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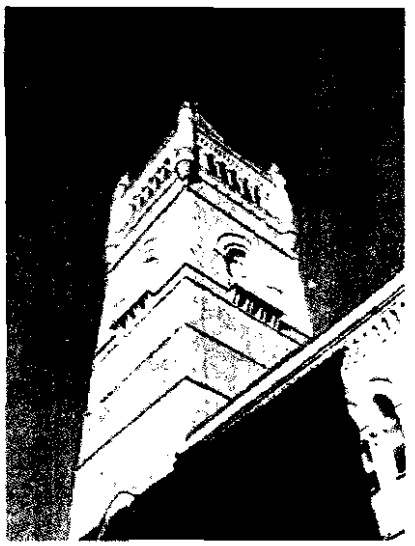
MINSHULL STREET CROWN COURT
N0310

FLAGSTAFF INSTALLATION & REPLACEMENT PLATFORM LIFT

DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT
Incorporating
PPG15 JUSTIFICATION STATEMENT

May 2008
Revised 11th September 2008





Introduction

This report has been prepared on the instruction of the Her Majesty's Courts Service – Northern Circuit to enable consultation for the installation of a single flagstaff to the entrance facade on Aytoun Street at Minshull Street Crown Court, Manchester.

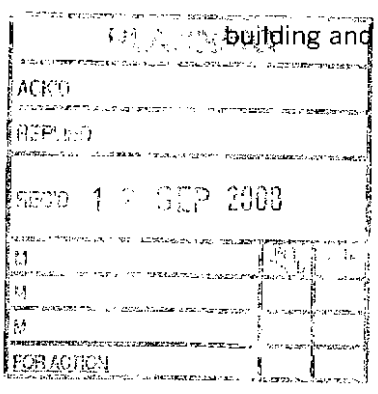
In addition to forming the required 'Design and Access Statement,' the document forms justification for the works in line with Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 'Planning and the Historic Environment', with particular regard to paragraphs 3.4; 3.5; 3.9 and Annex C.

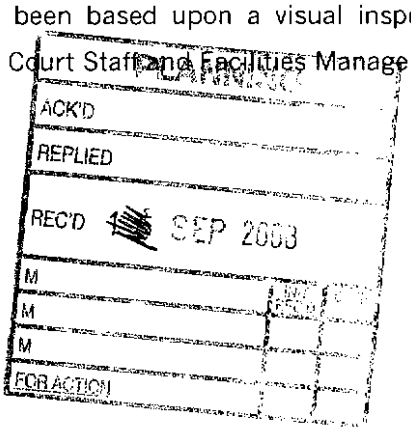
Until recently The Department for Culture Media and Sport issued guidance for UK Government buildings flying the union flag on only 18 appointed days. This has recently (July 2007) been retracted to allow the union Flag to be flown at all times. A Government building for the purposes of flag flying is a building that is owned by the Crown or where the majority of occupants are civil servants or Her Majesty's Armed Forces.

Under Schedule 1 Class H of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007, national flags, the flags of the Commonwealth, European Union, the United Nations, English counties and certain saints can be flown without the express consent of local authorities as long as they satisfy the standard conditions for the display of advertisements generally and the conditions and limitations set out within Class H itself.

For saints' flags, the conditions are that they can only be flown in the county with which the saint is associated. If any of these flags are to be flown no further planning permission is needed for the flagstaff, however it may be required if other flags are to be flown. It should be noted that consent for the erection of a flagstaff is solely for the flying of the union flag.

Whilst the installation of the flagstaff is to the modern extension which now forms the entrance facade for the court, it must be recognised that some compromises are inevitable in any existing building but more particularly in a listed building. This report has been based upon a visual inspection of the building and on discussions with Court Staff and Facilities Management Group.





Minshull Street Crown Court is located centrally to the City of Manchester and comprises the original 1868 to 1871 "Italianate Gothic" style red-brick building with sandstone dressings designed by Thomas Worthington with a tower to the north west corner; together with (to the east) a modern extension of similar proportions designed by Hurd Rolland Partnership. The accommodation now provided comprises cell accommodation at the basement with secure loading/off-loading, ten Courts surrounding a central atrium all at various levels, administration, Chambers and Robing Rooms, etc.

The whole of the building is grade II* Listed, but the listing, dating from 1974, makes no reference to the modern extension and refurbishment.

1. Building History and Significance

The original building was the subject of a competition run concurrently with that for Manchester Town Hall. The competition was won by Thomas Worthington.

In addition to the involvement of Thomas Worthington as architect, the carving, although very limited in extent, is by Thomas Earpe who was also responsible for that on G E Street's Royal Courts of Justice in the Strand. (1866-1881).

The entry in Pevsners 'Buildings of England' is somewhat limited:
"Magistrates Court" Bloom Street and Minshull Street 1868-1871 by Thomas Worthington. Brick with Sandstone dressings. EE with a tower, an asymmetrical composition, not well placed."

The extension of the building towards Aytoun Street and the creation of an open space, albeit a car park, to Bloom Street have undoubtedly helped the setting of which Pevsner was so critical.

