

Public statement

Proposals for the relocation of Manchester Cenotaph and associated memorials



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Status: Immediate release

Starts

War Memorials Trust has provided comments on the planning applications relating to the proposed relocation of the Manchester Cenotaph. Whilst the Trust agrees that the memorial is in need of some conservation and repair we are, at present, objecting to the proposal for the relocation of this important Grade II* Lutyens memorial and the later associated plaques.

War Memorials Trust does not have a blanket opposition to relocation. If evidence demonstrating a need, and all relevant research and investigations has been done, then we accept it is sometimes necessary. All of our comments on this proposal, summarised below, are based on the information currently made publicly accessible through the planning system. We do not feel all appropriate investigations have been shown to be undertaken. However, we will be happy to comment further should additional information become available.

War Memorials Trust has been involved in some meetings with Manchester City Council and Stephen Levrant: Heritage Architecture Ltd. regarding these proposals. At these meetings the Trust has raised a number of issues and reservations over the proposals. These include the loss of the group value between the Cenotaph and St Peters cross as well as the site more widely. Lutyens originally designed the memorial for this specific site and expressed a wish for the cross to remain in its location.

War Memorials Trust only recommends relocation where a memorial is no longer publicly accessible or is at risk. This is due to the impact that relocation can have upon the longevity and structural integrity of the memorial. In addition relocation can negatively affect the significance of a memorial by disassociating it with its original site and any significance this was perceived to have.

In this case, whilst access has been somewhat restricted as a result of later interventions, the site is still accessible. The site of the memorial was always surrounded by tram lines which would have dictated the manner in which people interacted with and used the Cenotaph. The primary justification given for the relocation in the application documents is the restrictions posed on Remembrance Services by the position of the 1992 tram stops. However Remembrance Services have always had to function around the use of the area for trams and the form of services is naturally subject to change. As such this alone cannot be considered suitable justification for the relocation of a nationally important memorial as the public benefit would not seem to outweigh the harm caused to the heritage significance. As the new location is on a corner, this area will still be affected by paraphernalia relating to the tram route and therefore will only provide a slightly improved situation from the current location.

The supporting application documents do not explore alternatives to relocation, such as appropriate alteration to the later 1992 tram works, to address the current issues relating to the tram routes. It is not necessary to relocate the memorial to provide an enhanced setting for it or to improve the situation for the holding of Remembrance Services. In addition the necessary repair and conservation works to the memorial can be undertaken without the relocation of the Cenotaph.

War Memorials Trust has also provided comments on the proposed methods for relocation and conservation.

Ends

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Notes to editors

1. War Memorials Trust is an independent registered charity. Established in 1997 due to concerns about neglect and vandalism it works to protect and conserve war memorials. It provides advice, information and administers grants schemes that assist the repair and conservation of war memorials across the UK. As a charity the Trust relies on voluntary contributions to undertake its work. Supporters include annual and life members, donors, charitable trusts and corporate contributors.
2. War Memorials Trust provides grants that can assist repair and conservation of war memorials. Contact the Conservation Team to discuss eligibility on 020 7233 7356 / 0300 123 0764 or conservation@warmemorials.org or download an 'Expression of interest form' from www.warmemorials.org/grants/.
3. War Memorials Trust provides a free advisory service to anyone with a war memorial enquiry. Specialist Conservation Officers are available on 020 7233 7356 / 0300 123 0764 or conservation@warmemorials.org.
4. Details of grants made can be viewed on the Trust's Grants Showcase www.warmemorials.org/search-grants/. You can search by area, scheme, value and type of work.