

Heritage Statement

in connection with

Proposed Remodelling at Chorlton Old Mill, MSV Block B, 84 Cambridge Street, Manchester

Dated: 07.11.2022



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose and Format

This heritage statement has been prepared to assess and inform proposals to remodel and refurbish Chorlton Old Mill, MSV Block B, 84 Cambridge Street, Manchester. Chorlton Old Mill is a Grade II Listed Heritage Asset. The heritage asset does not fall within a Conservation Area. In essence the Heritage Statement assesses the heritage significance of the site and guides proposals for change in a manner that conserves significance. This approach adheres to the principle of intelligently managing change, which lies at the heart of national planning policy for conservation of the historic built environment.

The Statement has been prepared in accordance with the general guidelines set out in the English Heritage publications 'Informed Conservation'¹ and 'Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance'² and in particular responds to heritage policies outlined in Chapter 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (DCLG, 2012). The legal context is set by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act of 1990. The local policy context is set out with reference to Manchester City guidelines.

1.2 The Author

Vic Fletcher, the author, is a Chartered Architect and professional member of the Royal Institution of British Architects (RIBA). With substantial experience in the field of conservation and historic buildings. The author holds an MSc in Conservation and Urban Regeneration.

1.3 Methods of Research and Investigation

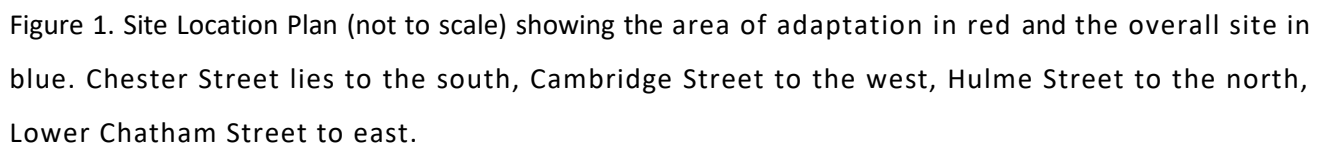
Inspections of the site were carried out in during the July / August of 2022 to assess the buildings physical nature. Background research has also been conducted to ascertain all relevant contextual matters appertaining to the proposals. The scope of this research has, in accordance with the NPPF, been proportionate to the nature of the proposed works, with particular emphasis placed upon the special architectural and historic interest of the site and those planning policies that affect/control change.

¹ Clarke, K, *Informed Conservation*, English Heritage 2003

² English Heritage, *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance: Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment*, 2008

2.1 Site Location and Context

Chorlton Old Mill lies on the corner of Hulme St and Cambridge St. A location plan is given below in Figure 1.



2.2 Context Photos



Figure 2. From south west



Figure 3. From north west



Figure 4. View from north

Site History

Manchester was at the heart of the Industrial Revolution and became a center for cotton spinning and associated warehouses.

The earliest recorded mill on the site in question (Chorlton Twist Company) was developed by Robert Owen who sold the mill in 1809. A series of alterations were made and extensions added to the mill, with the C19 owners developing the adjacent mill (Chorlton New Mill), with the Chorlton Old Mill then forming a group of mills – with Chorlton Old Mill being the only surviving building and which was partially rebuilt in early C19 including a cast-iron roof structure which is considered to be unusual.

Historic Maps

The historic record illustrates the historic development of the site through 150 years.

