

Chorlton Baths



Heritage Assessment
April 2023



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1.0

Introduction

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

This Heritage Assessment has been prepared to support a planning application for demolition of the existing buildings and construction of a residential apartment scheme for the over-55's at the former Chorlton Baths. s. The following report aims to provide an understanding of the heritage significance of the asset and assess the potential impacts of the proposed development on this significance.

This Assessment has been prepared as acknowledgement of the Chorlton Baths building's status as a non-designated heritage asset. The site does not contain any designated heritage assets.

1.2 Methodology

The document surveys the heritage, providing an overview of important information to foster better understanding of the proposed development site and its context. This is done through an assessment of historical development and the surrounding area. This is followed by an assessment of significance, based on the information gathered. Significance is assessed in relation to the heritage interests outlined by Historic England. The aim of the assessment is to understand the site through analysis of physical evidence and desktop research. A description of the site and its history will help to provide context for this significance assessment and inform the basis for heritage impact judgements.

This report has been written in accordance with the *National Planning Policy Framework (2021)*, *Historic England's Statements of Heritage Significance (2019)*, and *Conservation Principles, Policies & Management for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment (2008)*, and *BS7913 - British Standards Guide to the Conservation of Historic Buildings*.

1.3 Authorship & Ownership

This document has been prepared by Freya Needham MA, Heritage Consultant at **Buttress**, and reviewed by Jenna Johnston MA (Hons) MSc IHBC, Associate Heritage Consultant at **Buttress**.

1.4 Location & Description

The site is located in Chorlton-cum-Hardy, Manchester, on Manchester Road. Constructed in the 1920s, Chorlton Baths operated as a public bath house and pool. The baths were closed in June 2015.

The site is bordered to the east by the Manchester Metrolink South Manchester Line. To the south is Unicorn Grocery Shop.

1.5 Designations

Chorlton Baths is not a designated heritage asset, however is considered to be a non-designated heritage asset by the local authority, as a building of unique local architectural merit and local historic interest (outlined further in [3.0 Assessment of Significance](#)).

The site does not lie within a Conservation Area.

The nearest designated heritage assets to the site boundary are the Grade II listed Chorlton Library building, and Grade II listed former Temperance Billiard Hall. The site does not lie within the setting of these assets and does not contribute to the understanding of their character or significance. These assets will therefore not be considered as part of this assessment.

