Deloitte LLP
100 Embankment, Cathedral Approach,
Manchester, M3 7FB

Phone: +44 (0)161 832 3555
Fax: +44 (0)161 829 3800
www.deloitte.co.uk

Direct phone: 0161 455 6512
johcooper@deloitte.co.uk

23 August 2024

F.A.O Jennifer Atkinson
Manchester City Council
Planning and Development
PO Box 532
Town Hall
Manchester
M60 2LA

Dear Jennifer,

Beswick Street Bridge, Ashton Canal, Manchester
Application for Listed Building Consent

Please find enclosed an application for Listed Building Consent (LBC) under the Planning (Listed buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 ('Listed Buildings Act 1990') for the installation of new LED lighting to the Ashton Canal towpath beneath the Grade II Listed Beswick Street bridge (Listing No. 1197805).

The Applicant is Eastlands Arena Limited ('The Applicant').

The application relates to Beswick Street bridge, located on the Ashton Canal towpath in Manchester (the 'Site').

1 Description of Development

The description for the works requiring LBC as set out in the enclosed Application form is as follows:

> ***"Listed Building Consent for works to the Beswick Street Bridge to facilitate the installation of lighting fixtures."***

2 The Site

The Beswick Street Bridge (the Site) was constructed at the start of the 19th Century (exact date unknown). It is constructed of red brick, cast-iron, and sandstone. The Site is located on Beswick Street, where it crosses the Ashton Canal. Please refer to Location Plan Ref. 834-012-001-02. The Site is wholly located within the Ancoats and Beswick Ward.

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The Site itself is occupied only by the canal infrastructure and towpaths which have had some modern interventions and resurfacing. The bridge itself remains in active use as a road bridge across the canal. The surrounding area is relatively densely built up with buildings largely 5 storeys or taller.

The history of the Site is described further in Section 6.

3 Background

This application corresponds to the recent development of the Co-op Live arena, as approved under Planning Permission Ref: 139501/JO/2024. Construction of the arena commenced in November 2020. The permission sets out the requirement for a number of improvements to the walking routes towards the Etihad Campus, including improved lighting under the bridges crossing the towpath.

This requirement is set out in Condition 42 (Ashton Canal Improvements) attached to Ref: 139501/JO/2024, which reads as follows:

> ***The Ashton Canal improvements shall be carried out in accordance with the following details (as approved under CDN/24/0046):***
>
> 1. ***Co-op Live Improvement Measures to Existing Walking Routes received by the City Council, as Local Planning Authority, on the 25 January 2024***
> 2. ***Amended programme of works received by the City Council, as Local Planning Authority, on the 29 February 2024***
>
> ***The approved details shall be implemented in accordance with the agreed programme***

The improvement measures agreed with Manchester City Council (MCC) as Local Planning Authority (LPA) include new LED bat friendly lighting to the Ashton Canal towpath beneath the Viaduct Street bridge and Cambrian Street bridge (both non designated heritage assets) and the following Grade II Listed bridges: Carruthers Street bridge; and Beswick Street bridge.

A separate concurrent LBC for Beswick Street bridge has also been submitted.

The proposed works to all four of the bridges are identical in order to ensure a consistent approach to the walking route and therefore the same information is submitted for both LBC applications.

3.1 Scope of this Application

Section 7 of the Listed Buildings Act 1990 states:

> ***No person shall execute or cause to be executed any works for the demolition of a listed building or for its alteration or extension in any manner which would affect its character as a building of special architectural or historic interest, unless the works are authorised.***

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Therefore, in order to acknowledge and make good the proposed works to the Grade II listed structures, an LBC is required in relation to the installation of this lighting.

Paragraph 200 of the NPPF (2023) states that:

> ***"Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment."***

On this basis a desk-based Heritage Statement is included in Section 6 of this letter.

To confirm, no additional planning consent is required, as the proposals are in line with the documents listed above approved under Ref: 139501/JO/2024.

4 Pre-Application Consultation

The NPPF (2023) highlights the importance of early engagement and pre-application discussion with the LPA and their heritage advisers, where the proposal is likely to affect the significance of heritage assets, to ensure that any issues can be identified and appropriately addressed.

This application for LBC is submitted following engagement with the LPA on 28 Mar 2023, and follow up email communication. The key comments raised were as follows, and these have been considered and fed into the final proposals submitted under this Application:

- The location of the proposed lights and cabling is acceptable, contingent on these being attached to the brickwork not stonework, and affixed to mortar where possible;
- There should be consistency across all four bridges along the route, and one universal and appropriate security light fitting should be proposed;
- The light fixtures presented originally were noted to be unacceptable, MCC requested more sympathetic and discrete alternatives should considered. The fittings have subsequently been changed;
- MCC requested that cabling, conduits and guards should be routed along mortar joints and fixed into mortar; and
- The proposed feeder pillars should be finished in black, to match existing lamp posts. The exact location should be confirmed.

The revised proposals were presented to the LPA on 22 July 2024 to agree final specification and proposed locations for the lighting, ahead of formal submission.

5 Planning Policy and Supporting Guidance

5.1 National Planning Policy Framework (2023)

The NPPF is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications and articulates the priorities of The Plan for Growth within planning policy. It was originally published in 2012 and was most recently updated in December 2023. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) have released Proposed Reforms to the NPPF and views are currently being sought through a consultation closing on 24 September 2024.

