heritage
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Manchester Transformation Project

Installation of Bird Control Systems into the Tracery Windows of the Town Hall Extension:

Heritage and Design Access Statement

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October 2013

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Introduction

This Heritage Statement has been prepared on behalf of Manchester City Council (MCC) in support of an application for Listed Building Consent for the installation of bird control systems to the 2no. tracery windows from the Town Hall Extension. The Heritage Statement also considers the installation of new LED uplighters to the sills of the tracery windows in order to illuminate the decorative stonework as well as the installation of a new lantern above the Lloyd Street entrance of the Greater Manchester Police (GMP) office.

The proposed works are required to support the on-going Transformation Project, in particular the refurbishment of the Grade II* listed Town Hall Extension building. The significance of the existing site and its component elements, the potential impacts of the works herein proposed and the justification for such works are provided in accordance with Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), 'Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment', and with English Heritage's 'Planning for the Historic Environment Practice Guide'.

This report exclusively addresses the heritage issues associated with the installation of the proposed bird netting, uplighters and GMP Lantern together with their impact on the Grade 2* Listed Town Hall Extension.

The report is structured as follows:

1. Introduction
2. Town Hall Extension, Tracery Windows:
    a) Site location and context.
    b) Area for Analysis
3. Heritage Significance of the Tracery Windows
    a) Previous Assessments of Significance
    b) Heritage Photographs
    c) Significance Appraisal of the Tracery Windows
    d) Statement of Significance
4. Review of Requirement
5. Review of Options / Options Appraisal
6. Proposed interventions
7. Reversibility of interventions and future restoration plan.
8. Impact appraisal of the proposed works on the significance of the heritage assets
9. NPPF and local planning policy considerations

The Heritage Statement aims to demonstrate that the design proposals are based on a good understanding of the existing building, the site and its wider context.

Site Location and Context

The tracery windows are located on each of the gable ends of the Mount Street and St. Peters Square wings of the Town Hall Extension. The building is sited between the Old Town Hall and the Central Library; it is located within the Albert Square Conservation Area (Figure 1) and abuts the adjacent St. Peters Square Conservation Area (Figure 2).

