

DONALD INSALL ASSOCIATES

Central Manchester Friends' Meeting House

Heritage Impact Assessment



Contact information

Kate Martyn

Practice Director

kate.martyn@dia.co.uk

020 7245 9888

Amelia Bircham

Assistant Heritage Consultant

amelia.bircham@dia.co.uk

020 7245 9888

Manchester Office

Donald Insall Associates

2nd Floor, 32-34 Laystall Street, Manchester, M1 2JZ

www.dia.co.uk

Contents

1.	Introduction	2
1.1.	Introduction and Methodology	2
1.2.	The Building, its Legal Status and Policy Context	2
1.3.	Summary Assessment of Significance	4
1.4.	Summary of Proposals and Justification	4
2.	History of the site	5
2.1.	Early history of the site (1673-1855)	5
2.2.	The new Meeting House (1828-31)	6
2.3.	Exhumations and closure of Jackson's Row (1855-1940s)	7
2.4.	Late 20 th century records	8
2.5.	Summary of burials and history of wall	8
3.	Site Survey	10
3.1.	Boundary wall	10
4.	Significance	11
4.1.	Introduction	11
4.2.	Assessment of Significance	11
5.	Commentary on the Proposals	13
5.1.	Description of the Proposals and their Impact on the Listed Building and Conservation Area	13
5.2.	Justification of the Proposals	14
5.3.	Conclusion	16

Version Control

Rev	Date	Auth	Check	Notes
002	31.03.26	APB	RQB	Issued for Planning

This report and all intellectual property rights in it and arising from it are the property of or are under licence to Donald Insall Associates Limited. Neither the whole nor any part of this report, nor any drawing, plan, photograph, other document or any information contained within it may be reproduced in any form, including online, without the prior written consent of Donald Insall Associates Limited. All material in which the intellectual property rights have been licensed to Donald Insall Associates Limited, and such rights belong to third parties, may not be published or reproduced at all in any form, and any request for consent to the use of such material for publication or reproduction should be made directly to the owner of the intellectual property rights concerned.

1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction and Methodology

Donald Insall Associates were commissioned by the Manchester and Warrington Area Quaker Meeting in November 2025 to assist them in an application for remedial structural works to the boundary wall attached to Central Manchester Friends' Meeting House.

This assessment has been prepared in accordance with the requirement of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024), paragraph 207, which asks that applicants 'describe the significance of any heritage assets affected' by proposals for change. This assessment takes account of the guidance provided by Historic England in 'Statements of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets. Historic England Advice Note 12' (2019); IEMA, IHBC and CIfA: 'Principles of Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment in the UK' (2021)

The investigation has comprised historical research, using both archival and secondary material and consulting the relevant Historic Environment Record (HER). The assessment build on existing work by AHP which undertook a full assessment of the site. An illustrated history of the site, with sources of reference and bibliography, is in Section 2; the site survey findings are in Section 3. The investigation has established the significance of the site, which is set out in Section 4 and summarised below.

The specific constraints for this site are summarised below. This report has been drafted to inform the design of proposals for the site, by Donald Insall Associates. Section 5 provides a justification of the scheme according to the relevant legislation, planning policy and guidance.

1.2. The Building, its Legal Status and Policy Context

Central Manchester Friends' Meeting House and its associated boundary wall is a Grade II-listed building located in the St. Peter's Square Conservation Area in Manchester.

Alterations to a listed building generally require listed building consent; development in conservation areas or within the setting of a listed building or conservation area requires local authorities to assess the implications of proposals on built heritage.

The statutory list description of the listed building is included in Appendix I and a summary of guidance on the St. Peter's Conservation Area provided by the local planning authority is in Appendix II.

Full relevant extracts of relevant law, policy and guidance for change in the historic environment are contained in Appendix II of this report. In summary, the relevant legal and policy backgrounds is as follows.

1.2.1. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 is the legislative basis for decision-making on applications that relate to the historic environment. Sections 16 of the Act impose statutory duties upon local authorities to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting, or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

1.2.2. The Development Plan

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The development plan applicable to the building is the Manchester Core Strategy 2012-2027 (2012) and saved policies in the Unitary Development Plan (UDP - 1995) which require that proposed works preserve or enhance the historic environment, avoiding adverse impact on the special interest of listed buildings.

1.2.3. The National Planning Policy Framework (2024)

The courts have held that following the approach set out in the policies on the historic environment in the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) will effectively result in a decision-maker complying with its statutory duties. The Framework forms a material consideration for the purposes of section 38(6). At the heart of the Framework is 'a presumption in favour of sustainable development' and there are also specific policies relating to the historic environment.

The Framework requires that proposals for change give 'great weight' to the conservation of heritage assets (paragraph 212), that harm to the significance of heritage assets requires 'clear and convincing justification' (213), and that such harm is outweighed by public benefits. Harm is to be categorised as substantial (214) or less than substantial (215).

The Framework requires local planning authorities to look for positive opportunities for new development within conservation areas and within the setting of heritage assets. Proposals that preserve positive elements or enhance/better reveal their significance, are required to be treated favourably (219).

1.2.4. The Draft National Planning Policy Framework (December 2025)

The draft NPPF December 2025 which has been issued for consultation is also a material consideration, which includes a new structure of the chapter 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment'.

Policy HE4 would stipulate that heritage assets 'should be conserved and enhanced in a manner appropriate to their significance'; it also includes new policies relating to the historic environment.

Policy HE6 stipulates that 'substantial weight should be given to the asset's conservation' and that 'development proposal which would have a positive effect on designated heritage assets should be approved.' Policy HE6 also states that 'important public benefits can include securing the long-term re-use of a vacant or underused listed building and enabling energy efficiency and low carbon heating measures to be employed' and that such benefits can outweigh harm.

Summary Assessment of Significance

A detailed assessment of significance with guidance on the relative significance of elements of setting, fabric and the extent to which these elements are sensitive to alteration is included in Section 4 of this report.

The following paragraphs are a summary explaining why the Central Manchester Friends' Meeting House boundary wall is considered of nationally important architectural and historical interest.

Constructed as part of the first Meeting House on the site, the boundary wall was built during the early phase of Manchester's expansion out of its medieval core. With St. Peter's forming the commercial and civic centre of the city during the 19th century, many of the buildings first constructed in the area have been demolished, leaving the boundary wall one of the earliest elements of built form in the area; the Meeting House itself was reconstructed in the latter years of the Georgian period and the wall therefore predates the building itself. Prominent as the site of a civilian crush during the Peterloo Massacre in 1819, the wall is of high associative and illustrative historic value.

Architecturally simple, the wall's fabric nonetheless contributes to the character of the St. Peter's Square conservation area. The tall wall encloses views along Bootle Street and is an imposing visual presence.

Summary of Proposals and Justification

The proposals are necessary to undertake major structural repairs and prevent serious damage to the historic fabric of the listed building. They would lead to public benefits by securing the future of the listed boundary wall and ensuring that the existing road to Bootle Street remains accessible and safe.

The proposals would sustain the significance of the both the Grade II-listed wall and the St. Peter's Square Conservation Area and, as such, they would meet the tests for sustainable development outlined within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), insofar as they relate to the historic environment.

