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Planning, Development & Heritage Consultants

Signature Victoria Mill Limited, c/o its Administrators

Victoria Mill – Ceiling Works

Heritage Addendum

15 August 2024

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Members of the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI). Recognised by the Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC) as a Historic Environment Service Provider (HESPR).

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Contents

1. Introduction

2. The Application Site and Surrounding Area

3. The Proposed Scheme

4. Heritage Significance of Victoria Mill

5. Impact of Scheme on Heritage Significance of Victoria Mill

6. Conclusion

Appendix 1 Photographs

1. Introduction

1.1 This Heritage Addendum has been prepared by Paul Butler Associates on behalf of Signature Victoria Mill Limited, c/o its Administrators relating to proposed works at Victoria Mill, Lower Vickers St, Manchester, M40 7LH. Victoria Mill dates from 1869-73 and was constructed as a cotton spinning mill. The building is Grade II* listed but is not located within a Conservation Area.

1.2 The statement has been provided in support of an application for Listed Building Consent for works to part of the basement of the northern wing of the building. The basement, including the affected part, is vacant.

Background

1.3 Planning Permission (Ref: 119321) and Listed Building Consent (Ref: 119357) for the conversion of the upper floors of the northern part of the building from office to residential apartments was approved on 6 June 2018, with these consents having been partially implemented. The works ceased due to the developer falling into administration. Paul Butler Associates have been involved in the project since 2020 as part of a new project team which has been tasked by the administrator with completing the development, enabling its occupation. The project team identified a number of discrepancies with regards to the approved residential scheme which have meant that had it been built out as approved, it would not have been safe, or in accordance with other requirements such as secure by design. A suite of variation applications along with fresh applications for Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent relating to the upper floor conversion works were submitted in July 2021 and approved in March 2022. Upper floor works are subsequently nearing completion.

1.4 A further issue which had not been considered by the previous project team was the necessity for fire protection between the ground floor office use and the upper floor residential use. Listed Building Consent 136174/LO/2023 for the works necessary to make the building fire safe was approved on 23 November 2023. Since approval of that application, it has come to light that some additional basement chambers will need to have similar fire safe works undertaken, and for those spaces to be permanently blocked off. Listed Building

Consent is now sought for these works, which will comprise the installation of a fire-rated ceiling and the infilling of doorways.

This Statement

1.5 A Heritage Statement (dated October 2016) was issued by Archaeological Research Services Ltd in support of the original applications for the conversion of the upper floors of the building but did also consider the ground and basement floors. No significant changes have been made to these spaces since this Statement was undertaken. The Statement included a policy review, an assessment of significance, and an assessment of the impact on the significance resulting from the development. The Statement was undertaken in accordance with national and local policy, which has not significantly changed in the intervening period.

1.6 The purpose of this statement is therefore to consider any impact upon the heritage significance of those parts of the Listed Building which may be affected by the works proposed as part of this Listed Building Consent application, and subsequently the overall impact on the significance of the Listed Building.

1.7 This statement includes:

- A description of the application site and surrounding area;
- An overview of the proposed works;
- A review of the heritage significance of the application site; and,
- An appraisal of the application proposals against this significance.

1.8 The proposed scheme is supported by a series of drawings prepared by Allison Pike Architects and has been developed further to consultation with Manchester City Council's (MCC) planning and conservation officers during pre-application discussions during August 2024.

2. The Application Site and Surrounding Area

Application Site

2.1 The application site incorporates the northern part of Victoria Mill which is located within the Manchester suburb of Miles Platting. The works which comprise part of the subject applications relate only to internal works to part of the basement of the northern wing of the former Mill.



Figure 2.1: Aerial view of the Victoria Mill site

2.2 Victoria Mill is Grade II* listed. It is a substantial former cotton spinning mill comprising six storeys set above a basement and is constructed from red brick with yellow brick dressing, and a modern bitumen flat roof. The building actually comprises two large former mills, connected by a central engine house, thereby following a U-plan. There is a small enclosed courtyard to the rear, with a large car park to the front.

