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HERITAGE STATEMENT

CHATHAM MILL OFFICES B + C

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ARCHITECTURE + HERITAGE

AMAZON HOUSE • BRAZIL STREET

MANCHESTER • M1 3PW

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Image: Chatham Mill external view.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.0

INTRODUCTION



Image: Chatham Mill external view.

This Heritage Statement has been written to accompany a Listed Building Consent Application for office spaces B and C, to the first floor of Chatham Mill, Manchester

It was produced in February 2026 by Atelier MB. Its author is Laura Jessup, MA History and Theory of Architecture, PGCert. Conservation of the Historic Environment.

This application is confined to the area within the client's ownership. The client does not have ownership rights for the exterior of the building, the windows, the main roofs or any other part of the site.

2.0 LOCATION

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Chatham Mill is located on Chester Street, Lower Ormond Street and Lower Chatham Street, off Oxford Road in Manchester, to south of the city centre.

The mill is 6 storeys with 6 main buildings and a variety of extensions and linking structures. The largest of the extensions is the two storey one to the rear of the main Chester Street mill building, running approximately one third of the length of the mill block.

The main entrance to the former mill is on the long Chester Street block. Stairs lead through a double height, white-painted surround which appears to be (at least in part) a later addition, dating from the 1920s.

windows with four panes. Central to the block is a round headed door with circular window above. There is a chimney in the courtyard-facing corner, in the angle between the main mill and the Lower Chatham Street building. A former hoist is evident to the rear of the main block and there are 3 newer vertical access towers at various points along the main building.

Chatham Mill is one of a number of textile mills located in the Chorlton-on-Medlock area. It forms part of a group, the majority of which have been refurbished and converted to residential and mixed-use space in the last 20 years.

The application is limited to the ground floor loading bay, the first floor level of the main block and its rear extension, and the first floor of the two rear buildings accessed via a link bridge, as indicated on the accompanying plans.

For ease of reference, the different parts of the site have been labelled in this document as follows:

A Main Chester Street front block

B Rear square block with inserted mezzanine office (mezzanine not in the client's demise)

C Rear left hand side block with exposed roof structure

D Lean to block with sloping roof

E Linking structure between blocks A and B

F Loading bay, to the left hand side of the main block A



Image: Site location.

3.0 DESCRIPTION + HISTORY

3.0 DESCRIPTION + HISTORY



Image: 1845 map showing main Chester Street and secondary Ormond Street blocks.

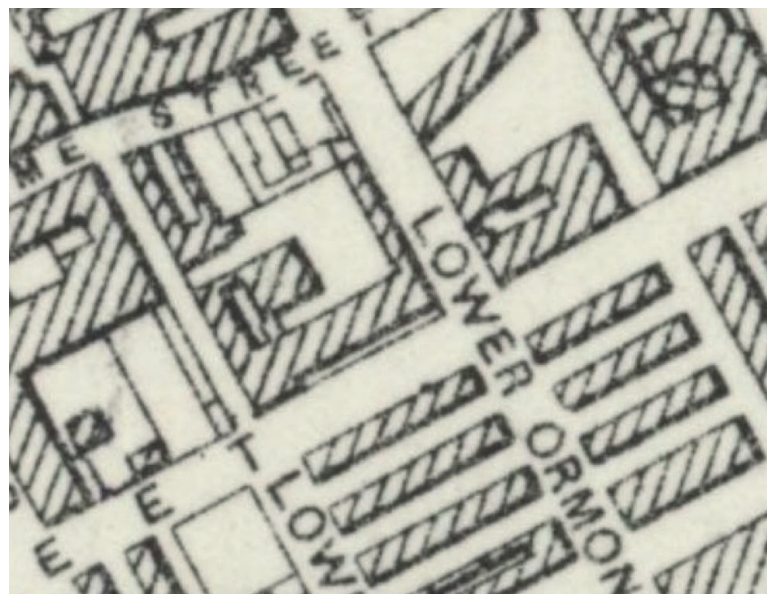


Image: 1894 map showing additional Lower Chatham Street block and link.

A report on a survey of Chatham Mill by Manchester Regional Industrial Archaeology Society was located in Manchester Library archives. It suggests the following timeline for the mill:

1818: Runcorn and Bellhouse listed as cotton spinners at Medlock New Mill, York Street. The south wing of the mill (Chester Street) block was completed.

1819: The Runcorn brothers, Richard and John, were listed as cotton spinners at Chester Street Mill, Ormand Street.

1823: The Runcorn brothers completed the east wing to spin fine yarns.

1824: The plan of the mill taken from Swire's map of Manchester shows the east wing along Ormond Street and the main block along Chester Street, with an extension to the rear.