Clair Hartwell's account in the revised guide 'Manchester' is more complementary:

"...the former City Police and Sessions Courts in 1867 – 73 by Thomas Worthington, now part of the Crown Court. The building is informed by Worthington's absorption of Ruskinian principles and his knowledge of European Gothic

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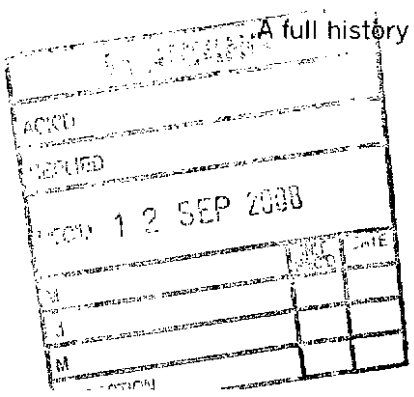
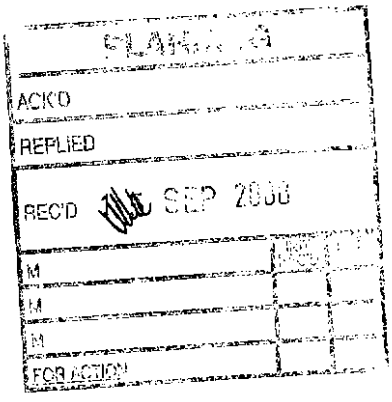
The design has a vigorous urban quality imparted by the flat areas of brickwork, deeply recessed openings and bold outline. There are parallels with his designs for the Town Hall competition, submitted in the same year. The site is awkward and the asymmetrical composition with corner tower and central campanile chimney turns this to advantage – Worthington had initially planned the tower as the central axis (cf. His Nicholls Hospital, now Ellen Wilkinson High School [The Manchester College]) Orderly rhythm is given by the ranks of tall closely set windows and, as at Nicholls Hospital, decoration becomes more concentrated at the top in stonework of the chimney with its spiky gargoyles and the corner tourelles and open arcading to the tower. Owls top the elongated finials to the gables. The carving by Earp & Hobbs includes fierce beasts placed at eye level at the entrances, as Ruskin would have liked. Worthington's design for the Assize Courts in Manchester was criticized for poor circulation, and he learnt from his mistakes. The separation of different users was achieved by placing pairs of court rooms on each side of an open courtyard, each separated from its neighbour by offices and flanked on two sides by corridors.

The extension to the Aytoun Street side is by James Stevenson of the Hurd Rolland Partnership, 1993 – 96. Adapting a complex building to suit the even more complex requirements of a modern crown court presented a formidable challenge. Worthington's forms are simplified for the new work, which echoes the tall windows and gables. The courtyard was glazed over and four new court rooms inserted into the ground floor, where there had been public areas and holding points for defendants beneath the courts. Two more courts were sited in the extension. The atrium provides views of the Worthington tower and chimney and is the hub of the separate circulation routes. There is an open deck for the public and separate glazed walkways for jurors and the judiciary. The stained glass of the walkway is by Lavers Barraud & Westlake. It was moved from the former judges' rooms and copied where necessary to provide a complete scheme. The three figures of Moses, St Michael and Solomon symbolise Law, Justice and Wisdom.

Worthington's court rooms have been preserved with relatively few alterations and C20 suspended ceilings were removed in the refurbishment. They have panelled roofs, pierced for ventilation, and high windows framed by ornate pilasters. The pitch pine furnishings effectively combine open, glazed and blind gothic arcading.

A full history of the building is contained in Appendix 1.





2. Listing

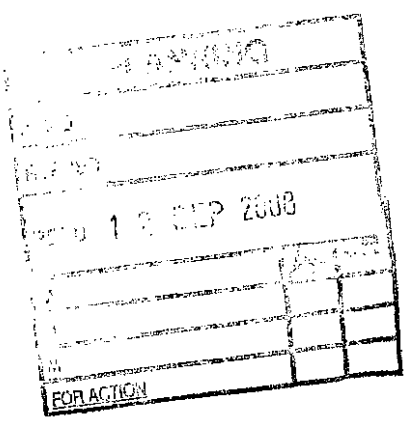
The building is listed Grade II* as follows:

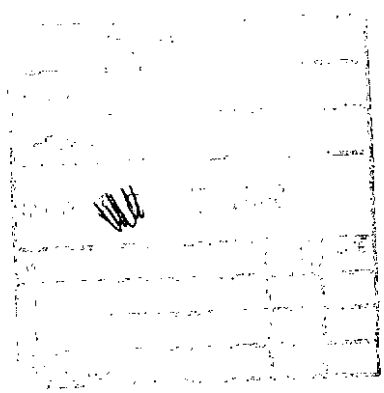
Listing

MANCHESTER

SJ8498	*MINSHULL STREET*
698-1/28/234	*(North East Side)*
03/10/74	*City Police Courts*
	*II**

