped access with a gradient which would not be noticeable to most users.
- The security bollards would allow access for wheelchair users.
- The material palette would be anti-glare and anti-slip.
- Some of the benches would include arm and back rests.
- The Lloyd Street kerb would have clearer material colour change to the street paving to minimise the risk of falling or tripping. Tactile paving would be used along the top of the kerb to emphasise this. The kerb helps people with visual impairments determine where the Lloyd Street vehicular route runs. Tactile paving would identify where dropped kerbs are located.

The proposals would enhance pedestrian movement within and around the public realm and improve connectivity to other areas of public realm including St. Peter's Square, Lincoln Square and the proposals at St. Michael's.

The Town Hall building and monuments are orientation points and improve legibility. The removal of the carriageway to the southern and western edges would create a much more open and accessible space, and materials and other enhancements, such as lighting and wayfinding would create clarity of the new square for all users. A maintenance strategy should ensure that the Square remains accessible to all.

However, concerns have been raised by the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association, which are currently under discussion. An age friendly audit of the proposed street furniture is also currently being prepared. Given this, it is recommended that a condition be applied to the application to require the measures to make the Square fully inclusive to be submitted and agreed.

Given the above the proposals are considered to be in accordance with Section 4 of the National Planning Policy Framework, policies DP2 and DP5 of the Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West, policies SP1, CC4, CC5, CC10, T2 and DM1 of the Core Strategy for the City of Manchester and the Design and Accessibility principles of the Guide to Development in Manchester SPD.

Effects on the Local Environment

This examines, amongst other things, the impact the scheme would have on nearby and adjoining residents and other occupiers. It includes the consideration of issues such as impact on noise and air quality.

a) Air Quality

The site is within an air quality management area and future users could be exposed to elevated pollution levels. The development could cause temporary air quality impacts during the construction phase, but any adverse impacts would be controlled through mitigation measures included in the construction management plan.

The removal of traffic from the Square and the provision of additional trees would improve air quality. Vehicles travelling to and from the site are unlikely to have a significant effect on air quality due to the public transport links available.

In view of the above, it is considered that the proposals are considered to be in accordance with Section 8 of the National Planning Policy Framework, policies SP1 and DM1 of the Core Strategy for the City of Manchester.

(b) Vehicle Movements

The site is close to sustainable forms of transport. Through traffic would be removed and the road would be incorporated into the Square. Access would be controlled by telescopic bollards and would be accessible to emergency vehicles, service vehicles and vehicles required to set up the events only. This requires a Stopping Up application and the draft plan was included in the application for information.

A transport modelling exercise has assessed the impact of removing the traffic and the model does not forecast substantial increases in travel times and no issues have been identified in rerouting of typical journeys.

No additional floor space is proposed and the number of trips should not increase and there would be no material effect on the operation or capacity of bus or tram services, cycle tracks or other methods of sustainable transport.

A Traffic Regulation Order (TRO), which runs along the Albert Square elevation from Lloyd Street to Princess Street prohibiting the use of vehicles on the Square is being reviewed in light of the proposals.

Highway's works include the relocation of taxi ranks to Central Street and Mount Street and the relocation of on street car parking spaces, which would be addressed through a Section 278 Agreement. Six GMP parking bays and three public parking bays would be closed and GMP parking provision would be relocated to a nearby street.

Four parking bays on Lloyd Street would be replaced with two disabled parking bays.

The bus routes that pass through Albert Square would use Princess Street.

The servicing route to the Town Hall and Town Hall Extension would be retained along Lloyd Street, Cooper Street and Princess Street. However, the controlled electronic bollard access point would be on Mount Street. Loading bays set back from the carriageway would be provided on Mount Street and Lloyd Street.

Servicing of Albert Square and most of the surrounding buildings would be from Southmill Street via Princess Street and John Dalton Street or Southmill Street. Electronic bollards would be located at these egress points. Discussions are ongoing with the neighbours as to the specific details of how each building would be serviced. The proposals would provide a redesigned public space that is in a highly accessible location and close to a range of public transport modes.