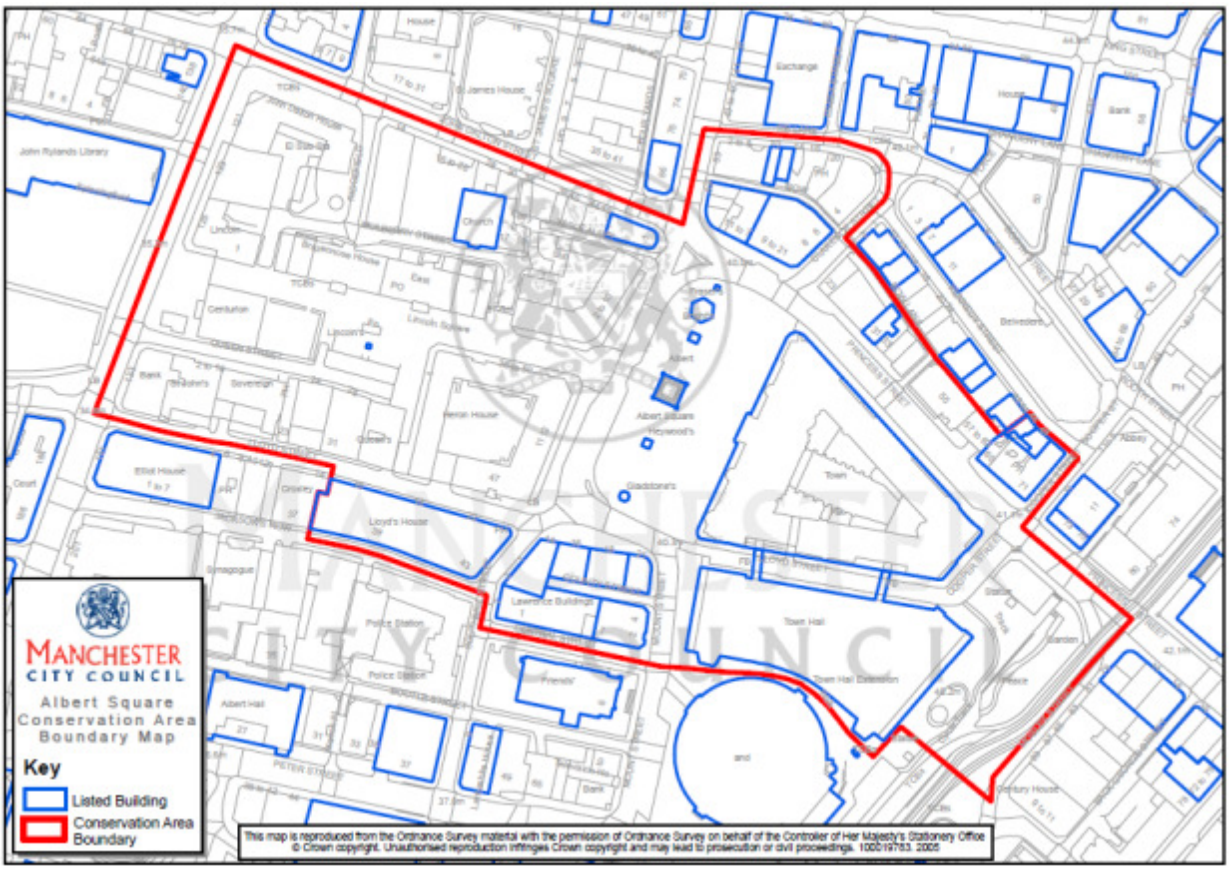


Figure 1: Albert Square Conservation Area (© Manchester City Council)

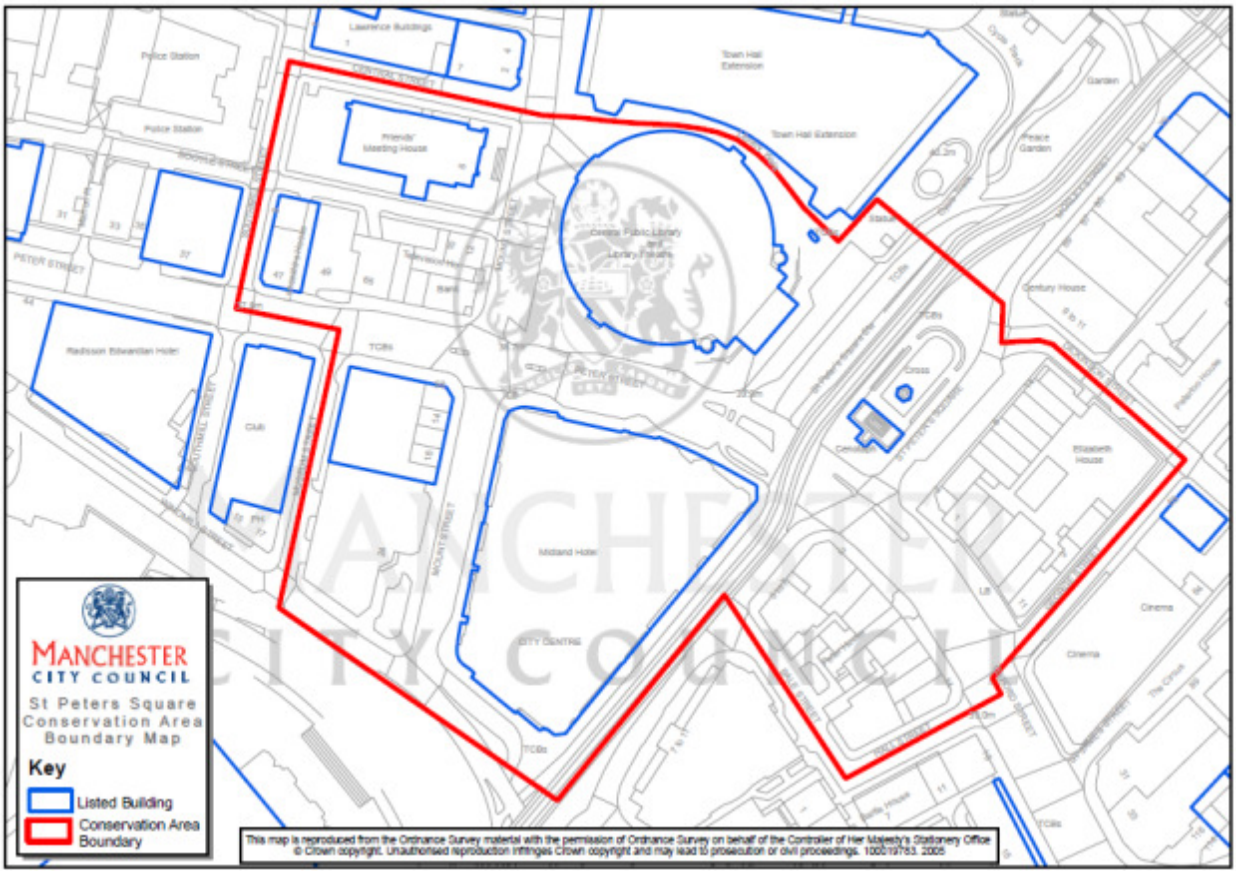


Figure 2: St Peters Square Conservation Area (© Manchester City Council)

Area for Analysis

The area of analysis for this report is deemed to be the perimeter of the Town Hall Extension Building as the significance of the Buildings has already been covered by earlier submissions and consents granted by MCC Planning and English Heritage.