City police courts, 1868-71, by Thomas Worthington. Red brick with sandstone dressings, steeply-pitched slate roofs. Rectangular plan on corner site. Italian Gothic style. Two and a half storeys over basement, plus tower at north-west corner, 1:3:3:3:1 bays, the centre gabled, the left end formed by the tower and the right-hand end with a turret; with moulded stone plinth, impost bands, enriched 1st-floor cill-bound, Lombard frieze, and stone parapet stepped up to the centre gable with tourelles at the corners of this. Central 2-centred arched doorway with gabled surround including shafts with carved crocket caps; three 2-centred arched 2-light windows above the doorway; and arcaded 5-light attic window in gable; 2, 3 and 2-light windows to both floors of the side ranges, with shafts and 2-centred arched lights with linked hood moulds; another doorway to the right-hand end, which has slightly different fenestration to the main floors, arcaded 7-light attic window, and saddle-back roof. Very tall octagonal chimney behind ridge. Tall square tower to left, with bands, 3 light window to 1st floor with balcony, 2 small lancets to next stage, clock face in arched surround, elaborate stone top stage with corner tourelles and arcaded belfry, and slated pyramidal roof. Left return (to Bloom Street) in similar style, with central doorway, windows of 3, 3, 2, 3 and 3 lights, and 2 large gables each with a 2-centred blank arch containing two 2-light windows. Interior not inspected but probably contains features of equivalent quality.





1. Scope Of This Report

It is proposed that a three metre long fibreglass flagstaff is mounted on the modern Aytoun Street Elevation of the building – aiding the identification of the entrance and avoiding the need to alter the historic court building behind. In addition the application also covers the replacement of the existing platform lift at the main entrance with a new fully compliant platform lift. The object of this report is to demonstrate a need for these items and justify the location proposed for installation.

2. Present Arrangements

Flagstaff

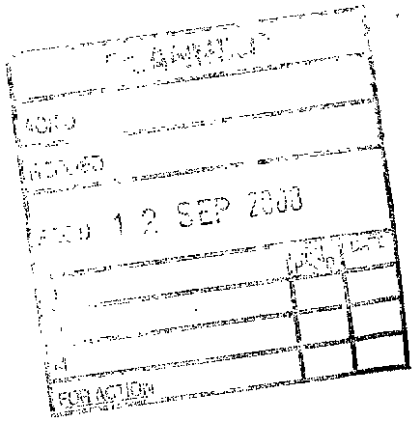
Presently there is no flagstaff on the building, and as part of a move by the DCMS (The Governance of Britain: Constitutional Renewal) the flying of the Union Flag is encouraged. Minshull Street Crown Court is one of the busiest Crown Courts in the country, and as a major public building – it is felt important that the Union Flag is flown by the operating department (Her Majesty's Courts Service).

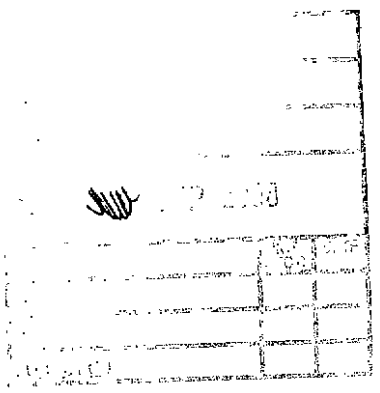
"Government buildings are not obliged to have a flagstaff, the choice being with the occupying department. There is no strict policy within Her Majesty's Court's Service as to whether a [new] building should or should not be provided with one, the test being whether the building is suitable. Its provision is usually proposed by the Project Architect."

The highest part of the building is favoured for the siting of the flagstaff as it obviously enables the flag to be seen from all sides. Also, it gives the flag a clearer area for flying and avoids obstructing the lines of vision of the building occupants.

The plane of the flagstaff, i.e. vertical, horizontal or inclined, is chosen for its required visual or ceremonial effect."

Courts Service Design Guide 2007.





Platform Lift

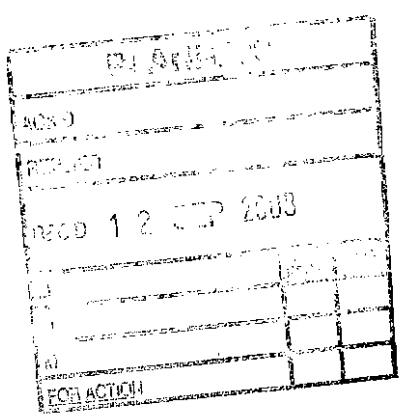
The existing platform lift is an open platform between two flights of stairs. This forms part of Hurd Rolland's 1996 entrance to the crown court extension. There are a number of problems with the existing lift. Currently, the platform is out of order and beyond economical repair. There are also Health and Safety concerns with the open design of the platform. Without an operational platform lift, with only steps to access the central concourse, there is no disabled access to this busy public building.

