

Ancoats Green, Jersey Green & Prussia Street Arm Greenway – Heritage Statement – January 2023

Introduction

- 1 This report has been prepared to support the planning application, being submitted by Manchester City Council, for public realm improvements within the Poland Street Zone.
- 2 The aspirations of the project are to create two new green spaces, Ancoats Green, Prussia Street Arm Greenway and to enhance the existing Jersey Green with the capacity to support the existing and future communities whilst championing; and reinterpreting Ancoats heritage and character.
- 3 The public realm improvements will consist of a series of green open spaces which allow for various uses for the community, offer better connections to users from Oldham Road to new Islington, Miles Platting to Cutting Room Square and the city centre. The public realm will also promote sustainable movement with the introduction of the new Ancoats Mobility Hub connected to the site and new enhancements of existing footpaths.
- 4 This report considers the history and character of the area and how the proposals aim to work with that its heritage significance. The majority of the site lies within the Ancoats Conservation Area.
- 5 The report has been prepared for Manchester City Council by Nick Collins BSc (Hons) MSc MRICS IHBC of KMHeritage. Nick has twenty years' experience in the property sector, including nine years at Historic England as a Principal Inspector of Historic Buildings & Areas where he led a specialist team of historic building inspectors, architects, and archaeologists on a wide range of heritage projects in East & South London. Nick knows the Ancoats area well and has worked on the delivery of a number of key projects in the area since 2014, including Murrays Mills and New Little Mill, and has also recently been involved in the application to regenerate and restore the Ancoats Dispensary building.

Background

- 6 The town of Manchester emerged as a hub for textile finishing processes in the early modern period and by the 17th century had become the principal commercial centre for the north west region.¹ By the 1790s, Manchester had begun to displace London as the nexus for the overseas trade in cotton cloth. This development was connected in no little way to the revolutionising effect that the development of an extensive canal network had had across the North West post-1765. By the first decade of the 19th century, this network

¹ Oxford Archaeology North 'OAN' (2009) Bradford Road, Ancoats, Manchester: Archaeological Desk based Assessment prepared for Maryland Securities Group.

of waterways linked the east and west coasts of England giving Manchester unhindered access to the coastal ports.

Ancoats

- 7 The Manchester Canal and its branches dissected Ancoats into smaller parcels - the Ashton-under-Lyne Canal (1796) passed through its southern half and the Rochdale Canal (1804) its northern – in between a proliferation of canal branches and wharves served the new steam-powered factories and textile mills. These would be built on an unprecedented scale to satiate the burgeoning consumer demand for textiles and other goods both at home and abroad. By 1800 there were more than 40 cotton spinning mills in the Manchester area, more than half of them steam-powered, and Ancoats was at its centre.²
- 8 Ancoats' transformation from a semi-rural district into a pre-eminent industrial powerhouse could not have been achieved without the vision and drive of a small group of entrepreneurs who were able to understand and quickly apply the new technology of steam-power for commercial ends.
- 9 The new mills introduced a new integrated workflow where raw textile material entered the mill and unbleached cloth left it.³ These new style mills required a particular configuration of buildings in order to operate and specialised mill architects also began to appear during 19th century. The mills were built of red brick or sometimes local stone with form following function. The main body of the mill was narrow in order to take advantage of large windows on opposite façades with stair columns built in towers, external to the main floors. The number of bays (length of the mill building) was dictated by the number of spinning mule machines installed and a separate engine house and boiler house with a tall chimney to help carry away the noxious coal smoke were needed.
- 10 The OS map published in 1891 shows the south Ancoats district fully developed. The Rochdale Canal can be seen running south-west north-east with several branches running off from it serving private factory wharves (fig. 1⁴).
- 11 Economic success brought, in its turn, population growth. By 1801, Manchester's population had tripled to 75,281.⁵ Squeezed into the gaps between the canals and the looming, multi-storey mills and associated industrial buildings were streets of small, terraced houses lived in by the workers. Theirs and their families' health was affected not only by their cramped insanitary homes surrounded by polluted canals and noxious air but they also ran the risk of serious occupational injury whilst working with the heavy machinery of the mills.⁶ In 1889, a five-storey block of workers housing, called Victoria Square, was the first example of municipal housing in Manchester, and this was followed shortly after by the development of model housing in adjacent Anita Street (originally Sanitary Street).

² Palmer, M, Nevell, M and Sissons, M (2012). Industrial archaeology handbook. York: Council for British Archaeology.

³ Palmer, M, Nevell, M. and Sissons, M. (2012). Industrial archaeology handbook. York: Council for British Archaeology.