Although some localised loss of fabric has been identified within the proposals the limited evidential value of the wall means that the proposal would not harm the significance of the structure. Weighed against the benefits of stabilising the wall the impact is considered to be neutral.

The proposed scheme would meet the statutory duty imposed by The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the tests for sustainable development as outlined in the National Planning Policy Framework and accord with the relevant local policies insofar as they relate to the historic environment. They are therefore considered to be acceptable in heritage terms.

2. History of the site

2.1. Early history of the site (1673-1855)

Whilst Manchester has been home to a Friends' Meeting House since 1673 (originally located on the corner of Deansgate and Jackson's Row), the Mount Street site was first purchased by the Society of Friends in 1790. A Meeting House was first constructed on the current site in 1795, which appears to have been considerably smaller in scale on historic maps of the site (Manchester HER). It is assumed that most burials still took place on the Jackson's Row site.

The boundary wall, whilst altered to incorporate a later datestone and grave markers, was apparently constructed at this date. An 1807 map highlights a walled enclosure running around the building.

The site on Mount Street is shown on an 1806 plan of the burial ground, and as such was apparently in use for burials by this date (Butler, 1999, p. 320). Surrounded by a rectangular enclosure on the map, it is likely that the boundary wall was in place by this date, delineating the extent of the site and marking burials.

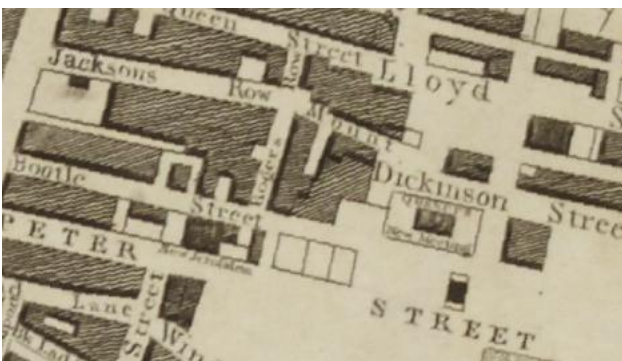
In 1819 the wall played a prominent role in the Peterloo Massacre. Civilians were recorded as being crushed by the military against the wall on Bootle Street as they fled the event. The Meeting House itself served as a place of refuge and first aid point for those escaping the violence outside (Manchester HER).



Both Meeting Houses shown in Map of Manchester by Roper, 1807 (Public Profiler)



Both Meeting Houses shown in Map of Manchester by Pigot, 1813 (Public Profiler)



'New Meeting House' and burial group shown in Map of Manchester by Pigot, 1821 (Public Profiler)

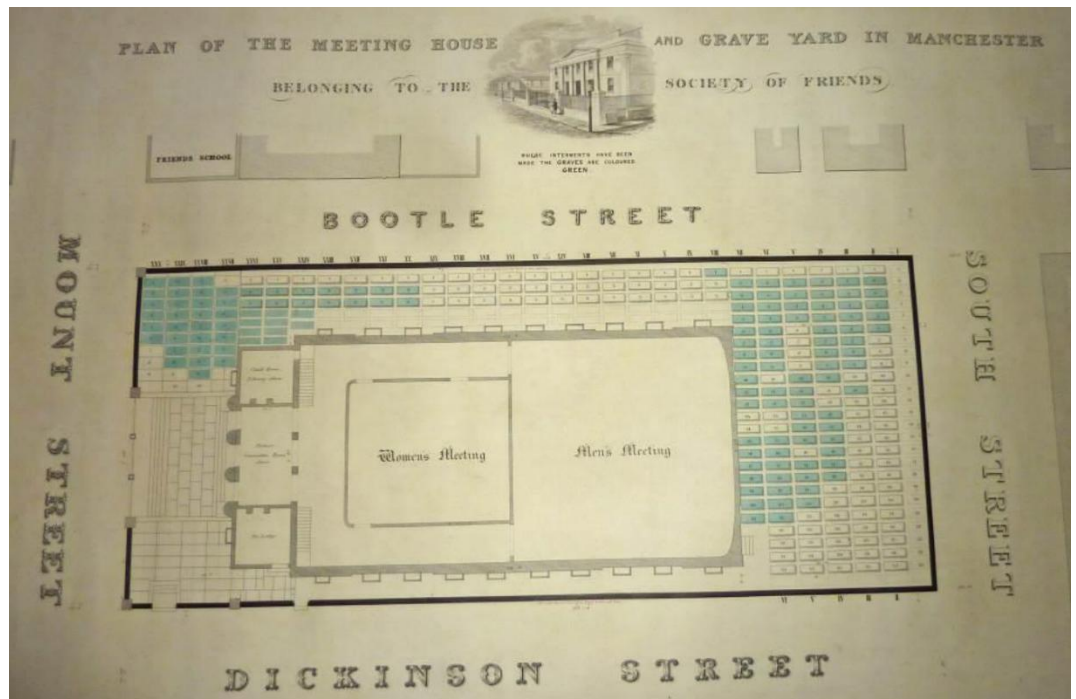


'New Meeting House' and burial ground shown in Map of Manchester by Pigot, 1836 (Public Profiler)

2.2.

The new Meeting House (1828-31)

The Central Manchester Friends' Meeting House was rebuilt to designs by Richard Lane in 1828-31. 1833 plans of the site show that burials had taken place by this time, marked in a strict grid system, with stone markers in the walls highlighting their locations. Green infilled plots represent those that had been filled with burials by this date, whilst those clear boxes represent plots that remained vacant.

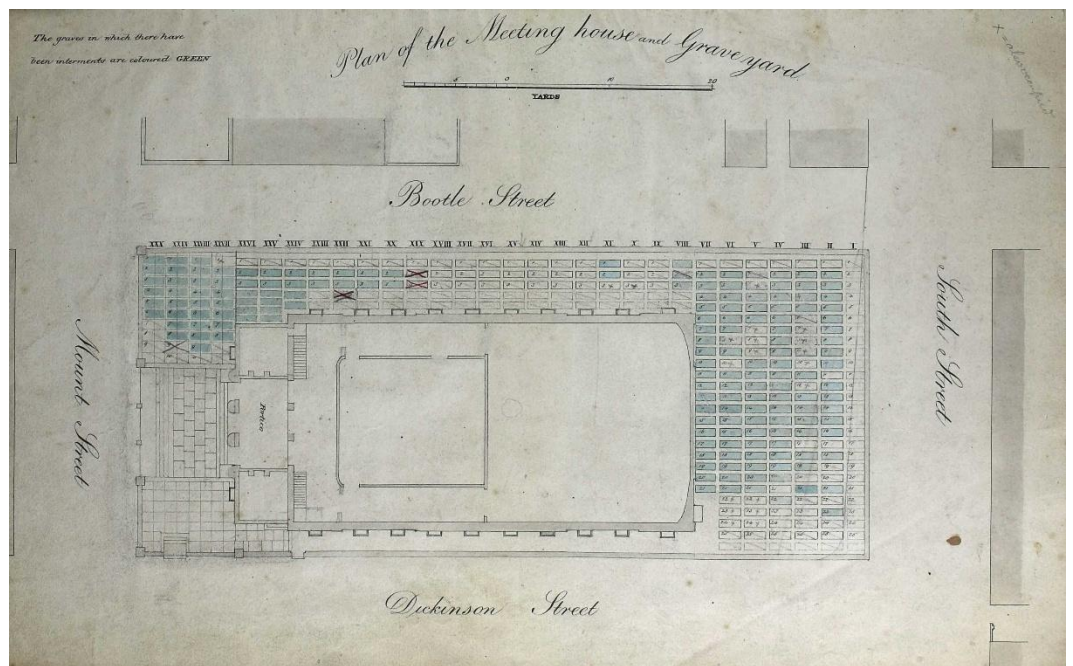


Meeting House and Burial Plots, 1833 (Friends Collection)

Though the wall was not seemingly demolished and rebuilt, the addition of a dated sandstone highlights that some change to the structure of the wall was likely undertaken.