The location of the tracery windows on the exterior of the Town Hall Extension (Figure 3) and the areas affected by the proposed bird control system, the new uplighters and the GMP Lantern are highlighted below (Figure 4):

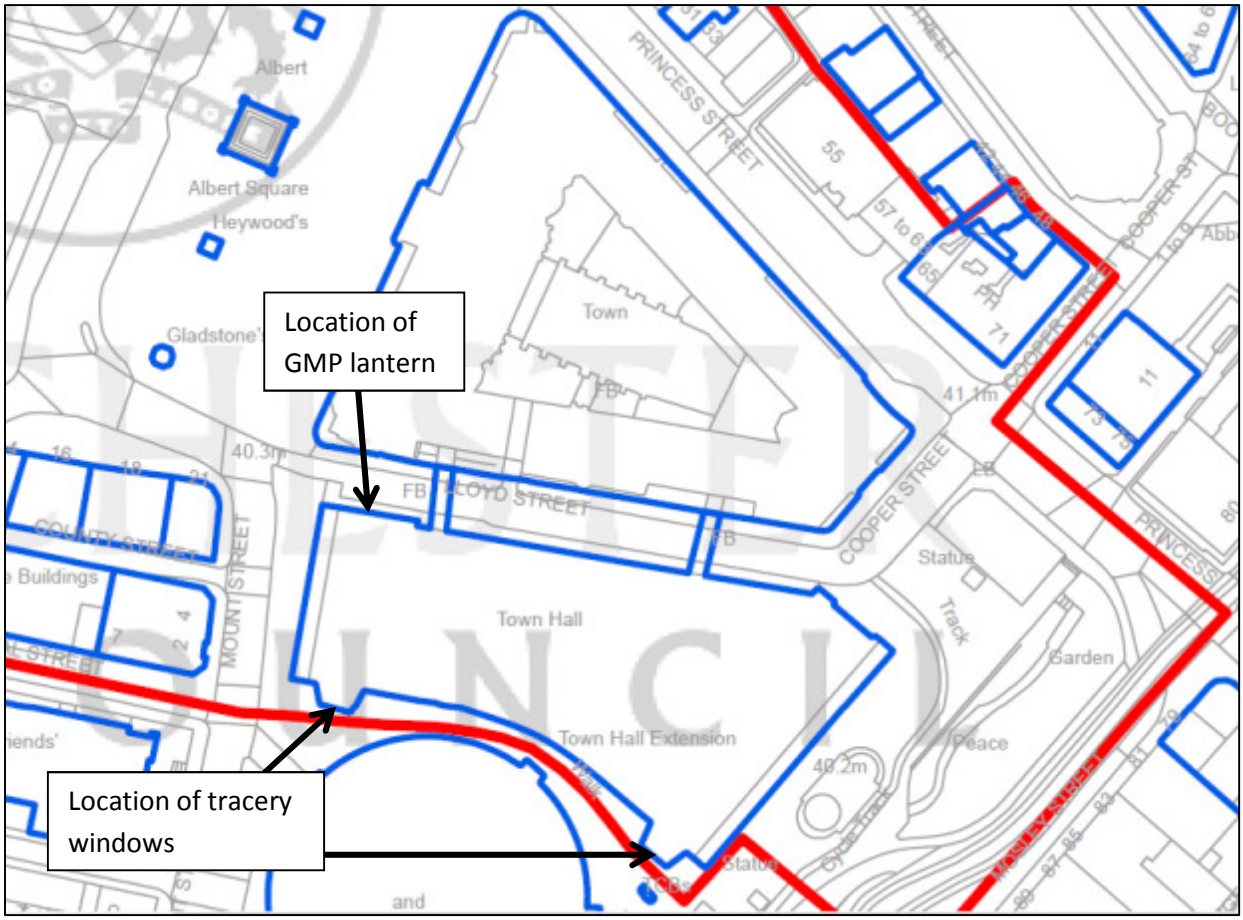
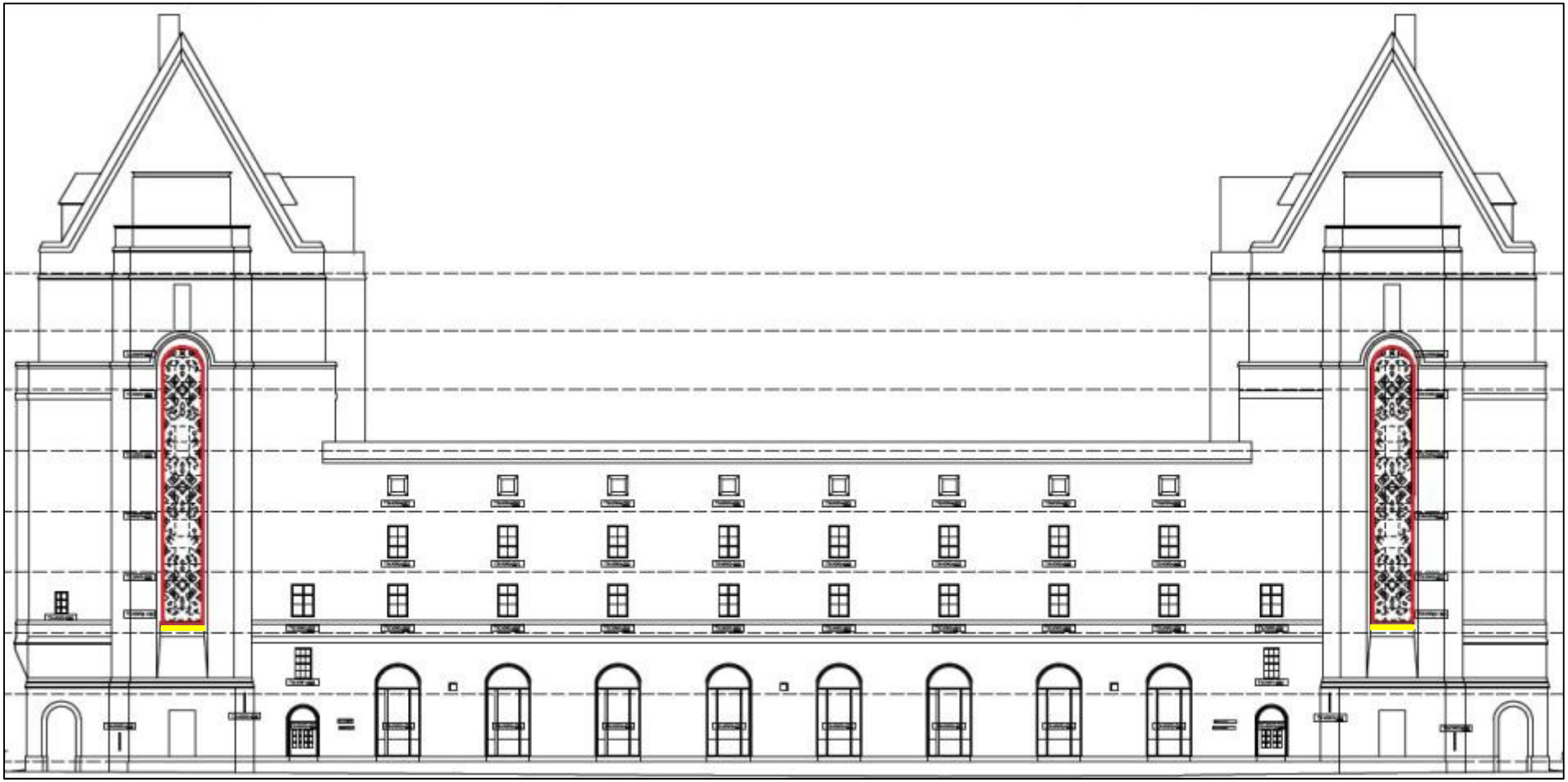


