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HERITAGE STATEMENT

UNION BUILDINGS, BURY

REVISION	B
DATE ISSUED	2025
PROJECT REF.	2065

ARCHITECTURE + HERITAGE

AMAZON HOUSE • BRAZIL STREET
MANCHESTER • M1 3PW

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Image: Photograph of Union Buildings at 1 The Rock.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.0

INTRODUCTION

This Heritage Statement accompanies a Listed Building Consent and planning application for Union Buildings, 1 The Rock, Bury.

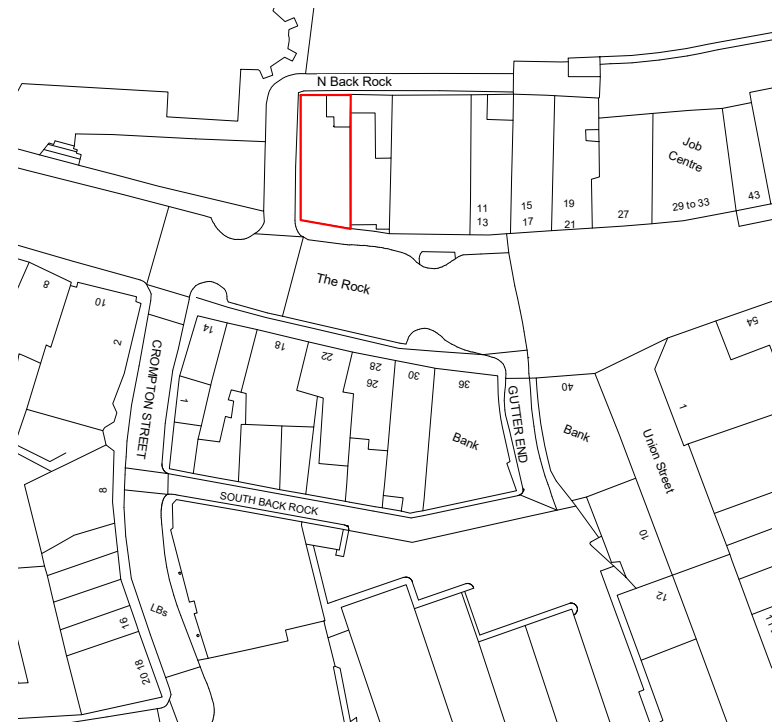
It was produced by Atelier MB and its author is Laura Jessup, MA History and Theory of Architecture, PGCert. Conservation of the Historic Environment.



Image: Historic view of the building (left hand side), 1920.

2.0 LOCATION

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Union Buildings is a four-storey property located at the end of The Rock in Bury Town Centre, adjacent to the St Mary's Church (Bury Parish Church). The building has two frontages- one facing the main thoroughfare of The Rock and a second to the narrow, cobbled, side street, North Back Rock.

The site is within Bury Town Centre Conservation Area, designated in 1978, extended 2005. The Conservation Area Appraisal notes its special characteristics to be the overall Victorian nature of the principal streets, a distinctive and unified character and the grouping of civic and commercial buildings from the town's heyday in the 19th century.

Union Buildings has a prominent position, next to the Parish Church, close to the old Market Place, and at the start of The Rock. Whilst more modern development to the other end of The Rock has moved the retail focus, the historic core of the town remains around the Parish Church and former castle area.



Image: Location map of site.

Image: Aerial photograph of site.

3.0 DESCRIPTION



Image: Union Buildings, primary elevations.

Above the entrance is a date stone from 1874 (external face in stonework). The construction is brick with regular timber framed windows and decorative elements to the faces, and a pitched tiled roof.

The building is listed at Grade II and an extract from the description is included here.