2.3 The building currently accommodates a mix of uses with residential use occupying the southern wing of the building, whilst the northern wing had most recently been predominantly in office use. The office use of the upper floors of the northern wing ceased several years ago. Until very recently, the ground floor was occupied by the NHS and the Manchester Primary Care Trust (PCT). The space has now been vacated, the surgery and office users relocated to temporary accommodation, to enable the strip out and refurbishment of the spaces in accordance with the recent Listed Building Consent approval.

2.4 The main part of the basement is vacant and although there has been some subdivision with modern breezeblock walls, the space has not been made habitable. The historic columns, beams, and brick jack arches are all therefore visible. This application relates to small basement chambers located close to the chimney, in the northern part of the building. There are no historic brick arch ceilings within these chambers, nor are there any historic columns and column heads. Please refer to the images of the affected part of the basement within Appendix A.

Surrounding Area

2.5 The site lies within the suburb of Miles Platting, approximately 1 mile to the east of Manchester City Centre. There are a mix of residential and commercial uses within the immediate area, with the Rochdale Canal aligning the site's southern perimeter, and a public park with children's play facilities located to the immediate west. The site is not located within a Conservation Area and there are no other listed buildings or structures within immediate proximity to the site. Removed from the site is the Grade II Listed former Corpus Christie Basilica which is located approximately 300m to the north.

2.6 The site itself became developed during the industrial expansion of the mid-19th Century, and whilst the southern part of the complex had by 1845 been developed as housing, construction of the mill commenced in 1869, with the second western wing being completed in 1873. Although there have always been residential properties in close proximity to the Mill, for many years the site was abutted on its western side by a cotton mill, and on its eastern side, by a chemical works. These adjacent buildings and industrial operations longer exist, and aside from a modern light industrial complex to the north of the site, the Victoria Mill remains the only clear evidence of the area's historic industrial past.

3. The Proposed Scheme

3.1 The application proposals comprise minor necessary works to small chambers within the building's basement, to ensure the fire safety of the building. These works are limited to the installation of fireproof ceilings and the blocking up of doorways to prevent access. Some repairs will also be undertaken to the brickwork walls, but these will be undertaken in accordance with the repair strategy approved under LBC 136174/LO/2023 and via condition discharge approval CDN/23/0701.

3.2 The necessity for the works is set out within the submitted Design and Access Statement prepared by Allison Pike Architects. Pre-application advice was sought by the applicant from Manchester City Council, which confirmed that Listed Building Consent for the works was necessary.

4. Heritage Significance of Victoria Mill

4.1 The heritage planning policy of relevance to the proposed scheme, and which provides the context for its assessment, is set out within national and local planning policy guidance.

4.2 An assessment of the heritage significance of this Grade II* Listed Building is set out within Section 7 of the Heritage Statement by Archaeological Research Services (Ref: 2016/156). The assessment of significance is based on the four key aspects of significance as defined in Historic England's guidance document 'Conservation principles, policies and guidance for the sustainable management of the historic environment (Historic England 2008)'. The following is of note from this assessment:

4.3 The Listed Building has a 'degree of **evidential value'** resting in the nature of construction and style of the structure, due to the remnants of the building's engine house, and the crane hoist within the courtyard, along with two bearing shafts suggestive of industrial activity. The canal remaining in the same location adjacent to the Mill providing a 'visual aid' as to the transportation of raw materials and the finished product is also identified. The adverse impact upon the evidential value resulting from the substantial modification of the building's interior is noted – including with regards to false ceilings covering the jack arches and the rectangular lining obscuring cast iron columns, and all machinery has been removed or covered over during (the 1989) conversion. (paragraphs 7.2 – 7.4)

4.4 The site is identified as being of **historical value** in the sense that it guides a current understanding of how the cotton industry operated, but notes that this has been compromised due to the alterations to the surrounding land. The assessment states that 'many other mills would have been present in the surrounding area; however, these have been lost during time'. (paragraphs 7.5 – 7.6)

4.5 The assessment identifies Victoria Mill as being of **aesthetic value**. This is identified as being due to its Italianate architectural style which was popular in the late 19th century; and its imposing nature and scale which would result in people drawing sensory and intellectual stimulation from it. The loss of 19th century mills from Manchester is also noted, with Victoria Mill being 'the last remaining mill of the many mills that occupied sites along the Rochdale Canal until the mid-20th century'.