The NPPF provides the Government's national planning policy on the conservation of the historic environment. Section 16 (paragraphs 195 to 214) is titled 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment'. To confirm, there are no proposed changes to the wording of these paragraphs proposed under the current consultation.

The NPPF defines significance as "the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting" (NPPF, Annex 2).

Paragraph 205 to 207 places great weight on the conservation of designated heritage assets, emphasising the need to avoid "substantial harm" unless that harm is clearly justified (via four specific tests) or there are substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm. Paragraph 208 notes that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits, including securing the asset's optimum viable use. The fundamental objective is to ensure that the balance of the impact on the heritage assets is demonstrably beneficial, minimising any negative impact on their significance.

5.2 National Planning Policy Guidance

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) was introduced in March 2014 as a live web-based resource to support the NPPF. It brings together planning practice guidance for England in an accessible and usable way and is a material consideration in assessing this application.

The Historic Environment PPG, updated in July 2019, recognises that the conservation of heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance is a core planning principle, requiring a flexible and thoughtful approach to get the best out of assets. PPG acknowledges that substantial harm is a high test, and that it is the degree of harm to the significance of an asset, rather than the scale of the development, which is to be assessed.

The 'Historic Environment' PPG details what is meant by the term 'Public Benefits', and gives examples of heritage benefits as:

- sustaining or enhancing the significance of a heritage asset and the contribution of its setting;
- reducing or removing risks to a heritage asset; and
- securing the optimum viable use of a heritage asset in support of its long-term conservation.

5.3 Local Policy

The Unitary Development Plan (UDP) was adopted in July 1995. Coinciding with the adoption of the Core Strategy in 2012 significant proportions of the UDP have been replaced, however, a number of polices were saved on 11 July 2012 and remain extant.

The saved policy relevant to this application is **Policy DC19.1 Listed Buildings**: In determining applications for listed building consent or planning applications for development involving or having an impact on buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest, the Council will have regard to the desirability of securing the retention, restoration, maintenance and continued use of such buildings and to protecting their general setting.

The Manchester Core Strategy was adopted in July 2012 and is the key, overarching DPD within the LDF. The Core Strategy (CS) has replaced significant elements of the Manchester UDP as the document that sets out the long-term strategic policies for Manchester's future development and forms the framework that planning applications will be assessed against.

There are several policies which are of relevance to this application, and which have been summarised below:

- **Policy SP1 (Spatial Principles),** states that development in all parts of the City should make a positive contribution to neighbourhoods through the creation of well designed places that enhance or create character whilst protecting the built environment.
- **Policy CC9 (Design and Heritage),** this policy states that development in Manchester City Centre should protect or enhance the heritage assets that have been identified, including listed buildings, conservation areas and scheduled ancient monuments.
- **Policy CC10 (A Place for Everyone),** states that City Centre developments should appeal to a wider range of residents and visitors through the provision of high standards of accessibility.
- **Policy EN3 (Heritage),** states that the Council will encourage development that complements and takes advantage of the distinct historic and heritage features of its districts and neighbourhoods, including those of the City Centre

It should be noted that the 2nd paragraph of Policy EN3 (Heritage) has now been replaced by PfE Policy JP-P2 (see below).

5.4 Places for Everyone

The Places for Everyone (PfE) joint development plan was adopted by Manchester City Council on 21 March 2024 for long-term sustainable growth, new homes and jobs. The PfE covers Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan. It has partially replaced MCC CS policies andany part of the policy that is not replaced remains part of Manchester's Core Strategy.

There are several policies which are of relevance to this application, and which have been summarised below:

- **PfE Policy JP-P2 (Heritage)** has partially replaced Core Strategy Policy EN3, and promotes conservation and enhancement of the historic environment:

> ***Opportunities will be pursued to aid the promotion, enjoyment, understanding and interpretation of heritage assets, as a means of maximising wider public benefits and reinforcing Greater Manchester's distinct character, identity and sense of place.***

It goes on to note that management and integration of heritage should deliver:

> ***positive benefits that sustain and enhance the historic environment, as well as contributing to the economic viability, accessibility and environmental quality of a place, and to social wellbeing***

It also emphasises the importance of a robust evidence base in decision making, noting:

> ***Proposals should be informed, as necessary, by the findings and recommendations of the appropriate heritage assessment(s).***

- **Policy JP-C6 (Walking and Cycling)** sets out that deliver a higher proportion of journeys made by walking and cycling, a range of measures will be supported, including:

> ***"Ensuring routes are direct, easily navigable and integrated with the street and public transport network"***

> ***"Utilising and enhancing green infrastructure, including canals, parks and recreation grounds, to create opportunities for walking and cycling;"***

5.5 Historic England Guidance

5.5.1 Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 2 - Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment (2017)

Heritage assets may be affected by direct physical change or by change in their setting. Being able to properly assess the nature, extent and importance of the significance of a heritage asset and the contribution of its setting early in the process is very important to an applicant in order to conceive of and design a successful development.

It goes on to note that the significance of a heritage asset is the sum of its archaeological, architectural, historic, and artistic interest, and that understanding the nature of the significance is important to understanding the need for and best means of conservation.

The note concludes that while change to heritage assets is inevitable, it is only harmful when significance is damaged. The nature and importance of the significance that is affected will therefore dictate the proportionate response to assessing that change, its justification, mitigation and any recording which may be needed.