'SD 8010 NW, 1/69
THE ROCK, No 1 (Union Buildings)
26.03.75
II
Dated 1874. Neo-medieval. Red brick with stone dressings and mock timbering with plastered infill (especially to top stages). Corner site. Irregular. Four storeys. Gable front of three bays and 5-bay left-hand return front. Windows generally have straight heads on ground floor, obtusely pointed heads (and ornamental sill-grilles) on first floor, pointed heads and drip moulds on second floor and multiple mullioned lights on top floor (together with small 4-light roundels). Central window on first floor is rectangular oriel, as are two windows on second and third floors of return front, which has elaborate carving over bi-partite entry, incorporating dated coat of arms, surmounted by roundel on first floor under gabled canopy of pierced bargeboards on corbels. Circular corner chimney rising from foliate capital on shaft running towards ground. Steep tiled roof.
Listing NGR: SD8047210856

The site is referred to in the Conservation Appraisal, 'No 1 (Union Buildings), Grade II: 1874. Neo-Gothic four-storey building of red brick with stone dressings, mock timbering and plaster infill. Modern shop front. This building replaced an earlier building on the same footprint which was constructed on the glebe lands of the rector of St Mary's Church.'

In 2015 planning permission and listed building consents were granted for the conversion of Union Buildings to 5 no. apartments within the upper floors.

In 2022, permission and listed building consent were granted for a new scheme with 7 no. flats including additional units to basement and at upper level with an added internal floor. A variation of conditions was submitted in 2025 to amend the apartment layouts.

i) EXTERNAL
There is passing reference to external repairs in the 2015 application, no specific set of proposals was detailed or approved. The intention to carry out external repairs is mentioned again in the 2022 application. From visual inspection, these works appear not to have been completed as yet.

3.0 DESCRIPTION



Image: Stone to external face, 'Union Club Company Limited.'
Image: Roof timbers, visible at top floor level.



Image: Timber roof framing example, to upper floor.
Image: Typical interior.



Image: Side elevation of Union Buildings.
Image: Detail of entrance with date stone, Union Club 1874.

3.0 DESCRIPTION



Image: Evidence of former roof light location- with one pane remaining glazed.
Image: Deteriorating front elevation with timber and plaster.

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In 2022, permission and listed building consent were granted for a new scheme with 7 no. flats including additional units to basement and at upper level with an added internal floor. Amendments to this application were approved in 2025.

i) EXTERNAL
The construction is red brick solid walls with decorative timber and plaster to upper levels. The 2015 application mentions repairs dating from 2007, possibly referring to widespread brickwork repointing on the elevations.

At street level, the original shop frontage has been over-tiled some decades ago. The original polished granite face remains behind later cladding, which is

3.0 DESCRIPTION



Image: Wheel from dumb waiter at third floor.

Image: Original staircase at top level.

coming away in places. Non-original shop signage has been added over the mini market.

ii) INTERNAL

Internal walls have a plaster finish (over board and brick). There is evidence of lath and plaster in some areas, and wallpaper to others and dado rails. Deep skirting boards are present to several rooms, with differing profiles.

Internal walls, their associated finishes and features are of medium heritage value. They do not display any particular architectural or historical interest, but are valuable as evidence of the plan form.

The main stone cantilevered staircase is of high heritage significance and has a curved timber handrail with iron balusters. It is considered to be original and appears to have had little alteration, other than its modern tread covering. A second stair, presumed to be less ornate and described as being in poor condition in the Design and Access Statement from 2015 has been removed as per permissions/consent and the floor in this area infilled (towards the rear of the building).

Two fire place is intact to the rear of the property. They have a degree of architectural value and are good examples of historic decorative features.

To the third floor there is an exposed dumb waiter mechanism, with wheel, pulley and tray. The shaft serving the feature remains . This element is of high evidential value.

A historic light fitting/rose appears to be present within one of the exposed roof tile areas to the fourth floor, but it cannot be fully seen.

Floors have modern boarded over the original timber boards.

iii) WINDOWS

Currently, secondary glazing is in place to a limited number of the front windows facing The Rock. The existing secondary glazing is plain in its form. Its precise age cannot be ascertained. Stained glass remains to main bay windows and the tri-part round decorative windows at upper level, all of high heritage value. Glass is broken in some areas, and a full pane is missing to the front elevation.