A further brief history can be found in Clark, S, Chorlton Mills and their Neighbours, Oxford University Press, 1978, "The last vacant lot on Chester Street was taken by the Runcorn Bros, second generation spinners The main building was completed in 1820 and still in use, is wooden floored, rather exceptionally for that date and place, but the long low extension along Lower Ormond Street, added in 1823, is basically fireproof in spite of some wooden additions. The ground floor of the mill is used as a grocer warehouse and has been much reinforced; the upper floors are

occupied by garment workers and seem little changed from their original form except for partitions. There is an engine house, fire proof and smoke blackened, at the west end of the yard. The small block serves the purpose for which it was no doubt designed, as offices, with the arches neatly picked out in paint. Some of its iron work is rather fancy, as though it had been transferred from a railway station."

As Manchester grew in to a large industrial city in the nineteenth century, the area around Oxford Road was almost exclusively covered with the buildings associated with the textile trade, alongside accommodation for those who worked in the mill and workshops. Following demolition of the slum dwellings, the River Medlock was culverted in the mid-nineteenth century, apparently partially under the Chatham Mill.

Archival references class the mill's business as 'cotton waste', a sub-trade of the cotton industry producing items of a lower quality for practical domestic and commercial uses. A contemporary advert describes the type of produce from Chatham Mill.

"Cotton Waste Manfrs. Adams & Co. Limited (manufacturers of engine cleaning waste sponge cloths, lamp & candle wicks, bunting, flags, mops, scouring flannel, twines, wad-ding, cotton wools,



Image: 1905 map with block running off Lower Chatham Street filled in.

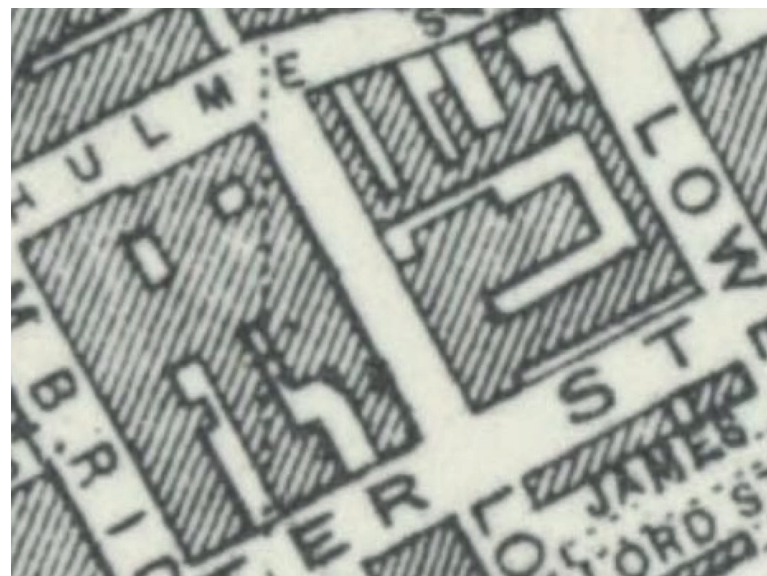


Image: 1938 map showing link to rear of site and Hulme Street buildings.

cotton and woollen flock, lubricating pads &c. Home, foreign & colonial government & railways stores contractors), Chatham Mills Manchester.”

Historic maps give an indication of the chronological development of Chatham Mill (sometimes referred to as Runcorn Mill) and though precise dates of the many and varied additions and alterations are uncertain, the likely timeframe of the main blocks is as follows.

1845: The main block on Chester Street is present, as is the secondary block on Ormond Street. A smaller block to the rear in the ‘yard’ is also evident.

1894: The two blocks on Chester and Ormond Street are shown, with a further block to (Lower) Chatham Street, forming a third side and a square shaped building to the rear, with a narrow link from the Chester Street building and a further narrow link from Lower Chatham Street.

1905: The buildings are a similar layout, with the block running off Lower Chatham Street now filled in, as it exists today.

1915: The layout is the same as that shown in 1905.

1938, the map shows a fuller link to the rear of the site and the Hulme Street buildings. Today these buildings are no longer part of the same site.

It is concluded that the main block (A) dates from around 1818 and the Lower Ormond Street block from slightly later, c.1823. The square rear block (B) is present on the 1894 map, though not on the 1845 one, so was originally constructed between these dates. The rear main block extension and link bridge (D and E) are later additions.

The rear left hand side block (C) can be dated to between 1894 and 1905.

The loading bay (F) has undergone changes in its form from the outside in the latter half of the twentieth century, presumably to accommodate access for modern delivery vehicles.

There have been a number of changes over the lifetime of the mill, including the addition of vertical circulation towers to the rear of the main block and the rebuilding in part of the rear blocks, particularly the square block building (B).