By the time the new Central Manchester Friends' Meeting House had been constructed, the original Meeting House on Jackson's Row had been demolished. Converted into a burial ground and school by 1821, the site was in full use as a burial ground, with a watchman's hut situated on Jackson Street. This site closed to burials in 1847.

By the 1840s the burial ground was increasingly filled, as shown in a plan of it dating to 1849. However, in 1855 the burial ground at Mount Street was closed, resulting from an order from Lord Palmerston in 1854 that all burials in Manchester City Centre must cease (Butler, 1999, p. 320). The wall remained in place during this period



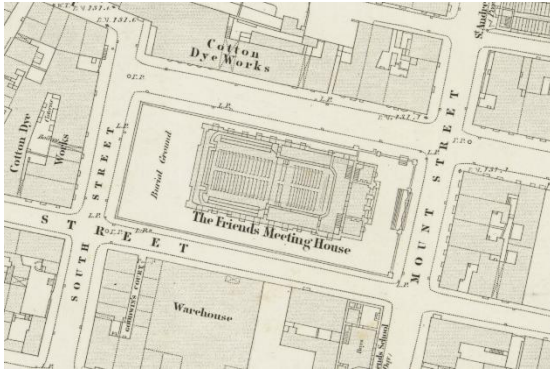
Meeting House and Burial Plots, 1840s (Friends Collection)

2.3. Exhumations and closure of Jackson's Row (1855-1940s)

It is known that the burials on the Jackson's Row site were moved to the new burial ground at the Ashton-upon-Mersey Meeting House between 1876 and 1877 and placed in a stone vault (Manchester HER). Undertaken because Manchester Corporation sought to widen Deansgate in the 1870s, the records do not record any exhumation of burials from the Mount Street site.

No further burials then took place on the Mount Street site from 1856, with internments made at Ashton-upon-Mersey (Butler, 1999, p. 320). As a result, the landscape surrounding the Central Manchester Friends' Meeting House was no longer shown as a 'burial ground' on OS mapping of the 20th century. However, the wall remained in place, enclosing the Meeting House.

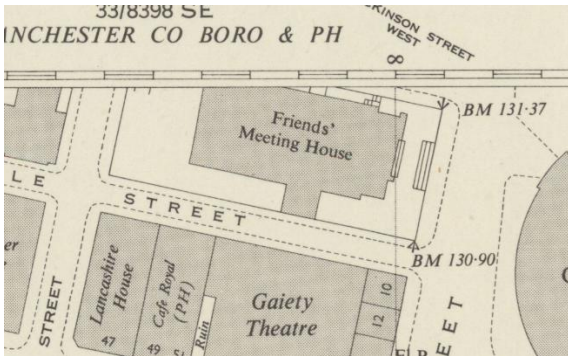
Aerial images of the site dating to the middle of the 20th century suggest that few grave markers to the rear of the site remained in place at this time. Lawned areas and paths were in place. As such, it could be that gravestones and/or burials had been removed by this date.



OS Map of site, surveyed 1849, published 1851 (NLS)



OS Map of site, surveyed 1915-16, published 1922 (NLS)



OS Map of site, surveyed 1849, published 1851 (NLS)



Aerial image of Meeting House, 1948 (HE Aerial Images)

2.4. Late 20th century records

Several planning applications relate to a scheme of landscaping to the rear of the Meeting House, including the following:

- Listed Building Consent for the demolition of a garage to the rear of the Meeting House (1983)
- Listed Building Consent for the formation of a 17-vehicle car park (1983)

However, no exhumation records appear to relate to the relandscaping scheme, nor do any of the conditions imposed by officers as part of their decision refer to any below-ground archaeology or burials. As such, it is unclear whether any bodies were removed as part of the work.

No further works are known to have taken place, and no additional excavation or exhumation records were held by the HER or uncovered by archival research.

2.5. Summary of burials and history of wall

No documentary evidence has been found to relate to any major scheme of exhumation on the site since its closure to burials in the late 19th century, and they don't appear to have been exhumed at the same time as the 1876 works to the Jackson's Row site. However, the loss of most of the gravestones suggests that some exhumation may have taken place at an unknown date

Archives

Greater Manchester Lives, <https://www.gmlives.org.uk/>

GMAAS, Manchester HER, <https://gmaas.salford.ac.uk/historic-environment-record/>

Manchester and Warrington Quakers, material supplied by client

Maps and Images

Johnson, W., A Plan of the meeting House and Grave Yard in Manchester 1833

National Library of Scotland, Maps, <https://maps.nls.uk>

The University of Manchester Public Profiler, Historic Maps, <https://manchester.publicprofiler.org/beta/>

Secondary Literature

Butler, D. M. The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain (London: Friends Historical Society, 1999), vol. 1, pp. 318–323

AHP, 'The Friends' Meeting House Manchester Significance and Impact Assessment' (2015)

Websites

Heritage Gateway,
https://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/advanced_search.aspx

Historic England, Aerial Explorer, <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/archive/collections/aerial-photos/>

Manchester Image Bank, Manchester Images,
<https://images.manchester.gov.uk/>

Manchester City Council, See or comment on planning applications,
https://www.manchester.gov.uk/info/200074/planning/5865/planning_permission

3. Site Survey

3.1. Boundary wall

The boundary wall forms a rectangular enclosure around the Meeting House, directly fronting onto the pavement of Bootle Street, Southmill Street, Central Street and Mount Street.

The front boundary wall is ashlar surmounted by replacement steel railings to Mount Street; the stone piers flank the stepped access to the main building.

From this point they continue around the site in brick laid in English bond with stone copings. On the south side the wall incorporates a stone panel with the date 1828. To Bootle Street the wall stands above head height and is taller to the corner that meets Southmill Street. A plaque on the corner commemorates the Peterloo Massacre.

The inner sides of the precinct brick walls incorporate small headstones with Roman numerals to identify burial plots. The wall and piers date from the construction of the original building.

4. Significance

4.1. Introduction

The purpose of this section is to provide an assessment of significance of the Central Manchester Friends' Meeting House boundary wall, so that the proposals for change to it are fully informed as to its significance and so that the effect of the proposals on that significance can be evaluated.

This assessment responds to the requirement of the National Planning Policy Framework to 'recognise that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and conserve them in a manner appropriate to their significance'. 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 (potential to yield evidence about the past), architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting'.