The existing window frames are a mixture of those with timber mouldings and historic window furniture (of some heritage value) and replacement of a lower quality but in the same style (limited to no heritage value). To date, the windows are yet to be refurbished

3.0 DESCRIPTION



and a UPVC double glazed unit has been inserted at third floor level to the rear. Previous proposals allowed for the reinstatement of a blocked window to the basement. A number of windows to the side elevation have been removed and boarded over. Several timber sills appear to be rotten, including one in very poor condition in the bay overlooking the Parish Church.

The large bay windows over-looking Bury Parish Church feature deep cills.



Image: Original windows to upper floor.

Image: Original bay window, top floor, with cut frames to edges.

DESCRIPTION



Image: External elevation of Union buildings, with Fletcher & Speight signage clearly identifiable, along with the zip zag pattern to roof.

iv) EXTERNAL ELEVATIONS

There are signs of deterioration and decay to the upper storeys with peeling paint, potentially rotting timbers and a hole to the underside of the front gable plasterwork. Photographs from the 1890s show the exterior to be a lighter colour than the black and white which exists today, but consent has been given to retain the existing colour scheme which has been in place for some decades.

v) ROOF

Historic images and altered roof tiles show that there were previously 4 no. roof lights in groups of two either side of the main ridge. These remain though are partially covered. This feature, originally in glass, has heritage significance as part of the original design.

Historic photographs show that the roof has been altered. The original tiling appears to be in a zigzag pattern, no longer present. Sarking is evident to the underside of the roof covering. Chimneys remain.



Image: Sarking to the underside of the tiled roof.

3.0 HISTORY

3.0 HISTORY



Image: 1936.



Image: Late 19th century– note roof lights zig zag tiling pattern and colour scheme of facade and window frames.

The date stone gives the building the title of 'Union Club'. Little information exists as to details of the club, but it was likely a private establishment with dining facilities, a bar and meeting/socialising spaces. The 'Clarence Club' later occupied the upper floors.

Around the start of the 1900s, the building was used as premises for Fletcher and Speight Printers. Following this, the RAF Association Club used the upper floors, later the space was occupied by a dance school, which was based there until the 1970s. There is no record of a use after this date.

The ground floor has always remained a separate unit, archive photographs show that it was occupied in succession by the Lancashire and Yorkshire Bank, Martins Bank, Barclays Bank and Swinton Insurance. The current tenant is a mini-market which uses the front section of the ground floor and has its own shop entrance.

The building has been much altered inside, with a limited amount of historic and significance fabric remaining.



Image: Aerial view, 1927



Image: Later half of 20th century. Outside plaster and window frames have been painted and roof re-tiled. Rooflight still visible.

4.0 SIGNIFICANCE

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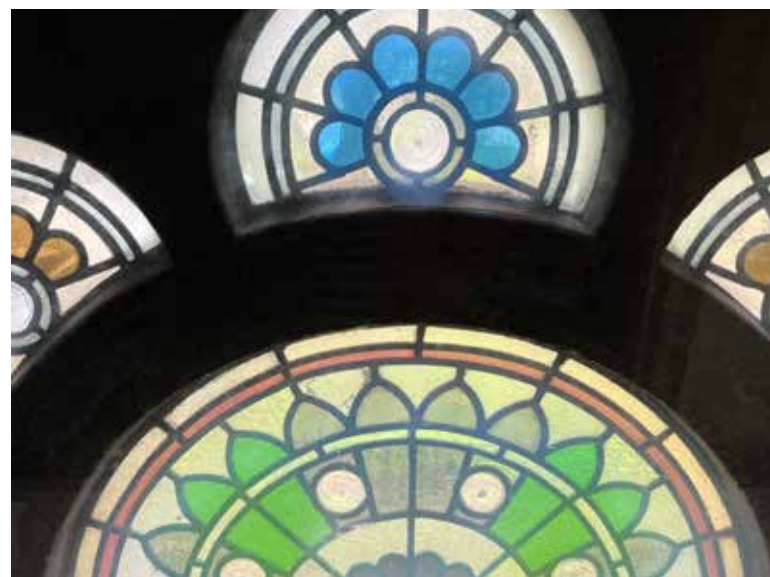
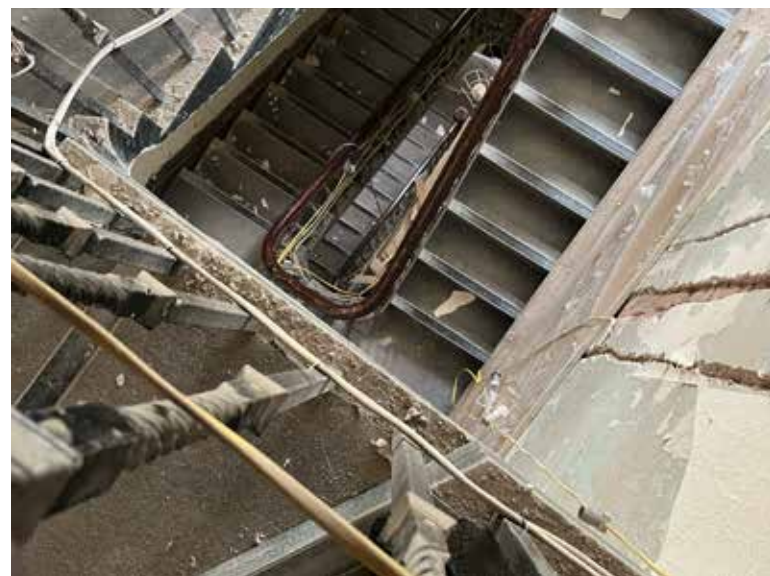