Figure 3: Tracery Windows and New Lighting Locations



Location of proposed bird control system

Location of proposed LED Uplighters (2no. per window)

Figure 4: Areas affected by proposed bird control system and LED uplighters

Heritage Significance of the Town Hall Extension

The Town Hall Extension has a Grade II* listed Status and is a significant heritage building to the city and people of Manchester. The building was designed by Emanuel Vincent Harris, completed in 1938 and sited between the Gothic style of the Old Town Hall and the Neo-classic style of the Central Library.

The English Heritage Grade II* listing for the building notes:

> *Grade: II**
> *Date Listed: 3 October 1974*
> *English Heritage Building ID: 388286 Listing Entry Number: 1197917*
> ***Listing Text:***
> *Town Hall extension, 1938, by Vincent Harris. Steel frame with cladding of sandstone ashlar and steeply-pitched slate roof. Large irregular plan with long concave south side. Eclectic style with Gothic accent. Eight storeys and attic, the 7th and 8th storeys set back behind a parapet, with 29-window facade to Lloyd Street (linked to Town Hall by bridge), 17-window facade to St Peter's Square, and contrasting 5-bay facade to Mount Street (see below). In all these facades the ground floor is treated as a plinth with a continuous arcade of simple round-headed openings and a chamfered coping; the upper floors of those to Lloyd Street and St Peter's Square are divided horizontally by a band over the 1st floor and a parapet over the 5th floor, have small rectangular windows up to that level and 2-light mullioned windows to the set-back 6th and 7th floors, and attic dormers with wooden cross-windows and hipped roofs; and the last 5 bays of the Lloyd Street facade are set back. The Mount Street facade, by contrast, has 5 giant oriels from the 2nd to the 5th floors (inclusive), all rising from a straight band carried on large brackets at 1st floor, but the 2nd and 4th slightly set back, and all filled with a continuous grid of mullion-and-transom windows divided by a king mullion and 2 transoms into pairs of 8, 6 and 4 lights on successive levels. The gable ends of the Mount Street and St Peter's Square wings have tall stair-turrets with giant round-headed arches containing elaborate geometrically traceried windows, over the head of each arch a square-headed niche with a statue, and stepped back top stages with bands. At the rear (towards the circular Library building) the wings are linked by a curved 4-storey range which has widely spaced round-headed arches and small windows.*
>
> *Listing NGR: SJ8388598012*

(Source: English Heritage)

Assessment of Significance

Prior to the commencement of the Transformation Programme and to assist with the overall understanding of the buildings and collections, Manchester commissioned a number of surveys and reports to assess the overall significance of the building and its elements. These included:

1. **Manchester Town Hall Complex Conservation Plan**

   Volume 1 - The Buildings and Squares by John Archer and Building Design Partnership 2006.

   Volume 2 - The Furniture by John Archer and Stuart Evens 2006.

   Volume 3 - The Collections by various authors 2006.

2. **Manchester Town Hall Extension : A Report and selective gazetteer on its conservation and proposed development** by John Archer and C Wojakowskir 2009.

3. **Assessment of the Significance of Manchester Town Hall Extension and Central Library** by Stephen Levrant Heritage Architecture 2010.

4. **Manchester Town Hall Extension – Conservation Strategy** by HOK Architecture 2010.

These assessments and reports confirm the importance of the exterior elevations of the Town Hall Extension and the aesthetic impact of the tracery windows as designed by Vincent Harris.

The Town Hall Complex Conservation Plan describes the windows thus:

> *"…a continuous panel filled with interlocking tracery. It owes little to Gothic design and combines sharp angularity with full-bodied curves filled with the emblematic floral motifs of Britain's nationhood, the rose, thistle, shamrock and leek. Above the keystone of the panel is a tall niche containing a symbolic sculpture by Hermon Cawthra. … Dressed as ancients, two figures, one in each niche, represent a philosopher and a counsellor"*
>
> *John Archer, BDP, 2006.*

Heritage Photographs

Successive photographs of the Town Hall Extension since its completion in 1938 show that the exterior facades have changed little during its 70+ years of use. The tracery windows are a significant aesthetic feature of the Town Hall Extension; marking both the South East and South Western entrances into Library Walk.