Elements of this summary draw on the existing Statement of Significance completed by The Architectural Heritage Practice in 2015. A summary of the conservation area also draws on the appraisal produced by Manchester City Council on their website.

4.2. Assessment of Significance

4.3. The Central Manchester Friends' Meeting House boundary wall

Originally constructed to the designs of an unknown architect in the 19th century, the Greater Manchester HER describes the significance of the current Central Manchester Friends' Meeting House as follows:

Manchester meeting house has high significance as a good example of an urban late Georgian meeting house in the region, designed by the leading Manchester architect of the day, to replace an earlier meeting house on the site.¹

¹ Manchester Historic Environment Record

Historic Value

Constructed as part of the first Meeting House on the site, the boundary wall was built during the early phase of Manchester's expansion out of its medieval core. With St. Peter's forming the commercial and civic centre of the city during the 19th century, many of the buildings first constructed in the area have been demolished, leaving the boundary wall one of the earliest elements of built form in the area; the Meeting House itself was reconstructed in the latter years of the Georgian period and the wall therefore predates the building itself. Prominent as the site of a civilian crush during the Peterloo Massacre in 1819, the wall is of high associative and illustrative historic value.

Architectural Value

Architecturally simple, the wall's fabric nonetheless contributes to the character of the St. Peter's Square conservation area. The tall wall encloses views along Bootle Street and is an imposing visual presence.

Evidential Value

Constructed in English Garden Wall bond and surmounted by stone capping, the wall is of typical construction and thus of limited evidential value. However, the burial ground to the rear is likely to be of some value, with any physical remains that have not been uncovered having the potential to provide information on Quaker burial practices during the 19th century.

Communal Value

The only physical remnant of the built environment that was present during the Peterloo Massacre, the boundary wall is of considerable commemorative value. With a historic plaque fixed to the Bootle Street elevation, the wall is linked to one of the bloodiest events in the 19th century struggle for democracy. However, its association with a place of worship and burial is also of spiritual and social value.

Located at the heart of Manchester's civic and commercial core, the St. Peter's Square Conservation Area's character is summarised by Manchester City Council as follows:

The main characteristic of St Peter's Square conservation area is primarily one of civic grandeur, but it also contains some commercial property. It has been designated to include a more extensive area than just the square described above, to include several distinguished buildings. The Peace Garden, although laid out after the designation and therefore not a part of the St Peter's Square conservation area, is regarded as an important element of the same urban space.

As such, its architectural character is defined primarily by 19th and early 20th century large-scale commercial and civic buildings in a mix of revivalist styles. Originally a rural suburb of Georgian Manchester, its association with the Peterloo Massacre is of considerable historic interest, the collection of 19th

century buildings articulating the rapid development and expansion of the city from the end of the 18th century into the 20th.

The Central Manchester Friends' Meeting House's contribution to the conservation area is also summarised by Manchester City Council as follows:

The earliest building in the conservation area is the Friends' Meeting House on Mount Street, designed by Richard Lane and completed in 1830. It is in Greek Classical style with Ionic pedimented portico and replicates the Temple of Ilissus in Attica, a province of Greece.

The boundary wall, whilst architecturally unelaborate, is the only remnant of 18th century fabric within the conservation area. Articulating the former residential character of the Meeting House's surroundings and having sheltered victims of the Peterloo Massacre, it makes a considerable contribution to the character of the conservation area.

5. Commentary on the Proposals

5.1. Description of the Proposals and their Impact on the Listed Building and Conservation Area

The proposals for the insertion of a structural anchor system into the Central Manchester Friends' Meeting House boundary wall are outlined in the drawings by Donald Insall Associates.

The proposals aim at securing the repair of the wall, which is currently at a considerable lean. Externally they propose to insert a series of structural anchors into the wall and ground behind to secure it.

The proposals are described in detail below, with the impact on the listed building and, where applicable, the conservation area set out in italics.

5.2. External

It is proposed that small, defined areas of the outer skin of masonry to the wall be carefully removed to allow the installation of 'platipus' anchors and pattress plates in the locations indicated on the drawings. Once installed, the existing bricks would be reinstated and re-bedded with suitable lime mortar to match the existing.

Where possible, all removed masonry units will be re-used. However, where this is not possible it is proposed that reclaimed bricks to match the existing be used.

The proposals have been informed by an iterative design process which has considered a range of options for securing the future of the listed building. All of these have been explored with the client and conservation officer, with the final choice of the platipus anchoring system selected due to its minimal loss of historic fabric and limited change to the visual appearance of the wall.

Whilst the insertion of anchors into the fabric of the wall and burial ground would result in a localised loss of fabric to accommodate the pattresses, the depth of the wall and brick bond ensures that this loss would be extremely

minimal, while the fabric is of little evidential value in its own right. Minor changes to construction and loss of fabric will result in a change to the wall, but this is not considered to amount to harm, and therefore, no adverse impact has been identified. The works can be defined as repairs, to ensure the structural integrity of the wall.

The refacing of the wall with the adjusted brickwork or reclaimed brick would restore the appearance of the wall to its current, original, form. Retaining its patina, the visual impact on the conservation area would be neutral. Any possible visual impact would be additionally mitigated against using a test in the least sensitive area of the wall.

The structural anchor system would secure the building from any further migration, preventing collapse and deterioration to the historic fabric. It would therefore secure the future of the wall and allow Bootle Street to remain a safe and accessible highway. As such, the works would be of neutral impact to both the listed building and St. Peter's Square Conservation Area.

5.3. Justification of the Proposals

The proposed works outlined above seek to secure the boundary wall to Central Manchester Friends' Meeting House from further structural deterioration. Preventing collapse, this would sustain the earliest piece of surviving built fabric within the St. Peter's Square Conservation Area.

As explained in Section 1.2, Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The development plan applicable to the building comprises The Core Strategy (2012) and saved policies from the Unitary Development Plan (1995).

Policy EN3 Heritage in the Core Strategy establishes a presumption in favour of 'proposals which enable the re-use of heritage assets will be encouraged where they are considered consistent with the significance of the heritage asset'. Similarly, Policy 19 Listed Buildings of the UDP indicates the 'council will have regard to the desirability of securing the retention, restoration, maintenance and continued use of such buildings'...provided 'in its opinion, there would be an adverse effect on its architectural historic character'. As outlined above, the proposals would support the continued use of one of the most historically significant walls in central Manchester, allowing it to function in the same manner as it has done since the 18th century. The use of the proposed anchor system would ensure that the structural repairs would be minimally visible and would thus cause no harm to the significance of the listed building or conservation area.

The thrust of the Core Strategy aligns with the National Planning Policy Framework, which seeks to ensure the heritage assets are conserved in a manner accordingly to their significance. As has been outlined in detail above, the proposals will sustain the significance of both the listed building and the conservation area through retaining the wall *in situ* and maintaining its existing visual appearance. They will ensure that Bootle Street remains an accessible and safe public highway. As such they would be wholly beneficial and would cause no harm to the significance of the boundary wall to Central Manchester Friends' Meeting House as a Grade II listed building or the St Peter's Square Conservation

Area. Likewise, the statutory duties of the Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to preserve the special interest of the listed building and to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area would be met.