Image: Internal staircase

Image: Detail of stained glass windows.

Significance has been assessed using the criteria set out in Conservation Principles, Historic England.

Evidential and Historical values: Moderate

The external faces of the building show typical features of the architecture north-west towns in the late 19th century: the use of red brick, and timber/plaster detailing reflect the fashion for a type of neo-medieval influenced design. The building is ornate in its detailing and design- a demonstration of the relative wealth and prosperity generated through the textile and coal trades which had been developing in Bury and throughout Lancashire from the late 18th century and exploded in the following century. Despite several changes to the colour scheme and some fabric alteration, the original form of the elevations is clearly discernible. Internally the values have been eroded as almost all features of historical and evidential significance have been lost. The exceptions are the main staircase, exposed timber framework, dumbwaiter/hoist and two remaining fireplaces.

No. 1 The Rock is located in a prominent position next to St Mary's, the parish church, and is evidence of the street as a key thoroughfare within the town at the time of its construction. Although little has been found in relation to its specific use, it was clearly an important club within Bury, as reflected in the ornate and high-quality design of the elevations to two principal facades.

Aesthetic: Moderate/high

The architectural design is ornate and of a high quality. Despite external changes (primarily in terms of the roof finishes, over cladding to the front and external colour palette) it retains a moderate to high level of features and aesthetic value to the exterior faces. The building is an important element in the built fabric of this area of Bury, which forms the historic core of the town, and includes the Parish Church, remains of Bury Castle and Castle Armoury and the Market Place.

Communal: Moderate

Whilst the upper floors of the building have been out of use for some time, it remains a property which is experienced by passers-by, sited at a key location where The Rock thoroughfare begins and next to the Parish Church. It is an important link to the past of the town and a recognisable feature within the townscape.

The prolonged vacancy of the upper floors of the building over several years has contributed to its deteriorating condition, which in turn has had a negative impact upon all heritage values and places it at risk of further degradation. This issue was highlighted in the AHP Bury Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal, dated 2007 (p.71). Specific elements are discussed here.



Image: External elevation, western end.

Image: Existing roof light, partially infilled.

Floors: Unknown extent of original flooring. Where visible the historic surface is simple plain timber boards. They have no discerning features but have some value as original fabric.

Staircase: High heritage significance.

Original windows: High heritage value where present, though a number of frames appear to have been possibly altered, this has been piecemeal over a long period of time, and they retain some historic and evidential value. Stained glass is of high significance, general pattern of glazing panels is of high heritage value, later altered frames have little heritage value.

Roof: Internally, the roof lights which were originally present remain to one side. This is a significant form and part of the historic design. This feature has moderate heritage significance.