5.5.2 Historic England Statements of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets (2019)

This Historic England advice note covers the NPPF requirement for applicants, where relevant, to describe heritage significance to help local planning authorities to make decisions on the impact of proposals for change to heritage assets.

The guidance suggests a staged approach to decision making in regard to heritage assets would usually embrace the following stages, informed by the scope of the proposal:

1. Understand the form, materials and history of the affected heritage asset(s), and/or the nature and extent of archaeological deposits.

2. Understand the significance of the asset(s).

   These two stages fulfil the requirement in paragraph 189 of the NPPF and are undertaken by the applicant.

3. Understand the impact of the proposal on that significance.

   This stage fulfils the requirement in paragraph 190 of the NPPF and is undertaken by the LPA. However, the applicant needs to be aware of impacts so that the analysis of significance submitted to the LPA, under paragraph 189, is sufficient in its level of detail.

4. Avoid, minimise and mitigate negative impact, in a way that meets the objectives of the NPPF.

5. Look for opportunities to better reveal or enhance significance.

5.5.3 Historic England Advice Note 2 Making Changes to Heritage Assets (2016)

This advice note illustrates the application of the policies set out in the NPPF, and provides general advice according to different categories of intervention in heritage assets, including repair, restoration, addition and alteration.

It states that the junction between new work and the existing fabric needs particular attention, both for its impact on the significance of the existing asset and the impact on the contribution of its setting. Where possible it is preferable for new work to be reversible, so that changes can be undone without harm to historic fabric. However, it is noted that reversibility alone does not justify alteration; If alteration is justified on other grounds then reversible alteration is preferable to non-reversible.

The note also notes that assets may have an important established and historic relationship with the landscaping that exists or used to exist around them. Proposals to alter or renew the landscaping are more likely to be acceptable if the design is based on a sound and well-researched understanding of the building's relationship with its setting, both now and in the past.

6 Heritage Assessment

6.1 Research Methodology

The assessment has been carried out in accordance with the statutory duties of The Planning Listed Buildings Act 1990 and the policies of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

The baseline assessment has been undertaken using a combination of desk-based study and fieldwork to identify and assess the heritage significance of the impacted heritage assets and to establish the impact on their significance. The following survey and data sources have been used:

- National Heritage List for England (Historic England (HE));
- Manchester City Council Archives;
- Detailed visual Site inspections carried out July 2024; and
- Other published sources of information which are referenced where relevant.

6.2 History of the Site [1]

The history of the Site and immediate area can be charted through available historic mapping. The Site is situated on the Ashton Canal. The historic settlement pattern surrounding the Site comprises elements of eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth century industrial, residential and commercial infrastructure.

The first major settlement of what is now Manchester City Centre was by the Romans in AD 79, who established a fort at Castlefield. By the end of the sixteenth century Manchester's population had more than quadrupled, and the city became notable as a centre for the cloth trade. It was firmly established by the end of the seventeenth century as the centre of a network of south Lancashire towns that specialised in the production of cloth containing cotton.

Increase in trade was accompanied by better communications. The roads to Stockport, Oldham and Ashton-under-Lyne were all turnpikes by the early 1730s, and links to Liverpool and the west improved when the Irwell and Mersey navigation opened in 1736. By the second half of the eighteenth-century, Manchester had become a first rank provincial town. Trade was burgeoning, centred on the cotton industry, although production was mainly in domestic workshops.

By the end of eighteenth century as urban and industrial expansion gathered pace, the scene was set for Manchester to become the first industrial economy and society in the world. The precise reasons it befell to Manchester remain unclear. Long experience of textile production and trade, and the absence of restrictive practices associated with a corporation and craft guilds played a part.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century the town experienced rapid expansion facilitated by sales of large parcels of land in and around the centre in response to increasing demand and soaring land values. With the exception of the Ancoats area (which lies adjacent to the north east of the Site), where the predominant activity was the construction of industrial buildings, these land acquisitions related mainly to residential development.

[1] The principal sources for this section are:
Hartwell, Clare, Manchester Pevsner Architectural Guides, Yale University Press, London
Kidd, Alan, Manchester: A History, Carnegie Publishing Ltd, Lancaster
Makepeace, Chris, A Century of Manchester, Sutton Publishing Ltd, Stroud
Schofield, Jonathan, My Guide to Manchester, Manchester Books Ltd, Manchester
Redhead, Norman, Greater Manchester Historic Landscape Character Assessments (2006), Archaeology Data Service

As with much of Manchester before the industrial revolution, the Site was largely undeveloped. The earliest reliable source to show the Site area at a sufficient scale is William Green's 1794 Plan of Manchester & Salford (

Figure 6-1) which shows area around the Site primarily comprising field (prior to the Ashton Canal cutting through this area), and was in the ownership of a nearby Grammar School.



Figure 6-1 William Green's 1794 Plan of Manchester & Salford (University of Manchester Library). Although still undeveloped at this stage, the intended route of the Ashton Canal has been marked, as has the location of the grid street pattern. Beswick Street already appears to exist even at this date. This street pattern can still be seen reflected in the area around the Site in the modern day

6.2.1 Industrialisation and the Development of the Canal Network

The rapid pace of industrial development was facilitated greatly by the introduction of canals, which provided the first efficient means of transporting bulk loads of goods. The country's first canal (1759-65), built by the Third Duke of Bridgewater with its terminus at Castlefield, and significantly assisted the growth of trade.