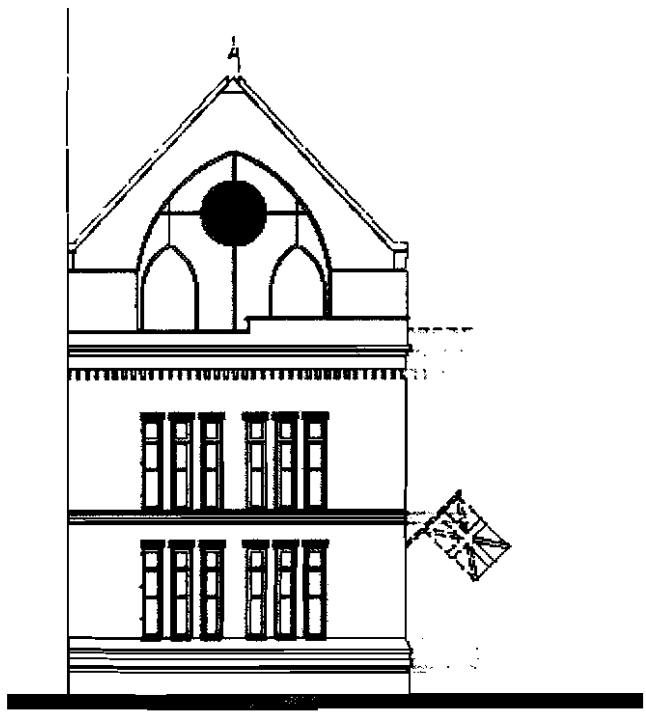
3. Proposal

Flagstaff

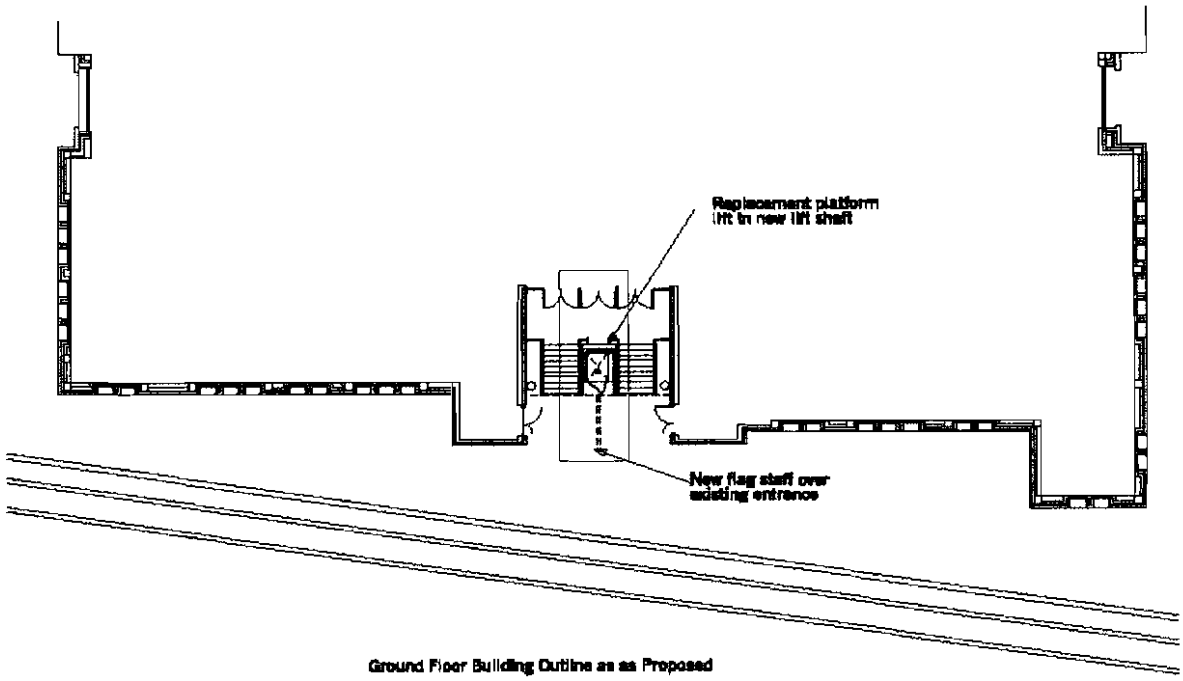
This proposal is for the fixing of a flagstaff to the entrance elevation on Aytoun Street, to the projecting brick stair tower to the right hand side of the main entrance. Due to the stepped nature of the facade, the flagstaff will be inclined to project from the building. This is indicated on the attached drawings.

British Columbian pine staffs are traditional but need regular maintenance. Fibreglass is currently the most popular medium, being quiet and maintenance free. The proposal is to use a fibreglass due to the need to be maintenance free due to the close proximity of the front facade to the Metrolink

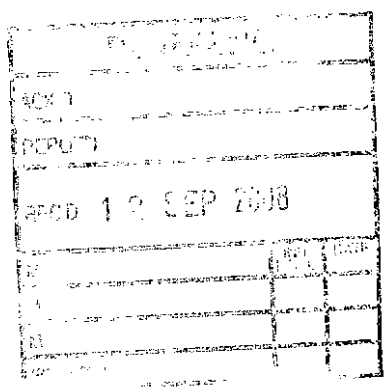


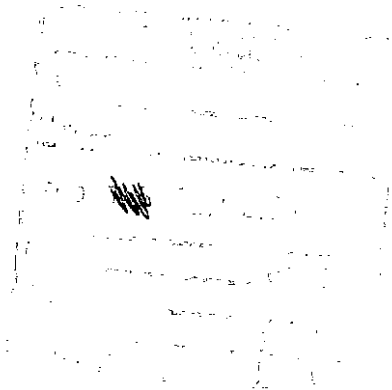


Partial Side (South) Elevation - Auburn Street



Ground Floor Building Outline as as Proposed





It is the intention of the court to fly the union flag only from the flagstaff, which will be flown each day. The frequency will remain under review, but will be a minimum of the 18 days as laid out by the Department of Culture Media and Sport.