External elevations: The two principal external elevations feature timber framing and plaster infill at upper levels and bays. Plaster has been renewed at some point in the past and its current poor condition is having a negative impact upon the significance. The design of the facades is decorative and both The Rock and the side frontage facing the Parish Church have high evidential and aesthetic historical values. At

lower level, the over-cladding to the shop frontage has no value as it exists and is detracting from the overall aesthetic quality of the building and exerting a negative impact upon the special qualities of the Conservation Area. It has not been possible to ascertain to what extent, if any, the original shop frontage may be present beneath the later cladding.

Dumb waiter: This is a feature with strong evidential value, revealing former use. It is of high heritage significance.

Fireplaces remain in two locations on the upper floors and are of moderate heritage significance.



Image: Example of remaining fireplace to upper floor.

5.0 PROPOSALS + IMPACT

5.0 PROPOSALS + IMPACT



Image: Entrance hall at ground floor showing wall, proposed location of new opening.

Proposals relate to a new listed Building Consent and Planning Application for the building, to provide apartment accommodation over all floors of the building.

Overall strategies have been identified for key elements within the building, both internally and externally.

External Walls

Removal of previously installed metal framing and condition assessment of existing lime plaster. Damaged areas to be repaired with like for like lime plaster.

Installation of rigid wood fibre board to existing walls, finished with lime plaster and limewash (final specification to be confirmed).

Skirtings to be carefully removed and re-attached to new wall finishes. Matching skirting to be added where pieces are missing or damaged.

IMPACT: MODERATE BENEFICIAL This approach is considered appropriate: enhancing breathability and ensuring long-term protection of historic fabric whilst offering improvements to thermal and acoustic performance of flats. The skirtings will be moved, but retained.

Internal Walls (New)

New metal stud partitions to be specified with deflection heads to structural engineer's input. All new walls to avoid junctions with existing fireplaces and windows.

IMPACT: NEGLIGIBLE There is a degree of subdivision required to create accommodation but this is not considered to be any more harmful than that already approved in previous application.

Internal Walls (Existing)

In general, internal walls are to be retained. In the rear part of the building, it is necessary to remove a section of internal wall to form an opening within flats 2 and 4 (on floors one and two).

IMPACT: NEGLIGIBLE The amount of fabric to be removed is limited and contains no specific features of interest.

Ground Floor Access to Flat 8

In order to access the ground floor flat, a section of wall is to be removed to form a doorway. This is limited in size to the minimum required and the historic fabric which is affected has no features of special significance.



Floors

Existing floors have been boarded with plywood. A new floor finish will be agreed upon and applied to the substrate with an acoustic separating layer.

IMPACT: NEUTRAL Historic fabric (existing floor boards) will remain protected behind new finishes.

Ceilings (Existing)

Site observations confirm that the original ceilings are constructed from lath and plaster. These will remain in-situ with a new MF ceiling installed, with a cavity of 100mm for general cabling, insulated with 100mm of quilted fibre insulation. Ceiling surface plaster-boarded and skimmed.

IMPACT: NEUTRAL Historic fabric (existing ceilings) to remain protected behind new finishes.

Ceiling in the roof space

The current buildup appears to be roof tiles on timber T&G sarking boarding on rafters with a lath and plaster finish. The proposal is to use wood fibre board on lath and plaster with a 3mm finish. Ceiling build up to be carefully considered in location of roof trusses. No penetrations will be allowed.

IMPACT: NEUTRAL Existing historic fabric will be retained and protected behind new finishes. Timber framework detailing to be retained.

Images, left. Above: Existing window overlooking The Rock
Below: Existing window overlooking the Parish Church.

Basement floor and walls

Excavation of basement, cavity drain membrane system installed with external formed channels, a sump pump, a backup sump pump, and fully designed and installed by a subcontractor with an insurance-backed guarantee to BS 8102:2002. Internal walls will be formed by the main contractor.

IMPACT: NEUTRAL The basement will be retained as a distinct space, ensuring the plan form remains. There are no distinct existing features to walls or floor and the proposal will not impact the heritage significance of the building.