As explained above, the proposals would result in no harm to the significance of heritage assets. They would accord with the relevant policies of the NPPF and with the relevant policies of the as outlined above. The proposals are therefore considered to be acceptable in heritage terms.

The proposals are necessary to undertake major structural repairs and prevent serious damage to the historic fabric of the listed building. They would lead to public benefits by securing the future of the listed boundary wall and ensuring that the existing road to Bootle Street remains accessible and safe.

The proposals would sustain the significance of the both the Grade II listed wall and the St. Peter's Square Conservation Area and, as such, they would meet the tests for sustainable development outlined within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), insofar as they relate to the historic environment.

Although some localised loss of fabric has been identified within the proposals the limited evidential value of the wall means that the proposal would not harm the significance of the structure. Weighed against the benefits of stabilising the wall the impact is considered to be neutral.

The proposed scheme would meet the statutory duty imposed by The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the tests for sustainable development as outlined in the National Planning Policy Framework and accord with the relevant local policies insofar as they relate to the historic environment. They are therefore considered to be acceptable in heritage terms.

Appendix I - Statutory List Description

Central Manchester Friends' Meeting House, boundary walls and steps

Grade II listed building

List Entry Number: 1291062

Date first listed: 18-Dec-1963

Listing NGR: SJ8377597989

Central Manchester Friends' Meeting House built in 1828 to a design by Richard Lane, altered in the 1860s by Alfred Waterhouse, and with further alterations in 1923 and 1962, is listed at Grade II for the following principal reasons:

Architectural interest:

- * as a purpose-built Quaker meeting house designed in Greek Revival style with features including a portico of attached giant Greek Ionic columns, pilasters, a frieze and a pediment;

- * the meeting house with its entrance precinct, boundary walls and gate piers, provides a distinctive town-centre building;

- * for its association with the adjacent and contemporary burial ground, enclosed by original walls.

Historic interest:

- * designed by Richard Lane who was Manchester's principal architect during the 1820s and 1830s and who built or remodelled some of the city's most important public and institutional buildings;

- * with alterations by Alfred Waterhouse, designer of nearby Manchester Town Hall and the Natural History Museum in London, both Grade-I listed buildings.

Group value:

- * with Lawrence Buildings (Grade II*), 1-5 Central Street (Grade II), Lancashire House (Grade II) and the Central Public Library (Grade II*).

History

The Quaker movement emerged out of a period of religious and political turmoil in the mid-C17. Its main protagonist, George Fox, openly rejected traditional religious doctrine, instead promoting the theory that all people could have a direct relationship with God, without dependence on sermonising ministers, nor the necessity of consecrated places of worship. Fox, originally from Leicestershire, claimed the Holy Spirit was within each person, and from 1647 travelled the country as an itinerant preacher. 1652 was pivotal in his campaign; after a vision on Pendle Hill, Lancashire, Fox was moved to visit Firbank Fell, Cumbria, where he delivered a rousing, three-hour speech to an assembly of 1,000 people, and recruited numerous converts. The Quakers, formally named

the Religious Society of Friends, was thus established.

Fox asserted that no one place was holier than another, and in their early days, the new congregations often met for silent worship at outdoor locations; the use of members' houses, barns, and other secular premises followed. Persecution of Nonconformists proliferated in the period, with Quakers suffering disproportionately. The Quaker Act of 1662, and the Conventicle Act of 1664, forbade their meetings, though they continued in defiance, and a number of meeting houses date from this early period. Broad Campden, Gloucestershire, came into Quaker use in 1663 and is the earliest meeting house in Britain, although it was out of use from 1871 to 1961. The meeting house at Hertford, 1670, is the oldest to be purpose built. The Act of Toleration, passed in 1689, was one of several steps towards freedom of worship outside the established church, and thereafter meeting houses began to make their mark on the landscape.

Quaker meeting houses are generally characterised by simplicity of design, both externally and internally, reflecting the form of worship they were designed to accommodate. The earliest purpose-built meeting houses were built by local craftsmen following regional traditions and were on a domestic scale, frequently resembling vernacular houses; at the same time, a number of older buildings were converted to Quaker use. From the first, most meeting houses shared certain characteristics, containing a well-lit meeting hall with a simple arrangement of seating. In time a raised stand became common behind the bench for the Elders, so that traveling ministers could be better heard. Where possible, a meeting house would provide separate accommodation for the women's business meetings, and early meeting houses may retain a timber screen, allowing the separation (and combination) of spaces for business and worship. In general, the meeting house will have little or no decoration or enrichment, with joinery frequently left unpainted.

Throughout the C18 and early C19 many new meeting houses were built, or earlier buildings remodelled, with 'polite', classically-informed designs appearing, reflecting architectural trends more widely. However, the buildings were generally of modest size and with minimal ornament, although examples in urban settings tended to be more architecturally ambitious. After 1800, it became more common for meeting houses to be designed by an architect or surveyor. The Victorian and Edwardian periods saw greater stylistic eclecticism, though the Gothic Revival associated with the Established Church was not embraced; on the other hand, Arts and Crafts principles had much in common with those of the Quakers, and a number of meeting houses show the influence of that movement.

The C20 saw changes in the way meeting houses were used which influenced their design and layout. In 1896 it was decided to unite men's and women's business, so separate rooms were no longer needed, whilst from the mid-1920s ministers were not recorded, and consequently stands were rarely provided in new buildings. Seating was therefore rearranged without reference to the stand, with moveable chairs set in concentric circles becoming the norm in smaller meeting houses. By the interwar years, there was a shift towards more flexible internal planning, together with the provision of additional rooms for purposes other than worship, reflecting the meeting house's community role – the need for greater contact with other Christians and a more active contribution within the wider world had been an increasing concern since the 1890s. Traditional styles

continued to be favoured, from grander Classical buildings in urban centres to local examples in domestic neo-Georgian. The work of the prolific Hubert Lidbetter, longtime Surveyor to the Six Weeks Meeting, demonstrates a range from the solid Classicism of Friends House, London (1924-1927) to the more contemporary style of the Sheffield meeting house of 1964 (now in alternative use). In the post-war period, a small number of Quaker buildings in more emphatically modern styles were built; examples include the meeting house at Heswall, Merseyside, 1963 by Beech and Thomas, and buildings by Trevor Dannatt, of which the Blackheath Quaker Meeting House is one.

The Manchester Society of Friends was formed in the C17 and a meeting house was erected on Jackson's Row in Manchester in 1693, replaced by premises on Mount Street in 1795. By the 1820s it was decided to build larger premises on the site for which money was raised by subscription. The architect Richard Lane (1795-1880), a Quaker, was appointed and the contractors were David Bellhouse. Work started on demolishing the old building in 1828 and the new Meeting House was completed in 1831, though it had been in partial use for 18 months by that time.

Richard Lane was Manchester's principal architect during the 1820s and 1830s who built or remodelled some of the city's most important public and institutional buildings. His principal source for the design of the building was the measured drawings and illustrations which appeared in *The Antiquities of Athens* by James Stuart and Nicholas Revett, published in four volumes 1762-1816. The building received notice and praise almost as soon as it had opened including in a book of engravings highlighting recent architecture, *Lancashire Illustrated* (T Allen 1832). The book described the meeting house saying: 'its simplicity is perfectly accordant with the unostentatious character of the Society for whose use it was erected.'