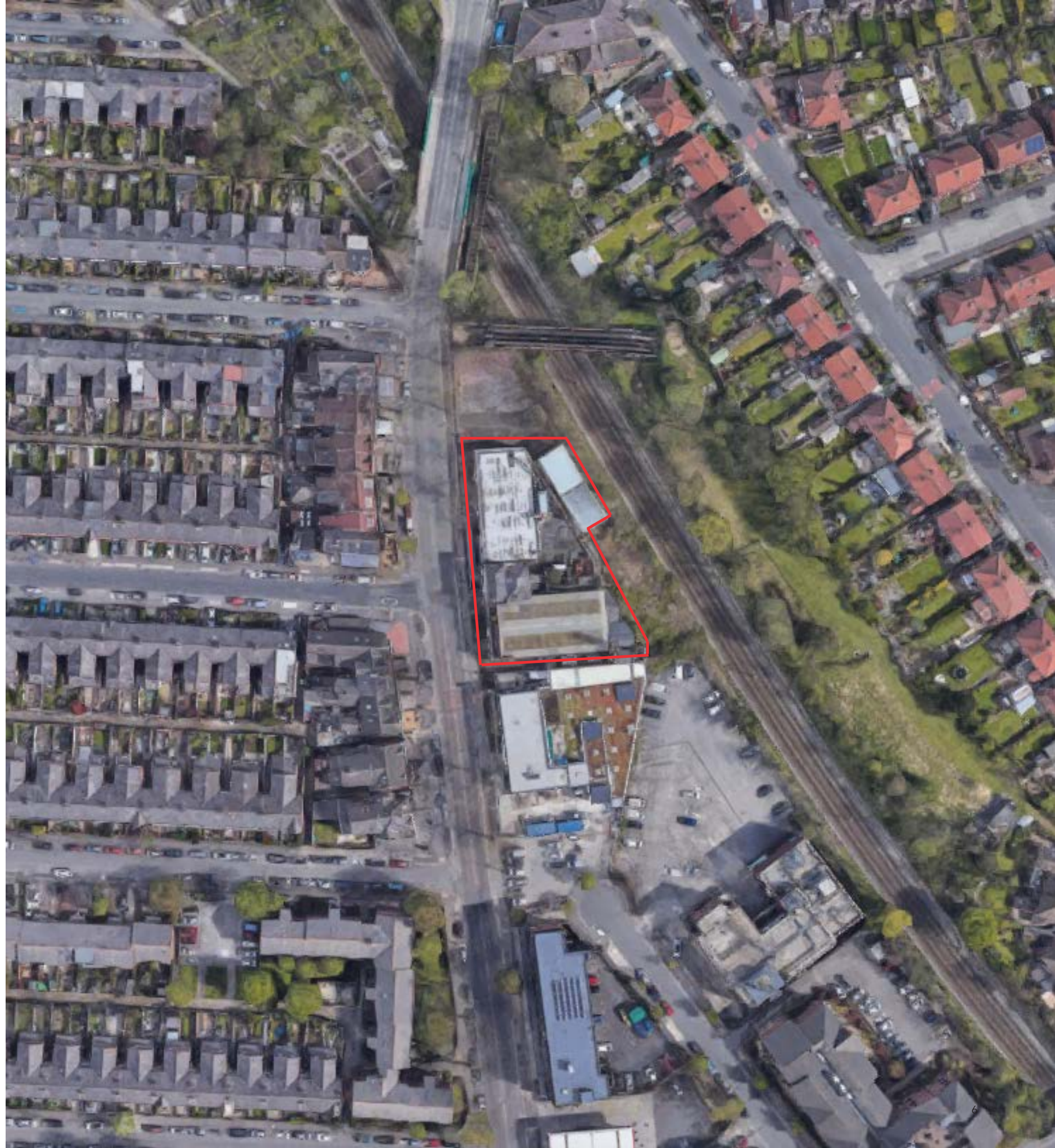


Figure 1 Location

2.0

Understanding the Heritage

2.0 Understanding the Heritage

2.1 Description of the Heritage

2.1.1 Exterior

Constructed in the 1920s, Chorlton Baths is an Art Deco style building, constructed largely of red brick, with ashlar detailing. The building is roughly symmetrical with a central entrance block, and two wings extending either side which would have housed the baths.

The central block is two-storey with a basement, red brick with ashlar face. At ground floor there are three openings. Central opening is a window, now blocked up. Two openings either side are former entrance doors framed with ashlar detailing. Above the left door reads 'Females' and above the right door read 'Males' carved into the stone. The first floor features three 12-light sash windows. Ashlar face is detailed with a cornice just below the parapet. Roof is a shallow and hipped.

North wing is three-bays long, constructed of red brick and detailed with ashlar panels. The ashlar panels feature small blocked up window openings. This wing has a flat roof.

To the rear is a moderate flat-roof extension. This extension features no details of architectural interest. Beyond this to the west is a late 20th-century metal-clad extension containing two squash courts.

South wing features a single ashlar panel as well as two openings either side which have been boarded up. This wing has a very shallow pitched roof that is stepped back from the parapet. To the rear is a three-gable extensions with a large brick-built chimney.



Figure 2 Top Right: North Elevation

Figure 3 Bottom Right: East Elevation and Adjoining Market Hall

2.1.2 Interior

Interior has been modified and extended to accommodate modern use.

The northern wing contains a large swimming pool. This pool is original to the 1929 construction and retains the original lining tiles. The roof is a modern flat roof. Pool-side changing rooms have been removed from their original position and graffitied.

The southern wing contains a large sports hall, refurbished in 1990. The hall has a shallow pitched roof with large skylights, supported internally by a steel truss. Fixtures, fittings and equipment are all modern.

Other areas, including the modern changing rooms were not assessed on site due to the condition of the site.



