

121 WATER STREET, MANCHESTER, M3 4JJ

HERITAGE STATEMENT





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1 INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

- 1.1.1. This Heritage Statement has been prepared to support an application for planning and listed building consent for the minor alteration and change of use of 121 Water Street, Manchester which is a Grade 2 listed heritage asset. Consent is sought for the change of use from Class B8 to Class E(b). The site will be a dining establishment selling hot food and drink for consumption on-site or takeaway.

LOCATION AND BUILDING DESCRIPTION

- 1.1.2. The application relates to Arch no 121 of the Manchester South Junction & Altrincham Railway Viaduct (NHLE: 1200837), referred to as the 'site'. Dating from the 1830s, the viaduct links to the Liverpool and Manchester Railway Line over the arches at Water St. The site is located in Castlefield Conservation Area, whose buildings and viaducts were the first of their type, and consequently are vital artefacts in the history of Manchester and the railways. Recent revival of interest in Castlefield is having a significant impact on the refurbishment of buildings. Warehouses have been converted to flats, offices, galleries and studios.

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

- 1.1.3. The development proposals involve the installation of a kitchen extraction system mounted internally against the infill at the southwest facing side of the site. The proposed external works are minor: 2 louvres will be inset in the brick infill installed in the last decade as part of the refurbishment of the arches on Water Street carried out by The Arch Co in preparation for their use as business premises. These Louvres will be hidden by decorative metal screens whose design and powder coating colour have been discussed with Manchester City Council's planning authority.

PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

- 1.1.4. This Heritage Statement has been prepared in the context of the national planning policy requirement for the impact of proposed works on the significance of heritage assets to be assessed, specifically; Paragraph 194 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2023 states that:
- 'In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposals on their significance.'

REPORT STRUCTURE

- 1.1.5. The remainder of this Heritage Statement is structured as follows:
- Section 2 details the methodology used to prepare the Heritage Statement;
 - Section 3 provides a statement of heritage significance;
 - Section 4 outlines a summary of relevant national and local planning policy;
 - Section 5 provides a heritage impact assessment; and
 - Section 6 sets out conclusions.

2 METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

2.1.1. The preparation of this document has been guided by the following documents:

- Statements of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets, Historic England Advice Note 12 (Historic England, 2019);
- Planning Practice Guidance on Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment (DCLG, 2014);
- Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2: Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment (Historic England, 2014);
- Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets (Historic England, 2017); and
- British Standard 7913: 2013: Guide to the conservation of historic buildings (BSI, 2013).

2.1.2. This report focuses on the built heritage assets in and adjacent to the application site (and their settings). It does not include an assessment of the archaeological potential of the site. Professional judgment is used in conjunction with policy, guidance, and methodology in order to undertake the assessments in this Heritage Statement.

SOURCES CONSULTED

2.1.3. This Heritage Statement has been prepared taking into consideration the historical background of the site and the wider area. Sources consulted included:

- National Heritage List for England;
- Dixon, Frank (1994). The Manchester South Junction & Altrincham Railway. Oakwood Library of Railway History (2nd ed.);
- Manchester City Council (2026) Castlefield Conservation Area Prepared by Manchester City Council;
- Historical mapping from the National Library of Scotland.

2.1.4. In addition, a site visit was undertaken on the 5th of March 2027 to inspect the site and to better understand the heritage significance of 121 Water Street and its setting.

ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Heritage values

2.1.5. The document *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment* (English Heritage, 2008) identifies four principal heritage values that should be taken into account when assessing significance. These values are:

- Evidential - deriving from the potential of a place to yield evidence about past activity;
- Historical - deriving from the ways in which people, events and aspects of past life can be connected through a place to the present;
- Aesthetic - deriving from the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place; and
- Communal - deriving from the meaning of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience and memory.

2.1.6. The assessment of the significance of the heritage assets identified uses these heritage values.

Level of significance

2.1.7. There are also four commonly accepted levels of significance as well as neutral and an intrusive grade. The following levels of significance are based on criteria from the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB 2 Volume 11, 2009) and from guidance provided by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS, 2011):

- Very High Level of Significance: World Heritage Sites (including nominated sites) and assets of acknowledged international importance.
- High Level of Significance: Scheduled Monuments (including proposed sites); Grade I and II* Listed Buildings; Grade I and II* Registered Parks & Gardens; non-designated heritage assets of schedulable or exceptional quality and importance; and conservation areas containing very important buildings.
- Medium Level of Significance: Designated or non-designated assets that have exceptional qualities or contribute to regional research objectives; conservation areas; Grade II Listed Buildings; and Grade II Registered Parks & Gardens.
- Low Level of Significance: a non-designated asset important at a local level, including buildings which make a positive contribution to a conservation area. Some historic fabric but limited evidence and makes little contribution to significance. Buildings and parts of structures in this category should be retained where possible, although there is more scope for adaptation.
- No interest: the element is historically unimportant but does not have a negative visual impact on the surrounding buildings. May include insignificant late twentieth century interventions to listed buildings. The removal or adaptation of structures in this category is usually acceptable where the work will enhance a related heritage asset.
- Intrusive: the element is historically unimportant and has a negative visual impact on the surrounding buildings. Wherever practicable, removal of negative features should be considered, taking account of setting and opportunities for enhancement.