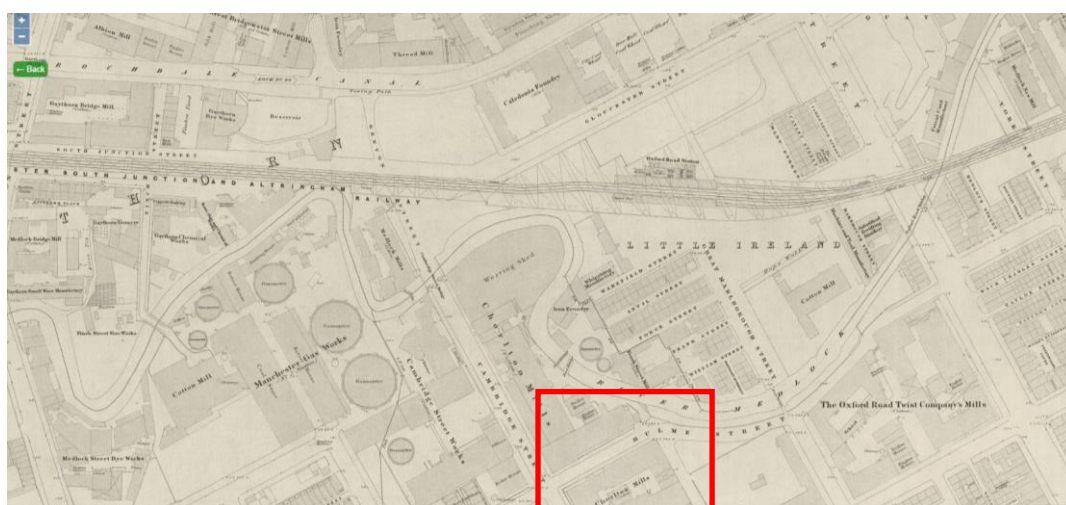


Figure 5. 1851 – the north end of the site indicated and developed.



Figure 6. 1900 – south east of the site, undeveloped.



Figure 7. 1923 – south east of the site remains undeveloped.



Figure 8. 1946 – The site fully developed.

2.3 Heritage Asset Designations

Chorlton Old Mill is a grade II listed building. The listing description for the building is given below.

Category: Listed Building

Grade: II

List Entry: 1197775

Date first listed: 11th March 1988

Date of the most recent amendment: 6th June 1994

Statutory Address: CHORLTON OLD MILL, CAMBRIDGE STREET, MANCHESTER.

Cotton spinning mill, converted to accommodation in 1993. The earliest mill on the site was built in 1795, considerably extended c1810, and then largely rebuilt in 1866. Brick with slate roof (missing at time of inspection). Single range of formerly U-plan mill survives: six storeys over basement, 14x8 bays, each with rectangular window with flat arched head. Panelled corner pilasters. Former shallow wings to each side to rear. Interior construction is cast-iron columns and beams carrying transverse brick arches (some columns encased in steel), and with three bays of cast iron arch-braced roof trusses. Later C19 rebuilding involved re-use of some at least of the structural iron-work, it is likely that the roof structure dates in its entirety to the 1860's. (1)

Listing NGR: SJ8396597285



Figure 9.

3.0 HERITAGE APPRAISAL

3.1 Introduction

The following appraisal adheres to guidance published by English Heritage (2008)³ and relates specifically to the requirement contained in clause 128 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2012), given in extract below:

“In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary.”

(Clause 128. NPPF, 2012)

The appraisal begins by identifying the potential range of heritage values attributed to the building, before evaluating these values and expressing them concisely within a ‘statement of significance’. This statement is then used as a basis for developing the design of new proposals, making sure to prioritise conservation of significance where possible and appropriate.

3.2 Heritage Values

The following appraisal of the heritage values devotes particular interest into how these values might be affected by emerging proposals for development. The values are distilled under the following headings: evidential value; historic value; communal value; aesthetic value.

3.2.1 Evidential Value

English Heritage (2008) suggests that “Evidential value derives from the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity”⁴.

³ English Heritage, *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance: Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment*, 2008

⁴ *ibid*

The building provides physical evidence of an 19th Cotton Spinning Mill which was greatly extended through the 20th Century to accommodate the expanding needs to the cotton industry. Following the demise of the cotton industry in the 1920s the building fell into steady decline. It was subsequently remodelled to form student accommodation in 1993. Plans of the current building and layout are shown in the Appendix. This was the most dramatic intervention to the Listed building, added to that there is now a basement car park which is access from Chester Street.

The brick coursed construction is evidence of the use of locally sourced construction materials.