The building was altered in the 1860s when Alfred Waterhouse, then articulated to Richard Lane and a member of the Manchester Friends, designed small-scale alterations, although it is not known exactly what was done. The work may have included the partial infilling of the original entrance to provide doorways, and the projecting addition to the basement on the south side for WCs.

The first major phase of alterations took place in 1923 to designs by Hunter, Cruickshank and Seward. The women's business meeting room was subdivided horizontally and vertically to create a central concourse, new staircase and a series of smaller rooms on both floors. A new small meeting room was provided on the north-east side of the ground floor. The work was undertaken to accommodate the Friends' Institute and the Friends' Byrom Street school. The original staircases and the vertically-sliding screen between the meeting rooms were removed, although the lifting mechanism for the latter was left in the roof space. Externally, some of the sash windows were widened and steel windows installed to provide more light. The basement was adapted and used for employment projects during the 1930s.

The main meeting room survived intact until 1962 when a second phase of alteration was carried out to the designs of Halliday and Agate of Manchester. The late Georgian meeting room interior was replaced by raised raked seating on the north and south sides of the space with a stage to the west. The floor was

replaced in concrete with a parquet finish and the solid gallery fronts faced in vertically-boarded timber. The void beneath the new galleries was designed to provide additional headroom to basement rooms below, reducing the floor area of the meeting room. The 1920s work in the eastern part of the building was removed and a new arrangement of rooms and circulation was created, allowing rooms to be let commercially to provide an income stream to maintain the building. A new concrete staircase was inserted with direct access to a new fire exit on the north side. All the 1920s joinery was removed and replaced with plain flush doors and plain functional detailing typical of the 1960s. At basement level a series of meeting rooms and spaces for letting was created. The principal front elevation was unaltered, but exterior alteration included blocking ground-floor windows at the west end of the building, new basement windows on the north and south elevations and new roof glazing. The 1920s north doorway was blocked and a new fire exit door inserted to its right. The Bootle Street entrance to the basement was probably created during the 1960s.

In 1999 and 2012 the Bernard Taylor Partnership upgraded the concourse and small first-floor rooms with new moulded plaster cornices and panelled doors in architraves, modelled on an original door from the first floor. The frontage to Mount Street was remodelled in 2000 with new ramped access and the reinstatement of stone gate piers and replacement steel railings.

The burial ground retains a few headstones which have been laid flat.

Details

Quaker Meeting House built in 1828 to a design by Richard Lane, altered in the 1860s by Alfred Waterhouse, and with further alterations in 1923 and 1962.

MATERIALS: red brick laid in Flemish bond with a sandstone ashlar façade, with the other elevations of brick with stone dressings, and a slate roof.

PLAN: rectangular in plan.

EXTERIOR: the building is aligned with the entrance facing east to the street, set within a walled precinct. It is of two storeys over a basement and is designed in Greek Revival style. The main east elevation is of five bays with giant end pilasters and a portico of attached giant Greek Ionic columns, a frieze with the words FRIENDS' MEETING HOUSE engraved upon it and a pediment. Windows are generally twelve-pane sash windows. The central doorway has modern glazed double doors and a C20 overlight flanked by side windows.

The north side elevation is ten bays with similar windows (some later steel windows and some blocked) and notional brick pilasters. There is a parapet and a stone sill band. An entrance to the basement is an insertion of 1960s date. The south elevation is similar with a small single-storey extension probably of late-C19 date and inserted entrances to the basement areas. The rear elevation is also of brick with giant end pilasters; the central three bays project slightly and the parapet is raised to give emphasis and movement to the façade. All the windows except those in the end bays of the upper storey are blind or blocked.

INTERIOR: the interior has a wide entrance hall with doors leading off to rooms on each side, a result of remodelling of various different C20 dates. Hardwood

doors lead to the main meeting room which has features relating to a remodelling in the 1960s by Halliday and Agate. Walls are lined with acoustic panelling and the ceiling is divided into a pattern of square translucent panels beneath roof lights. Stairs lead up on each side to galleries with raked seating. A stage has a lower sliding section to increase its depth and the stage recess is backed with an angled screen of veneered panels; finishes are generally in the type of hardwoods popular at the time, including a woodblock floor.

Rooms in the upper floor are broadly similar to those of the foyer below, largely with modern finishes. In the basement area there have been successive alterations and subdivisions of the space, keeping the original arched spine wall and some of the original vaulted ceilings. In the roof space the original roof construction of Baltic pine is largely intact; the pulleys and chains attached to the timbers are the remains of a system which allowed the original early-C19 smaller and larger meeting rooms to be divided by means of a partition which could be moved by raising it vertically.

SUBSIDIARY FEATURES: the frontage to Mount Street was remodelled in 2000 with a new ramped access and the reinstatement of stone gate piers. The entrance is accessed by flights of three and four stone steps. The front boundary wall of about 1m height is of sandstone ashlar surmounted by replacement steel railings to Mount Street; these walls return along the sides of the forecourt, with stone piers with stone copings. From this point the walls continue around the site in brick laid in Flemish bond with stone copings. On the south side the wall incorporates a stone panel with the date 1828. Towards the rear of the site, the wall has been altered to form a car park entrance. The inner sides of the precinct brick walls incorporate small headstones with Roman numerals to identify burial plots. The wall and piers date from the construction of the original building.

Appendix II - Planning Policy and Guidance

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

The Act is legislative basis for decision making on applications that relate to the historic environment.

Sections 16, 66 and 72(I) of the Act impose a statutory duty upon local planning authorities to consider the impact of proposals upon listed buildings and conservation areas.

Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that:

[...] in considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works the local planning authority or the Secretary of State 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.

Similarly, section 66 of the above Act states that:

In considering whether to grant permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority, or as the case may be the Secretary of State 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.

Similarly, section 72(I) of the above Act states that:

[...] with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

Local Policy

Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester (1995)

The Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester (the UDP) was adopted by the Council in 1995 as the statutory document that set out guidelines for all development in Manchester and provided a framework from which to base decisions about planning applications. Although the UDP has been superseded the following policies were retained and remain extant.

19. Listed Buildings

DC19.1 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. In giving effect to this policy, the Council will:

- b. not permit a change of use of a listed building, where it would have a detrimental effect on the character or appearance of the building;

- c. not permit any external or internal alteration or addition to a Listed building where, in its opinion, there would be an adverse effect on its architectural or historic character;
- d. seek to preserve and enhance the settings of listed buildings by appropriate control over the design of new development in their vicinity, control over the use of adjacent land, and where appropriate, by the preservation of trees and landscape features;
- f. not permit alterations to a listed building which would prevent the future use of any part of the building, in particular upper floors or basements, or where poor maintenance is likely to result.

Manchester Local Plan. Core Strategy Development Plan Document (2012)

Manchester Local Plan was adopted by Manchester City Council in 2012, though it retains several of the policies set out in the 1995 UDP. The following policies are of relevance.

Policy EN 3: Heritage

Throughout the City, 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. Proposals which enable the re-use of heritage assets will be encouraged where they are considered consistent with the significance of the heritage asset.