4.6 The site is identified as being of **communal value**, due to the large scale of the mill and its iconic chimney, meaning it can be seen from a substantial distance away. It is one of the few remaining mills along the Rochdale Canal and is considered a landmark in the north east of Manchester. The statement confirms that the site holds significant communal value as it contributes to a sense of place in this area, including for those who already live, work, and / or visit the building. (Paragraphs 7.9-7.10)

4.7 A 'Statement of Significance' is provided at paragraph 7.11 – 7.12 and notes:

> *'Victoria Mill is a Grade II* Listed Building (ID: 388305). A Grade II* Listing defines the building as being of outstanding national importance and of 'more than special interest'.* (paragraph 7.11)

> *'Victoria Mill is significant, having been given a Grade II* status in 1988, and thus is considered to be of 'more than special interest'. It is in good condition and provides an example of a late 19th century cotton mill built in the Italianate style. Although the interior machinery is no longer present, it still does retain good examples of jack-arches and cast iron pillars with octagonal capitals. Furthermore, this is one of the last of the 19th century mills still surviving on the Rochdale canal.'* (paragraph 7.12)

4.8 The 'Impact Assessment' within the Heritage Statement (Section 8) considered the impact of the proposed upper floor residential conversion scheme on the significance of the Listed Building. Paragraph 8.2 noted:

> *'Victoria Mill has already undergone changes when it was converted into offices and apartments in the late 20th century. Thus, the mill no longer retains any fixtures, on the interior, that indicate previous industrial use. The only visible historic fabrics on the floors are the jack-arches and the cast-iron columns with the octagonal capitals. The previous conversion, in the late 20th century, was reversible. False ceilings have simply covered the arches rather than altering them and the rectangular lining has simply shielded the cast-iron pillars from view instead of modifying them. Neither the jack-arches nor cast-iron pillars were removed or damaged during the alterations. If the proposed alterations to not damage or remove these items then the conversion will have moderate to minor impact on the fabric of the building.'*

> *'In summary whilst it must be recognised that any new use will require some change to the historic fabric of the buildings, including the subdivision of space, if the jack arches and cast-iron pillars are not damaged or removed in the process, this proposal does not heavily impact upon the historic integrity of a heritage asset. The proposal represents a positive opportunity to provide a viable future for the building. Thus it could be concluded that the proposed development (Appendix II) would have negligible to minor impact on the mill, when this is balanced against public benefit the proposed development could be acceptable'.* (Paragraph 8.6)

4.9 Section 5 considers the impact of the proposed works to the relevant part of the basement upon the significance of the Listed Building.

5. Impact of Scheme on Heritage Significance of Victoria Mill

5.1 This section is to be read alongside the photographs of the affected part of the basement within the submitted Photo Document. The submitted application comprises the installation of fireproof ceilings and the blocking up of doorways with blockwork. This section appraises the impact of the proposals upon the heritage significance of Victoria Mill.

5.2 As the proposals only relate to internal works to a small part of the basement of the northern wing of the Mill, any impact is limited to those parts where works are proposed. Notwithstanding this, consideration has also been given to the impact of the works on the significance and setting of the broader Mill.

5.3 The sections below reflect the works proposed, as set out within the Design & Access Statement prepared by Allison Pike Architects.

Intervention	Summary	Impact
6	Fireproof plasterboard ceilings to be installed to basement chambers to achieve 90m fire protection.	**Neutral** The installation of ceilings do not affect any original brick arch ceilings. The proposed works will not impact upon any of the elements identified within Section 4 as contributing to the Listed Building's significance.
2	Infill existing doorway openings with 140mm blockwork walls.	**Minor Negative** Whilst the works are ultimately necessary to ensure the preservation of this Grade II* Listed Building and the safety of those within it, there will be a minor negative physical impact where blockwork abuts historic walls. Blockwork is regarded as appropriate, due to its fire resistance, and ease of removal in future should circumstances require it. The spaces are not accessed currently, so there is not regarded to be any impact in making these spaces inaccessible for an indefinite period.

