## EIA Quality Mark Case Study

### Factory, St. John’s, Manchester

### Key Issues:

There were a number of key issues that needed to be addressed through the EIA and design process, including:

- **The surrounding context**, including the St. John’s Masterplan and how these future developments were considered in the EIA cumulative assessment.
- **The availability of existing baseline information** from surrounding development sites, as well as the original planning application, and how that could be used within the iterative EIA process.
- **The Site’s location**, which spanned over an existing adopted highway and Grade II Listed former railway viaduct, which was potentially susceptible to vibration impacts, as well as its close proximity to the new Ordsall Chord rail link and other Network Rail infrastructure requiring on-going maintenance.
- **The Site’s location** within an existing Conservation Area and in close proximity to a number of Grade I and Grade II Listed heritage assets forming part of the MSI site. The impact of the proposed demolition, as well as the scale, massing and materiality of the proposed development, had potential for a significant environmental effect to their setting.
- **The proposed use** as a performance space with potential significant noise-generating uses operating throughout the day, evening and weekends, within the context of a future residential neighbourhood.
- **Identifying the EIA requirements** for the revised planning application, including the need for any additional assessment arising from the coming into force of the 2017 EIA Regulations.

### Purpose of the project:

St. John’s is a proposed new mixed use neighbourhood within Manchester City Centre, to be developed on the former site of Granada Television. It will be delivered by Allied London with Manchester City Council, in accordance with an adopted Masterplan and Framework. Factory will be the cultural centrepiece, acting as a catalyst in the making of an enterprise and production district, which delivers economic growth by clustering creative industries, digital and education partners.

### Description of the project:

The Site is located within the St. John’s Masterplan, on a site bound by the River Irwell and surface car parking (currently in use for construction of the Ordsall Chord rail link) to the west, Grape Street and the Bonded Warehouse to the east, the Museum of Science and Industry (MSI), including the 1830 Warehouse (Grade I Listed) to the south and surface car parking to the north. The Site is approximately 1.80 ha and is currently occupied by surface car parking, the Starlight theatre and Grade II Listed Colonnaded Railway Viaduct (both formerly in use for filming and storage). Water Street runs through the Site. The surrounding area is defined by a mix of commercial, leisure and residential uses. The proposals involve demolition of the Starlight theatre and other buildings to enable delivery of Factory, which will comprise flexible spaces for theatre, music, dance, art and other performance-related events and ancillary facilities, including retail and bar, back of house function, servicing and access, and external landscaped areas. The proposals will be delivered in a single phase over a 3 year construction period. Planning Permission was originally secured in January 2017; a new planning application to reflect design amendments is due to submitted in April 2018.
Lessons learnt:
Given the proximity of the site to constraints such as the highly graded Listed Buildings, both (future) live and former railway lines and adopted highway, it was critical that the design team undertook early engagement with a range of stakeholders to develop an understanding of how the constraints might affect the design process. Through earlier consultation on the Masterplan, positive working relationships had already been established with key consultees including Historic England, Network Rail and MCC Environmental Health. Through existing relationships, it was possible to share more detailed information regarding the baseline site conditions in relation to archaeology through work that Network Rail had completed to support the Ordsall Chord development. This was particularly helpful, as due to the on-going construction of the Ordsall Chord, it was not possible to access this part of the site until a date much later than the target date for submission of the planning application and EIA to the LPA. This information was referenced in the EIA Scoping to demonstrate that the proposed development wouldn’t have a significant environmental effect in relation to archaeology; it was possible to scope out archaeology.

The Masterplan work had already established that the Site would be the most appropriate broad location for the Factory use; through design evolution with input from the technical consultants, alternatives were considered in terms of the exact location, orientation and materiality of the development. These factors were explained in the Environmental Statement (ES) and included the decision to shift the building footprint to avoid more significant physical impact in cultural heritage terms to the Grade II Listed Viaduct.

Given the proposed use, noise was an important consideration from the early stages and an iterative design process, with early input from the acoustician was essential. The intention was to ensure that the envelope could accommodate the ultra-flexible design, providing space capable of configuration in multiple modes for simultaneous performances, whilst enabling a range of noise generating activities to take place without leading to adverse significant environmental effects. Again, in the early stages of design and testing as part of the EIA, alternatives were considered for the final siting of the building and the adjacent Masterplan uses, which resulted in the building moving slightly and also in a future residential building being re-located. There was still potential for noise and vibration to give rise to significant environmental effects, particularly during construction, so despite extensive design work being completed.

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