Figure 4 Top Right: Pool Hall within Northern Wing

Figure 5 Bottom Right: Sports Hall within South Wing

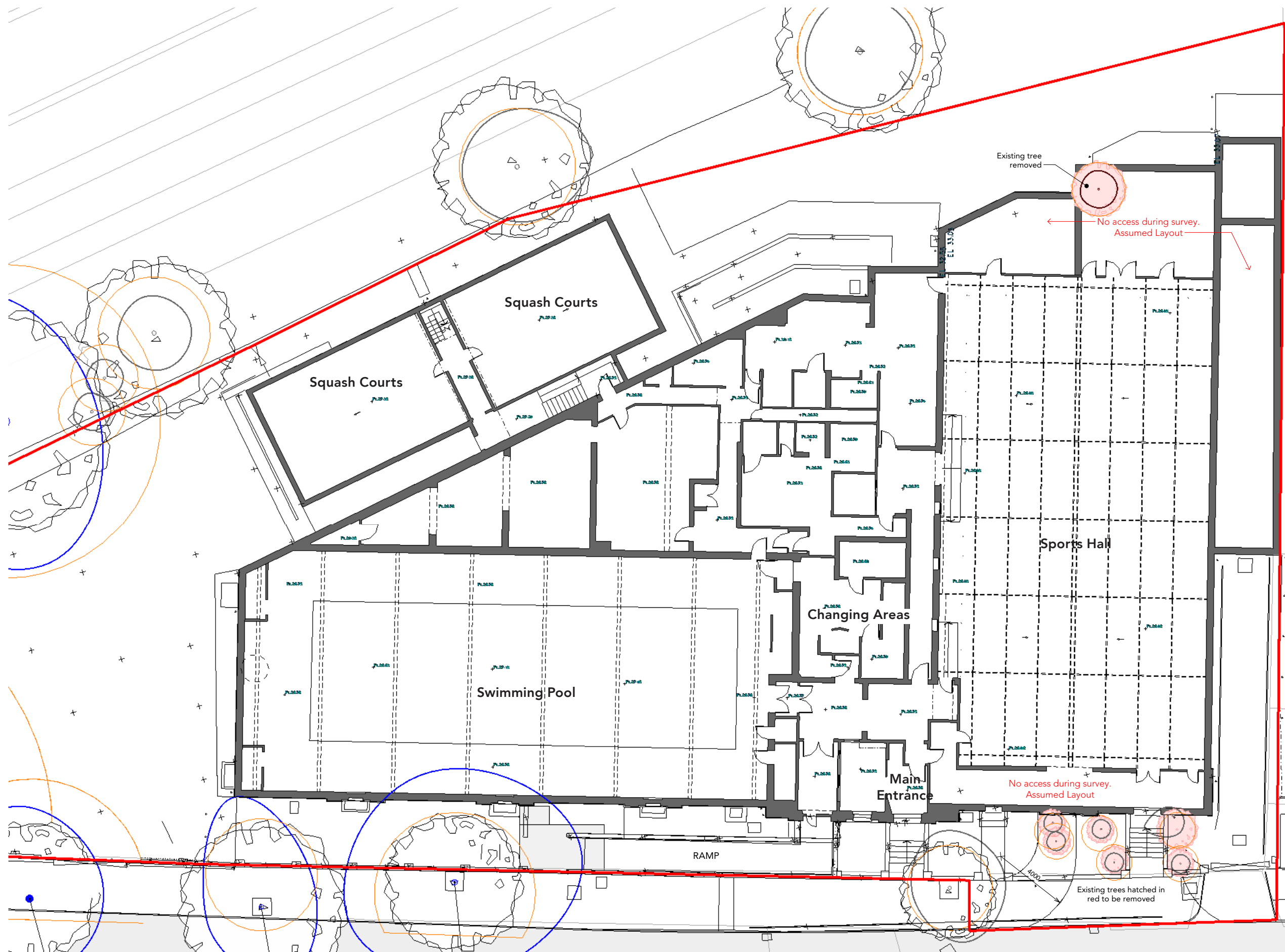


Figure 6 Existing Ground Floor Plan Showing Former Space Uses

2.2 History & Development

Constructed in the 1920s, the baths were designed by the Manchester City Architect's Department, headed by well-known Manchester architect Henry Price. The baths were constructed in response to a local need for bathing facilities and remained in operation for a large part of the 20th century.