Windows

Type 1 - refurbished with narrow rebate (18mm)

Full refurbishment: removal of frame, stripping to original wood, minor timber splice repairs, primed and top coated. Putty applied to single glazed glass type: Histoglass Mono

Type 2 - refurbished with wider rebate (above 18mm)

Full refurbishment: removal of frame, stripping to original wood, minor timber splice repairs, primed and top coated. Putty applied to single glazed glass type: Histoglass narrow double glazed HD10



Images, Above: Example of windows to The Rock elevation.
Below: Non-original example of window to The Rock elevation.

Window type 3 - existing UPVC

New timber window to match existing pattern with Histoglass narrow double glazed HD10

Window type 4 - existing stained glass

All windows to be retained and refurbished following a survey. Circular stained glass windows to be refurbished and secondary glazing (in matching shape) set in front of them to improve thermal performance.

IMPACT: MODERATE BENEFICIAL The windows are a key component of the character of the building. They exist in different forms, replaced at various points throughout the life of the building. Histoglass has been fitted in Grade I and II* listed buildings including the Tower of London and is considered an appropriate option. The use of this system is considered to be less obtrusive visually and in terms of fabric, than installing secondary glazing systems throughout which will require full internal framing. Mono glass provides single glazing with improved thermal and acoustic properties. Where narrow double glazing is proposed, this is the slimmest option available to ensure the aesthetic properties are retained from inside and from street level. Historic timber frames will remain, ensuring aesthetic and evidential values are retained.

Obscured Glazing

There are two vertical runs of windows to the rear block of the building. One is to remain blocked, as is the existing situation. The second vertical run will have obscured glazing to provide for bathrooms and storage rooms behind.

IMPACT: NEUTRAL Whilst it is acknowledged this is

not an original finish, it is required to give privacy to these rooms. In mitigation, the alteration is reversible and the position has been chosen to offer the least invasive option, away from the more decorative elements of the front elevations and main entrance.

Roof Generally

Patch repairs to be undertaken and lead replacement where appropriate. All repairs to be like-for-like.

IMPACT: MINOR BENEFICIAL

Rooflights (Existing)

To be inspected further once the scaffolding is erected. Existing frames to be refurbished.

Rooflights (New)

New roof lights to be Velux conservation roof lights with auto opening and rain detectors.

IMPACT: MINOR ADVERSE The installation of new rooflights will alter the appearance of the roof.

However, these are deemed necessary in order to provide a re-use of the building. The level of harm is considered to be considerably less than substantial and is justified on the basis that the sustainable reuse of this long-term vacant building is of greater benefit. In mitigation, additions are proposed only where necessary and Conservation Rooflights have been proposed for the benefit of low profiles which avoid disruption to the existing roof plane.



Images, Above: Entrance with timber door, to be retained.
Below: Historic fireplace, to be retained.

External doors

Main entrance door – to be refurbished. Original folding door in front of main door to be refurbished and held open.

IMPACT: NEUTRAL The original doors are to be retained.

New external door to flat- PAS 24 solid door.

IMPACT: NEUTRAL This is a door on the more functional rear elevation where a solid door is an appropriate response.

Internal Staircase

To remain and be refurbished. The height of the balustrade is to be agreed with building control as additional height may be a requirement.

Fireplaces

There are two complete fireplaces to the third floor (not necessarily original). These have a degree of evidential and historic value and are to be retained and exposed within the accommodation.

IMPACT: MINOR BENEFICIAL

Dumb Waiter

Existing dumb waiter head to be exposed at 3rd floor level. Existing vertical run to remain and be incorporated as storage at each level, with 60 minute fire protection infill inserted to provide fire protection between floors.

IMPACT: MINOR POSITIVE The retention of the dumb waiter and its run, will preserve evidential and historical value and create an aesthetic feature. It is understood that fire separation between floors is necessary to reduce risk of damage or loss of historic fabric. This separation is reversible and has limited impact upon the historic feature.

Basement Access

The existing basement door to be blocked up and new door inserted on adjacent wall. Access steps to be reconfigured to suit.

IMPACT: NEGLIGIBLE The existing access is a functional entry point to the rear, with negligible heritage significance. Reconfiguration is necessary if the basement is to be made into a viable space for occupation.

Rainwater Goods

Plastic rainwater goods to be removed and replaced with cast iron, painted black, throughout.