4.0 SIGNIFICANCE

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Image: Refurbished interior of office B, to be separated in to three units.



Image: Refurbished interior of office C, to remain as one area.

Chatham Mill is Grade II listed and is therefore afforded a degree of statutory protection as a designated heritage asset.

The HE document Conservation Principles outlines four types of heritage value; aesthetic, communal, historic and evidential.

Chatham Mill has evidential value as an example of early nineteenth century industrial architecture, particularly related to the cotton industry. It stands as evidence to past human activity.

The building is of some historic value. It is one of a group of mills in the All Saints area, a number which remain and have been converted, and some of which have been demolished. The grouping of these mills is evidence of the nature of distinctive industrial development in the immediate locality, in Manchester, in the North West and in Great Britain. Chatham Mill's place within the wider group is therefore particularly significant.

The aesthetic value of Chatham Mill is mainly in its contribution to the wider industrial setting and its place as a piece of that specific urban landscape. The design of the building itself is not of high quality or particular architectural significance and has been somewhat diluted by the ongoing piecemeal changes over the evolution of the space. Internally the aesthetic

significance is based in the basic structural elements of the building; which would typically be exposed in a mill of this kind.

Chatham Mill has a social/communal value as part of the cotton industry in Manchester and the important role that played in the lives of the workers and the country as a whole. That value is no longer first hand as the mill has long ceased to be used in its original function and is more associational, as part of the character of the area and the links with the cotton industry of the city.

The evidential significance of the mill has been compromised by alteration, but the original use is still readable, and the phased development of the mill remains evident through the presence of different blocks and extensions, and the plan form is still evident. The original building materials and structure have been repaired and exposed in the recent refurbishment of this floor.

There is limited evidence of the original function of the building from the interior fittings, but the structural elements are characteristic of a mill of this period, and together with the linked plan form of the various spaces, are considered the most significant features of the site.

5.0 PROPOSALS + IMPACT

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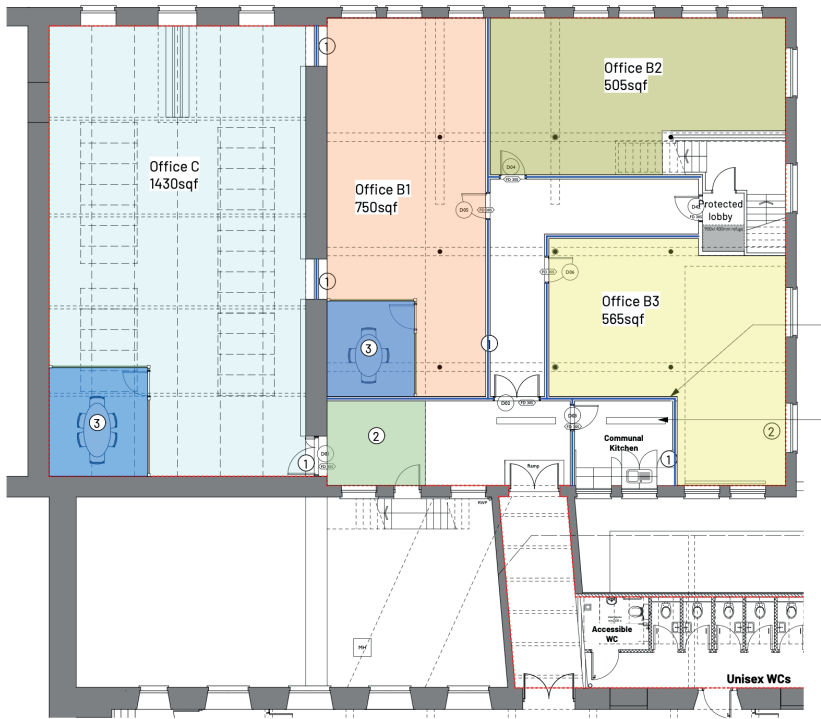


Image: Proposed alterations to offices B and C.

Proposal: Office C remains as a single unit within the existing separate space, the other three units are formed within the larger B space. Two openings to Office C will be infilled, plastered and painted white, with one existing opening remaining for access.

Impact: The retention of Office C as a distinct entity will maintain the area as a defined space. The infill panels will be readily recognisable as new and positioned to the centre of the deep openings, to allow for views of the brick reveal from either side. The change can be reversed and impact upon significance is considered to be neutral.

Proposal: Removal of modern, non-original partition wall to rear of space. Removal of radiator on back wall (to be rehung).

Impact: Neutral.

