

Jersey Street Canal Bridge – Heritage Statement

Introduction

- 1 This report has been prepared to support the planning application, being submitted by Manchester City Council, for the demolition of the Jersey Street Canal Bridge and adjacent tree.
- 2 The Jersey Street Bridge crosses a now filled-in canal spur just to the north of the Rochdale Canal at the eastern side of Ancoats.
- 3 Whilst the bridge is not protected as a statutorily ‘listed building’, or currently identified as a non-designated heritage asset, it is situated within the Ancoats Conservation Area (designated in 1989).
- 4 This report considers its history and significance and considers of its demolition as part of the regeneration of the area and specifically as part of the proposed linear park identified in the Ancoats & New Islington NDF (Character Area 3 – Poland Street, June 2020). The removal of Jersey Street bridge and associated levels would effectively be the enabling works for the creation of the linear park.
- 5 The report has been prepared for Manchester City Council by Nick Collins BSc (Hons) MSc MRICS IHBC of KMHHeritage. Nick has twenty years’ experience in the property sector, including nine years at Historic England as a Principal Inspector of Historic Buildings & Areas where he led a specialist team of historic building inspectors, architects, and archaeologists on a wide range of heritage projects in East & South London. Nick knows the Ancoats area well and has worked on the delivery of a number of key projects in the area since 2014, including Murrays Mills and New Little Mill, and has also recently been involved in the application to regenerate and restore the Ancoats Dispensary building.

Background

- 6 The Manchester Canal and its branches dissected Ancoats into smaller parcels - the Ashton-under-Lyne Canal (1796) passed through its southern half and the Rochdale Canal (1804) its northern – in between, a proliferation of canal branches and wharves served the new steam-powered factories and textile mills. These would be built on an unprecedented scale to satiate the burgeoning consumer demand for textiles and other goods both at home and abroad. By 1800 there were more than 40 cotton spinning mills in the Manchester area, more than half of them steam-powered, and Ancoats was at its centre.¹
- 7 The small extract from Pigot’s New Plan of Manchester 1819 below shows Jersey Street crossing a canal spur at the top right hand side of the map in figure 1. Figure 2 is a more detailed map prepared in 1851 by Adshead. These maps show that whilst the canal spur

¹ Palmer, M, Nevell, M and Sissons, M (2012). Industrial archaeology handbook. York: Council for British Archaeology.

and road crossing existed as far back as 1819 the canal crossing itself was a much narrower bridge – reducing in width to little more than a single track/pedestrian crossing.



Figure 1&2: Pigot's Map of Manchester 1819 and Adshead's Map of 1851

- 8 By the late 19th century Ancoats was fully developed and the 1888 Ordnance Survey Map of the area shows the Rochdale Canal running south-west north-east with several branches running off from it serving private factory wharves and through an entirely urbanised area (fig. 3²)



Figure 3: Ordnance Survey Map 1888 to 1891

- 9 By the later 19th century, the bridge had been replaced with one that provided a full width carriageway across the canal spur. This can also be seen on the 1888 Ordnance Survey Map (fig.3).
- 10 Following the Second World War, branches of the Rochdale Canal began to be filled-in and Ancoats became increasingly run-down as the heavy industry which had characterised it

² OS Lancashire CIV.NE (includes: Manchester.) Surveyed: 1888 to 1891, Published: 1891.

began to close down, not to be replaced. The canal spur that once flowed under the Jersey Street Bridge was one of these filled-in spurs.

- 11 A photograph of 1972 (figure 4) shows a view looking north from the Rochdale Canal towards the Jersey Street canal bridge. The view looks directly along the former canal spur, which has been filled in. The remnants of the Hearth Stone Manufactory building still stand to the right and a boundary wall that would have once backed onto the canal spur can be seen to the left. The image graphically illustrates the area's decline (fig. 4³).



Figure 4: Jersey Street Bridge over the former branch of the Rochdale Canal 1972

- 12 Whilst the bridge remains in-situ today it serves no purpose and is recognisable only by a slight hump in the road and a small stretch of stone parapet wall on either side of the road (see figures 5-8), whilst from the former canal spur itself it provides an incongruous barrier. (see figures 9&10).

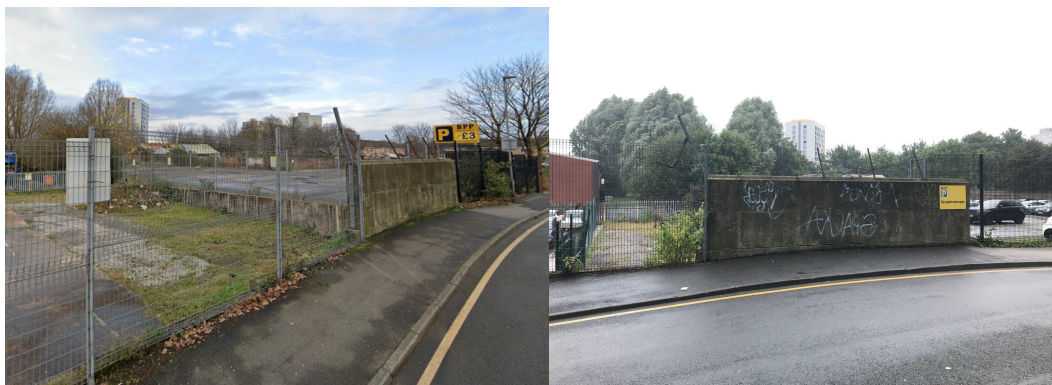


Figure 5&6: The remnants of the Jersey Street Bridge and former canal spur.