National Planning Policy Framework

Any proposals for consent relating to heritage assets are subject to the policies of the NPPF (2024). This sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. With regard to 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment', the framework requires proposals relating to heritage assets to be justified and an explanation of their effect on the heritage asset's significance provided.

Paragraph 7 of the Framework states that the purpose of the planning system is to 'contribute to the achievement of sustainable development' and that, at a very high level, 'the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'.

At paragraph 8, the document expands on this as follows:

Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives:

- a) an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;

b) a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities’ health, social and cultural well-being; and

c) an environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

and notes at paragraph 10:

10. So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 11).

With regard to the significance of a heritage asset, the framework contains the following policies:

208. Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset’s conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

In determining applications local planning authorities are required to take account of significance, viability, sustainability and local character and distinctiveness. Paragraph 210 of the NPPF identifies the following criteria in relation to this:

- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

With regard to potential ‘harm’ to the significance designated heritage asset, in paragraph 212 the framework states the following:

... great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

The Framework goes on to state at paragraph 213 that:

Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of:

- a) grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional;

b) assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, registered battlefields, grade I and II* listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional.

Where a proposed development will lead to 'substantial harm' to or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset paragraph 214 of the NPPF states that:

...local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:

- a) the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and
- b) no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and
- c) conservation by grant-funding or some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and
- d) the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.

With regard to 'less than substantial harm' to the significance of a designated heritage asset, paragraph 215 of the NPPF states the following;

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.

Concerning conservation areas and world heritage sites it states, in paragraph 220, that:

Not all elements of a Conservation Area or World Heritage Site will necessarily contribute to its significance. Loss of a building (or other element) which makes a positive contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site should be treated either as substantial harm under paragraph 214 or less than substantial harm under paragraph 215, as appropriate, taking into account the relative significance of the element affected and its contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site as a whole.

Consultation Draft NPPF (December 2025)

Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

HE4: Securing the conservation and enhancement of heritage assets

1. Heritage assets, as an irreplaceable resource, should be conserved and enhanced in a manner appropriate to their significance. To achieve this, development proposals which would affect the significance of heritage assets, including any contribution made by their setting should:

- a. Maintain or secure a use consistent with their conservation, taking into account the importance of maintaining the assets, the positive contribution they can make to sustainable communities including local economies, and the positive contribution they can make to local character and distinctiveness;

- b. Avoid harm to the significance of heritage assets, and instead preserve and enhance this significance.
2. If harm to the significance of heritage assets cannot be minimised or avoided, there should be a clear and convincing justification in accordance with the policies in this chapter.
 3. Where there is evidence of deliberate neglect of, or damage to, a heritage asset, the deteriorated state of the asset should not be taken into account in any decision relating to the asset.
 4. Proposals for enabling development, which would otherwise conflict with other policies in this Framework but which would secure the future conservation of a heritage asset, should be considered on the basis of whether the conservation benefits outweigh the disbenefits of departing from the policies concerned.

HE5: Assessing effects on heritage assets

1. Development proposals affecting heritage assets should be accompanied by an assessment of the significance of the assets affected (including any contribution made by their setting) and of the potential effect of the proposal on their significance. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is necessary to understand the potential effect of the proposal on their significance. The relevant historic environment record should be consulted as a minimum, and appropriate expertise employed where necessary.
2. Assessments of the potential effects of development proposals on heritage assets and their setting should identify whether proposals would be likely to:
 - a. Have a positive effect, which is where a heritage asset would be enhanced, or its significance better revealed; or
 - b. Have no effect on the significance of the asset; or
 - c. Result in harm to the significance of the heritage asset, either from work affecting the asset itself or from development within its setting. The degree of harm should be identified: substantial harm would occur where the development proposal would seriously affect a key element of the asset's significance; or
 - d. Cause the total loss of the significance of the heritage asset.
3. In making this assessment it is the effect on an asset's significance rather than the scale of the development which should be considered.
4. Decision makers should be satisfied that this assessment accurately reflects the effects on heritage assets caused by the proposals.
5. Where a development proposal involves, or has the potential to involve, heritage assets with archaeological interest, an appropriate desk-based assessment should be employed and, where necessary, a field evaluation.

HE6: Proposals affecting designated heritage assets

1. When considering the potential effect of a development proposal on a designated heritage asset, substantial weight⁷⁴ should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should

be). This is irrespective of whether any potential effect amounts to a positive effect, harm, substantial harm, or total loss of its significance.

2. Development proposals which would have a positive effect on designated heritage assets should be approved.

3. Where a development proposal would harm the significance of a designated heritage asset the effect on the asset and its significance should be weighed against any public benefits resulting from the proposal. Important public benefits can include securing the long-term re-use of a vacant or underused listed building, and enabling energy efficiency and low carbon heating measures to be employed.

4. Where a development proposal would cause substantial harm to, or the total loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset, consent should be refused unless it can be demonstrated that the development is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh the harm or loss, or if all of the following apply:

- a. The nature of the heritage asset would otherwise prevent all reasonable uses of the site; and
- b. No suitable use for the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and
- c. Conservation by grant-funding or some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is not possible; and
- d. The harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the asset back into use.

5. Within this context, development which would cause substantial harm to, or the total loss of, the significance of grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional; while development which would cause substantial harm to, or the total loss of, assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, registered battlefields, grade I and II* listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional.

HE9: Conservation areas

1. Development proposals within or affecting the significance of conservation areas should:

- a. Retain and restore buildings and other features which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area wherever possible; and
- b. Consider the area's special architectural or historic interest (as identified as part of the designation of the conservation area) in the design of development.

2. Not all elements of a conservation area will necessarily contribute to its significance. Where a development proposal would result in the loss of a building or other element which contributes to the character or appearance of a conservation area that is desirable to preserve or enhance, the assessment of impact should take into account the relative significance of the element affected and its contribution to the significance of the conservation area as a whole, and the effects of this considered in accordance with policies HE5 and HE6.

3. Proposals that preserve those elements of a conservation area that make a positive contribution to it (or which better reveal its significance) should be approved.

HE11: Loss or removal of heritage assets

1. Where a development proposal would result in the loss of the whole or part of a heritage asset (whether designated or not):

a. The development should not be approved without all reasonable steps being taken to make sure that the new development will proceed after the loss has occurred, including through the use of planning conditions and planning obligations to secure the development against the loss of the asset;

b. The applicant should record and advance understanding of the significance of the asset to be lost in a manner proportionate to its importance and the potential impact upon it; and should make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible by being deposited in the relevant Historic Environment Record, and any archives with a local museum or other public depository. The ability to record evidence of our past should not be a decisive factor in deciding whether such loss should be approved.

2. Development proposals to remove or alter a historic statue, plaque, memorial or monument (whether listed or not), should retain the feature in situ wherever possible (and, where appropriate, be supported by an explanation of their historic and social context).

National Planning Practice Guidance

The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) was published on 23 July 2019 to support the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the planning system. It includes particular guidance on matters relating to protecting the historic environment in the section: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment.

The relevant guidance is as follows:

Paragraph 2: What is meant by the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment?