The proximity of the Flagpole from the Metrolink has been considered, the flagstaff is on an area of the building set behind the 'back of pavement' or building line. Access for the erection of the flagstaff will be done in consultation with GMPTE.

Platform Lift

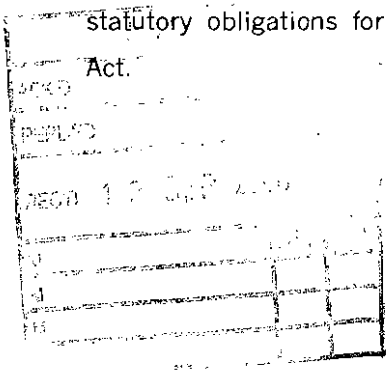
Due to the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act, a platform lift provides access to the entrance of the court which is at an elevated level. The current lift requires replacement, but current standards for platform lift design (BS EN 81) require a fully enclosed shaft to surround the platform. For this reason, a Listed Building Consent application is required.

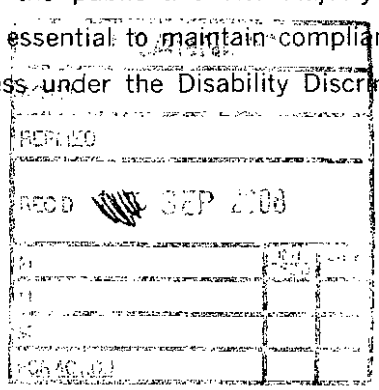
The new lift will be situated within the existing opening and the Shaft will extend to the soffit of the entrance. The shaft is fabricated from polyester Powder coated steel panels, which will be coloured dark green (RAL 6009) to match the existing powder coated window frames, doors and other architectural metalwork of the extension. There will be a glazed full height door to both the pavement, and upper landing as indicated on the submitted drawings. The platform lift will be fully compliant with part M of the building regulations, and suitable for public use.

4. ACCESSIBILITY

The raising and lowering of the flags will be done via access from an opening window on the landing of the adjacent staircase internally within the building – this allows the daily raising and lowering of the flag.

The platform lift will ensure that disabled access remains possible to this busy public building, for both members of the public and Her Majesty's Court Service Employees. This is considered essential to maintain compliance with statutory obligations for disabled access under the Disability Discrimination Act.

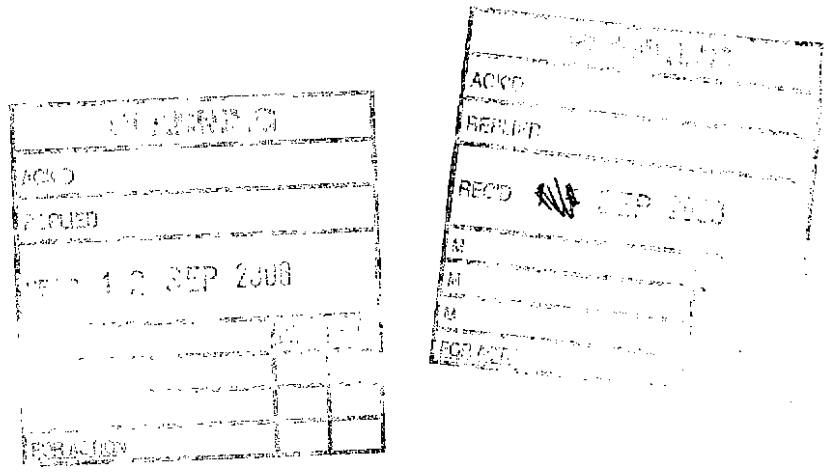




3. JUSTIFICATION

There is an amount of confusion caused by the fact that Minsull Street Crown courts' only entrance is on Aytoun Street, with the historic doors simply used for escape purposes. In addition, the increased sense of 'citizenship' has resulted in the desire to fly the union flag from this public building by both the management and the judiciary.

The replacement of the platform lift is required as the existing lift is out of order and beyond economical repair. The proposed lift also has significant health and safety benefits.



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APPENDIX 1

History

Minshull Street Crown Court was being designed and constructed at the same time as Manchester Town Hall, both being subject to competitions. Interesting comparisons are to be made both in the style and the cost of the two buildings. The following is the relevant section on Thomas Worthington from 'The Golden Age of Public Building.'

"In the summer of 1867, six well-known architectural practices were invited to prepare plans. They were Clegg and Knowles, Speakman and Charlesworth, Edward Salomons, Alfred Waterhouse, Mangnall and Littlewood and Tomas Worthington. The candidates were already fully occupied with their submissions for the Town Hall. The volume of other business, or the prospect of a more glittering prize, prevented two of the short-listed architects from competing, leaving the field to Clegg and Knowles, Salomons, Speakman and Charlesworth and Worthington who submitted their sketch schemes on 7th September 1867.

None of the competition drawings has survived but it is a tribute to the capacity of the four entrants that they were able to cope with two major deadlines within a short span of eight weeks. Time was not the only limiting factor: it soon became clear that the proposed budget figure of 25,000, which was exceeded by all the competitors, would be quite inadequate for so large and important a project. Worthington's estimate was 35,700 which, he advised, 'would require a strict regard to economy in all the executive details'. From contemporary accounts, his scheme was a simple Gothic composition, but one alternative was offered in the Renaissance style.