The baths were finally closed in 2015, when they were replaced by a new facility constructed at Hough End. The baths have since been occupied by squatters.

Throughout the building's history, it has undergone a number of changes to its form and fabric.

The two wings containing the pool and the sports hall originally featured glass roofs, as can be seen pictured in [Figure 7 Top Right: Chorlton Public Baths 1920s \(Manchester Libraries, Information and Archives\)](#). These have since been removed and been replaced with a flat roof on the north wing, and a shallow pitched roof on the south wing.

A number of openings on the principal west elevation, to the right of the main entrance, have been blocked up, and the small sash windows that are set within the ashlar panels on the wings have also been blocked up. The original red brick boundary wall has been replaced by low stone fabric.

The building was extended to the rear in the 1990s to include squash courts and additional internal facilities within the leisure centre.



Figure 7 Top Right: Chorlton Public Baths 1920s (Manchester Libraries, Information and Archives)¹



Figure 8 Bottom Right: Chorlton Baths 2023



Figure 9 Top Left: Pool Interior 1929 (Manchester Libraries, Information and Archives).²

Figure 10 Top Right: Baths Interior 1929 (Manchester Libraries, Information and Archives).³

Figure 11 Bottom Left: Baths Interior - Shower Room 1929 (Manchester Libraries, Information and Archives).⁴

Figure 12 Bottom Right: Baths Interior - Turkish Baths inspired room 1929 (Manchester Libraries, Information and Archives).⁵

3.0

Assessment of Significance

3.0 Assessment of Significance

Following guidance outlined in Historic England's *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance* (2008), along with the more recent *Historic England Advice Note 12 Statements of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets*, the following section will aim to assess any heritage interest(s) that the site might hold.

The level of significance will be assessed based on the scale below:

Exceptional: Heritage interests having national or international importance, usually found where assets are designated at grade II*, grade I, scheduled monuments and UNESCO World Heritage sites.

High: Heritage interests having national importance, usually found where assets are designated at grade II*.

Medium: Heritage interests having regional importance, usually found where assets are designated grade II. Also, generally applies to Conservation Areas.

Low: Heritage interests that make a positive contribution to their area, group or setting. Usually, non-designated heritage assets and historic townscapes.

Neutral: Historically unimportant. These ratings are intended to address the heritage values outlined below, and do not relate to the significance of specific buildings, spaces, or areas of fabric.

3.1 Archaeological Interest

There will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially holds, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point.

Historic mapping shows no evidence for previous development on the site of the baths. The site remained undeveloped during the development of the Chorlton-cum-Hardy suburb until the construction of the baths.

An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment completed by Salford Archaeology addresses the full archaeological potential of the site. The report concludes that the site has limited potential to contain remains dating to the prehistoric, Romano-British, medieval, however may yield surviving soils relating to the former agricultural landscape that existed during the industrial period. This report should be references accordingly.

The southern boundary of the site also follows the line of the now culverted underground Longford Brook

The archaeological interest of the site is **low**.

3.2 Architectural & Artistic Interest

These are interests in the design and general aesthetics of a place. They can arise from conscious design or fortuitously from the way the heritage asset has evolved. More specifically, architectural interest is an interest in the art or science of the design, construction, craftsmanship and decoration of buildings and structures of all types. Artistic interest is an interest in other human creative skills, like sculpture.

Chorlton Baths holds architectural interest as a building of good quality art deco design that is unique in its context and reflective of the era in which it was constructed. The strong brick frontage of the building makes a notable contribution to the local streetscape.

The building has lost a number of original features such as the pool-side changing rooms, glass roof detailing, original boundary wall, and original windows which make its original design and form less legible.

The architectural and artistic interest of the site is **low**.

3.3 Historic Interest

An interest in past lives and events (including pre-historic). Heritage assets can illustrate or be associated with them. Heritage assets with historic interest not only provide a material record of our nation’s history, but can also provide meaning for communities derived from their collective experience of a place and can symbolise wider values such as faith and cultural identity.