3.2.2 Historical Value

English Heritage (2008) suggests that - “Historical value derives from the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present. It tends to be *illustrative* or *associative*”.

It is the extent and nature of retained historic fabric which led to the designation of Chorlton Mill as a Grade II listed Building. The building contributes to the sense of history in the place and helps us develop a better understanding and appreciation of the past societies who occupied the City Centre. This relationship of place and history establishes a range of historical values which are illustrative in nature. The level of value is always restricted by the extent to which any building has changed through the years, although Chorlton Mill demonstrates a clear pattern of extension this has not destroyed significantly the historic fabric which remains. The main destruction of the building lies within the interior where the once clear footplates of a cotton spinning mill are lost to cellular construction.

The interior partitions have no historical significance.

3.2.3 Communal Value

English Heritage (2008) suggests that: “Communal value derives from the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory”.

One can readily imagine that cotton spinning mills were working communities within their own right and had strong communal value, the working community having strong association with the building.

Interestingly the current use as student accommodation fosters communal value and although short term students are likely to retain memory of this splendid building and relations formed within.

3.2.4 Aesthetic Value

English Heritage (2008) suggests that: “Aesthetic value derives from the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place”.

Interestingly whilst the interior has radically changed the exterior façade remains relatively intact although the external ramp on the east elevation is obtrusive architecturally.

The elegance of the façade is clear to see built of traditional load bearing brickwork and pitched slated roofs with regular punctuated openings, stone cills and stone heads, crisp detailing with regular brick pilasters. This forms an elegant brickwork facade of high quality Victorian engineering and of primary importance/significance.

3.3 Statement of Significance

Having assessed the heritage values associated with the site, it is possible to take a more informed approach to the assessment of site significance, giving specific consideration of plans to implement change. In this context a statement of significance is given below.

Chorlton Mill is a grade II listed building, comprising a former Victorian cotton spinning Mill (subsequently extended) and now home to a student population dramatically changed in the 1990s.

An appraisal of the heritage values associated with the listed building illustrate the key values as being aesthetic and historic in nature. The main evidential value lies in a building which still maintains evidence of an earlier working class age and a building of the Industrial revolution with cast iron columns and brick arches.

Communally, the building is of some value given students can associate the new use as being their home (even on a temporary basis) shared with others.

In summary, and mindful of the direction given by policies in Chapter 12 of the NPPF, conserving the significance of the building within the City Centre can be readily achieved by adopting the following design principles:

- Prioritise conservation of the elevations carrying out any structural repairs as required in a sensitive manner.
- Remove the 1990s lightweight partitions
- Where the existing structure is to be exposed carry out any structural repairs as required in a sensitive manner in accordance with good Conservation Practice.

4.0 ANALYSIS OF THE PROPOSALS

4.1 General Principles

General guidance on assessing proposed changes to heritage assets is given in chapter 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2012). The NPPF establishes that conserving significance should be a guiding principle when developing proposals for any new scheme. In order to satisfactorily do this, it is first necessary to conduct an appraisal of heritage values and identify the significance(s) of heritage assets before commencing with design work. Part 3 of this appraisal fulfils this need, and the findings of part 3 have informed the design of the new scheme. There follows, here in section 4, an objective review of the finalised scheme to verify to what extent conservation of significance has either been secured or compromised.

4.2 Summary of the Proposals

- 4.2.1 As previously noted the principle of this proposal can be seen on the attached drawings.
- 4.2.2 As described previously, the building is a former historic mill building that was converted to student accommodation in the mid 1990's. The building was sub-divided into cluster blocks of student bedrooms with shared kitchens and bathrooms utilizing plaster board dry lining construction for walls and ceilings, with many of the cast iron columns and the arched vaulted ceilings being enclosed and not visible to users of the building.
- 4.2.3 When the work was carried out in the early 1990s the existing brickwork and vaulted ceilings were concealed- see photo below (Figure 10).



Figure 10.