Following the success of the Duke of Bridgewater's canal in moving coal from his mines to Manchester and other developing industrial areas, a group of mine owners around Ashton and

Oldham saw the potential for doing the same thing themselves. In 1792 a group of shareholders, including these mine owners, put forward a proposal for an Act of Parliament to establish what was originally to be called the Manchester, Ashton under Lyne and Oldham Canal.

The Ashton Canal was proposed in 1791 and was intended to provide a link between Manchester and the collieries in the Ashton and Oldham area. Construction of the Ashton Canal officially commenced in 1792, and had been completed between Manchester and Ashton by early 1797, and was finally completed in 1799, running from a large basin behind what is now Piccadilly Station in Manchester, climbing gradually eastwards toward Fairfield, Droylsden.

When this network opened it was isolated from the other canals then in existence, even the short link between Ashton Canal Basin at Piccadilly and the Rochdale Canal was not opened until 1800. From there one level section continued eastward to Whiteland's Basin, Ashton under Lyne, while another arm headed north through what is now Daisy Nook.



Figure 6-2 Pigot's Map of Manchester and Salford 1813 (University of Manchester Library). As can be seen, the canal has been constructed by this point, and the Beswick Street Bridge has been constructed. However, while the route of Caruthers Street is indicated on the map, the bridge across the canal is not shown, suggesting it may not have been constructed by this point. The area around the Site is still predominantly undeveloped, but to the west evidence of the rapid development of Ancoats is evident.



Figure 6-3 Pigot's Map of Manchester and Salford 1819 (University of Manchester Library). The Caruthers Street Bridge has been constructed by this stage, and the road network has become more established.

The Piccadilly area to the south west of the Site became a local focus of the canal network, and particularly for the Ashton Canal and the Rochdale Canal. Several warehouses were established at the terminus in Piccadilly Basin. The Ashton Canal contributed to the area's status within the region's transport network, fuelled by the potential of cheap and reliable transport for goods and materials, and provided an impetus for development.

A commercial boom in 1800-02 saw the number of cotton- spinning firms in the township of Manchester double from 51 in 1799 to 111 in 1802, setting Manchester on its path to becoming the most highly concentrated centre of cotton spinning in the world. The area immediately adjacent to the Site also saw industrial development from this period, as the canal corridor became lined with textile mills, as can be seen in Figure 6-4 and Figure 6-5.



Figure 6-4 Site superimposed on Swire's map 1824 (University of Manchester Library). This map captures the acceleration of both residential and industrial development in this part of Manchester during the early nineteenth century, with the construction of a number of the streets shown in Green's map now completed. The canal has also been further developed by this point, including a second canal arm which would later serve the Soho Foundry, between Lock 2 and 3; and a lock further north directed west – the Higher Canal Arm – which was the first to be built to serve the warehousing around what is now New Islington Marina. There are some larger buildings now on the south side of the canal between Caruthers bridge and Beswick Street bridge, including Hope Mill, which was constructed in 1824, and Spectator Street Mill.

In the first half of the nineteenth century the Ashton Canal prospered, carrying coal to the mills and coal merchants along the line, bringing in raw materials to the mills and taking out the manufactured products, transporting stone for building and road construction and even carrying passengers. A lucrative side-line was the selling of water to the owners of steam engines.



Figure 6-5 Site imposed on Banks and Co. 1832 map (Manchester University Library). This shows further development along this stretch of the Ashton Canal, including Soho Foundry and Pollard St Mill. This also shows housing constructed along Ashton Street and Mill Street by this point. Building labelled now as Clarks's Cotton Mill; Caruthers Cotton Mill and Harbottle's Cotton Mill are located along the south bank of the Ashton Canal, between Caruthers bridge and Beswick Street bridge. The area to the north of the canal remains undeveloped.

However, the coming of the Railway Age saw a loss of trade for the canals. Large quantities of coal and other goods were still being carried on the canal up until the first decades of the twentieth century, but the smaller mines became unproductive or suffered subsidence and closed. The textile industry was also beginning a decline. The quantity of goods carried on the Ashton Canal fell from 50,000 tons in 1933 to just 7 tons in 1955.