Matters of style and detail were not resolved at this stage, the Committee preferring to keep an open mind about such questions until the general arrangement and costs had been determined. The four competitors attended a special meeting on 9th October at which they explained the particulars of their designs. Reports were presented from the Stipendiary Magistrate and the Clerk of the Peace who were both convinced that the requirements of the building would be 'perfectly met by the design of Mr Worthington'. On this advice, the Committee did not hesitate to offer him the commission.

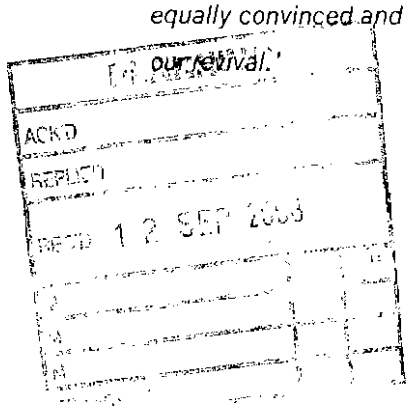
Few practices can have been busier than Worthington's during the winter of 1867-68. In addition to the Town Hall and Police Courts, the office was engaged in the design of Brookfield Chapel and in the first sketches for Nicholls Hospital School.

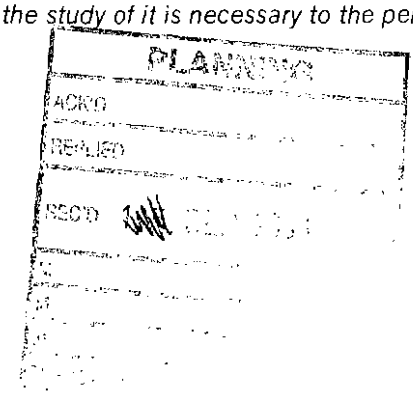
Work proceeded and the Courts project was ready to be exhibited in its final form alongside the Town Hall competition drawings in the latter part of April 1868.

A site had been chosen at the corner of Minshull Street and Bloom Street, in the mercantile district of the city centre. Remote from the splendours of Albert Square and King Street and hemmed in by frowning brick warehouses, the site offered little opportunity for architectural display. Since the main frontages could only be approached obliquely, a symmetrical layout on the pattern of the Town Hall would lose its effect. Traffic noise from the surrounding granite paved streets added to the complex problems of planning and circulation within a confined site.

These were the exacting constraints which faced Worthington in his design for the Minshull Street Courts. The resulting layout proved to be a masterpiece of bold and logical planning, considerably in advance of anything then built. From the critical vantage point of the late twentieth century, it is difficult to envisage the host of unprecedented problems of planning and circulation which faced the architects if the new generation of Victorian Courts. Even Waterhouse, whose accomplishments in internal disposition are renowned, failed to meet all the operational needs of the Manchester Assize Courts. That these requirements were met in full within the tight boundaries of the Minshull Street site was a considerable achievement for Worthington, whose skilful handling of the circulation of three levels produced a most elegant plan.

The architectural pedigree of the building was variously attributed to the streets of Nuremberg and to 'that type of the pointed Gothic of which examples abound in Florence, Siena, Pisa, Verona and other cities in the north of Italy'. These influences were not difficult to detect but the true importance of the building lies in its historical context as a product of the High Victorian movement. By the late 1860's, Thomas Worthington and his nearest contemporaries, Street, Godwin, Burges and Waterhouse had reached a mature stage in their development. Each had been influenced by the medieval architecture of Italy and by John Ruskin, particularly in the 1850s when Street had published his own extensive study of "Brick and Marble Architecture in Italy". In the following decade, each had followed his individual course. Certainly Waterhouse and Street would have been the first to agree with Scott, who wrote: 'I was convinced that Italian Gothic, as such, must not be used in England but I was equally convinced and am so still that the study of it is necessary to the perfecting of our revival.'





Worthington began the design of the Police Courts in 1867, shortly after the completion of the Memorial Hall and Albert Memorial. In London, the competition designs for the Royal Courts of Justice had been published, although a choice had not then been made between the medieval poetry of Burges and the High Victorianism of Street. At Northampton and Congleton, E W Godwin had created magnificent town halls rich polychrome essays in the Franco-Italian style. By contrast, the design for Manchester Town Hall revealed Waterhouse's conscious independence of medieval precedent which he saw only as a starting point. Waterhouse summed up the aims of many of his generation when he declared that he 'hoped that Gothic revival would be more than a mere revival - that it would turn from a revival into a growth.'

Worthington's own style had developed as distinctly as Waterhouse's, although it remained, superficially at least, closer to the spirit of revivalism. Indeed, he was criticised for 'following too closely the old models in his design for the Courts and for having 'allowed himself to be decoyed into too servile imitation of the works of early continental architects.' These were uninformed comments which Worthington, sensitive as he was to criticism, was moved to dismiss as 'rubbish'. If it was not difficult to attribute the inspiration for the Albert Memorial and the Memorial Hall, it would be quite impossible for a critic to suggest the old model upon which the courts were based. The design was a dramatic urban composition, well suited to the streets of Manchester with its extravagant Victorian skyline. Most significantly, it was a masterly demonstration of the flexibility of the Gothic style when applied to a lucidly expressed functional plan.

