Planning Statement

2621: Whitworth Art Gallery - University of Manchester

Schedule of Listing

Grade II

Art gallery. C1895-1900, by J W Beaumont; altered. Red brick with bands and dressings of matching terracotta, green slate roofs. Roughly rectangular plan with 2 towers and a large porch projecting to the front plus short wings to left and rear. Free Jacobean style. Two storeys over basements, 1:1:9:1:2 windows; with semi-octagonal pilasters to the corners finished as short Baroque turrets with colonnades, plinth, 1st-floor sill-band, stylised corbel tables, moulded cornice, and parapet. The 9-bay main range has a projected ground floor with cornice and balustraded parapet which sweep out over a large semi-circular porch with a screen of paired stone ionic columns and stone frieze, mounted on 4 semicircular steps; round-headed windows to the curved wall in this porch, small 3-light windows to the straight sides pf the projection; cross-windows at 1st floor except the centre which has a slightly bowed 6-light transomed window with a balustrade in the parapet (flanked by raised gold lettering "WHITWORTH" "GALLERIES"). The towers flanking the main range have tiered canted oriel windows and low top stages with corner pinnacles and pyramidal roofs. The end bay to the left and the 2 bays to the right have cross-windows to both floors, the lower large and set in segmental-headed recesses. All windows have small-paned glazing. Small white lantern on roof ridge, with pedimented faces.

As you stand in the Whitworth today, perhaps in the new landscape gallery or gazing out across the park through the restaurant windows, it's worth taking a moment to remember how we got here.

This is an old building, and one that has continually expanded and reinvented itself over the past 130 years. Yet for all its change, one thing has remained constant. The Whitworth, founded in memory of the industrialist Sir Joseph Whitworth, was done so with one aim: that it act for the "the perpetual gratification of the people of Manchester". It is that aim, in all its educational, cultural and inspirational forms, that creates an unbroken thread between the Whitworth then and the Whitworth now.

Originally known as the Whitworth Institute and Park, in 1889 it opened its doors to "people of all social classes," a gallery in a park that would counteract the malaises of inner city life.

Supported by sixty eminent Mancunians, including C. P. Scott, the editor of the Manchester Guardian (now The Guardian), from the beginning it was international in its outlook.

During the Industrial Revolution, Manchester was the world's largest centre of manufacturing, and so it followed that the city should furnish itself with the sorts of internationally relevant museums, galleries and libraries that befitted its global status. This being Manchester, it was a desire that was as much practical as it was aspirational. One of the reasons that the Whitworth's textiles collection is so strong is because the gallery's founders brought samples of the world's best textiles, old and new, to inspire the makers of the Manchester cloth on which the city's fortunes were founded.

So the Whitworth's founders took their lessons from the best museums and galleries in Europe, and by the time the first building was completed in 1908 it had already assembled two of the world's great collections: British watercolours and drawings, and world textiles.

Far from drawing a line under its collecting habits, the gallery continued to amass artworks - in fact, it never stopped, with some of the most recent acquisitions (from the Karpidas Foundation) on show today. Back in the early years of the 20th century, however, the emphasis was on creating national collections of print and modern art. Margaret Pilkington, gallery director from the 1930s to 1950s, oversaw 339 acquisitions, with more to come when the gallery became part of the University of Manchester in 1958. And in 1967, the Whitworth was given a collection of wallpapers that stands alongside that of the V&A.

Around this time, the university decided to overhaul the Edwardian building. The architects Bickerdike, Allen and Partners transformed the gallery, and by the late 1960s its breathtakingly bold, open-plan, Scandinavian-style spaces, along with an appetite for championing then-emerging artists such as David Hockney, led to it acquiring a new nickname. The Whitworth was dubbed the "Tate of the North".

In 1995, another extension - the RIBA award-winning Sculpture Court - was added, but even so the Whitworth quickly began to run out of space. Its expanding collections, ambitious exhibitions, research and education programmes and, most importantly, a dramatic leap in the

number of visitors, meant that by 2008 the Whitworth was thriving – and stretched to the very limits of its building.

Which brings us back to the here and now. The building you see today, and which we open this spring after a £15 million development, is the result of a plan as ambitious as the one put together by C.P. Scott in the 1880s. It is not just an extension, or a doubling in size: it is an expansion that has retained the best of the historic building, underlines our connection to the university, park and local communities, but also gives us, in effect, an entirely new gallery.

The design of this latest expansion was created by the innovative practice, MUMA (McInnes Usher McKnight Architects). Alongside big architectural gestures – those steel and glass wings that extend into the park – is a remarkable attention to detail. MUMA created a unique Whitworth blend of British brick, for example, and a brickwork pattern that reflects the historic textiles found in our collection. New, park-facing spaces encourage both us and our visitors to take the inside out, and the outside in.