Conservation is an active process of maintenance and managing change. It requires a flexible and thoughtful approach to get the best out of assets as diverse as listed buildings in every day use and as yet undiscovered, undesignated buried remains of archaeological interest.

In the case of buildings, generally the risks of neglect and decay of heritage assets are best addressed through ensuring that they remain in active use that is consistent with their conservation. Ensuring such heritage assets remain used and valued is likely to require sympathetic changes to be made from time to time. In the case of archaeological sites, many have no active use, and so for those kinds of sites, periodic changes may not be necessary, though on-going management remains important.

Where changes are proposed, the National Planning Policy Framework sets out a clear framework for both plan-making and decision-making in respect of

applications for planning permission and listed building consent to ensure that heritage assets are conserved, and where appropriate enhanced, in a manner that is consistent with their significance and thereby achieving sustainable development. Heritage assets are either designated heritage assets or non-designated heritage assets.

Part of the public value of heritage assets is the contribution that they can make to understanding and interpreting our past. So where the complete or partial loss of a heritage asset is justified (noting that the ability to record evidence of our past should not be a factor in deciding whether such loss should be permitted), the aim then is to:

- capture and record the evidence of the asset’s significance which is to be lost
- interpret its contribution to the understanding of our past; and
- make that publicly available (National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 218)

Paragraph 6: What is “significance”?

‘Significance’ in terms of heritage-related planning policy is defined in the Glossary of the National Planning Policy Framework as the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting.

The National Planning Policy Framework definition further states that in the planning context heritage interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. This can be interpreted as follows:

- archaeological interest: As defined in the Glossary to the National Planning Policy Framework, 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.
- architectural and 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 skill, like sculpture.
- 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.

In legislation and designation criteria, the terms ‘special architectural or historic interest’ of a listed building and the ‘national importance’ of a scheduled monument are used to describe all or part of what, in planning terms, is referred to as the identified heritage asset’s significance.

Paragraph 7: Why is ‘significance’ important in decision-taking?

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, is very important to understanding the potential impact and acceptability of development proposals.

Paragraph 13: What is the setting of a heritage asset and how should it be taken into account?

The setting of a heritage asset is defined in the Glossary of the National Planning Policy Framework.

All heritage assets have a setting, irrespective of the form in which they survive and whether they are designated or not. The setting of a heritage asset and the asset's curtilage may not have the same extent.

The extent and importance of setting is often expressed by reference to the visual relationship between the asset and the proposed development and associated visual/physical considerations. Although views of or from an asset will play an important part in the assessment of impacts on setting, the way in which we experience an asset in its setting is also influenced by other environmental factors such as noise, dust, smell and vibration from other land uses in the vicinity, and by our understanding of the historic relationship between places. For example, buildings that are in close proximity but are not visible from each other may have a historic or aesthetic connection that amplifies the experience of the significance of each.

The contribution that setting makes to the significance of the heritage asset does not depend on there being public rights of way or an ability to otherwise access or experience that setting. The contribution may vary over time.

When assessing any application which may affect the setting of a heritage asset, local planning authorities may need to consider the implications of cumulative change. They may also need to consider the fact that developments which materially detract from the asset's significance may also damage its economic viability now, or in the future, thereby threatening its ongoing conservation.

Paragraph 15: What is the optimum viable use for a heritage asset and how is it taken into account in planning decisions?

The vast majority of heritage assets are in private hands. Thus, sustaining heritage assets in the long term often requires an incentive for their active conservation. Putting heritage assets to a viable use is likely to lead to the investment in their maintenance necessary for their long-term conservation.

By their nature, some heritage assets have limited or even no economic end use. A scheduled monument in a rural area may preclude any use of the land other than as a pasture, whereas a listed building may potentially have a variety of alternative uses such as residential, commercial and leisure.

In a small number of cases a heritage asset may be capable of active use in theory but be so important and sensitive to change that alterations to accommodate a viable use would lead to an unacceptable loss of significance.

It is important that any use is viable, not just for the owner, but also for the future conservation of the asset: a series of failed ventures could result in a number of unnecessary harmful changes being made to the asset.

If there is only one viable use, that use is the optimum viable use. If there is a range of alternative economically viable uses, the optimum viable use is the one likely to cause the least harm to the significance of the asset, not just through necessary initial changes, but also as a result of subsequent wear and tear and likely future changes. The optimum viable use may not necessarily be the most economically viable one. Nor need it be the original use. However, if from a conservation point of view there is no real difference between alternative economically viable uses, then the choice of use is a decision for the owner, subject of course to obtaining any necessary consents.

Harmful development may sometimes be justified in the interests of realising the optimum viable use of an asset, notwithstanding the loss of significance caused, and provided the harm is minimised. The policy on addressing substantial and less than substantial harm is set out in paragraphs 212-215 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Paragraph 18: How can the possibility of harm to a heritage asset be assessed?

What matters in assessing whether a proposal might cause harm is the impact on the significance of the heritage asset. As the National Planning Policy Framework makes clear, significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.

Proposed development affecting a heritage asset may have no impact on its significance or may enhance its significance and therefore cause no harm to the heritage asset. Where potential harm to designated heritage assets is identified, it needs to be categorised as either less than substantial harm or substantial harm (which includes total loss) in order to identify which policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraphs 212-215) apply.

Within each category of harm (which category applies should be explicitly identified), the extent of the harm may vary and should be clearly articulated.

Whether a proposal causes substantial harm will be a judgment for the decision-maker, having regard to the circumstances of the case and the policy in the National Planning Policy Framework. In general terms, substantial harm is a high test, so it may not arise in many cases. For example, in determining whether works to a listed building constitute substantial harm, an important consideration would be whether the adverse impact seriously affects a key element of its special architectural or historic interest. It is the degree of harm to the asset's significance rather than the scale of the development that is to be assessed. The harm may arise from works to the asset or from development within its setting.

While the impact of total destruction is obvious, partial destruction is likely to have a considerable impact but, depending on the circumstances, it may still be less than substantial harm or conceivably not harmful at all, for example, when removing later additions to historic buildings where those additions are inappropriate and harm the buildings' significance. Similarly, works that are moderate or minor in scale are likely to cause less than substantial harm or no harm at all. However, even minor works have the potential to cause substantial harm, depending on the nature of their impact on the asset and its setting.

The National Planning Policy Framework confirms that 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 (and the more

important the asset, the greater the weight should be). It also makes clear that any harm to a designated heritage asset requires clear and convincing justification and sets out certain assets in respect of which harm should be exceptional/wholly exceptional (see National Planning Policy Framework, paragraph 213).

Paragraph 20: What is meant by the term public benefits?

The National Planning Policy Framework requires any harm to designated heritage assets to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

Public benefits may follow from many developments and could be anything that delivers economic, social or environmental objectives as described in the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 8). Public benefits should flow from the proposed development. They should be of a nature or scale to be of benefit to the public at large and not just be a private benefit. However, benefits do not always have to be visible or accessible to the public in order to be genuine public benefits, for example, works to a listed private dwelling which secure its future as a designated heritage asset could be a public benefit.

Examples of heritage benefits may include:

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

Other Relevant Policy Documents

Historic England: Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning (December 2017)

Historic England: Conservation Principles and Assessment (2008)