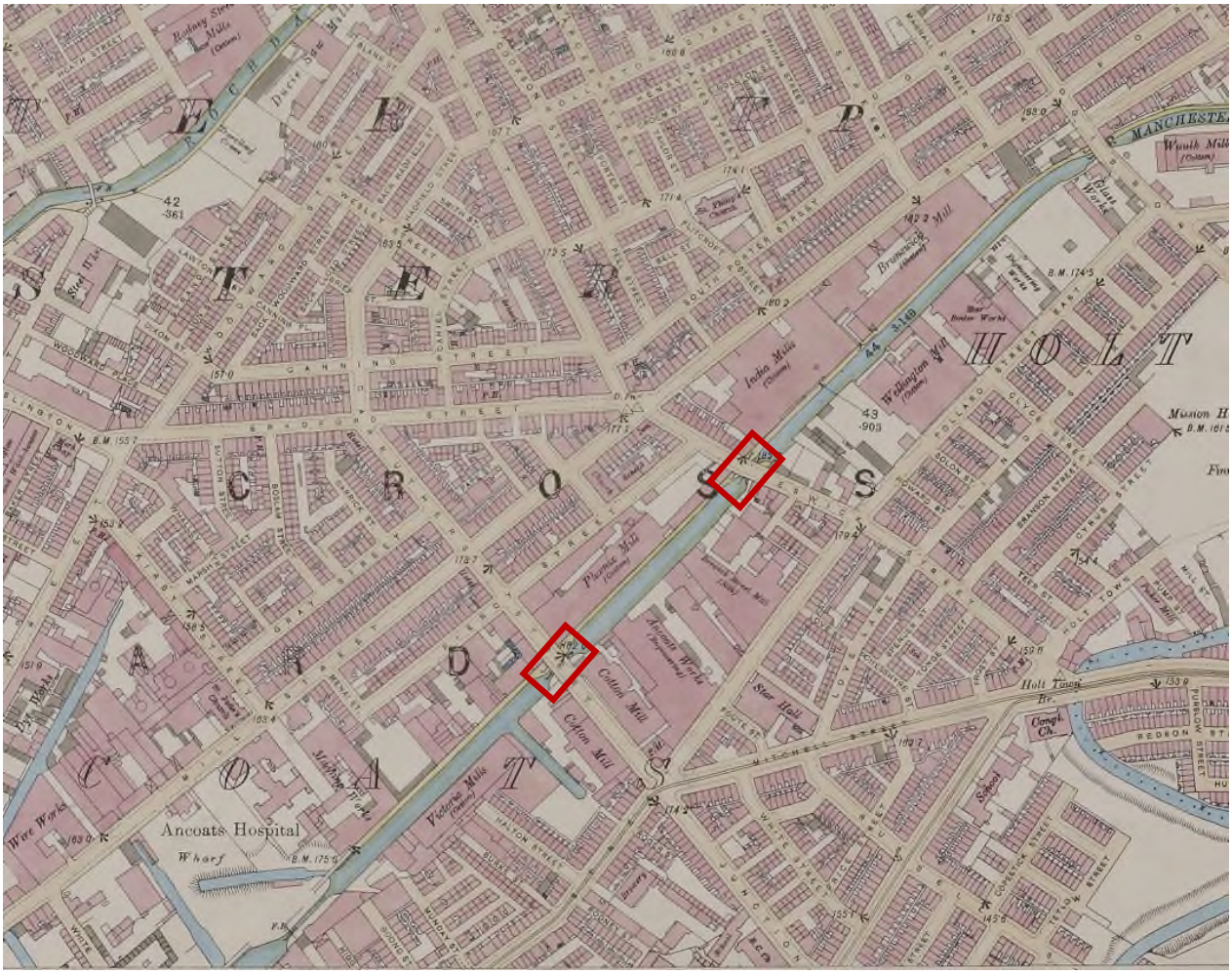


Figure 6-6 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 county series. Lancashire. 1893 (Manchester University Library) By this stage, use of the canal network had started to decline in favour of the railways. The Islington Canal arm is still marked, albeit it has likely been filled in as indicated by the green boundary; the Soho Foundry Canal Arm appears to be partially filled in. To the north of the canal there is now significantly more development, including Phoenix Mill between Caruthers Street and Beswick Street, and Brunswick Cotton spinning mill (opened in 1840), thought to be the first Greater Manchester mill to be converted to use mains electricity as its principal power source. By this stage the Ancoats area was densely populated, which is reflected in the dense urban grain of the residential streets to the north of the canal.



Figure 6-7. Bomb Damage Map, 1941 (Manchester University Library). As shown, the Site did not suffer bombing during the war, although several nearby buildings on the opposite site of the Ashton Canal were hit. As shown, the area around the Site is significantly less densely built up than it was through the 19th Century. The Upper Ashton Canal arm has been filled in by this stage.

6.2.2 Decline of the Canal Network

The end of Second World War bought a period of decline in manufacturing and the city's economic status. The cotton industry had collapsed by the 1950s and the most dramatic period of industrial decline began in the later 1960s.

By the 1950s, commercial traffic had deserted the canal, which fell derelict in the ensuing decade. Sone local people campaigned for its closure on safety grounds, while its owners wanted to be rid of the expense of maintenance. It was threatened with abandonment and infilling in 1961, when a pioneering pleasure cruiser made a passage with great difficulty.

Attempts to save the canal were not helped by a leak in 1964 which rendered it impassable, or the somewhat unsavoury reputation it had gained from bisecting some of the less picturesque elements of a major conurbation.