- 4.2.4 The Design Team and owner are sensitive to the quality and value of the architectural features present in the Chorlton Old Mill, including cast iron columns and cast-iron arch-braced roof trusses and vaulted brick arches. It is proposed to conserve these original architectural features in their entirety (and as noted in the Listing) with minimal, if any, works affecting the listed elements. The proposed lightweight, plasterboard partitions (forming separating walls between rooms and corridors) will replace existing partitions, with the existing internal brick wall faces, vaulted brick arches, left exposed wherever possible. The cast iron columns and the cast iron arch-braced roof trusses will be left exposed wherever possible with the application of fire-retardant intumescent paint where required under Building Regulations. The proposed works will not involve any alterations to the exterior of the building, including any works to the roof and existing openings within the floors and roofs (for the installation of services etc) will be utilised.
- 4.2.5 It is also noted that when dealing with planning applications affecting listed buildings, the local planning authority '*shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses*'. As will be seen these proposals seek to enhance the existing building in that the new accommodation will help to ensure its sustainability long term.

4.3 Analysis of the Proposals: National Planning Policy Framework

As discussed earlier, section 12 (Conserving and enhancing the historic environment) of the NPPF (2012) considers heritage planning and identifies (amongst other things) the following three key drivers in the decision making process:

- *the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
- *the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring;*
- *opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.*

In essence the NPPF unifies the overall approach to planning in a way that previous guidance, such as PPS's and PPG's, did not. This ensures that deliberations over decisions relating to heritage assets are made in the full planning context, where factors other than heritage conservation play a crucial role. Securing sustainable development is the primary driver, and in the heritage context this relies on maintaining active use (long term) in a manner that seeks to limit potential harm to significance.

In order to establish a clearer, objective assessment of the proposals in the context of the NPPF, the following commentary considers how the proposed scheme aligns itself to the four principle NPPF heritage policy drivers listed above.

4.3.1 *The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation (NPPF)*

The formerly remodeled Chorlton Mill is suffering from outmoded student accommodation. Without improvement there is a possibility units will become/remain vacant. These proposals provide opportunity to provide upgraded accommodation whilst respecting the historic fabric and long term sustainability.

4.3.2 *The wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring (NPPF)*

Through securing the future of Chorlton Mills by providing upgraded student accommodation its restoration will provide a positive social contribution to the City Centre.

4.3.3 *Opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place (NPPF)*

The final overarching NPPF policy driver is primarily concerned with exploiting the positive potential of heritage. With Chorlton Mills, it is not unreasonable to suggest that

Without improvement properties will become vacant. These proposals seek to address these issues, reverse potential decline of the structure and help provide a sustainable future for the Mill and provide a positive contribution to the City Centre.

4.3.4 *NPPF Policy*

Policy 132 of the NPPF states:

“When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of a grade II listed building, park or garden should be exceptional. Substantial harm to or loss of designated heritage assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, battlefields, grade I and II listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional”*

As discussed previously, the proposed remodelling of Chorlton Mill succeeds in conserving what is special about the site whilst also enhancing the overall heritage value of its locality. Past changes to the building (especially the 1990s conversion)

have eroded the overall authenticity and significance of the building but the external appearance has been maintained. This together with structural fabric repairs (if required) will be addressed. Internal alterations whilst extensive are all formed in lightweight partitions and essentially a 'reformation' of what is there but using opportunity to expose elements of the original structure revealing the construction of the original building.

5.0 SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

This Heritage Statement provides an overview of a design process guided by a detailed understanding of heritage significance and the need to conserve and where possible enhance significance through the intelligent management of change. The designers of the proposed scheme have ensured that, through an initial analysis of heritage values, their design decisions respect the context of the place and accord with law and policy. This includes close consideration of vital guidance which informs policy, and 'Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance' (English Heritage, 2008). Having used the guidance, the requirements of national and local heritage planning policy have been satisfied, therein delivering a scheme which is both justifiable and supportable, not least in regard to the overall benefits it will bring to the City Centre.

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