The site derives historic interest from its strong communal value. The pool was first opened as part of improved welfare offers from the council and the building use has remained unchanged until its closure in 2015. The baths were a key amenity for working-class residents who did not have access to private swimming facilities; the baths were a symbol of social progress and civic pride.

Local people have used the pool to learn how to swim since its opening and the building holds social value as a place of social interaction and community function.

The historic interest of the Baths is limited specifically to Chorlton-cum-Hardy and the local area and is of no specific regional or national importance. The site does not specifically relate to any significant historic events or persons.

The historic interest of the site is therefore **low**.

3.4 Summary of Significance

Chorlton baths has **low** heritage significance and is therefore considered to be a non-designated heritage asset. This conclusion is agreed by Salford Archaeology within their Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment for the site.

4.0

Summary of Proposed Works

4.0 Summary of Proposed Works

The proposed development will include the demolition of the existing Chorlton Leisure Centre building to make way for the construction of 50 new sustainable and affordable apartments.

The apartments will sit across two 5-storey apartment blocks constructed of buff brickwork and detailed with generous balconies with a modern balustrade design. The blocks will be set within a series of external communal gardens, both public and private, as well as a large car park for those living on-site.

The scheme will be exclusively for over 55s, creating 'later life' housing options for local people. The aim of the scheme is to allow local individuals to 'Right-size' to accommodation that suits their needs and aspirations.



Figure 13 CGI Showing Proposed Development

5.0

Heritage Impact Assessment

5.0 Heritage Impact Assessment

5.1 Introduction

The following assessment seeks to outline the potential impacts of the proposed development on the significance of the **non-designated heritage asset**. The scale of these impacts will be weighed against the **low** significance of the asset, in line with paragraph 203 of the NPPF and the following methodology, in order to assess any potential harm posed by the scheme.

5.2 Methodology

Impacts will be assessed and scaled per British Standards BS7913 guidance for the scale of impacts, which correlates with the ICOMOS Guidance on Heritage Impact Assessments. ICOMOS suggest a 9-point scale spectrum for defining the impacts of proposed changes, which is included here in **Figure 16**. This scale is a useful tool within the context of the benefit and harm dichotomy of the NPPF. The scale provides the opportunity for beneficial outcomes to be quantified, balanced, and considered alongside the NPPF outcomes of: no harm, less than substantial harm, and substantial harm. Together they create a holistic approach to assessment.

5.2.1 Assessment of Scale of Specific Impact and Change

The **scale of change** is based on the level of proposed intervention and how much potential the intervention has to alter fundamental principles of significance of the asset. The scale of impact relates this to the significance of the asset in question. It is important to note that impacts can be both direct and indirect, and do not only relate to the physical fabric. Change and impact can also be primary or secondary; temporary or permanent; reversible or irreversible; and may arise as a consequence of construction or operation of the proposed development. For the purpose of this assessment, the following definitions have been applied:

Direct impacts are those that arise as a primary consequence of the Scheme. Direct impacts can result in the physical loss of part or all of an asset, and/or changes to its setting. Setting is, ‘the surroundings in which a place is experienced, its local context, embracing present and past relationships to the adjacent landscape.’

Direct impacts resulting in physical loss are usually permanent and irreversible; normally occur as a consequence of construction; and are confined within the development footprint. The magnitude of these impacts will depend on the proportion of the asset affected, and whether its key characteristics would be affected.

Direct impacts that affect the setting of an asset can occur as a consequence of construction or operation of the scheme and can affect assets some distance from the development. Assessment of impacts on setting refers to perceptible visual and aural effects that can be appreciated at a given time. Such impacts may be temporary or permanent, reversible or irreversible depending on the extent to which the cause of the impact can be removed. Impacts may also be transient where occurrence is sporadic or of limited duration, for example related to hours of operation or the frequency of passage of vehicles.

Indirect impacts occur as a secondary consequence of construction or operation of the development, and can result in physical loss or changes to the setting of an asset beyond the development footprint.

Severity of impacts has been judged taking into account their direct and indirect effects and whether they are temporary or permanent, reversible or irreversible. The cumulative effect of separate impacts has also been considered. The magnitude of impact (summation of direct and indirect impacts) is assigned one of the descriptors; impacts may be adverse or beneficial.

