

REPORT TO:	Planning Committee
APPLICATION REF:	11/23/0364 AND 11/24/0026
APPLICATION ADDRESS:	Former Law Courts and Police Station, Manchester Road, Accrington, BB5 2BH
DEVELOPMENT DESCRIPTION:	Major Full: Conversion and extension of former Law Courts and Police station to form offices, cafe and 25no apartments including internal and external alterations AND Listed Building Consent: Conversion and extension of former Law Courts and Police station to form offices, cafe and 25no apartments including internal and external alterations
DATE REPORT WRITTEN:	8 July 2025

Late Information Report

The LPA have received further comments/correspondence from the following consultees:

Growth Lancashire: 01/07/2025: Their view remains that the proposal would cause a low to moderate level of less than substantial harm due to the loss of historic fabric and introduction of non-traditional materials and style of windows. As the applicant has not submitted any further justification, and only have the original whole building window quotes, they do not believe that the proposal is justified under paragraph 213 of the Framework. Nevertheless, it is up to the LPA to decide if the identified level of harm is outweighed by the public benefits. Regarding the internal courtyard section/elevation, the external construction of the walkway is not clear but could be dealt with by condition.

Historic England: 2 July 2025: While aluminium windows across the whole building would be preferable, the Manchester Road façade and the corner section that wraps around to Spring Gardens are the most prominent and the obvious choice for high-quality windows. It is great news that these could be installed within the project budget. There would be some harm to the significance of the listed building and the CA due to the use of uPVC windows elsewhere on the building. However, they consider this to be at the lower end of less than substantial due to the lower status of these facades.

LCC Highways: 3 July 2025: They do not provide detailed cost estimates but advise that a traffic regulation order (TRO) would cost around £5,000 and the footway works circa £30,000 to £50,000. The developer would need a consultant to design the scheme and a contractor to deliver it via an agreement under Section 278 of the Highways Act 1980 (as amended). The final cost would depend on the consultant and contractor selected and the timing of the works.

LCC cannot accept a commuted sum as they do not have the resources to deliver small-scale developer-led schemes.

Twentieth Century Society: 2 July 2025:

- The latest online documents show uPVC windows. If these are still proposed for the building frontage, they object to the application.
- There is no justification from calculations that the introduction of secondary glazing or aluminium frame double glazing would make the scheme unviable such that paragraph 213 of the Framework (requiring clear and convincing justification for harm) is not met.
- The Report on Window Condition indicates that there are multiple windows on the primary elevations that are in 'good' condition. The Society support the retention of these windows with the installation of secondary glazing. Given the state of repair of the other windows, they do not object to their replacement with suitable aluminium or steel framed double-glazed windows. However, they will continue to object to the proposed uPVC windows, particularly when the viability assessment indicates that there would be a surplus profit that could be utilised for alternative window frames.
- They remain concerned about the potential loss of original internal fabric and features and would welcome more information and photographs. They need to know exactly what exists and what would be removed to understand the impact of the proposal as per paragraph 207 of the Framework (relating to level of detail to understand the potential impact of a proposal on significance).
- They require further information on the disposal or storage of the courtroom furniture and on any internal alterations that could impact areas of interest. It is unclear where the fixed furniture would be located to or reused in this application.
- There are inconsistencies in the application such as the proposed upper ground floor plans showing the main court converted into a café, bar, lounge, and furniture room but the viability assessment showing the courtroom being converted into offices. There are previously mentioned inconsistencies regarding the proposed windows. They would appreciate if superseded drawings and documents could be noted as such and if they could be updated to remain consistent with the proposals.

Observations

1. Impact on the character and appearance of the area, including the Christ Church CA and the setting and significance of grade II listed buildings 'Magistrates Courts' and 'Fire Station'

- 1.1. The Twentieth Century Society question the need to replace all existing single-glazed steel windows, citing the Report on Window Condition, which identifies 11 of the around 55 windows on highway-facing elevations as being in good condition. However, the cost of refurbishing the remaining 44 would be around £183,000, which exceeds the £90,000 surplus identified by the Independent Viability Assessment (which must also cover the off-site highway improvements). The case for replacing the existing windows is generally accepted by Historic England and Growth Lancashire. Therefore, there is sufficient justification for replacing the windows.
- 1.2. The Twentieth Century Society further state that no calculations demonstrate the unviability of secondary glazing or aluminium-framed double glazing. However, the agent has submitted quotes indicating refurbishment costs of around £4,160 per window, likely excluding the cost of secondary glazing. Refurbishing all highway-facing windows would total around £260,000, well above the surplus. Similarly, the cost of aluminium windows to all elevations would exceed the surplus. Therefore, a case can be made for a mix of uPVC and aluminium replacement windows, subject to condition.
- 1.3. Concerns from the Twentieth Century regarding the loss of historic internal fabric and courtroom furniture are addressed by conditions 8 and 9 of the LBC application, and the use of the courtrooms by conditions 2 and 24 of the full planning application.
- 1.4. Growth Lancashire argues that the original window quotes are insufficient for justifying inappropriate replacements. However, for the reasons given, the evidence provided is considered adequate. They state that the latest proposed window scheme (aluminium on Manchester Road and quadrant; uPVC elsewhere) would result in a low to moderate level of less than substantial to the application building.
- 1.5. Historic England are the most positive of the heritage consultees and suggest that the latest proposed window scheme would reduce the harm to the listed building and the CA to the lower end of the less than substantial harm spectrum.

2. Impact on highway safety and transport

- 2.1. LCC Highways estimate that the off-site improvements would cost in the region of £35,000 to £50,000. Therefore, it is likely that the cost of the improvements could be provided for by the £90,000 surplus, along with some aluminium replacement windows.

3. Conclusion

- 3.1. In conclusion, the late information does not substantively change the assessment of the applications or the ultimate recommendations.