³ © Manchester City Library Image Collections ref. m14229



Figures 7,8 & 9,10 the southern parapet and the approach to the bridge from the west and the view looking south along the canal spur showing the 'barrier' now caused by the bridge

- 13 As can be seen from these images the structure is (as would be expected) entirely utilitarian and functional and does not possess any elements of architectural detailing. Due to modern land ownership and new boundaries the structures do not even relate obviously to the former canal spur anymore – as is apparent in Figure 5 above, where a modern fence and hardstanding cuts across the former line of the canal.

Heritage Significance

- 14 The bridge and the former canal spur lie within the Ancoats Conservation Area. This recognises that the juxtaposition and inter-linking of manufacturing, transport and residential uses meant that Ancoats functioned as the first industrial estate in the world. The principal buildings are the massive cotton spinning mills, which are located adjacent to the Rochdale Canal and the nearby housing.
- 15 The canal network is clearly an important part of the character of the area, and the remnants of its former spurs also contribute to a historical understanding of the evolution of the area, and how it operated.
- 16 As described above, much of this historical significance has been lost through the ad-hoc nature of the post-war re-use of the area and in many cases site ownerships and boundaries have further blurred the former plan of the area. This is even apparent in figure

5 above which shows a boundary fence and the remnants of post-war industrial development across the line of the former canal spur.

- 17 Within this immediate context the Jersey Street bridge has some historical interest as a remaining reference point of the presence of the canal spur. However, architecturally, the bridge has very little significance – being an entirely functional utilitarian structure, which does not even traverse a waterway anymore.
- 18 The tree does not contribute to the character of the area at all. Self-seeded, it is an alien feature in the landscape as well as historically inappropriately positioned.

The Policy Context

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

- 19 The legislation governing listed buildings and conservation areas is the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 ('the Act'). Section 72(1) of the Act requires decision makers with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area to pay 'special attention... to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area'.

The National Planning Policy Framework

- 20 The Revised National Planning Policy Framework was published in July 2021.
- 21 Paragraph 126 of the NPPF says that 'Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities'.
- 22 Paragraph 130 says that developments should be:

“Visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping”. It goes on to say that developments should be “sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities). The paragraph continues that developments should “establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit”.
- 23 The NPPF says at Paragraph 194 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. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.
- 24 A description and analysis of the heritage and townscape significance of the site and its context is provided in this report.

25 At Paragraph 197, the NPPF says that:

In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

26 Paragraph 199 advises local planning authorities that 'When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting'.

27 Paragraph 201 says:

Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:

- the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and
- no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and
- conservation by grant-funding or some form of charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and
- the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use..

28 Paragraph 202 says that '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 securing its optimum viable use.

29 Paragraph 206 of the NPPF advises local planning authorities to 'look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites and within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of the asset should be treated favourably'.

Manchester City Council

30 Manchester's Core Strategy was adopted on the 11 July 2012 and is the key document in the Manchester Local Plan. It sets out the long term strategic policies for Manchester's future development and will form the framework that planning applications will be assessed against.

31 Policy EN3 deals with heritage, and says that:

‘Throughout the City, the Council will encourage development that complements and takes advantage of the distinct historic and heritage features of its districts and neighbourhoods, including those of the City.

32 Policy DC18.1 deals with conservation areas, and says:

‘The Council will give particularly careful consideration to development proposals within Conservation Areas.

a) The Council will seek to preserve and enhance the character of its designated conservation areas by carefully considering the following issues:

i) the relationship of new structures to neighbouring buildings and spaces;

ii) the effect of major changes to the appearance of existing buildings;

iii) the desirability of retaining existing features, such as boundary walls, gardens, trees, (including street trees);

iv) the effect of signs and advertisements;

v) any further guidance on specific areas which has been approved by the Council.

b) The Council will not normally grant outline planning permission for development within Conservation Areas.

c) Consent to demolish a building in a conservation area will be granted only where it can be shown that it is wholly beyond repair, incapable of reasonably beneficial use, or where its removal or replacement would benefit the appearance or character of the area.

d) Where demolition is to be followed by redevelopment, demolition will be permitted only where there are approved detailed plans for that redevelopment and where the Council has been furnished with evidence that the development will be undertaken.

e) Development proposals adjacent to Conservation Areas will be granted only where it can be shown that they will not harm the appearance or character of the area. This will include the protection of views into and out of Conservation Areas

Ancoats & New Islington Framework

33 The main Ancoats and New Islington Framework was last updated in 2016. However subsequently, in June 2020, a further update was produced focusing on Character Area 3 – Poland Street Zone – which includes this part of Jersey Street. One of the key aspirations of this document is the creation of better connectivity across Ancoats and to re-interpret the lost canal spur as a linear park – linking Ancoats Green to the Rochdale Canal along its historic route. A Public Realm Strategy is being prepared to address this.

