



24th January 2022

Anthony Mitchell
Manchester City Council
City Centre Team – Development Management
P.O. Box 532
Town Hall
Manchester
M60 2LA

Dear Anthony,

Righton Building, Manchester Metropolitan University: Combined Design and Access Statement with Heritage Statement

1. Introduction

- i. This combined Design and Access Statement with Heritage Statement has been prepared by Stephen Levrant Heritage Architecture (SLHA) on behalf of Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU). The Righton Building (the site) is Grade II listed (list entry no. 1197781 and **Figure 1**).
- ii. The Righton Building was constructed in 1905 as a Drapers Warehouse with the basement floor level forming a storeroom for products and other ancillary uses such as staff WC's, plant rooms and a vault, the area was not designed to be publicly accessible and therefore was not constructed with decorative finishes like the ground and first floors. The building was subsequently purchased by MMU, firstly being used as the student's union before being converted for use by the universities fashion department. Most recently the basement has been used for plant and secure storage.
- iii. The listed building is currently owned by MMU and is proposed to be redeveloped as an educational facility. The key objective of the following statement concerns the removal of a modern plasterboard ceiling, proposed replacement of the incomplete lath and plaster ceiling, to enabling cleaning and removal of asbestos contamination within the basement of the Grade II listed building.

2. Planning Policy Context

- i. The key planning policy documents are respectively, the: Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2021), and relevant Manchester City Council policies in regard to heritage that maintain the policy of the NPPF.
- ii. The policies in the NPPF constitute the Government's view of what sustainable development means in practice. The definition requires development to give due weight to the appropriate

conservation of heritage assets in order to be defined as sustainable development (**paragraph 8.c**). This is because one of the key dimensions of sustainability is protecting and enhancing the historic environment. It is thus necessary to demonstrate that the proposals for the site are demonstrably sustainable.

- iii. This statement has been prepared in the context of relevant national and local heritage planning policy. Of particular relevance is **paragraph 194**, which states that *“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.”* (NPPF, 2021).
- iv. The content and level of detail of the document accords with the NPPF (2021) requirements, as well as Historic England’s October 2019 guidance on the structure and form of Heritage Statements. The NPPF emphasizes that the level of detail submitted in support of applications for planning permission should be no more than is necessary to reach an informed decision and should be proportionate to the significance of the heritage asset(s) affected and the impact on that significance (**paragraph 194**).
- iv. Due to the minor proposals that impact the internal subsidiary basement space of the building, the level of detail afforded by the Heritage Statement will be proportionate to the potential for impacting the identified heritage assets.

3. Relevant Planning History

- i. The Righton Building has been granted a number of planning permission and listed building consents over the past 25 years, the following applications are associated with the basement level of the building:
- ii. A change of use application was made in 2002 under the following application:

064863/FO/CITY2/02
Change of use of building from arts and design workshops and exhibition area to office use (B1) and elevational alterations.
- v. In 2003 listed building consent was granted for works to the basement identified in the following application:

Listed Building Consent 068333/LO/2003/C2
LISTED BUILDING CONSENT internal alterations to basement including under drawing of existing plaster ceiling and installation of new boiler.
- vi. Additional planning and listed building consent applications were made in 2012:

Planning Permission 100564/FO/2012/C1 and Listed Building Consent 100565/LO/2012/C1
Formation of a glazed link at ground floor level between the Righton Building and Cavendish South, and formation of 4no. windows in rear wall of the Righton Building, together with minor internal alterations to the Righton Building.

- vii. It is our understanding that no works to the basement were undertaken within the 2012 application, but it is included for reference due to the extensive refurbishment at ground floor and upper floor levels that this is associated with.

4. Heritage Context and significance of the ceiling

- i. The Righton Building was designated Grade II listed on the 11th June 1991. The complete list description can be found in Appendix A.
- ii. The building is not within a conservation area.
- iii. A comprehensive significance appraisal of the building was undertaken in June 2021 by SLHA, however further assessment of the basement space can now be undertaken following the removal of the modern plasterboard ceilings and elements of no significance.
- iv. The surviving but incomplete lath and plaster ceiling to the basement is of considerable significance to the building in understanding the buildings original form and the basement as an ancillary store room to the above drapers warehouse and showroom.
- v. The modern plasterboard ceiling is of no significance and was detrimental to being able to appreciate the original form and use of the basement space.



Figure 1: The Righton Building as viewed from Cavendish Street (Source: SLHA 2019).

5. Proposals and Options Appraisal

- i. The basement has been restricted access due to the contamination of asbestos throughout the space, this has been in place since 2017 and has therefore put great strain on the ability to maintain, repair and upgrade the buildings Mechanical & Electrical equipment that are located in the basement. As multiple failures occurred through 2019-2021, as well as the

prospect of converting the basement for new studio and workshop space, a primary phase of asbestos removal works was therefore embarked upon in 2021.

