

Manchester City Council
Parsonage Garden's, Didsbury

Parsonage Gardens,
Stenner Lane,
Didsbury,
Manchester
M20 2RQ

Heritage Statement

Project Reference: AMP44657.6

Project Title: Fletcher Moss Botanical Gardens - Stenner Lane Boundary Walls



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On behalf of
Capital Programmes and Procurement
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1. Introduction

The purpose of this Heritage Statement is for to demonstrate the requirement for the provision of rebuilding requirements identified to sections of the boundary wall to the boundary of Parsonage Gardens/Fletcher Moss Art Gallery on Stenner Lane, Didsbury. The works have been identified as essential to prevent further ongoing damage occurring to the wall and to safeguard the public.

2. The Site and Historic Overview

The Old Parsonage building, on Stenner Lane, was designated a Grade II listed building on 3rd October 1974, and is still referred to by Historic England as Fletcher Moss Art Gallery, Stenner Lane.

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest. All works should have cognisance to the listed status of the building and Conservation Area.

The Parsonage is a Grade 2 listed building, within the St James' conservation area. The first record of the house is from 1646, the home of Thomas Walker, when it is called Ash House, and referred to as 'the home of the minister'. It is probably the second oldest building in Didsbury after St James' Church.

Prior to 1761, it was owned by the Tatton family, again as a home, and John Davenport also lived there as did William Hesketh, presumably not all at the same time. Between 1761 and 1795 it was lived in by the Bamford family and then in 1795 Sam Bethell lived there until 1804. The next occupant, up to 1829, was Miss Twyford, landlady of the Cock Inn until 1824.

[<https://www.didsburyparsonagetrust.org.uk/history-of-the-parsonage>]

In 1865 Fletcher Moss, then aged 22, moved in with his parents and siblings and he subsequently bought the house in 1885. The Moss family made their money from being corn factors and had their offices at the Corn Exchange in Manchester. He died in 1919 after an active life of public service and was renowned for his in-depth writing on local history, travel, flora and fauna and local people.

On his death in 1919 Alderman Moss bequeathed the house and gardens to the City of Manchester because he wanted the house and its contents to remain, as far as possible, intact “to show what a comfortable house of the olden times was like”. Unfortunately, the house became difficult to maintain and in 1922 many features, including stained glass and fireplaces, were removed.

The house became a branch of Manchester Art gallery containing much of the Fletcher Moss Collection which included several Turner paintings (now with Manchester Art Gallery). The emphasis of the displays was on items made in or associated with Manchester.

As an ‘economic measure’, the City of Manchester closed the gallery in 1978. It was then used as council offices until 2011. Didsbury Civic Society started a fundraising effort to raise the money to renovate the house and formed a separate charity (owned by the DCS). Over £160,000 was raised and the house was opened in September 2012 as a community space. It is leased to the Trust by Manchester City Council. It has been a major success as a centre for the community, housing classes from children’s drama to art, from lacemaking to yoga. Many of the U3A classes take place in the building. It also hosts business seminars, weddings, and arts events. In the spirit of its time as a much-loved Art Gallery there are ever changing art exhibitions by local artists. As a community space it provides rooms for local group meetings, hosts community events and is now an integral part of the Didsbury community. Its gardens have won several local and national awards having been restored and maintained by the Friends of Fletcher Moss Park and Parsonage Gardens.

[<https://www.didsburycivicsociety.org/the-old-parsonage/>]

