BROWNSFIELD MILL

Piccadilly Basin
Manchester

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

for Proposed Repair and Renewal Works

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Brownsfield Mill was built as a cotton spinning mill around 1825, and extended soon afterwards with the westerly annexe block. It is located adjacent to the Rochdale canal on the western side of Great Ancoats Street. It has over the years been used for a variety of purposes and had undergone alterations and refurbishment up to as late as 1959. Parts remained occupied in the late 1980's, but the building was falling into disrepair and suffering from a complete lack of maintenance.

In 2006 the current owners, Town Centre Securities plc, decided to commence essential repairs needed to restore weather tightness and to stabilise the condition of the structure. These works were subsequently extended to include the installation of replacement windows and to carry out repairs to the decaying timber primary structure, all of which was subject to Planning and Listed Building Consent granted on 17th March 2008.

The design of all the works, including the detailing of structural repairs, replacement of roofing and windows, respected the character of the building and was informed by its historical detailing.

Application has now been submitted to Manchester City Planning for Planning and Listed Building Consent to carry out works to the existing building, as follows:

- Structural strengthening of all floors to 3.5 Kn/sq m
- Provision of toilet accommodation to all floors
- Installation of two passenger lifts
- Mechanical and Electrical Installations
- Construction of new escape staircase, disabled refuge and toilets in new structure at east end of the existing mill building
- Restoration and decoration of wall and ceiling finishes
- Removal of temporary boarding to some windows and doors and installation of new windows and doors.
- Construction of new electrical sub-station
- Reduction in height of boundary wall
- Hard landscaping with provision for car parking, cycle storage, bin storage and recycling area

1. Strengthening of Floors

The current floors consist of timber mill boards spanning between timber beams supported by circular cast iron columns and masonry external walls. The structure is not adequate for normal office floor loadings.

It is proposed to install steel channel columns each side of existing columns and at perimeter walls supporting new steel beams positioned above the existing mill boards, and a reinforced concrete slab over the entire floor area, leaving the underside of the mill boards exposed.

See Stockley Outline Structural Specification accompanying the LBC Application.

The structural strengthening is designed to respect the existing structure, all of which remains exposed, as per PPG15 C3. The work is justified in that the building can have no commercial purpose in its present structural form.

2. Toilet Accommodation

The accommodation will be formed using lightweight partition walls, which will be clearly defined as not part of the existing structure, and will not intrude on any existing wall or ceiling features. The plumbing and services will, in the main, be exposed and readily identifiable as non-original.

3. Installation of Lifts

Lifts will provide an efficient means of vertical circulation in a commercial environment. In order to minimise disruption to the floor structure, they will be located in the former Engine Room, which is a three-storey high space rising from Lower Ground Floor. The lift shafts will be exposed steel frames which will be free-standing within the space, and will be visible from within the space. This is in keeping with the industrial character of the former Engine Room and the installation respects the existing structure and character.

4. Mechanical and Electrical Installations

Whilst the building will be naturally ventilated by the crossflow of fresh air from existing windows, it will be necessary to provide some forced ventilation, particularly extract from toilet accommodation. It is intended that any ductwork will be kept to a minimum, will be located in least obtrusive areas, and will be exposed to view, maintaining the industrial aesthetic of the building.

Similarly, heating pipework and wiring enclosure will be visible and industrial in appearance.

5. New Staircase Extension

For commercial occupancy, the floors of the main Mill Building will require a secondary means of escape in case of fire. The main staircase is located around the chimney and is the last remaining example of this arrangement in Manchester. The secondary stair therefore needs to be located at the east side of the Mill. Historically there has always been building at this location, and during the previous works completed in 2008, part of the end gable brickwork of the Mill was rendered to reflect the former building, in agreement with MCC Conservation Officers and English Heritage.

It is, therefore, appropriate that an extension should be built in this location. The design includes a rendered elevation to Ancoats Street, a polymer membrane covered metal deck monopitch roof with same pitch as the Mill roof, a glazed north elevation to provide daylighting, and a colour-coated profiled metal clad elevation to the south (canal side). In addition to the staircase, the extension will accommodate two additional toilets, and a disabled refuge area at each level. This will provide level access escape to each floor and toilets at landing levels.