VALUE OF HERITAGE ASSET	SCALE & SEVERITY OF CHANGE/IMPACT (EITHER ADVERSE OR BENEFICIAL)				
	No Change	Negligible Change	Minor Change	Moderate Change	Major Change
Very High (Grade I/Scheduled Monument)	Neutral	Slight	Moderate/ Large	Large/Very Large	Very Large
High (Grade II*)	Neutral	Slight	Moderate/ Slight	Moderate/ Large	Large/Very Large
Medium (Grade II/ Conservation Area)	Neutral	Neutral/Slight	Slight	Moderate	Moderate/ Large
Low (Locally Listed)	Neutral	Neutral/Slight	Neutral/Slight	Slight	Slight/ Moderate
Negligible (Non-Designated)	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral/Slight	Neutral/Slight	Slight

Figure 14 Significance/Scale of Impacts Table

No Change	Negligible Change	Minor Change	Moderate Change	Major Change
No material change to the heritage asset or its setting.	A small change or alteration, but unimportant. Having no visual or indirect impacts on the asset or its setting. Slight changes to use or access.	A small change to an element of fabric or setting that results in a noticeable difference. Limited indirect impacts or changes to character.	Changes to an element, including replacement, or insertion of a new element, where the asset or its setting has clearly been modified. Noticeable indirect impacts.	A change of great extent, including the complete removal of an element. Changes to most or all of the asset or its setting. Total alteration of the asset. Extreme indirect impacts.

Figure 15 Definition of types of change

Major beneficial	Moderate beneficial	Minor beneficial	Negligible beneficial	Neutral	Negligible adverse	Minor adverse	Moderate adverse	Major adverse
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Figure 16 9-point scale of impact

5.3 Impact on Chorlton Baths

The demolition of Chorlton Leisure Centre will result in the total loss of the existing non-designated heritage asset, which is of low heritage significance. This will result in a slight impact in accordance with the methodology outlined in [Figure 14](#).

The building has remained vacant since 2015 and the existing building and building layout was not considered viable for retention and residential use due to site constraints, such as inaccessible access levels, and unsuitable floorplate levels. Viability and re-use options are discussed further within the DAS.

The slight impact resulting from the loss of the asset is outweighed by the public benefits sought by the construction of the new building on the site of the former baths.

The proposal will introduce high-quality, affordable housing for local people that will allow people to move into housing that is more suitable to their physical and financial requirements, freeing up family housing for working age people. The provision of housing will make a valuable contribution towards meeting the identified need for affordable housing in Manchester as identified in the Planning Statement.

The increase in population as a result of the development will increase local expenditure to support local businesses, enhancing the vitality and viability of Chorlton as a district centre.

The new development will also feature a Community Space, which will be bookable by the local groups. This will be beneficial to the local community and improve the social value of the development.

The new apartment blocks will introduce high-quality contemporary design into the townscape of Chorlton-cum-Hardy. The frontage of the new eastern block will seek to retain the strong streetscape presence currently maintained by the existing leisure centre and the central location of the building entrance will maintain the rhythm of the existing building.

Figure 17 CGI Showing Proposed Development



5.4 Conclusion

Overall, in line with the requirements of paragraph 203 of the *NPPF (2021)*, this assessment concludes that the proposed development will result in the total loss of the non-designated heritage asset. This loss is justified by the introduction of sustainable and affordable local housing that will support over-55 living and benefit the local economy.

The new development will be of high-quality contemporary design that contributes positively to the townscape of Chorlton-cum-Hardy.

6.0

Bibliography & Sources

6.0 Bibliography & Sources

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6.1 Endnotes

- 1 Manchester Libraries, Information and Archives. Baths and Wash Houses, Chorlton-cum-Hardy Public Baths, Manchester (GB127.m57255)
- 2 Manchester Libraries, Photograph, City Engineers Department (GB127.m78310)
- 3 Manchester Libraries, Photograph, City Engineers Department (GB127.m78366)
- 4 Manchester Libraries, Photograph, City Engineers Department (GB127.m78370)
- 5 Manchester Libraries, Photograph, City Engineers Department (GB127.m78368)

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