IMPACT: MODERATE POSITIVE A return to a high quality finish,, similar to those originally installed represents an enhancement to the elevations and will ensure protection of the historic fabric.

External venting

All external venting to be kept away from the two principal elevations (that to The Rock and that facing the Parish Church).

IMPACT: NEUTRAL



Images, Above: Basement showing existing openings.
Below: Existing basement openings and pavement lightwell.

Basement Windows and Pavement Lights

The basement has lightwell openings to the side elevation, which run to pavement level. These are to be retained and windows inserted within the external wall openings. A chamfered edge will be added within the space to reflect natural light into the basement from above. At pavement level, traditional cast iron pavement lights will be inserted into the 2 former openings and within a new opening made at the furthest end of the building (serving Flat 7 bedroom).
IMPACT: MODERATE POSITIVE Adding cast iron pavement lights is considered to be an appropriate solution, sympathetic to the age of the building. Providing natural light within the basement will enable its re-use.

Side panel next to front door

There is non-original infill to the opening on the right hand side of the front door. The timber boarding will be removed and the opening used to fit post boxes for the development, accessible from either side.
IMPACT: NEUTRAL This is considered to be the most appropriate and least harmful location for post boxes. There is no degree of harm to historic fabric as a result of this change.

External repairs to elevation fabric have already been approved as part of the previous application for this building.



6.0 PLANNING CONTEXT

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Image: Rear elevation

NATIONAL POLICY

The main heritage planning considerations affecting this site is its Grade II listed status and its place in the Conservation Area.

The legislation concerning built heritage is contained within Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Government Policy is set out within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, updated 2023).

Statutory legislation states that special regard should be given to ‘the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any feature of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.’ Clause 66. Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990.

The NPPF recognises that sympathetic changes to heritage assets are necessary to ensure their viable ongoing use, but that alterations must be justified and their impact upon significance assessed. This report meets the requirements of NPPF, paragraph 210, ‘In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting’. Paragraph 203 states, ‘In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to uses consistent with their conservation;

b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.’

The significance of this building will be retained and enhanced through ongoing improvement to a space which is currently vacant and unused. Works are considered compatible with historic fabric and seek to adapt the space for re-use, whilst retaining and maintaining the asset for the future.

Paragraph 212 states, ‘When considering the impact of proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation.’

Proposals have been designed to retain historic features and fabric where present and to repair and retain external elevations and internal details.

Paragraph 215 states, ‘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, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.’

6.0 PLANNING CONTEXT

It should be noted that the original plans were approved and Bury MBC staff noted that there was little historic fabric remaining before works were undertaken. Wherever possible, new proposals seek to re-expose those historic details which do remain and improved strategies for their retention and protection in the long-term will be employed.

LOCAL POLICY

Places for Everyone is Greater Manchester's joint development plan. Policy JP-P2 relates to heritage and states that particular consideration will be given to ensuring 'the significance of key elements of the historic environment which contribute to Greater Manchester's distinct identity and sense of place are protected from harm' and that positive management and integration of heritage should be informed by 'delivering positive benefits that sustain and enhance the historic environment as well as contributing to the economic vitality, accessibility and environmental quality of a place.'

The proposals are considered to accord with local and national policy.

7.0 CONCLUSION

7.0 CONCLUSION



Image: External elevation showing main entrance.

Union Buildings are of heritage significance, demonstrated by their listed status. Their place within the Bury Town Centre Conservation Area and alongside the listed Bury Parish Church are also of importance.

The proposals within this application are considered to offer an enhancement to the significance of the listed building by better revealing the remaining features of significance; proposing appropriate new interventions where needed; improving the condition, repair and long-term protection of historic fabric; and ensuring the building is sympathetically upgraded.

The loss of historic fabric has been limited to the level necessary to allow for practical re-use. In all instances where proposals result in harm, this is considered to be at a minor level and certainly less than substantial. In every case the proposals are considered justified and outweighed by the greater benefit of bringing the building back in to sustainable use.

Proposals are considered to accord with both national and local policy.

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ARCHITECTURE + HERITAGE

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