Summary of Impact

5.4 The proposed works which are the subject of the submitted applications will result in neutral and minor negative impacts. The minor negative impact is associated with the closing off of existing doorways with blockwork walls, but these do not affect any fabric or spaces which contribute to the Listed Building's significance, therefore the minor negative impact is extremely minor.

5.5 Along with the works which are currently underway to the building's ground floor and basement, these additional minor works are necessary to ensure the building is in accordance with fire safety and building regulations standards. These works are ultimately necessary to enable the occupation of the upper floors of the building for residential use, and the reoccupation of the ground floor NHS and office uses. Whilst the proposed works will result in some extremely minor harm to the Listed Building, this is regarded at the lower end of 'less than substantial', and far outweighed by the multiple public benefits of the broader scheme. The most significant public benefits associated with this application are:

- The continued operation of an established NHS Surgery which has functioned at the site for around 30 years.
- Safeguarding the jobs of 55 employees at the site associated with the NHS Surgery and the PCT offices.
- Enabling occupation of the upper floors of the building which have been converted for residential use and currently remain vacant.
- Enabling full occupation of this Grade II* Listed Building, securing its future so that it can continue to be an iconic historic feature within Miles Platting, linking the area in perpetuity to its industrial past.

5.6 As is set out within Section 4, the Listed Building is identified as being of outstanding national importance and of more than special interest. Its historic interest is primarily within its external appearance, as a 19th century cotton mill built in a specific architectural style popular during the period. It is one of the last 19th Century Mills which survive on the Rochdale Canal and its relationship with the canal can still clearly be read and understood.

5.7 The building's evidential, historical, aesthetic, and communal value is summarised within section 4. The works set out within this application submission will not impact upon these values. Whilst the application will result in a degree of harm, this is not regarded as materially impacting upon the significance identified above, and the proposals will not impact upon the building's setting.

6. Conclusion

6.1 This Heritage Addendum has been prepared as an addendum to the Heritage Statement prepared by Archaeological Research Services (Ref: 2016/156) and approved as part of applications 119321 and 119357. This Statement considers the potential impact of necessary fire safety works to part of the basement of the northern part of the Grade II* Listed Victoria Mill.

6.2 Approval of the submitted Listed Building Consent application is vital both to ensuring the reoccupation of the NHS and PCT uses at the site, and enabling the occupation of the upper floors at the building for residential use. Together, this continued and future occupation will help to secure the long-term future of the building.

6.3 The heritage significance of the building has informed the various design interventions, and impact upon sensitive parts of the building has been minimised as far as possible. The proposed works will have a minor or neutral impact upon the significance of the Listed Building. Where works are proposed which will result in a degree of harm, this harm is regarded as less than substantial, and outweighed by the public benefits of the scheme.

6.4 This Heritage Addendum has been prepared in accordance with national and local planning policy guidance. The design team look forward to working further with the Council in progressing the proposals through to determination.