Figure 5: South East gable from St. Peters Square c. 1938

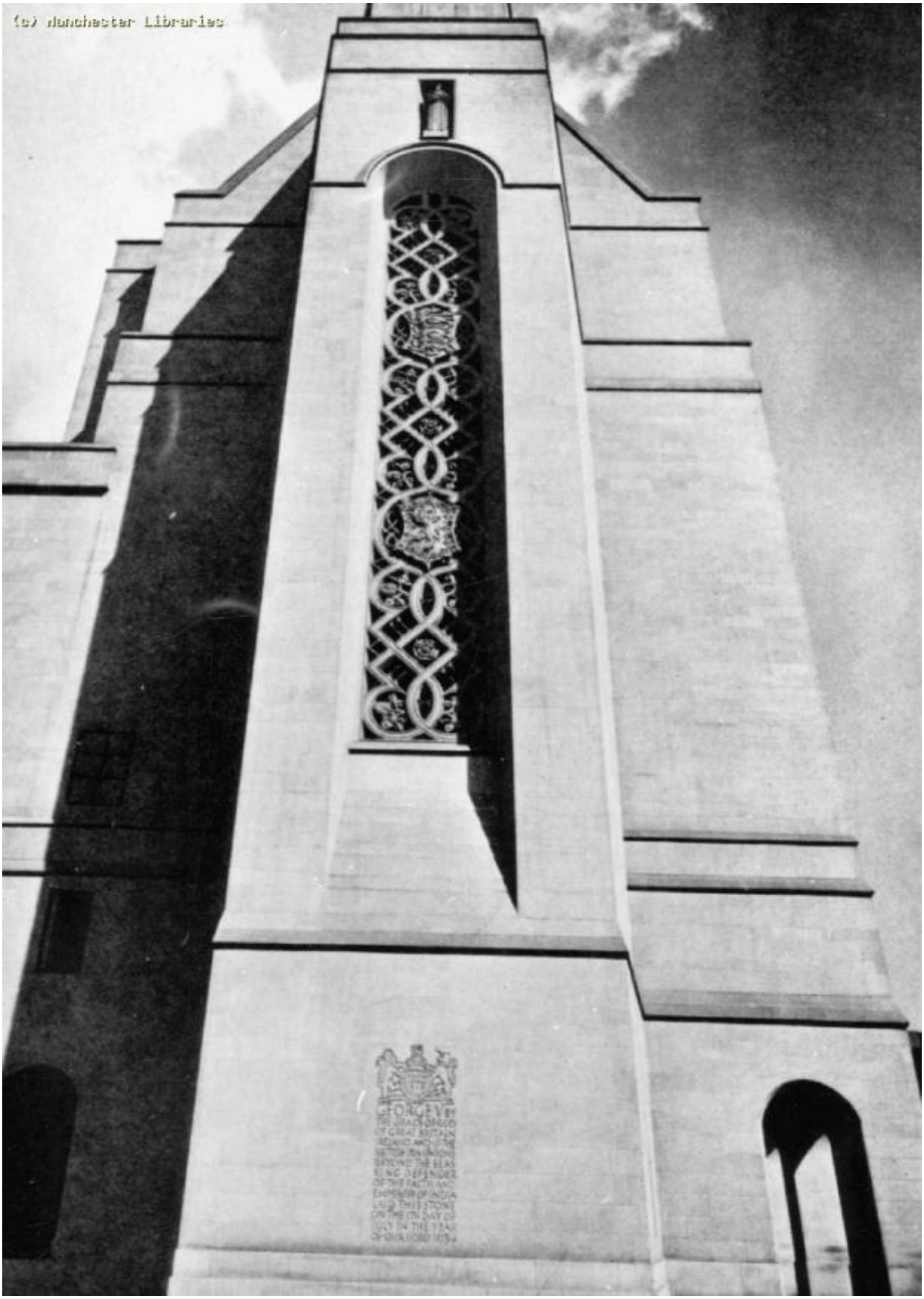


Figure 6: South East gable c.1938



Figure 7: South West gable (from Friend's Meeting House) c.1937



Figure 8: South East gable c.1937



Figure 9: South West gable c.1971



Figure 10: South East gable c.1980 (© J. Archer)



Figure 11: South East gable from St. Peters Square (2008) [taken from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Manchester_Town_Hall_Annexe.jpg



Figure 12: South East gable, 2012 (© A. Henderson, HPM)



Figure 13: South East gable (detail showing bird fouling) and old uplighters 2012 (© A. Henderson, HPM)

The preceding photographs show that uplighters have been previously installed to the sills of the tracery windows. Based on these photos the lights were installed after 1980 (Fig. 10), and prior to the photograph dated 2008 (Fig. 11).

Significance Appraisal of the Tracery Windows

This significance appraisal is based upon documentary research and analysis of primary and secondary sources, including photographs, drawings and site surveys. This appraisal also draws on the previous assessments conducted by Stephen Levrant Heritage Architecture and HOK Architecture.

English Heritage's Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance (2008) recommends analysing the significance of a heritage asset based on the four types of value it may hold: aesthetic, evidential, historic and communal.

This appraisal assesses the significance of the tracery windows both as individual architectural features and as part of the exterior façades of the Town Hall Extension as a whole.

Heritage Value	Rating (High, Medium, Low)	Discussion
EVIDENTIAL *Evidential value derives from the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity."*	High	As established by Stephen Levrant Heritage Architecture (SLHA) and by the subsequent report by HOK Architecture; the Town Hall Extension (along with the Central Library) was the greatest civic project undertaken in Manchester in the period following WW1. Furthermore; as part of a group formed by the Town Hall, the Extension and the Library, the building is evidence of Manchester's economic achievements and cultural aspirations during this period. They provide evidence of the rapid development of the city and its role as a regional centre. The ornate tracery windows with their heraldic designs and the associated statues of the philosopher and the councillor are evidence of the perceived role of the Town Hall Extension and Central Library buildings. They also provide evidence of the skilled craftsmen employed to work on the Extension building through their intricate design and quality carving.
HISTORICAL *"Historical value derives from the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present. It tends to be illustrative or associative."*	High	The monumentality of the Town Hall Extension represents a sense of shared civic ownership (SLHA, 2010) during the tumultuous interwar period in Manchester. The Town Hall Complex was integral to the growth of Manchester during the late 19th and early 20th centuries and is representative of the evolving demands of the civic complex to meet the growing needs of its citizens. The ornate tracery windows with their heraldic designs and the associated statues of the philosopher and the councillor are evidence of the perceived role of the Town Hall Extension and Central Library buildings at the time of their completion.