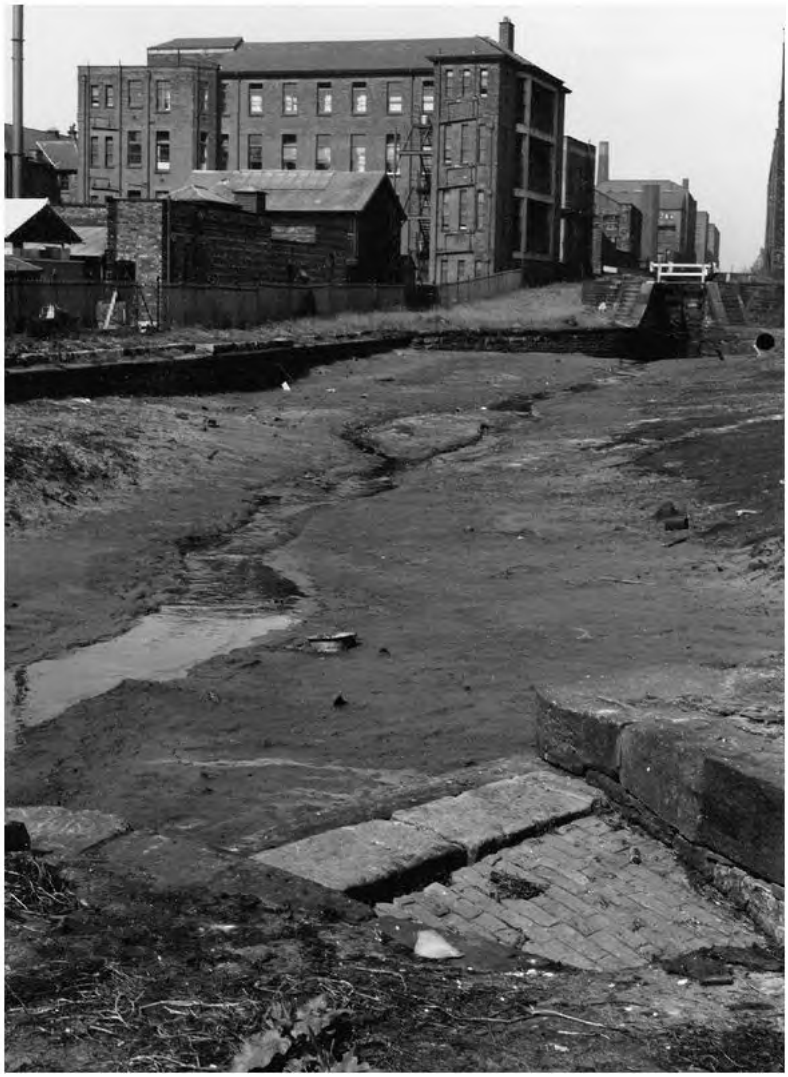


Figure 6-8: Ashton Canal viewed looking east, 1962, with Lock 3 in the back right of the frame (Manchester Libraries Collection). Ancoats Dispensary can be seen in the background. This image clearly shows the state of disrepair the canal had fallen into, and its impassibility.

But volunteers had seen the canal's potential as a crucial link in the 'Cheshire Ring', a boating circuit taking in six canals through beautiful countryside, bustling Manchester, and market towns like Congleton and Macclesfield. In 1964, the Peak Forest Canal Society was formed and, with the Inland Waterways Association, fought to keep the Peak Forest and Ashton Canals open and to restore them.

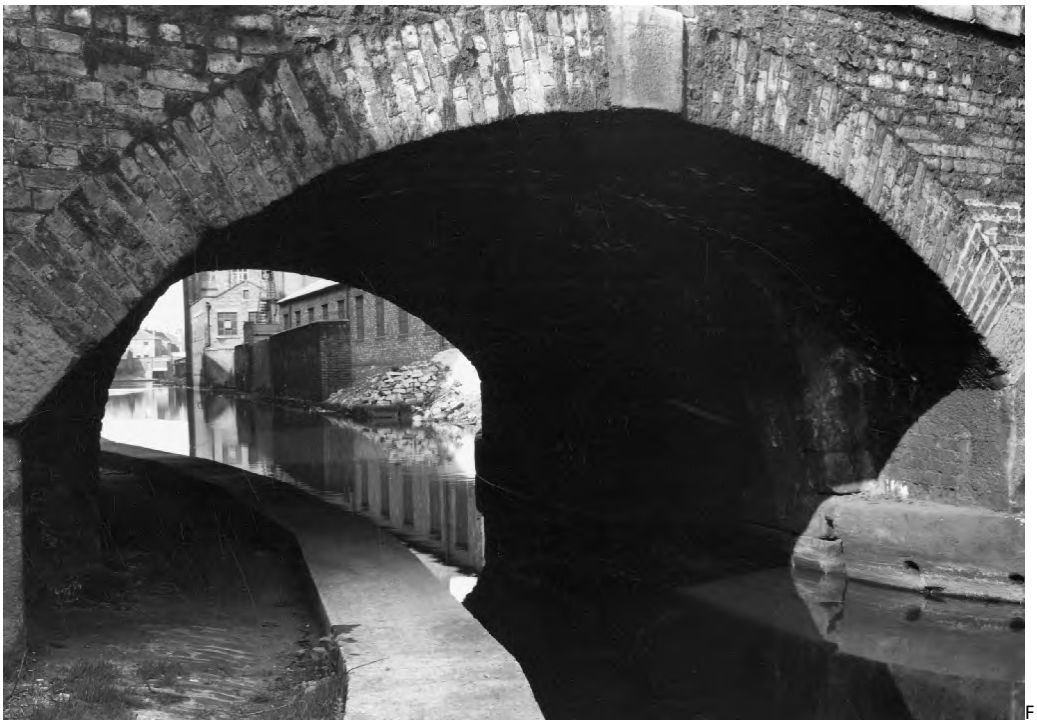
In 1968, 600 volunteers cleared 2,000 tons of rubbish from the section of Ashton Canal between Clayton and Droylsden. Unhappily, this action was condemned by the Droylsden Council, who preferred to see the canal closed and culverted.

Having been left to further decline, it wasn't until 1971 that the canal was given a reprieve and restoration was approved. In 1972, a thousand volunteers from all over the country descended on the canal, carting away the decade's worth of rubbish that had collected.