Appendix 1: Photographs



Image 1: North (main) elevation



Image 2: East elevation



Image 3: North wing south elevation



Image 4: Courtyard elevations

Photo Document – Additional Basement Areas

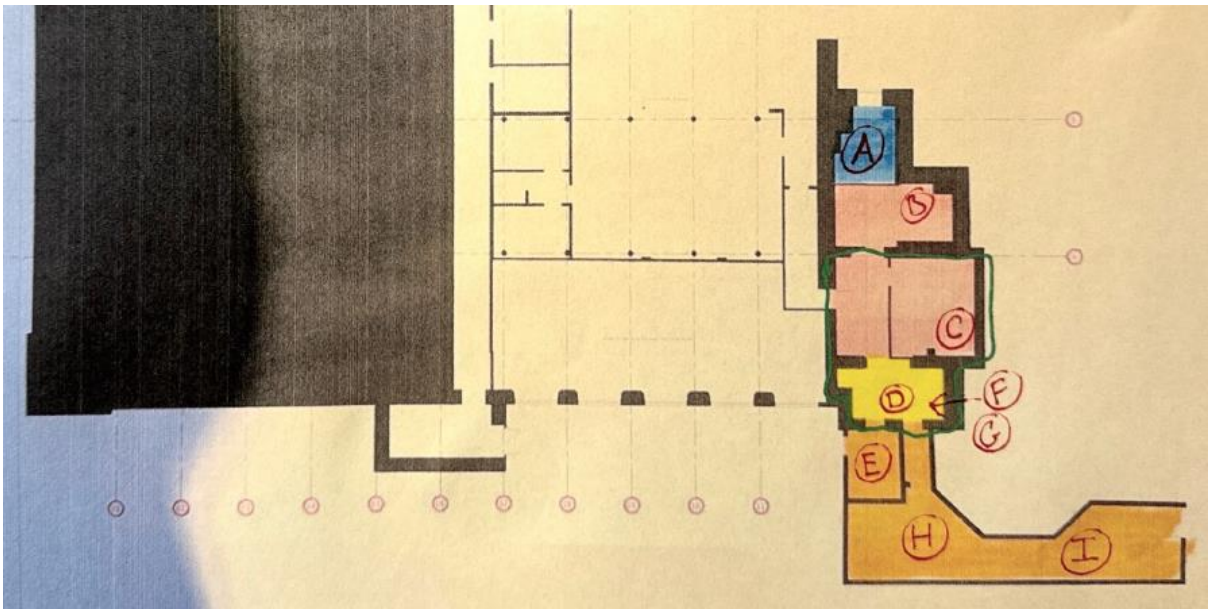


Image 5: Photo Location Plan



Image 6: Photo A



Image 7: Photo B



Image 8: Photo C



Image 9: Photo D



Image 10: Photo E


Image 11: Photo F


Image 12: Photo G


Image 13: Photo H



Image 14: Photo I

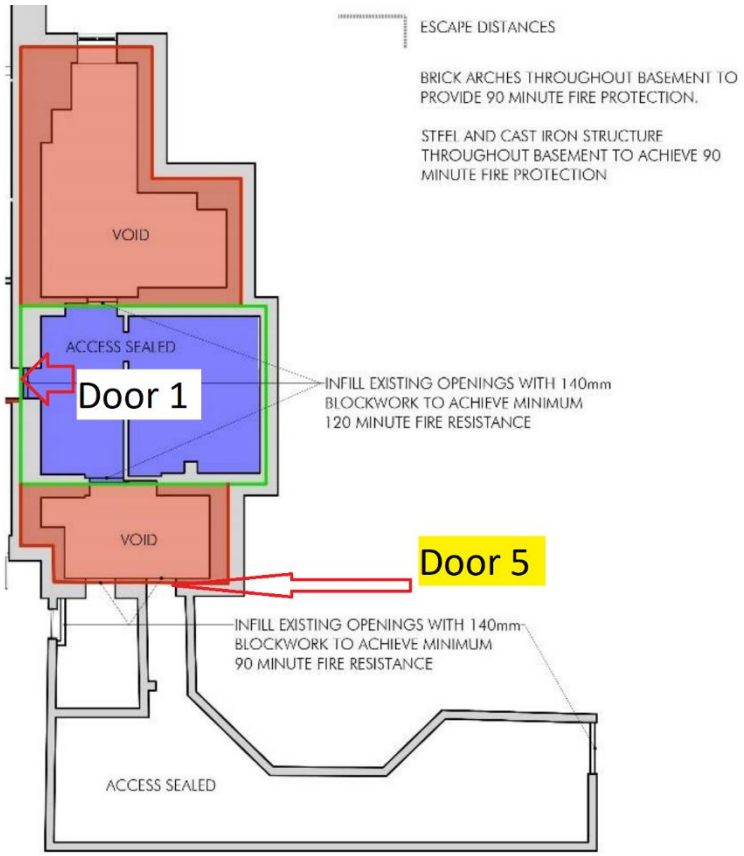


Image 15: Plan for photo locations of photos below.



Image 16: Door 1



Image 17: Door 5