- ii. The works to the basement have been planned to safeguard the surviving historic fabric of the basement, whilst also ensuring that the space can be successfully de-contaminated and not place any restrictions on the future use.
- iii. Prior to commencing the project, it was not possible to ascertain the extent of surviving lath and plaster ceiling or condition due to the installation of a modern plasterboard ceiling that under drew this ceiling (see relevant planning history above). The project therefore commenced with the approach to maximize the retention of the lath and plaster ceiling if it survived in good enough condition to have not become contaminated with suspected asbestos.
- iv. On completion of the removal of the modern plasterboard ceiling, the lath and plaster ceiling has been found to be in poor condition, with much of the plaster failed and lath broken from historic works, with further testing and analysis showing extensive contamination of the ceiling void as well (between lath and plaster and floorboards above, see accompanying MMU Righton Building Asbestos Removal Project report and Letter from Santia as Asbestos surveyors to the project for full details of asbestos contamination).
- v. Additionally, the ceiling is scattered with penetrations from both historic and current mechanical and electrical pipework and cabling.
- vi. Options have subsequently been assessed for how best to proceed, with the following options being considered:
 - a. Retention and encapsulation
 - b. Reinstatement of the consented under drawings of the ceiling
 - c. Full removal of the lath and plaster, decontamination, and reinstatement
- vii. Option A was considered, however has had to be discounted due to the need to access the ceiling void for maintenance of the M&E, with this option also retaining asbestos contamination within what will become a publicly accessible space and placing extensive constraints on the proposed re-use.
- viii. Option B was discounted due to the ongoing issues this would maintain and the heritage impact of the previously consented works.
- ix. With the asbestos remediation works needing to take into consideration the ongoing maintenance, repair and upgrade of the M&E equipment, as well as the subsequent refurbishment and occupation of the basement space, it has ultimately been concluded that option C to fully remove the lath and plaster ceiling, decontamination of asbestos and reinstatement of the lath and plaster ceiling is being proposed.
- x. The original lath and plaster ceiling is constructed of sawn softwood lath with a two coat haired lime plaster (see figure 6 and 7 below), the proposed reinstatement will match this specification through the use of a sawn larch lath and a two coat lime plaster.



Figure 2 and 3: View of the modern c. 2003 plasterboard under drawing to the ceiling, with detail around the column head and primary structural beam being disguised.



Figure 4 and 5: Views of the surviving lath and plaster ceiling as uncovered in January 2022, not the non-decorative, incomplete nature with a large number of services running through the ceiling.

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Figure 6 and 7: Close up view of saw softwood laths and section through the plaster showing two coat lime based plaster.

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4.0 Impact Assessment and Conclusion

- i. Contamination with asbestos containing materials and asbestos dust has resulted in a difficult situation to balance the loss of historic fabric, remediation works, retaining the building in use as well as bringing the basement level back into use.
- ii. The removal of the unsympathetic c. 2003 modern plasterboard ceiling has a minor beneficial impact on the building.
- iii. The proposed works will result in the loss of the original but incomplete lath and plaster ceiling to the basement, which will result in a **minor adverse impact** to the buildings special interest.
- iv. The loss of historic fabric is however partially counterbalanced through the reinstatement of the ceiling on a **like for like** basis.
- v. Through this reinstatement, the basements legibility as a non-decorative back of house space will be restored, whilst also restoring the basement spaces proportions with the original ceiling height also being restored.
- vi. On balance, it is therefore considered that the proposed works will have an overall **neutral impact on the buildings special interest**.
- vii. The proposed works will also enable the building to continue to be occupied through the maintenance and repair of M&E equipment that requires full access to the basement.
- viii. The asbestos remediation works will ultimately enable the continued use of the whole building, but more importantly enable the basement to be brought back into use and maintain the building in a sustainable and viable use consistent with its conservation.
- ix. This Heritage Statement has provided an assessment of the potential impact of the proposed works, being proportionate to the scale of proposals, it therefore meets the requirement of the NPPF in its proportional assessment of the potential impact of the proposed works.
- x. Although the proposals result in loss of historic fabric, this is balanced through the reversal of previously consented unsympathetic works to the ceiling and outweighed by the benefits that are gained to both the building as a whole and bringing the basement back into use.

Yours sincerely,



Declan Cahill
BSc(Hons), IHBC
Historic Building Surveyor
For and on behalf of Heritage Architecture Ltd

APPENDIX A – Historic England List Description

RIGHTON BUILDING

Overview

Heritage Category: Listed Building

Grade: II

List Entry Number: 1197781

Date first listed: 11-Jun-1991

Date of most recent amendment: 06-Jun-1994

Statutory Address: RIGHTON BUILDING, CAVENDISH STREET

Location

Statutory Address: RIGHTON BUILDING, CAVENDISH STREET

The building or site itself may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

District: Manchester (Metropolitan Authority)

Parish: Non Civil Parish

National Grid Reference: SJ8425196984

Details

MANCHESTER

SJ8497 CAVENDISH STREET 698-1/20/591 (South side) 11/06/91 Chorlton-On-Medlock Righton Building

GV II

Formerly known as: Cavendish House CAVENDISH STREET Chorlton-On-Medlock. Draper's shop and showrooms, now annex to school of art. 1905, altered. White glazed brick and buff terracotta, slate and glass roof. Rectangular plan on corner site, with chamfered corner. Two storeys over cellars, 5 windows to Cavendish Street plus the corner to the left; ground floor altered; terracotta sill-band, frieze, cornice and shaped parapet, the centre arched with a finial and displaying a banner with raised lettering "A.D. RIGHTON 1905"; transomed canted oriel windows of 8 lights to the centre and 6 lights to the outer bays and the corner. Left return side (to Higher Ormond Street), 11 bays, the first 5 altered at ground floor as the front, the next 3 with oval windows at ground floor, and the last 3 with oriel windows and a doorway, all with a plain frieze and dentilled cornice, and at 1st floor canted 8-light oriels alternating with transomed 6-light windows, a segmental-arched upstand to the parapet over each of the latter, with moulded terracotta decoration. Interior: central atrium with gallery of superimposed cast-iron columns, the lower with open-work brackets forming elliptical arches and the upper with Corinthian capitals supporting a panelled frieze, with set-back glazed screen walls to both floors, Art Nouveau wrought-iron balustrades to the gallery, and a glazed roof supported by slender iron trusses with open-work spandrels.

Listing NGR: SJ8425196984

Legacy

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

Legacy System number: 387974

Legacy System: LBS

Legal

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

End of official listing