The Proposals and their impact on heritage significance

- 34 The proposals are for the demolition of the bridge, the removal of the tree and the levelling of the road at this point with associated public realm works.
- 35 The works form a key part of the emerging Public Realm Strategy as identified in the Ancoats & New Islington Framework and more specifically the Poland Street Zone. The park would not only provide a 'green lung' through the area, but also re-establish the visual link along the canal spur – allowing a more meaningful understanding of how the area was once connected.
- 36 Whilst the bridge might have some historical significance in referencing the past development and operation of Ancoats, in reality it now presents a block on the area's positive regeneration.
- 37 Physically it creates a visual block to the line of the former canal spur and as described earlier, architecturally it is not of any particular special interest.
- 38 However, the removal of the bridge and tree would allow for the coherent implementation of the proposed linear park between Ancoats Green and the Rochdale Canal. The removal of the physical obstacle will enable views as well as the opportunity for level access along the line of the canal - making it more meaningful and create a far better understanding of how the canal network used to link the wharves and manufactories to the Rochdale Canal – the main transport artery through this part of Ancoats.
- 39 The commitment and ability to implement the linear park will deliver a far more successful re-interpretation of the heritage of the area than the retention of a redundant remnant that now serves no functional purpose and is an obstacle to fully appreciating how the canal network used to traverse the area.
- 40 The removal of the bridge will also enable a more effective landscape solution to be implemented on the adjacent development sites – in particular Eliza Yard and Jersey Wharf – and rationalise the level of Jersey Street. This in turn would allow both of the proposed developments in this location to improve their levels-design making them more accessible and less reliant on ramps to permit level access.
- 41 The removal of the bridge would enable the landscaping of the junction of the canal spur with the Rochdale Canal to meaningfully link up to the end of the park and facilitate enhanced level access, connectivity and traffic calming.
- 42 Landscaping can be used to further mitigate its removal through interpretation in materials and surfaces.
- 43 Therefore, on balance, arguably the net benefits to the conservation area outweigh the loss of the bridge - meaning that the character and appearance of the conservation area is at the least preserved and possibly enhanced.

Compliance with Policy

- 44 For the reasons given above, we believe that the proposals will comply with s.72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 ('the Act') with regards to the preservation of the character and appearance of the area. -

- 45 Having regard for the policies of the National Planning Policy Framework (as revised in July 2021), if the bridge is regarded as making a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Ancoats Conservation Area, its removal could be regarded as causing 'less than substantial harm' to the conservation area's significance.
- 46 Paragraph 202 of the NPPF requires: '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'.
- 47 Considering the limited remaining significance of the Jersey Street bridge within the conservation area we believe that the benefits that its removal can unlock – both with regards the aspirations of the linear park and the enhanced landscape connectivity with proposed adjacent development - would more than outweigh any perceived harm to the wider conservation area.
- 48 The delivery of the linear park with the removal of the bridge will provide a Heritage benefit (as well as the myriad other public benefits that the park will deliver) - and enhance the conservation area - by allowing the canal spur to be visually appreciated and understood in a far more meaningful way – allowing a view of passing barges on the Rochdale Canal from the spur itself – rather than being faced with a utilitarian blank wall that once formed the parapet to a now redundant bridge.
- 49 It can also be argued that the removal of the bridge and tree will enable the Council to address its obligations under paragraph 206 of the NPPF to 'look for opportunities...within Conservation Areas...to enhance or better reveal their significance.' The Public Realm Strategy, of which this will form part, will enable a pro-active re-landscaping of the area which will identify, highlight and celebrate the area's historical evolution – in particular the canal spur.
- 50 We believe that for the reasons given above the removal of the bridge and tree would also comply with the requirements of the Manchester City Council Local Plan to preserve or enhance the City's heritage assets.

Conclusion

- 51 In conclusion, we believe that whilst the Jersey Street Bridge has some limited historical significance this currently relates to the fact that it is a remaining reference to the former canal spur.
- 52 The aspiration identified by the NDF to create a linear park along the route of the historic canal spur will provide a meaningful interpretation of the heritage of the area and how it was interconnected.
- 53 The removal of the bridge, even if it is regarded as causing a small amount of 'less than substantial harm' to the character and appearance of the conservation area, will allow these former connections to be more effectively re-established and thus deliver considerable public benefits to the area – including a more coherent appreciation of the history and development of Ancoats.