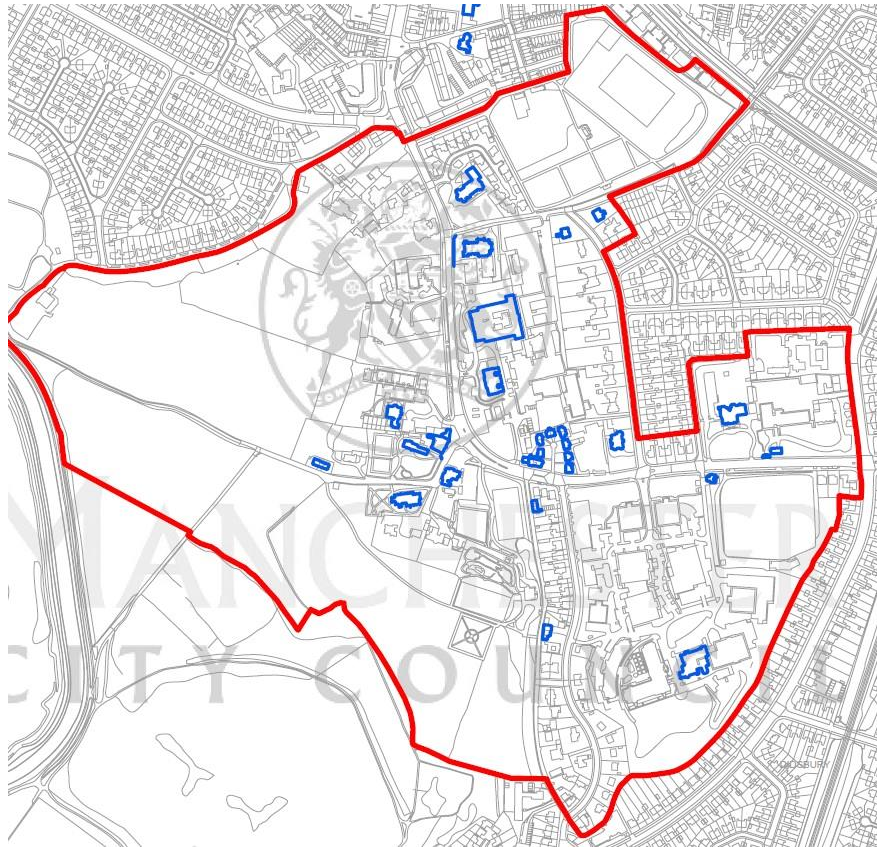


Fig.1 Didsbury, St James Conservation Area



Fig.2 Site Location Plan, Fletcher Moss Art Gallery, Stenner Lane, Didsbury

3. Listing Details

Heritage Category: Listed Building

Grade: II

List Entry Number: 1254682

Date first listed: 03-Oct-1974

Statutory Address: FLECTHER MOSS ART GALLERY, STENNER LANE

4. Background & Proposed Works

The boundary wall at The Old Parsonage Gardens located on Stenner Lane adjacent St James's Church has shown signs of significant movement and cracking over the past 18 months. This damage to the wall is due to a conflict of interest between the brick boundary wall and the large Field Maple tree located adjacent the wall. Fletcher Moss Art Gallery is a Grade II Listed Building, and is located in the Conservation Area of St James, Didsbury. All works should have cognisance to the listed status of the building, its grounds and the conservation area.

The boundary wall at Fletcher Moss Art Gallery is a solid free-standing masonry retaining wall built from common brick units arranged in English Garden Wall bond i.e. 3 or 5 courses of stretchers between header courses. The joints have been finished with a flush mortar joint. Wall thickness varies from 230mm to the parapet and approximately 390mm at retaining lower section. Additional 500mm thick piers have been provided one directly adjacent the tree and one at the location adjacent the gated access. In consideration of the history of the site and condition of the wall it is estimated that the boundary wall position dates to Victorian times i.e. circa late nineteenth century.

There are visible tree roots growing through the brick joints at various levels, roots are also visible at footpath level up to five metres from the tree position. The leaning of the wall is associated with tree growth where the tree roots and the trunk has impinged the rear face of the wall. Gradual tree movement and growth will have produced adequate force to overstress the brickwork and cause the movement visible.

Front Elevation - Immediately noticeable is the differential out-of-plane 'lean' of the wall across the two number piers adjacent to the Field Maple Tree. The top of the wall to the left-hand side of the tree is leaning forwards approximately 100mm beyond the bottom of the wall at pavement level.

Rear Elevation - The Field Maple tree growing in the retained earth is located very close to the rear wall face. The tree roots are visible at ground level and stretch up to 5 metres in distance from the tree base.

The walls height changes from approximately 1500mm at the lower section (right hand side) of wall up to 1700mm (left hand side) of tree past the central pier and carries on up to the entrance of the private residence of Stenner Brow. The wall appears to have been constructed to retain earth on the inside based on the following observations;

- a) Existing weep holes located near pavement level were provided to allow water in the retained material behind the wall to drain away.
- b) Increasing wall thickness towards the base as can be seen on the inside face to provide weight and stability.
- c) The height of retained soil to the rear of the wall is approximately 1000mm to 1400mm above pavement level.

An elevation drawing of Stenner Lane boundary wall provided (FMO-MCC-XX-XX-DR-B-003) shows the level of retained earth behind it.

The existing weep holes are formed from cutting parts of a full brick during construction at approximately 1.5m centres. The weep holes do not appear to be allowing water to drain away from the retained material and flow onto the pavement. They are most likely to be blocked.

The existing weep holes are formed from cutting parts of a full brick during construction at approximately 600mm centres. The weep holes do not appear to be allowing water to drain away from the retained material and flow onto the pavement. They are most likely blocked.

Fletcher Moss Art Gallery is fully accessible to the public. During the project the Contractor will make full allowance for adequate segregation and security to prevent unauthorised access into the site and theft of materials and/ or plant and equipment.

5. Impact Assessment

The boundary wall on Stenner Lane at Parsonage Gardens has suffered from neglect in its most recent history and the lack of maintenance has resulted in its current poor state of repair. Much of the damage has been caused by the juxtaposition of the Field Maple Tree adjacent to the boundary wall.

As a local authority we have the responsibility to conserve our heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution of life of this and future generations.

In carrying out the repair works, as detailed in the supporting documents, every effort will be made to ensure the materials used to rebuild and repair sections of the wall match the existing in both colour, appearance and texture to minimise the visual impact the repairs might cause as they will be visible from Fletcher Moss Botanical Gardens and the church graveyard.

A heritage contractor will be chosen to undertake the works as they have previous experience working on similar projects. They also appreciate the quality of workmanship required and are sympathetic in their approach.

It is requested to allow the proposals to proceed to help benefit the user groups which frequently benefit from the use of these gardens as which is a focal point of their community. The works will help safeguard against the demise of the sections of wall and allow the boundary walls to be viewed as they should be from the adjacent Stenner Lane.

6. Conclusion

The rebuilding and repairing of this boundary wall are considered vital to safeguard the public and to restore a part of a heritage asset at Parsonage Gardens. Due to the continuous growth of the adjacent Field Maple Tree this wall has become vulnerable to significant movement and concern for future failure.

Best efforts will be made to reduce the visual impact that the repair and rebuilding of this boundary and retaining wall will have on key lines of sight or approaches to the area.

Parsonage Gardens is inside Didsbury, St James Conservation area, therefore, proposals to reuse the existing bricks and coping stones and to best match the existing mortar in appearance should not affect the significance of the local listed asset. The proposals set out in this statement will ensure the repair works will not have any negative impact on the area and it's surrounding areas.