Over the next two years with volunteer help and mechanical plant, the whole canal was cleared and restored. It was re-opened for navigation in April 1978. However, although this specific stretch had been significantly improved, its various branches – such as one to Stockport – remained derelict and were eventually built over.

Since this clear up operation, the use of the canal network for leisure has developed and Canal-side properties are being redeveloped. Piccadilly Village project opened alongside the canal further west, and this has been followed by significant regeneration in New Islington, including Chips Building and Milliners Warf which have transformed the canal side. Other recent development in the immediate Site area is also comprised of mainly residential buildings, most significantly the redevelopment of New Islington Marina. The surrounding area is relatively densely built up, with surrounding buildings generally 5 storeys or taller.





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Figure 6-9 Beswick Street bridge in 1962, (Manchester City Council Libraries). Looking north east from the Canal towpath. As shown the area surrounding site is still occupied by industrial uses at this stage, and is densely built along the canal side, however by this stage the canal had become rather unkempt. Many of the industrial buildings would be demolished in the following decade.

6.3 Assessment of Significance

6.3.1 Beswick Street Bridge (Bridge Number 5 Over Ashton Canal) – Grade II

The Bridge is a Grade II Listed asset (Listing No. 1197805), and the description on the register is as follows:

> ***Public road bridge over Ashton Canal. Probably c.1800. Brown brick in English garden wall bond, with sandstone dressings. Narrow rectangular structure across canal waisted to width of lock. A low segmental arch of brick springing from a sandstone base, with a keystone (oval cast-iron number plate attached to this); broad pilasters and terminal pilasters, stone band, brick parapet with stone coping.***



Figure 6-10 Bridge Number 5 Over Ashton Canal (Authors Own)

The bridge is listed as a part of Ashton Canal's overall infrastructure. It is significant in its own right as an early example of canal infrastructure, but it has greater significance as part of the overall group of other canal infrastructure (bridges, tunnels etc). As discussed above, the canal infrastructure was key to the development of area around the Site, and is at the heart of the industrial heritage of the surrounding area given the key role transport systems, including the Ashton Canal, played in the Industrial Revolution, and in particular Manchester

As set out in the description, the bridge is quite modest in its detailing, being of functional construction rather than decorative. The bridge therefore has moderate to high historical significance, but relatively low architectural significance.

It is also important to consider the contribution of setting to the significance. The primary setting of the Grade II listed asset is the canal itself and associated towpath, which contribute highly to its significance when viewed from the canal. However, the immediate setting of the canal has changed.

Overall, whilst the surrounding canal infrastructure adds to the significance, due to the impact of the predominance of modern development, the setting makes only a moderate contribution to the significance of the assets.

6.4 Assessment of Impact

6.4.1 Proposed Development

As noted above, the works to the Beswick Street Bridge forms part of wider improvement works to the Ashton Canal towpath, to improve the quality of walking and cycling routes between the new Co-op Live arena and the city centre.

The route's main objective is to encourage more people to walk and cycle. The inclusion of the new lighting under the bridges crossing the towpath is intended to improve the safety and accessibility of the proposed route, thereby allowing access for a greater number of visitors and local residents. Currently there is very limited visibility under the bridges, particularly at night, which creates an unwelcoming environment and presents a hazard to those using the route.

The Proposed works to the Beswick Street Bridge comprises installation of 3 no. new surface mounted light fittings to be fixed directly to the internal bridge wall, these will be 1250mm surface linear style LED luminaires with black finish (RAL 9005). The location of the Proposed lighting is illustrated in plan and elevation on 5125-VIT-DRG-EPT-000003 submitted in support of this application.

New electrical cabling will be routed from the existing lighting column to a new feeder pillar, as set out in 'Ashton Canal Four Bridge Lighting Scheme' prepared by Vitec. A new junction box will be installed at low level and will be black in colour to be less visually obtrusive. A powder-coated black galvanised steel conduit will rise up from junction box to new fittings. Any exposed armoured cabling shall be protected by a cable guard. Galvanised steel conduit will also be installed between each luminaire, to be powder coated black to match luminaires. Again, fixings will be made into brick mortar bed where possible.

As part of the design process, different options for the location and design of the lighting fixtures were explored. Key constraints identified included minimising the impact on the heritage of the Grade II listed asset, and in line with MCC comments noted above, the fixings will be made to be made into brick mortar bed where possible. The proposed height of the fittings has been determined by the very limited head clearance under the bridges.

Following discussions with MCC, the specification of the lighting fixtures was reviewed, and a slimmer, less obtrusive fixing has been proposed as part of this application. All lighting fixtures and conduits will be black to fit in better with the aesthetic of the canal infrastructure.

Further information can be found in the plans and specification sheets submitted in support of the application. The proposals for Beswick Street Bridge is consistent with the lighting fixtures across the three other bridges crossing the towpath, including that at Carruthers Street Bridge.

6.4.2 Assessment of impact

The introduction of lighting fixtures will not require the removal of any original fabric, and have been developed in mind of the assets significance to have minimal impact on the asset, through specification of appropriate lighting fixtures and proposed methodology for installing these.