AESTHETIC *"Aesthetic value derives from the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place."*	High	As established in the report: *"Assessment of the Significance of Manchester Town Hall Extension and Central Library"* by Stephen Levrant Heritage Architecture 2010, the exterior facades of the Town Hall Extension are of high aesthetic value. They belong to the original concept and design, are a fundamental part of the building typology and contribute to its townscape presence. Moreover; whilst the interior of the building has changed drastically over the years, the exterior has remained unaltered and true to Harris's original vision. The tracery windows are an integral part of the exterior appearance of the Town Hall Extension and act as centrepieces to the strong vertical lines of the gable ends. They mark the entrances to Library Walk and remain unchanged since the buildings construction. The gable ends and tracery windows have particular visual impact when approached from Mount Street or St. Peters Square and are key architectural features of the building.
COMMUNAL *"Communal value derives from the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory."*	High	The Town Hall Extension holds a variety of meanings and functions for the citizens and businesses of Manchester. The building, - as part of the larger Civic Complex – forms a central part of the communities 'sense of place' and as a symbol of Manchester. "The design embodies both functionality and the desire to impress and engage visitors and users in a shared expression of civic power" (SLHA, 2010). Furthermore, the inclusion of the floral motifs of Britain - the rose, thistle, shamrock and leek – into the design of the traceries; symbolises Manchester's place as part of the British nation.

Statement of Significance

The heritage significance of the tracery windows is largely aesthetic; as both striking individual elements and as part of the Town Hall Extension exterior as a whole.

The tracery windows provide ornate focal points in the otherwise monumental facades of the Town Hall Extension and are of particular impact when approached from Mount Street or St. Peters Square.

The high communal, evidential and historical values associated with the tracery windows arise from their part of the overall appearance of the Extension building. The building and by extension, the tracery windows form part of the Civic complex and as such are part of Manchester's 'sense of place'.

Their presence as 'centre-pieces' of the two gable ends provides a tangible link to the past and maintains the appearance of the areas surrounding and approaching the building at the time of its construction.

They make a statement about the quality of the workmanship associated with the building through their intricate design and skilled carving.

For these reasons we consider the tracery windows to be highly significant to the Town Hall Complex and as such effort should be made to repair and maintain them where reasonably practicable.

Review of Bird Control Requirements

The tracery windows provide an ideal nesting place for wild birds. This has resulted in an unpleasant and potentially damaging build-up of bird guano and nesting debris which has stained the tracery stonework and could result in potential loss of detail through increased erosion of the stone (Figure 14).



Figure 14: Bird ingress and fouling to tracery stonework (© Reactive Group Services Ltd)

Furthermore, the fungi and bacteria present in the guano poses a potential health hazard to those who may come into contact with it. This risk is increased if frequent cleaning of the stone is required due to repeated bird infestation.

Works to remove the nesting birds and clean the bird guano from the tracery windows are to be completed as part of the refurbishment of the building. Unless measures are put in place to limit the ingress of birds into the tracery windows, this is only a temporary solution as the birds will quickly return.

Review of Options

Option 1 – Bird Netting

It is proposed that the front of the tracery windows be enclosed using 50mm mesh polyethylene netting. The net would be fixed to a 2mm stainless steel perimeter cable that in turn will be secured

using stainless eyelet fixings every 500mm into the mortar joints between the stones of the recess (an example of the eyelet fixing is shown below).



The mesh has been used successfully on various historic buildings in the UK (Figure 15 and 16).



Figure 15: Bird Netting on York Minster (© Reactive Group Services Ltd)