⁴ OS Lancashire CIV.NE (includes: Manchester.) Surveyed: 1888 to 1891, Published: 1891.

⁵ *Op. cit.* OAN, 2009.

⁶ *Op.cit.* Rose, 2011.



Figure 1: Ordnance Survey Map 1891

- 12 Aside from the foundries and heavy engineering factories that grew up around Ancoats in order to supply the machinery required by the mills, there were service industries such as builders, joiners, glaziers and plumbers; wheelwrights, farriers and blacksmiths servicing the horse-dependent transport industries; numerous small workshops, stores and warehouses and small, and coal-, timber- and stone-yards as well as domestic industries.
- 13 One of the foremost industries was glass-making. By the fourth quarter of the 19th century there were nine glass-works in production including the Flint Glass Works on Jersey Street. Flint glass, also called Lead Crystal, was a heavy and durable glass which leant itself to decorative cutting and was a key to making England the leading glass producer of the world. Nearby, on Poland Street, was Butlers Tate & Co., founded in 1858 which was known for its mass-produced pressed glass ornaments. Other companies included Molineaux, Webb & Co. as with many heavy industrial processes, the glass industry declined post-war with the last factory closing in 1959.⁷

19th century streetscape

- 14 Interspersed between the looming mills and factory buildings were narrow streets of small brick-built terraced housing with small back yards built for mill workers. These were interspersed with small industrial premises, yards, public houses and chapels. The canal spurs and their wharves which served the numerous small timber and coal merchants as well as the large mills and factories gave the area a unique character. Examples of Jersey Street streetscapes can be seen in figs 2 & 3. The Map at figure 4 illustrates Ancoats in 1880 – showing the mix of housing and industry in the area.

⁷ *Op.cit.* Rose, 2011.



Figure 2&3: Jersey Street (south side) 1967 & 1962

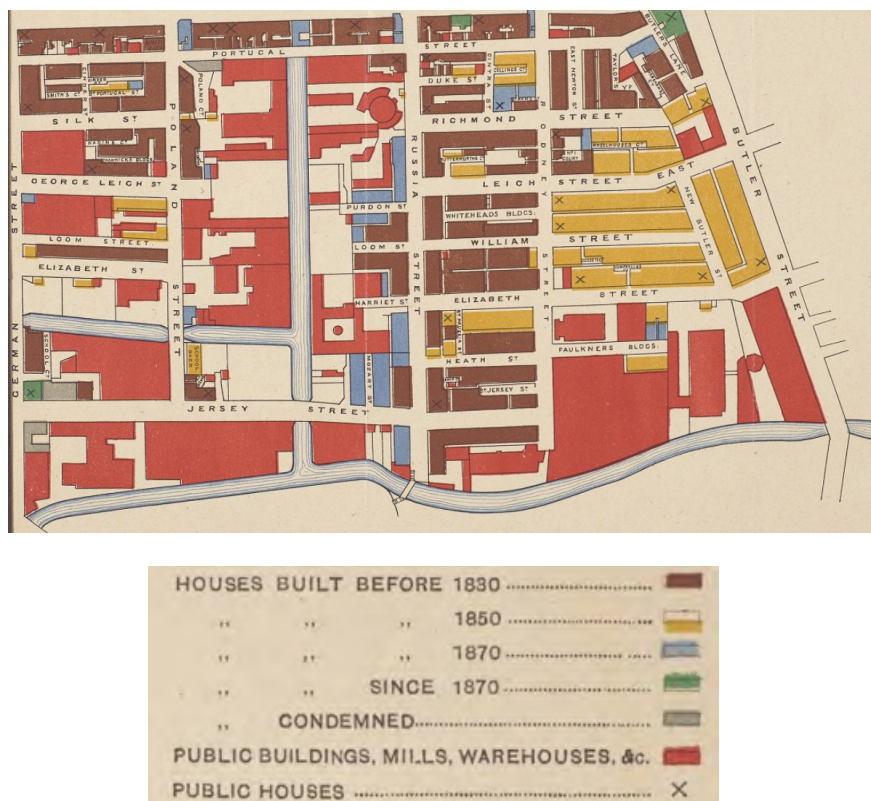


Figure 4: Bastow's Map of Ancoats (Report on the Health of the City of Manchester 1880)

Heritage Significance

- 15 The conservation area represents part of the historic Ancoats district and is bounded by Great Ancoats Street, Oldham Road, Kemp Street, Wadeford Close, Jersey Street and the Rochdale Canal. It was designated in order to counter the impending loss of character caused by widespread demolition of pre-20th century buildings.