In view of the above the proposal is considered to be in accordance with Sections 9 and 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework, policies SO1, SO5, SP1, DM1, CC5, CC10, T1, T2 and EN16 of the Core Strategy for the City of Manchester.

c) Event Management

Albert Square would continue to host events. This has been a key design driver with a need to demonstrate how these can be accommodated whilst maintaining space within the Square for the public to use all year round. An Events Management Plan sets out how they would be managed efficiently and minimise disturbance to neighbouring buildings, staff and visitors.

All event vehicles and staff used to set up events would be formally briefed ahead of entering the Square to set up events.

The hours of operation for events that require a license would be limited to:

Monday to Saturday: 1100 to 2300.
Sunday: 1200 to 2300.

The hours of operation for events that are not licensed would be limited to:

Monday to Saturday: 0800 to 2100.
Sunday: 0700 to 1800.

Non-licensable event activity would be limited to mainly sports type events and some one-off commercial events.

Any events hosted in Albert Square would follow the guidance provided by Manchester City Council's Environmental Protection and Environmental Health section and all noise generation would be considered in the early planning stages. This would include using good site design and any control measures needed to achieve.

All the relevant legislation and guidance would be considered, all necessary planning consents and licensing requirements would be obtained and any liaison with enforcement authorities would take place.

There would be a Noise Management Plan. An Event Information Questionnaire would be submitted to MCC's Event Unit. Event organisers would be responsible for monitoring noise levels on Albert Square and ensuring that they comply with any noise guidelines and would be required to act on any reasonable instruction given by Council Officers.

Measures and methods for communications to residents and businesses would be included. At events where music is played on loud speakers would be carefully monitored to ensure noise level restrictions are adhered to.

The public toilet facilities on Lloyd Street would be the only toilet provision. The hours of opening for the public toilets would be adjusted as required to ensure that they are available for each event.

Information regarding sustainable modes of travel to Albert Square would continue to be provided, through MCC communications and website. This would include information about Metrolink, Rail, Bus, Metroshuttle, Taxi and Cycling facilities.

MCC would set and issue the requirements to be met by any group or organisation that uses the space for events to control how the Square is kept during the event, the methods for waste removal from site, and the methods by which these requirements will be measured.

Any event hosted on the Square will also be expected to adhere to MCC's policy on waste and recycling. Biodegradable and compostable receptacles would be required and the use of single use plastics would be forbidden.

In the handling of waste and refuse from the Square any organiser as part of their plan would be expected to demonstrate how they are making an effort to reduce the impact on the environment and to promote sustainability.

Albert Square would be covered by increased video surveillance cameras that would be monitored centrally and support any required security response. Suitably trained SIA registered stewarding would be provided at all large and licensed events.

In view of the above, it is considered that all aspects of events would be appropriately managed in accordance with Section 8 of the National Planning Policy Framework, policies SP1 and DM1 of the Core Strategy for the City of Manchester and Saved Unitary Development Plan policy DC26.

Waste and Recycling

During the construction phase the project would follow the Resource Efficiency Plan. This would be updated with outputs of waste reviews which would evaluate:

- Material Specifications;
- Design and Procurement to prevent waste;
- Buildability Working Practices needed to deliver the design;
- The driver within the known and proven alternatives with a lower or improved waste profile;
- Options identified by this review will be presented to the Project Team for evaluation;
- Waste segregation on site, promoting reuse of materials;
- Reduction in disposable packaging promoting the use of reusable packaging for repeat items; and,
- Offsite prefabrication of components and cut to size raw materials, i.e. stone.

The contractor would actively minimise the amount of waste produced by an attitude towards the prevention of waste creation, reusing materials where necessary, recycling where possible, and implementing a recovery strategy where by materials are sent to a special sorting facility whereby waste is sent to a specialist energy recovery facility. Events on the Square would have to adhere to MCC's policy on waste and recycling.

Given the above, the proposal is in accordance with policies DM1 and EN19 of the Core Strategy.

Surface Water Drainage and Climate Change Resilience

The site is in Flood Zone 1 with a low probability of flooding. A Drainage and Flood Risk Statement concludes that the proposal is appropriate and would comply with NPPF guidance.

The drainage solution would reduce surface water drainage run off by 50% and would be designed for the 1 in 100 year storm event and the 40% rainfall increase predicted in the worst case climate change scenario.

There would be a below ground tank/cellular storage that involves storage tanks or geo-cellular crates installed below the lowest ground level of the main Albert Square area. The soil in tree pits would store surface water for high storm events.