The only direct impact to the asset will be the works to fix to the lighting and conduits to the existing fabric. As noted above, this will be fixed to the mortar where possible to minimise damage to brickwork. This will ensure the lighting can also be removed at a later date with minimal impact to the historic fabric. The methodology on drawing Ref. 5125-VIT-DRG-EPT-000003 sets out the careful approach that will be taken to fixing these to the bridge wall.

Furthermore, the significance of this asset, as assessed above, is primarily historic as part of the overall group of other canal infrastructure. The surrounding canal infrastructure will be unaffected. All lighting will be affixed to the underside of the bridge, and due to the low height, this will not be visible from the canal towpath unless standing directly under the bridge.

The lighting will not impact the ongoing function of the bridge, and it is considered that improved lighting will increase pedestrian use of the towpath, and therefore encourage more visitors to appreciate this asset as a part of Manchester's history.

Overall, the impact of the Proposed Development is considered to be at the lower end of 'less than substantial harm'.

6.5 Planning Policy Assessment

Section 66 of the Listed Buildings Act 1990 notes planning authorities should have special regard to the desirability of preserving historic assets or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. As assessed above, while the works will have a direct impact on the listed asset, the significance of the asset and its setting will be preserved.

The NPPF stresses that 'great weight' should be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets (NPPF paragraph 199), emphasising the need to avoid substantial harm, in terms of demolition, alteration or the compromise of an asset's setting.

As concluded in Section 6, the impact of the Proposed Development is considered to be at the lower end of 'less than substantial harm'. NPPF Paragraph 203 is therefore triggered which states that, "Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use."

The public benefits of the proposal are outlined below, as per the three core tenets of the NPPF.

6.5.1 Economic

- The bridge forms a key part of the wider improvement works to the Ashton Canal which seeks to connect this part of the city centre and significantly improve accessibility, supporting regeneration objectives to connect edge of city neighbourhoods;
- The bridge will also provide a direct pedestrian link from the new Co-op Live arena, providing walking and cycling connections to the rest of the city, and Piccadilly train station;
- This route ensures new development along the canal is easily accessible from the city centre by walking and cycling; connecting residents with jobs and educational opportunities and supporting the regeneration of this area.

6.5.2 Social

- The proposals form an important function in improving wayfinding for pedestrians travelling to and from the Etihad Campus;
- This improved accessibility of the scheme ensures wider access to both historic and environmental assets, including the Beswick Bridge, allowing members of the public to enjoy and appreciate these more easily;
- Attractive and useable active transport links, including the improved pedestrian footway, will help to encourage modal shift away from car travel to public transport, cycling and walking, offering health benefits to local residents.

6.5.3 Environmental

- By improving the public access along the canal; the bridge will link the open space network including the Rochdale and Ashton Canals;
- The wider improvement works to the Ashton Canal are a key element in a wider strategy to facilitate better connections around the edge of the city centre, and between the new Co-op Live arena, to prepare for carbon free modes of transport, working toward carbon reduction targets both nationwide and locally.

It is considered that the above benefits outweigh the potential harm caused.

7 Summary

Paragraph 203 of the NPPF directs local planning authorities to consider three key factors when determining planning applications concerning the historic environment. These are considered below in light of the Proposed Development.

- The Proposed Development will sustain the significance of the identified heritage assets.
- The Proposed Development will not affect the positive contribution that the heritage assets can make to their community.
- The Proposed Development will make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 ("PCPA 2004") states that the proposals should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. As outlined in Section 5.3 above, the documents comprising the development plan (the Core Strategy, PfE, and UDP), place emphasis on the importance both of preserving heritage assets, whilst also promoting development that complements and enhances these to promote increased public understanding, and 'the economic viability, accessibility and environmental quality of a place'. Furthermore, the development plan sets out an ambition for a higher proportion of journeys made by walking and cycling across the city, including through enhancing existing infrastructure (including canals). The proposals will encourage increased use of the existing canal towpath by pedestrians and cyclists, through improving the safety and accessibility of the route, complementing the wider scheme of Ashton Canal improvements works undertaken to date.

In regard to the second limb of S38(6) PCPA 2024, the NPPF is a material considerations in determining any application, and this places great weight on the conservation of designated heritage assets. However, as outlined in the Section above, overall, the impact of the Proposed Development is considered to be at the lower end of 'less than substantial harm', and this will be outweighed by the benefit of improving the safety and accessibility of these assets will be improved due to the lighting.

The proposals are therefore considered to be fully in accordance with national and local planning policy.

8 Application Documentation

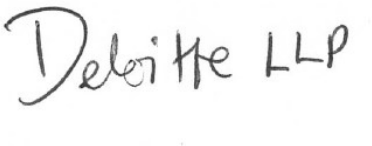
The application has been submitted through the Planning Portal, and comprises of the following documents:

- Application form and Covering letter
- Red Line Boundary Ref. 834-012-001-02 prepared by Wilde
- Proposed Plan and Elevation Ref. 5125-VIT-DRG-EPT-000003 prepared by Wilde
- Specification document ‘Ashton Canal Four Bridge Lighting Scheme’ prepared by Vitec
- Co-op Live Improvement Measures to Existing Walking Routes (as approved under Ref: 139501/JO/2024).

The Planning Portal Reference number for the submitted application PP-13344755.

If you require any further details, please do not hesitate to contact my colleague Eithne FitzGerald (+44 161 455 6963 / eithnefitzgerald@deloitte.co.uk).

Yours sincerely



Deloitte LLP