- 16 The conservation area statement⁸ summarises what gives the area its special character and appearance:
- 17 “The principal buildings are the massive cotton spinning mills, which are located adjacent to the Rochdale Canal and the nearby housing. This juxtaposition and inter-linking of manufacturing, transport and residential uses meant that Ancoats functioned as the first industrial estate in the world.
- 18 Before the Industrial Revolution, textile and other manufacturing processes were carried on in and around worker’s homes. Following the harnessing of waterpower, mills were sited alongside rivers, but they had to be spaced out in order to extract the limited amount of power available from a certain stretch of water.
- 19 Although the area is dominated by the massive mill buildings, it also contains other listed buildings of differing character. The Victoria Square housing is a five-storey block of flats dating from 1889 and regarded as one of the most successful local authority housing schemes in Manchester, due in part to its enclosure of shared inner space.
- 20 Buildings such as the church of St Peter and the Crown and Kettle pub, together with older non-listed buildings in the area, provide a contrast of architectural styles with the surviving massive mill buildings.”
- 21 As described above, much of this historical significance has been lost through the ad-hoc nature of the post-war re-use of the area and in many cases site ownerships and boundaries have further blurred the former plan of the area. This included the in-filling of the canal spurs and the demolition of much of the 19th and early 20th century industry and housing at the eastern side of Ancoats.

The Proposals and their impact on heritage significance

- 22 The proposals are for the improvements to the public realm to create high quality and robust open spaces which provide a platform for active and recreational use – and importantly celebrate the historic past of the area as envisaged in the Ancoats and New Islington Framework.
- 23 The main Ancoats and New Islington Framework was last updated in 2016. However subsequently, in June 2020, a further update was produced focusing on Character Area 3 – Poland Street Zone. One of the key aspirations of this document is the creation of better connectivity across Ancoats and to re-interpret the lost canal spur as a linear park – linking Ancoats Green to the Rochdale Canal along its historic route. The Public Realm Strategy, effectively an addendum to the Poland Street Zone NDF, was endorsed in 2022
- 24 Whilst there are no visible existing heritage assets on the site, it is known that the Ancoats Green area was historically known for the glass and flint glass work production, for example, the Woolfalls Glass Bottle Works. Similarly, the Prussia Canal Arm historically linked the Ancoats Green site to the Rochdale Canal.

⁸ MCC, Ancoats Conservation Area: https://secure.manchester.gov.uk/info/511/conservation_areas/1216/ancoats_conservation_area

- 25 Prussia Street Arm Greenway will not only provide a ‘green lung’ through the area, but also re-establish the visual link along the canal spur – allowing a more meaningful understanding of how the area was once connected.
- 26 The proposals intend to celebrate the history of the area through wayfinding which celebrates the heritage of the area at key gateways, nodal points and junctions within the site, directing users to key destinations in the area.
- 27 The entry points will be marked with gateways and the profile of play features and coloured resins used in the children’s play area will reference the history of the area and the historical uses of the sites and old coping stones associated with the buried canal will be re-used along the new Prussia Street Arm Greenway.
- 28 Since the creation of Victoria Square and the reports carried out in the late health of the residents of Manchester in 1880 the creation of space and a better living environment has been important – and is a relevant part of the area’s history.
- 29 The creation of this space in Ancoats in a manner that respects the characteristics of the area – its grid iron pattern, the historic canal arms and views through the area – will positively enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area. This is further strengthened by the incorporation of motifs and interpretation into the design and materials of the proposed spaces.
- 30 By working with the historic layout of the area it will also mean that new development of the remaining sites will ensure an integration of the aspirations of both the NDF and the conservation area.

Compliance with Policy

- 31 For the reasons given above, we believe that the proposals will comply with s.72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (‘the Act’) with regards to the preservation of the character and appearance of the area.
- 32 Similarly, they comply with the policies found in the National Planning Policy Framework (2021). The proposals are borne out a full understanding of their heritage context – recognising the ‘positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities’ and ‘the positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness’.
- 33 The approach to the interpretation of the three parts of the proposal also enable the Council to address its obligations under paragraph 206 of the NPPF to ‘look for opportunities...within Conservation Areas...to enhance or better reveal their significance.’ The proposals will enable a pro-active re-landscaping of the area which will identify, highlight and celebrate the area’s historical evolution – in particular the canal spur.
- 34 The proposals will also comply with the requirements of the Manchester City Council Local Plan to preserve or enhance the City’s heritage assets.

Conclusion

- 35 In conclusion, the proposals will enable a key aspiration of the Ancoats and New Islington Framework and the Public Realm Strategy to use open space and the linear park along the route of the historic canal spur to provide a meaningful interpretation of the heritage of the area and how it was interconnected – thus enabling a better appreciation of the history and development of Ancoats.