Reference has been made to the Archaeological Survey in considering the location, and the design, whilst in keeping with the character of the Mill, will not dominate the existing building in scale or material, and will indicate clearly that it is not original but a contemporary addition.

6. Restoration and decoration of Internal finishes

Existing wall finishes vary throughout the building between plastered brickwork and exposed brickwork. In both cases they have been painted, mainly "whitewashed". The installation of replacement windows in 2008 required removal of plasterwork reveals in many cases, in order to provide adequate metal fixings into brickwork in various states of repair. It will be necessary to conceal these fixings and to seal gaps around window frames, and where appropriate to replaster reveals. Careful consultation with Conservation Officials and English Heritage will inform the nature of this work, as per PPG15 C60.

In many areas, whitewash has been applied to walls, and in some areas, to ceilings, presumably to provide better light reflection. In principle, it is intended to retain and, where necessary, repair plasterwork to the gable walls, and to replaster as necessary or retain exposed brickwork to piers and infill walls. Each area will be determined individually as appropriate.

Existing timber beams and mill boards will be retained and exposed.

7. Removal of temporary boarding

The works carried out in 2008 included temporary boarding to certain windows and doors, pending a decision on the future use of the building. Now that the use has been established, it is intended to restore the openings to their historic form.

The design of the windows/doors will be informed by reference to historic photographs and documentation, and will be constructed in timber, with details and finish to match the replacement windows installed in 2008.

8. Construction of Electrical Sub-station

The electricity supplier requires a sub-station to serve the new uses of the building. The construction will comply with the relevant structural guidelines.

The location of the sub-station has been identified as the site of the existing brick-built single storey Security Office, as this is deemed to be appropriate for historic reasons. In order to identify the structure as not being part of the original mill building, it is proposed to face the external walls of the new building in render, the roof being pitched and slated with stone coping details similar to the existing mill building, and the new escape stair extension.

The design of the sub-station will use references to the mill building but will not dominate in appearance, scale or material.

9. Reduction in height of Boundary Wall

The brick boundary wall to the north of the courtyard is considered by structural engineers to be structurally unsound. It is proposed to reduce the top of the wall to a height of approx 1.6m above courtyard ground level. It is intended to re-use the stone copings, as far as possible, and to step the wall at its eastern end up to existing gate post height.

Reference to archaeological records suggests that the wall is not original to the mill building. Its reduction in height will enhance the appearance of the surroundings to the mill building whilst preserving security from the neighbouring area.

10. Hard Landscaping

The area of the courtyard and the space between the building and its boundary with Ancoats Street will be subject to hard landscaping. There will be a small provision for car parking, and a sheltered cycle park to accommodate 15 cycles. Approx 16 sq m screened area will accommodate bin storage, of which 6 sq m will be allocated to recyclable waste only.

A defined pedestrian and cycle pathway will be incorporated into the scheme, which will also include bollards to protect the building from vehicular impact damage. There being no history of vegetation on the site, hard surfaces will be installed throughout. Existing level variations will be respected as far as possible.

A detailed landscaping design will be agreed with the Planning Authority before commencement of work on site.

11. Access

The site can be approached by public transport and by private car, as well as on foot. See accompanying Travel Plan.

All entrances to the building will be clearly visible and will provide level access to the building.

Within the building, there will be lift access to all levels, except attic space. The lifts will be able to accommodate a wheelchair and attendant in accordance with Part M of the Building Regulations. In addition, vertical circulation throughout the building will by means of the historic chimney staircase, which will be repaired and amended to reach acceptable standards, and by a new staircase serving the main body of the building, which will be designed to ambulant disabled standards in compliance with Part M of the Building Regulations. This stair will open direct to the exterior for emergency purposes.

Staircases will be fitted with non-slip nosings of a contrasting colour.

WC facilities, including Disabled accessible, will be provided in adequate numbers at every level, except for the attic space.

12. Heritage Benefits

The proposal will sustain the significance of this Heritage Asset and the contribution of its setting beside the Rochdale Canal. It will also remove current risks to the building. Furthermore, it will secure the optimum viable use of the building in support of its long-term conservation, and make a positive contribution to economic vitality and sustainable communities.

The design of the project is appropriate for its context and adds to the appearance, character and quality of the historic environment and its sense of place.