The street frontages are characterised by contrasts between smooth yellow masonry and orange brickwork, between flat wall areas and deeply recessed window openings. Like the Memorial Hall, the building stands upon a half-basement faced with close-textured stonework and pierced by tall square-cut cellar lights. The windows are grouped in twos and threes, separated on the principal street frontages by polished granite shafts. These are four main entrance portals, each rising nearly twenty feet above street level, and each guarded by fierce carved animals springing and coiling out of the mouldings to peer and scowl into the doorways. There is almost a complete absence of superficial decoration, though here and there the architect indulged his liking for rich naturalistic carvings. A correspondent wryly deduced that the owl finials and gargoyles were 'emblematical probably of the wisdom of the magistrates who will preside below'.

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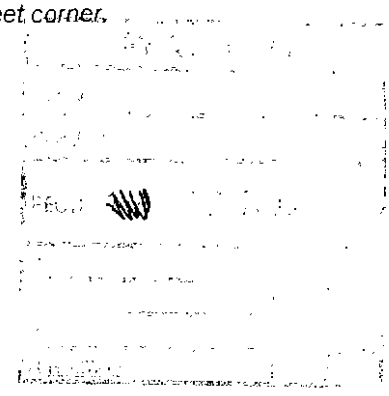
The tight boundaries of the site gave little opportunity for the advance and recession of elements which G E Street was to attempt so effectively on the Strand frontage of the Royal Courts of Justice in London. Instead, Worthington compensated for the flatness of the facades with massive square-cut details and simple incised ornament to create a strong play of light and shade. The flat areas of wall between window openings are enlivened by stone bands, and the principal corners are emphasised by rectangular quoins of irregular height and length, and attractive mannerism seen in several of Worthington's designs during the 1860's and 1870's. In the same spirit, window heads, offsets, kneelers and other constructional elements are fashioned boldly in stone and set flush in the brickwork. There is in the crystalline shapes, the sharply detailed wall planes and the emphatic constructional elements, a suggestion of the 'Vigorous Style' which Street had carried to such interesting extremes in some of his church designs.

At roof level, the facades are capped by a plain stone parapet supported on an arcaded gallery, early terminated by winged grotesques perching on short stone shafts. From this table rise the attic storeys, each designed to create a dramatic effect when seen from the surrounding streets. The steep roofed attic facing Auburn Street served not only to counter balance the tower at the opposite end, but also to effect the transition between the richness of the main facade to the plainer side facing the Rochdale Canal. The Bloom Street elevation is clad in the full splendour of shafted windows and stone heads, while its opposite counterpart on the canal frontage echoes this arrangement in an economical but adequate use of brick details. On each facade, the main public staircases are expressed externally by the raking cills of the ground floor windows which carry the main string courses up to the corners.

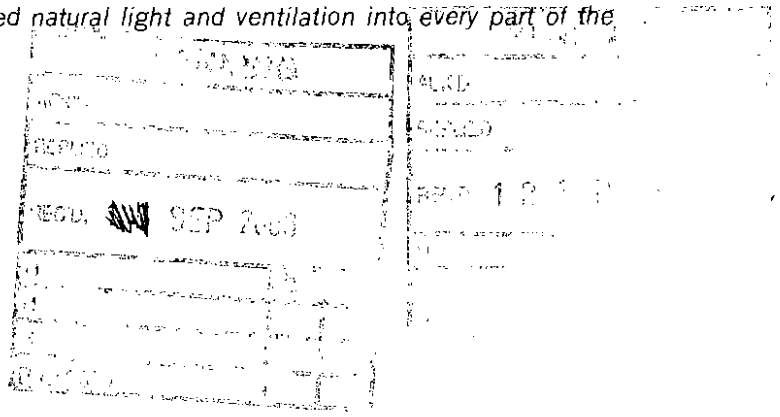
Worthington's arrangement of circulation produced a logical plan occupying the two main floors and surrounding the four courts, lit by high clerestory ranges above parapet level. Such a clear, symmetrical plan form might have suggested a similar arrangement for the upper part of the building, and there is evidence that Worthington proposed a conventional central tower in the early stages of the design. However, the narrowness of the surrounding streets which would have diminished the effect of a symmetrical skyline, and the need to provide for a large chimney shaft in the centre of the building influenced him towards a more effective solution with the clock tower at the most prominent street corner.



As a feature on the Manchester skyline, it suggests a romantic fusion of watch tower and campanile. Military themes are suggested in the massive stone plinth, the jutting corbels and crenellated parapets. This effect is heightened by the absence of buttresses and by the flat planes of banded brickwork at the middle stages, relieved only by the muscular plate-tracery of the first floor windows and the tiny loop-holes punched into the masonry. The clock faces appear to have been cut into stone flags and recessed into wide flat arches interleaved with bands of orange brickwork. High above, cylindrical corner turrets soar from their supporting corbels to frame the belfry storey, an open gallery of double arcading supported on granite shafts. Rising from the battlements of the topmost parapet is the roof, a lofty pyramid clad in blue slate, it's simple volume contrasting with the richness of the upper stage. Worthington was not alone in his use of corner turrets and arcades as crowning features: both Burgess and Street had proposed clusters of 'bartisans' or 'tourelles' in their designs for the Royal Courts of Justice. Where the Manchester Courts demonstrated the originality of its architect was in the exaggerated contrast between plain volumes and pierced, richly-worked intermediate stages, a characteristic seen to greatest effect on the Albert Memorial and the Town Hall designs, among many others.