External hardstanding would incorporate linear drainage channels with gratings and slot drainage. New road gullies would be incorporated within highways outside of Albert Square. A check would be undertaken as often as required to ensure that any ponding on the surface does not stay on the surface for long lengths of time.

A Hydrobrake Downstream Defender, which is a vortex system with minimal maintenance would intercept and separate oil. Anti-flood valves would prevent surcharge of the public sewers into the onsite systems.

Conditions should be attached requiring the agreement, implementation and maintenance of the sustainable drainage system.

Given the above, the development would be consistent with section 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework and Core Strategy policies EN8, EN9 and EN14.

Ground Contamination Issues

A Phase 1 and 2 Ground Conditions report recommends that the condition specified by the Head of Regulatory and Enforcement Services (Contaminated Land) is applied to the application. Given the above the proposals are considered to be in accordance with Section 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework and policy EN18 of the Core Strategy for the City of Manchester.

Crime and Disorder

Greater Manchester Police have been involved in the development of the proposals and have confirmed their support. The security strategy has been developed in consultation with their Counter Terrorism Unit and Secure by Design Team. The design would allow the large concrete National Defence Barriers to be removed through the use of bollards, trees and planting. A Crime Impact Statement confirms support for the scheme subject to the implementation of the included recommendations.

In view of the above the proposal is consistent with section 8 of the National Planning Policy Framework, and policies SP1 and DM1 of the Core Strategy.

Transport Issues / Relationship to Transport Infrastructure

The area would continue to be well served by a variety of sustainable transport modes including walking, cycling, buses, trains and the Metrolink and Metroshuttle systems. A transport assessment demonstrates that there would not be a negative impact on the highway network. The increased permeability would provide improved access to surrounding bus stops and train services.

It is recommended that the condition relating to a Construction Management Plan specified by Transport for Greater Manchester is applied to the application if approved.

Given the above the proposals are considered to be in accordance with Section 4 of the National Planning Policy Framework, Policy DP5 and RT9 of the Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West, Policies SP1, CC4, CC5, CC10, T1, T2 and DM1 of the Core Strategy for the City of Manchester and the Design Principle of the Guide to Development in Manchester SPD.

Cycling Infrastructure

The public realm would be accessible to all including cyclists. The cycle strategy has been developed to be consistent with the approach adopted within St. Peter's Square, where pedestrians and cyclists have freedom within the Square, creating a mutual respect and consideration.

32 cycle stands are proposed with space for 64 cycles and wayfinding for cyclists, as well as a commitment to explore the potential for Hire Bike stands.

The existing cycle lane would be removed by the closure of the road. This allows the Square to become more of a destination for cyclists or route for cyclists moving slowly through the city. The aim is to create a well-balanced square that works safely for cyclists and pedestrians without the need for interventions typically seen along vehicular routes.

Albert Square would no longer be a primary cycle route between Mount Street and Cross Street and it is anticipated that Peter Street and Princess Street would be used as more direct commuting routes.

Consultation is on-going with TfGM and MCC Highways to ensure that the proposals tie in with both the Greater Manchester's Bee Network and the City Centre Transport Strategy.

In view of the above the proposal is considered to be in accordance with Sections 9 and 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework, policies SO1, SO5, SP1, DM1, CC5, CC10, T1, T2 and EN16 of the Core Strategy for the City of Manchester.

Impact on Biodiversity

The new soft planting and replacement tree planting, would introduce more appropriate and higher quality tree species and contribute towards the creation of green linkages and habitat corridors. There are 30 trees on Albert Square, Mount Street, Cooper Street and Princess Street.

21 trees would be removed, 16 from Albert Square and 5 from Princess Street. 15 are classified as Category B, 5 as Category C and 1 as Category A.

The trees to be removed comprise 1 London Plane tree (Category A), 11 Common Lime and 4 Fastigate Hornbeams (Category B) and 5 Norway Maples (Category C)

Category A trees have a high value, including those that are particularly good examples of their species and/or have visual importance or significant conservation or other value.

Category B trees have moderate value, and includes trees that would be classed as Category A, but can't due to impaired condition and/or those that collectively have higher value than they would as individuals, also trees with material conservation or other value.

