



17th May 2024

Response to the re-consultation with Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service (GMAAS) regarding the partial demolition and redevelopment of the Hotspur House site, Cambridge Street, Manchester.

Stephen Levrant Heritage Architecture (SLHA) were commissioned by Manner to prepare a Heritage Statement to assess the impact of the proposed residential development of the non-designated heritage asset – Hotspur House (formally The Hotspur Press)/Medlock Mills), Cambridge Street, Manchester, on the significance and setting of the non-designated heritage asset, and on the settings of surrounding heritage assets.

The current planning application comprises the partial demolition of the former Hotspur Press Complex (Medlock Mill) and redevelopment of the site to provide Purpose Built Student Accommodation (Sui Generis Use Class) above ground floor commercial or community uses (Use Classes F(e), F2(a)(b) and E(b)), within a part 4/5-storey and part 36-storey building plus roof parapet level above basement level, associated ancillary internal and external amenity space, public realm (including a new public square), hard and soft landscaping and associated highway works.

The Site has been identified by MCC as a non-designated heritage asset, consequently, in line with recognised ICOMOS guidance, the building is subsequently deemed to yield low heritage interest, which relates to *“unrecorded buildings, structures, or designed landscape features, which demonstrably retain a degree of heritage value due to their: architectural design, historic, communal, or townscape interest”*.

Subject to the tests as set out in para.209 of the NPPF (most recent version - 2023). The relevant planning policy guidance states that *“In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset”*.

Our Heritage Statement found that the proposed development resulted in both moderate direct and indirect harm to the significance and setting of the non-designated Hotspur House, which arises from the proposed demolition of elements of the site, and the impact on the setting of the building, primarily from the First Street development to the west, and from Cambridge Street to the east/south-east. Our findings concluded that the cumulative impact of the development Proposals would have a negligible – to – minor adverse impact on designated heritage assets (the Grade II listed Chimney and Whitworth Street Conservation Area) and a moderate adverse impact upon a non-designated heritage asset (Hotspur House).

On review of the letter to Manchester City Council from GMAAS dated the 16th May 2024 regarding their re-consultation on the current scheme for Hotspur House, it appears that a number of new findings have arisen from a comprehensive archaeological survey of the mill that was undertaken in the interim of submitting the completed Heritage Statement report.

Fundamentally, the new findings strongly suggests that a degree of the original c1794 mill building survives, including:

- *“...both long walls of the late 18th-century mill survive to full height, together with the south gable wall”,*
- *“Several significant features relating to power generation and transmission within the original and reconstructed mill of 1801 are retained in the south gable wall, including an arch of dressed ashlar sandstone that was blocked with brick and concealed from view internally by a large brick and sandstone foundation bed for an early steam engine, representing a later modification to the mill’s power system.*
- *The size and form of the stone-built arch is consistent with the axle housing for a waterwheel, raising the possibility that the mill was powered in the late 18th-century by a waterwheel connected to a steam-powered pumping engine. This remarkable piece of engineering bridged the technological gap between water-powered mills and full steam-powered mills, representing a very important stage in the evolution of power generation / transmission. The use of pumping engines to draw water from a reservoir / cistern and pump it onto a waterwheel is known from documentary evidence to have served numerous late 18th- / early 19th-century mills across Manchester and the wider region but there are no known surviving examples”*
- *“The soffits of several ceiling beams at ground-floor level retain cast- iron plates with a central square-section socket, most likely representing the head plates of slender cruciform section columns, as would be expected in a late 18th-century mill. These may well have had open heads to house a power shaft, a relocated example of which survives in the mill.”*

GMASS conclude that the “Building embodies physical evidence for the earliest surviving textile mill in Manchester with what could be unique evidence for early power development and transmission. The building embodies physical evidence for the earliest surviving textile mill in Manchester with what could be unique evidence for early power development and transmission.”

It is accepted in the letter from GMAAS that these new findings would not have been assessed within our Heritage Statement, however as part of our assessment of the development of the site (see quote below), we did consider that indeed the southern half of the mill may date to the original c1794 mill, however this could not be confirmed as part of our initial surveying: *“Following the disastrous fire of January 1801, the original mill building is thought to have been demolished, and a new mill (the current building) constructed on the site. However, there may be some discrepancy with the origins of the current building as the small footprint and location of the original 18th century mill that appears on the 1800 map (Figure 8), matches that depicted on the 1804 Map in Figure 8a, supposedly drawn three years after the construction of the new, larger mill.*

Building surveying has also shown that the current mill building was built in two halves, with matching brick stub walls at each floor level, illustrating the location of extension, and located to the centre of the current brick and stone staircase to the west elevation. Together this suggests that the original late-18th century mill was not entirely destroyed by the 1801 fire, and instead its brick shell was reconstructed and extended with the addition of a new staircase across the point of extension.” (Page 25, Stephen Levrant Heritage Architecture - Heritage Statement, 8th May 2024).

SLHA have not reviewed the current archaeological survey referred to in GMAAS’s letter to substantiate the findings, however, on review of the new findings detailed in the letter, it would appear that our

presumption that the southern half of the mill did indeed partially survive the fire of 1801, and instead of being demolished (as is commonly understood), was incorporated into a rebuild of the mill, extending northwards by 6 bays in 1801.

Although the new findings detail the survival of parts of the original c1794 mill, which preserves evidence for early power development and transmission in mill technology and development uniquely surviving in Manchester, the building remains a non-designated heritage asset with interest at only a local level, and consequently the findings of our Heritage Statement remain the same.

Kind regards

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