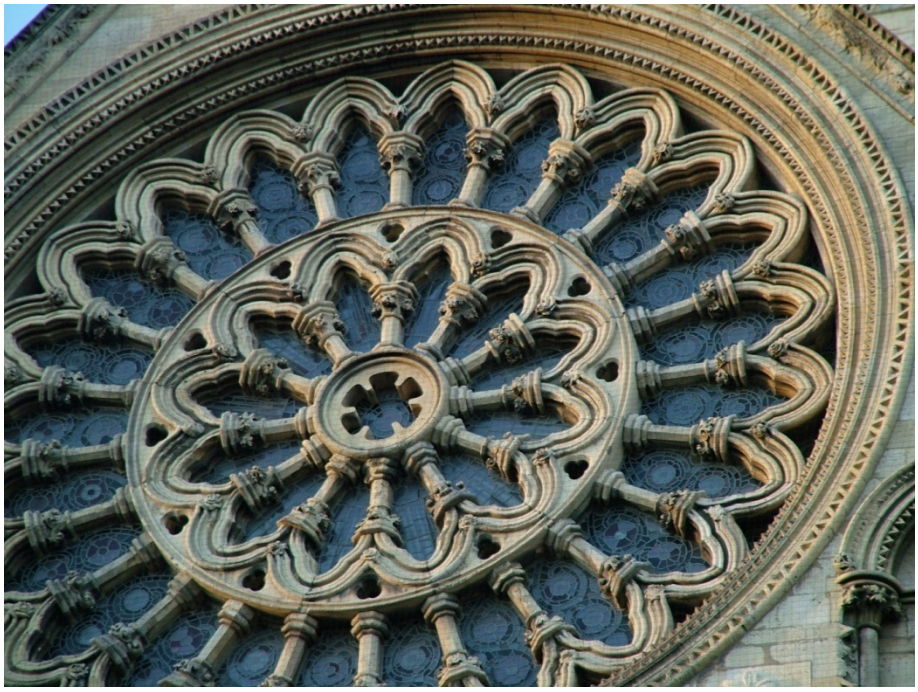


Figure 16: Bird Netting on York Minster (© Reactive Group Services Ltd)

Option 2 – Bird 'Spikes'

Deters perching and roosting on exposed features and ledges. The spikes are maintenance-free and are attached using a powerful high-tack adhesive.

It is important to note that spikes are less successful in very sheltered places. Pigeons have even been known to build nests on top of the spikes.

Bird spikes are therefore likely to be ineffective within the tracery and are extremely visually intrusive.

Option 3 – Fire Gel

'Fire Gel' emits ultraviolet light that birds relate to fire, deterring them from landing onto buildings and ledges. Visual deterrence is further reinforced by natural oils in the gel which are abhorrent to a bird's senses of smell and taste and which cause a mild stinging sensation if the bird comes into contact with it. The gel is placed in small dishes which are be glued, magnetised or hung to attach them to the building.

Multiple dishes will be required to cover the area of the tracery windows; furthermore the gel is bright yellow in colour making it visually intrusive against the stonework.

Bird Control Systems - Options Appraisal

An options appraisal was undertaken of the 3 options following review with stakeholders including MCC Conservation Officer, and users of the Town Hall Extension and Central Library facilities. Each option was compared against the following criteria:

- **Criteria 1 –** Aesthetic appearance of the bird control system within the heritage area (when viewed from ground level).
- **Criteria 2** – Modification requirements to incorporate the new bird control system.
- **Criteria 3** – Reversibility of the proposals for the heritage area.

Appraisal Criteria	Option 1 (Bird Netting)	Option 2 (Bird Spikes)	Option 3 (Fire Gel)
Option Description:	**Attachment to the Stonework via eyelet fixings in mortar joints.**	**Attachment to the stonework via a high tack adhesive.**	**Free standing dishes of gel resting on stonework.**
Criteria 1	**Good** – The black coloured mesh is virtually invisible against the stonework. Eyelets and 2mm steel cabling are also difficult to see from ground level.	**Poor** – the bird spikes are visually intrusive and clearly visible against the stonework.	**Poor** – the number of 'dishes' needed to hold the fire gel onto the tracery makes the system visually intrusive. The gel is also brightly coloured and so will be visible from ground level.
Criteria 2	**Fair** – Multiple fixing points will have to be drilled in order to attach the steel eyelets. However these can be spaced to fit into the mortar joints so as to avoid damaging the stonework.	**Fair/Poor** – The spikes are adhered using a high-tack adhesive – this may damage the stonework.	**Fair –** The dishes are adhered to the stonework rather than being mechanically attached. Has to be 'refreshed' approximately every 5 years.
Criteria 3	**Fair –** The eyelets and cabling are easily removable, holes in the mortar joints can be refilled/repointed.	**Fair** – no mechanical attachment so no remedial works required if the spikes are removed. However, adhesive may damage stonework.	**Good** – no mechanical attachment so no remedial works required if the fire gel is removed.
Outcome	**PREFERRED OPTION**	**Discounted**	**Discounted**

Preferred Option

The preferred option is to enclose the front of the tracery windows in bird netting as this is the most effective solution for limiting bird ingress into the tracery. Furthermore samples of the netting trialled on site have shown that once installed; the black coloured netting will be almost invisible from ground level (see figures 17-19).

While this option does require the installation of steel eyelets into the stonework, they are aligned to the mortar joints between the stones ensuring that the damage to the historic fabric of the building is limited and reversible.