The Category C trees have low value in that they are young with a stem not exceeding 150mm diameter or that they are low value with very limited merit or impaired condition. These trees offer transient or temporary landscape benefits.

The proposals for trees have developed following specialist advice. The existing trees are under pressures because of the urban environment; where replacement trees are planted, they will not grow as well or long because of poor rooting conditions.

An Arboricultural Options Appraisal Report has considered three options for the tree planting scheme, with preference for an option to allow transitional tree stock replacement via the retention of four of the best quality existing trees.

4 London plane trees (Category A) and trees on Mount Street and Cooper Street would be retained (Category A). 25 new trees would be planted making a total of 34. Site constraints prevent more tree planting but the planting proposed would deliver a number of benefits including:

- Tree pits that significantly increase growth potential, overall health and the species palette available.

- The positioning of new trees would create more open, usable space and clearer site lines of the surrounding building entrances.
- The tree location improves views of the Town Hall and other heritage assets.
- The Albert Memorial and three statues would have a more open setting.
- Access would be improved as levels to be regraded and trip hazards removed.
- Increased biodiversity through the introduction of new tree species.

The 300 sq.m. of soft landscaping would improve biodiversity and enhanced wildlife habitats with the trees and soft landscaping linking to established wildlife corridors forming links to St. Peter's Square and Brazennose Street.

No works to the trees would take place during bird nesting season (March to September). If works are required during this time, then a suitably qualified ecologist would undertake a site walkover in advance of works commencing.

A condition will require the final number of trees to be removed to be agreed and fully justified.

In view of the above the proposals are considered to be consistent with section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework, and policies SO6, SP1, DM1, EN9 and EN15 of the Core Strategy.

Blue and Green Infrastructure

The proposals incorporate trees and planting. All Category B trees, one Category A tree and the Category C trees would be replaced with trees in engineered cellular tree pits that have tailored drainage attenuation features, significantly increasing the growth potential, overall health and species palette available greatly improving the life expectancy and condition of trees in the Square. The trees would be of an improved quality and improve biodiversity.

The highway on the west side of the Square would be removed and regraded to extend the pedestrianised area. Remedial works would be undertaken to footpaths on Lloyd Street, Cooper Street and Mount Street, further improving accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists.

Pedestrian linkages across the Square would be enhanced. Pedestrian and cycle access would be consistent with that adopted within St Peter's Square where they both have freedom, creating a mutual respect for the other user.

In view of the above the proposals are considered to be consistent with section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework, and policies SO6, SP1, DM1, EN9 and EN15 of the Core Strategy.

Soft Landscaping

The planting beds, trees and lighting columns would allow full visibility in all directions and would improve views of the surrounding listed buildings and the main building entrance.

The planting beds would incorporate a variety of different plant species contributing to the creation of an attractive environment and contributing to biodiversity.

The proposed open layout of and improved lighting levels within Albert Square would discourage anti-social behaviour.

The application is supported by a maintenance regime for the proposed soft landscaping.

Given the above, the proposals are considered to be in accordance with Policies SP1, CC1, CC4, CC9, T1, EN1, EN3, EN15 and DM1, the Design principle of the Guide to Development in Manchester SPD and Saved Policies DC18.1 and DC19.1 of the Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester and sections 12 and 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Archaeology

A Desk-Based Archaeological Assessment has been prepared by Salford Archaeology in support of the proposals. The Desk-Based Archaeological Assessment concludes in respect of the Site that the potential for archaeological remains, mainly in the form of 18th or 19th Century building foundations, cellars, yards and outbuildings, have a high probability of being present in Albert Square, which will have low significance at local level.

GMAAS have confirmed that no more further archaeological mitigation would be merited given the past investigation within the Square.

Given the above, the proposals are considered to be in accordance with Policies SP1, and DM1, Saved Policy DC20.1 of the Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester and section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Health and Wellbeing

The Proposed Development would support the creation of a strong, vibrant and health community, in particular it would make the following contributions:

The proposals would deliver a well-designed public space that encourages social interaction to be open and accessible to all communities and be connected into the movement network.

The high quality, safe and accessible that would be provided as part of these proposals would create an improved environment.

All through traffic would be removed from the Square improving air quality.

The proposals have been designed to be inclusive and have considered the needs of all parts of the community, including disabled people, older people, cyclists etc.