The clock tower shares a dramatic skyline with a magnificent boiler chimney rising to more than 140 feet from its brick haunches behind the main entrance portal. This imperious near-relative of Worthington's laundry chimneys with its elaborate pierced corona was the outward expression of a most sophisticated heating and ventilation layout. Deep inside the cellar, a large brick channel directed fresh air into a heat exchanging plant, whence it was conducted to wooden grilles in the courtroom walls and gallery fronts. In winter, the warmed air seeped round the ankles of the judiciary, and in the summer, natural ventilation was assisted by adjustable louvres in the pointed window heads, a system which Worthington had perfected at Chorlton Hospital. In the cells, the ventilation could be controlled from a central point by a system of levers, rods and counter-weights not unlike primitive railway signalling equipment.

Prisoners were delivered from horse-drawn vans into an internal courtyard which also gave access to the coal bunkers and boiler plant. Conditions in the lock-up were considered to be advanced for the time, with a range of accommodation capable of meeting almost any contingency. Each cell had its own water closet and lavatory basin, and open grilles allowed natural light and ventilation into every part of the gaol.

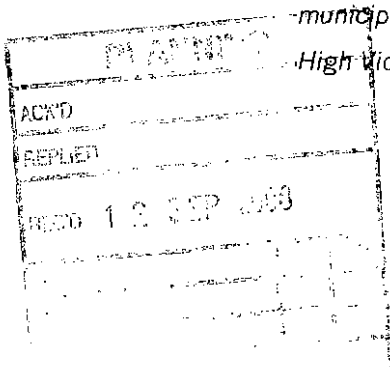


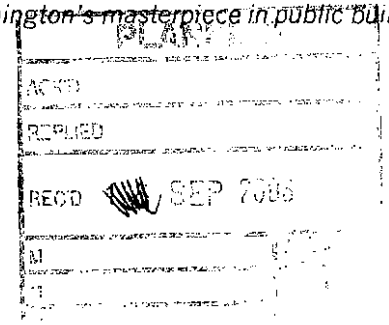
The central courtyard was spanned by a bridge containing glazed corridors and retiring rooms, an elaborate structure suggesting the complex romantic perspectives of Viollet-le-Duc. The effect of the stained glass, the massive iron columns and the plated girders has now been sadly marred by the thoughtless addition of lifts, pipework and flat-roofed extensions. Similar drastic modern 'improvements' have befallen the courtrooms which have lost their high open roofs behind flimsy suspended ceilings. However, much of the original pitch-pine furniture has survived its robust Gothic detailing and carved 'choir stalls' imparting an oddly ecclesiastical character to the Bench. Sadly, the original speaking-tubes, considered to be a novel aid to communication in the 1870s, have passed into history.

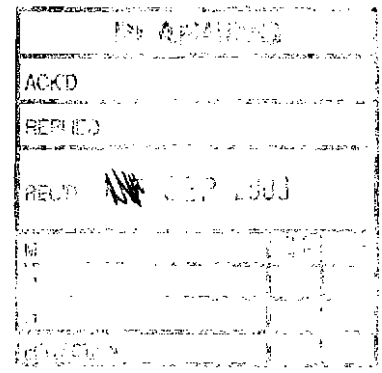
The construction of the Police Courts which began in March 1869 was not without incident. When it was discovered that the appointed contractor intended to sub-let most of the builders' work to Robert Neill and Sons, the building committee recommended that they should take responsibility for the whole contract. This action caused a storm in the Council, of which Robert Neill himself was a member. Neill was now in a difficult position and faced with a choice between his continued membership of the Corporation and the contract for the Courts, he resigned his seat. There was much criticism of the substitution, not least from the unsuccessful tenderer's who claimed that the Alderman had gained a valuable contract by the back door. The affair was hugely magnified by the press which was eager to infer sharp practice on the part of the contractor or the Council. Many reputations were damaged but there was no criticism of the architect who was said to be celebrated for his 'scrupulosity'. His problems did not end there, however, as a correspondence recalled in a letter comparing the progress of work on the Town Hall and the Courts:

The Manchester architect [Worthington] has had to contend with a strike which lasted 13 months; he has been unmercifully criticised by the Council, many times during his work. The London one [Waterhouse], I understand he likes to be considered so, has had no strike during Messrs Smith's contract; we have heard nothing but laudations in the Council of the doings at the Town Hall. Does not this look a little like snobbery? ... I am afraid we are in danger of falling down to worship the New Town Hall.

The Manchester City Police Courts cost 81,000 gross, a small sum in comparison with the million pounds used up in the completion and fitting out of Waterhouse's municipal palace. Despite severe limitations of cost, it is a significant landmark of High Victorian architecture, and Worthington's masterpiece in public building."



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