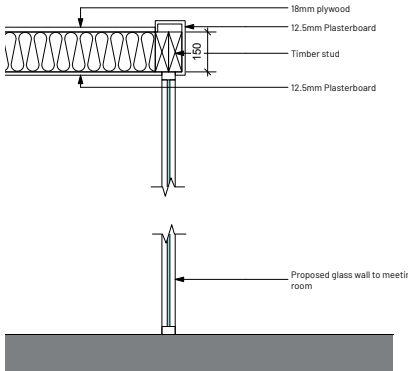


Image: Proposed meeting room with glass walls and ceiling lid.

Proposal: Insertion of new partition walls to form offices B1, B2 and B3. Insertion of new doors to access office units, in timber with glazed panel. Formation of a corridor linking the existing walkway and the rear staircase. Care has been taken to ensure walls are set away from the existing windows. Where walls have junctions with existing brick walls, a shadow gap will be formed to identify the alterations as a separate phase of work. The walls will be fitted around the historic structural elements.

Impact: The division into multiple offices alters the spatial characteristics and internal long views. This results in a degree of harm to aesthetic and evidential values. The harm is considered to be low on the scale and evidence has been provided that in its current form, the space is not commercially viable. The evidence states that sub-division into smaller units is the most likely way of securing a tenant for the space which has been on the market for some time. On balance, the importance of retaining the space in viable occupation is considered to outweigh the low level of harm resulting from additional partitioning.

Proposal: Two of the office units (B1 and C) include an internal glass walled meeting room with a ceiling lid, stopping short of the full height of the space.

Impact: Neutral. This approach avoids unnecessary junctions with the existing ceiling and retains a more open view within the unit.

6.0 PLANNING CONTEXT

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The main heritage planning considerations affecting this site are its Grade II listed status.

The legislation concerning built heritage is contained within Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Government Policy is set out within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, updated 2023). Local planning policy is set by Manchester City Council.

Statutory legislation states that special regard should be given to ‘the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any feature of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.’ Clause 66. Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990.

The NPPF recognises that sympathetic changes to heritage assets are necessary to ensure their viable ongoing use, but that alterations must be justified and their impact upon significance assessed.

This report meets the requirements of NPPF, paragraph 207, ‘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’.

Paragraph 210 states,

‘In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to 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.’

The ongoing viable re-use of these buildings is of great public benefit, in terms of conserving the listed asset. Care has been taken to ensure alterations are carefully positioned to avoid features.

Paragraph 212 states, ‘When considering the impact of proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation.’

Proposals have been designed to work with the historic features and fabric, with modern intervention only proposed where it is necessary to create viable, modern, and accessible office space.

Paragraph 215 states, '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.' In this specific context, the degree of harm is considered low enough to be outweighed by the benefit of having the spaces in use.

The buildings represent a good example of their kind and have typical key characteristics of their typology and date. The most important elements such as external walls and windows and exposed structure will be retained. The compromise to spatial character is a low level of harm, certainly 'less than substantial' to the whole. A long period of time has been given to marketing the existing space and the proposals are based on the advice of the agent as supported in the accompanying letter. Divisions are positioned to avoid clashes with significant features and can be reversed. The public benefit of ongoing reuse and maintenance of the space is considered to outweigh the level of harm.

Local policy reflects principles established in the NPPF and is contained within the Local Development Framework Core Strategy, 2012. Of particular relevance are CC9, which states that development should preserve or enhance listed assets; and EN3 which states the Council will encourage development that complements and takes advantage of historic and heritage features of neighbourhoods.

Places for Everyone is Greater Manchester's joint development plan. Policy JP-P2 relates to heritage and states that particular consideration will be given to ensuring 'the significance of key elements of the historic environment which contribute to Greater Manchester's distinct identity and sense of place are protected from harm' and that positive management and integration of heritage should be informed by 'delivering positive benefits that sustain and enhance the historic environment as well as contributing to the economic vitality, accessibility and environmental quality of a place.'

The proposals are considered to accord with local and national policy.

7.0 CONCLUSION

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Chatham Mill has heritage significance, as evidenced by its Grade II listing. Recent works to refurbish the first floor space have created high quality office suites with historic features exposed and restored, preserving and enhancing the asset.

Units B and C are component parts of the building and have significance, the ongoing vacancy in these areas is a risk to their preservation and proposals seek to directly address this issue, creating smaller units to meet the demand of the office market in this area.

Changes will result in a degree of harm to the character of the space through subdivision, though the impact has been mitigated as far as possible by careful positioning of partitions and adding glazed walls to meeting rooms, which do not reach full height. There is a recognisable benefit in bringing the space back into long term viable end use which is considered against the degree of harm to character by subdivision. On balance, it is considered that the harm, which is limited and reversible, is outweighed by keeping the space in use.

Proposals have been designed to work alongside the most significant historic features and are considered to accord with local and national policy.

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