The location of the Square means that it is accessible from a various type of public transport.

The increased number and variety of trees and the increased amount of soft landscaping would create a healthier environment for the people using the Square.

During the construction phase the contractor's site cabins would be located within Albert Square. An artisan village is proposed within the Square, whereby members of the public can view special trades being conducted to restore some of the historic elements of the Our Town Hall Project, as well as finding out about these specialist trades. This would promote interaction with the Site and the public interface at a safe distance.

Given the above, the proposals are considered to be in accordance with Policies CC1, CC10, SP1, and DM1 and section 8 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Local Labour and Social Value

The application is supported by a Local Labour Agreement. As part of the overall Our Town Hall Project, the main contractor has committed to a series of targets in respect of local employment and training, as set out in the Local Labour Agreement Commitments:

- Through the construction period, there will be a commitment employ workers from Manchester and to support workers to achieve higher level qualifications.
- The main contractor will deliver STEM sessions in Manchester schools and colleges.
- Work placements will be provided to Manchester residents and young people attending Manchester educational or training establishments.
- Apprenticeships will be offered to Manchester residents, at different qualification levels.
- Construction staff will undertake mentoring and volunteering.
- Members of the Our Town Hall Project Team have also delivered apprenticeships and training as part of their role on the scheme.

Given the above, the proposals are considered to be in accordance with Policies CC1, SP1, and DM1 and sections 6 and 8 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Conclusion

The proposals would be consistent with national and local planning policy, and would promote a quality neighbourhood, economic development and sustainable travel patterns. It would fulfil an important role in providing well needed and improved public space within the City Centre. It would be consistent with GM Strategy's key growth priorities and meet the demands of a growing economy and population, in a well-connected location within a major employment centre. It would therefore help to promote sustained economic growth.

The development would have an overall positive impact on the settings of the Grade I Listed Town Hall, the Grade I and Grade II Listed monuments, the surrounding listed buildings and the Albert Square Conservation Area.

The comments on the inclusiveness of the Square, the removal of trees and the acceptability of the materials and other elements of street furniture will be subjects of conditions and are currently being considered and discussed.

The proposals represent sustainable development and would deliver significant social, economic and environmental benefits. It is considered, therefore, that, the proposals enhance the setting of the adjacent listed buildings and the character of the conservation area as required by virtue of S66 and S72 of the Listed Buildings Act within the context of the above, the overall impact of the proposed development including the impact on heritage assets would meet the tests set out in paragraphs 193, 196 and 197 of the NPPF.

It is considered that the submission has given sufficient information to assess the environmental impacts of the development and that, with the mitigation measures proposed and those already designed into the development, those impacts would not be significant or would be balanced out by the public benefits that the scheme would bring.

Given the above, it is considered that the proposal is in accordance with the City of Manchester's planning policies and regeneration priorities including the Adopted Core Strategy, the relevant Strategic Regeneration Frameworks and the Community Strategy, as well as the national planning policies contained within the National Planning Policy Framework and should be approved.

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 the right to a fair hearing and to this end the Committee 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 policies 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 of the application 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.

Recommendation APPROVE

Article 35 Declaration

Officers have worked with the applicant in a positive and pro-active manner to seek solutions to problems arising in relation to dealing with the applications. This has included ongoing discussions about the need for more information and has included extensive pre application advice.

Conditions to be attached to the decision

All conditions to be applied to the applications will be reported by Late Representations to allow time for further comments to be taken into account.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

The documents referred to in the course of this report are either contained in the file(s) relating to application ref: 124918/VO/2019 held by planning or are City Council planning policies, the Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester, national planning guidance documents, or relevant decisions on other applications or appeals, copies of which are held by the Planning Division.