The original building, meanwhile, has been beautifully restored. The Cornelia Parker exhibition takes advantage of the transformed barrel-vaulted exhibition galleries. At lower ground level, a new Collections Centre, housed in what was once a basement storage area, allows unprecedented access to the gallery's 55,000 object-strong collection. It sits close by our new Study Centre and the Clore Learning Studio, which, opening directly onto the art garden, is a space for messy, creative play for all of our visitors, particularly children. And the whole development has been conducted with an eye on a sustainable future. With ground source pumps and photovoltaics used to heat the building, this is a green gallery in a green park.

The Whitworth has come a long way in the past 130 years – though in some ways it has travelled no distance at all. The building's new facilities and spaces simply allow us to do more of what we have always done, but to do it better and to be able to open our gallery and our collections to more people than ever before. So that original aim, to create a gallery for the perpetual gratification for the people of Manchester – and for the thousands of people who pass in and out of this city - still seems no bad aim today.

Initial Proposal North Elevation:

This Project involves the assessment of continual flooding to a box gutter above the art gallery to the South and North as indicated on drawing Nr.MGA_031AA-R000.

Following discussions with the University of Manchester the following works packages were also requested to be undertaken:

a) Dry rot treatment and eradication to the North Tower.

b) Terracotta Finial Replacement

c) North spire remedial works

An initial desk top assessment of the box gutters was undertaken by Brian Doran of Troup Bywater + Anders (TB+A) on the 31st of July 2023 (See Appendix A) undertaking Design Calculation of the Roof Rainwater in line with Building Regulations Approved Document H of which follows the requirements of BSEN 12056-32. Brian Doran concluded that rainwater downpipes should be to a minimum of 150mm diameter or additional 100mm down pipes should be provided; the existing rainwater outlets of 75mm diameter to the existing roofs are inadequate to discharge rainfall. JCT Design & Build Contract 2016 incorporating the Schedule of Amendments

Dry Rot

An initial assessment was undertaken during a survey on the 1st June 2022 by Joanne Wavish (University of Manchester) and Dr Jagjit Singh (Environmental Building Solutions Ltd) and no concealed timbers and cavities were investigated and recommendation were given to undertake a non-destructive investigative survey by a specialist contractor employed as an aid to determining the extent of rot within the structure, see Appendix B.

Further to Environmental Building Solutions Ltd report the University of Manchester appointed Trace Remedial Building Services to undertake a destructive survey on the 16th January 2024 as detailed in Appendix B concluding with a Schedule of Repair.

Finial Replacement

The University of Manchester commissioned a survey from Novus Solutions providing tower access to ascertain the condition of the Finials and associated coping stones. The survey was undertaken on January 14th 2022 with recommendations to renew the ball finials and re-bed existing coping stones, see Appendix B.

Darwen Terracotta were approached for a quotation for the replacement of the ball Finial (existing damaged/broken finial is stored on site) which is on a 24 week manufacture and delivery period. Final shall be matched with materials & profile to match existing.

SDA requested quotation from Sandtoft & Keymer Heritage Services & Darwen Terracotta of which were received on the 25th April 2024 and included in the Appendix B.

Design Proposals:

The design brief provided by the Client was to assess ways in which the surface water could be reduced to the box gutters of the North & South roofs without causing extensive remedial works to the internal fabric of the building.

Whilst the remodelling of the box gutter to the East roof structure has been considered above the Grand Hall, SDA Consulting have reviewed an alternative to minimise any disturbance to the building fabric yet reducing the discharge of surface water to the gutters above the North & South Gallery.

It was noted that to both the North and South roof areas double skinned polycarbonate roof sheets are installed with no gutters incorporated thereby discharging direct into the box gutters. Due to the detail of the eaves consideration should be given to installation of a traditional deep flow gutter system to divert the surface water away from the outlets causing the water ingress to the North & South Gallery walls.

The gutter remedial project should be relatively straight forward and the proposals to discharge water to alternative rainwater outlets should alleviate the water ingress to the North and South gallery walls.

It should also be noted that the proposed works mitigate the risk of water ingress into the Art Gallery, this does not alleviate the issue with the downpipes to the North & South gallery and we would recommend (where feasible) the downpipes that are set within the wall are exposed and a permanent upgrade undertaken at a later date and in consultation with the Conservationist.

All pipework within the ceiling void will be insulated to prevent condensation and a leak detection system such as Envirotech Alarms Ltd or Waterguard System are recommended subject to approval by the University.

All material to be used shall be approved by the Planning Authority prior to installation to ensure the Grade II listing is not affected.