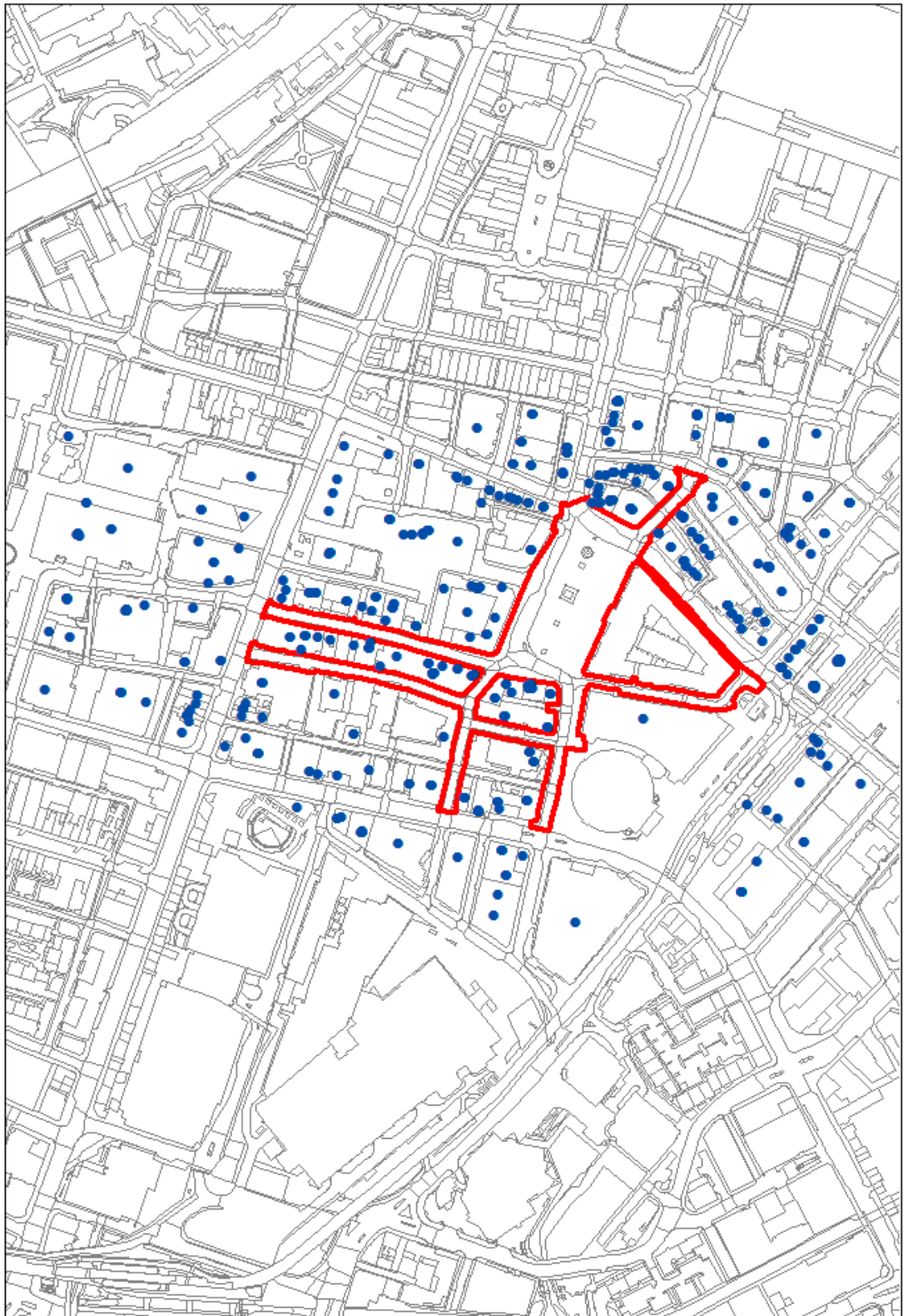
The following residents, businesses and other third parties in the area were consulted/notified on the application:

Highway Services
Environmental Health
Corporate Property
City Centre Regeneration
Manchester City Galleries
Neighbourhood Services (Public Realm)
Neighbourhood Team Leader (Arboriculture)
Greater Manchester Police
Historic England (North West)
Environment Agency
Transport for Greater Manchester
Greater Manchester Ecology Unit
Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service
United Utilities Water PLC
National Amenity Societies
Wildlife Trust
Electricity Northwest
Cadent Gas Ltd
Parks, Leisure & Events
Counter Terrorism SA
Greater Manchester Pedestrians Society
Neighbourhood Team Leader (Arboriculture)

A map showing the neighbours notified of the application is attached at the end of the report.

Representations were received from the following third parties:

Relevant Contact Officer : Emily Booth
Telephone number : 0161 234 4193
Email : e.booth@manchester.gov.uk



□ Application site boundary ● Neighbour notification
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