3 RELEVANT LEGISLATION AND PLANNING POLICY

THE PLANNING (LISTED BUILDING AND CONSERVATION AREAS) ACT 1990

3.1.1. The statutory test remains the starting point for consideration of proposals affecting heritage assets. Section 66 (1) of the Act 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.”

Section 72 of the 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 that area”.

NATIONAL POLICY

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2023)

3.1.2. Chapter 16 of the NPPF (2023) sets out a national planning policy on the historic environment.

3.1.3. Paragraph 189 states that heritage assets range from buildings of local historic value to those of international significance.

3.1.4. Paragraph 197 provides a framework for decision making on proposals that could have an impact on heritage assets setting out that:

“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 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.”*

3.1.5. Paragraphs 199 to 202 set out how potential impacts should be considered in the determination of applications. Paragraph 199 requires “great weight to be given to the (heritage) asset’s conservation” with Paragraph 200 stating 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”. Paragraph 201 sets out matters to be considered where proposed works would lead to substantial harm. Paragraph 202 states that where proposals would result in less than substantial harm, the harm “should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.”

LOCAL POLICY

3.1.6. Local planning policy sets out the criteria that will be used in the determination of planning applications and has been used to inform and guide the design and development of the proposals. The development plan for Manchester is laid out in Manchester City Council’s Manchester Core Strategy 2012 to 2027.

3.1.7. Heritage policies are set out in both parts of the Core Strategy.. The relevant policies for this assessment in relation to this application are shown below:

■ Policy EN 1 - City Centre Character Area

The City Centre contains a rich legacy which reflects its urban evolution to the current day and includes listed buildings, conservation areas, archaeological remains and an historic street pattern. Its core area presents a particularly dense environment that accommodates a wide and closely integrated range of uses including commercial, civic and residential activities. Relative to the amount of development there is limited open space and this includes a range of civic and less formal green spaces and waterways. Outside the core and associated with the Inner Relief Route there are less active and less densely developed areas with significant elements of cleared land. The City Centre is the focus of the City's transport routes. Developers will be expected to consider the City's heritage and continue the rich pattern of activity in the core area. While there will be opportunities to create landmark buildings, developments should also contribute positively to the experience of all at street level. Wherever possible the opportunity should be realised to enhance existing and provide new areas of meaningful open space, and the maintenance and improvement of the City's permeability should be considered in all proposals.

■ Policy CC 9 - Design and Heritage

Design of new buildings will need to be of the highest standard in terms of appearance and function. The standards and guidance explained in other LDF policies should be the basis for the approach to design, with particular attention to be given to the City Centre context and character. Development in Manchester City Centre should preserve or enhance the heritage assets that have been identified, including listed buildings, conservation areas and scheduled ancient monuments.

■ 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. New developments must be designed so as to support the Council in preserving or, where possible, enhancing the historic environment, the character, setting and accessibility of areas and buildings of acknowledged importance, including scheduled ancient monuments, listed buildings, registered parks and gardens, conservation areas and archaeological remains. Proposals which enable the re-use of heritage assets will be encouraged where they are considered consistent with the significance of the heritage asset.

■ Policy SP 1 - Spatial Principles

The City is covered by regeneration areas including the City Centre. All development should have regard to the character, issues and strategy for each regeneration area as described in the North, East, Central and South Manchester and Wythenshawe Strategic Regeneration Frameworks and the Manchester City Centre Strategic Plan.

4 STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

INTRODUCTION

- 4.1.1. This section describes the significance and setting of 121 Water Street. It starts with a brief summary of the historical development of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway Line and Manchester South Junction and Altrincham Railway. This section should be read in conjunction with the historical mapping and site photographs contained in Appendix B.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1.2. The Liverpool and Manchester Railway was opened in 1830 to link the factories of Manchester with the port at Liverpool. The railway also provided a passenger service and was the first public railway to rely exclusively on steam power. The bridge which carried the Liverpool and Manchester Railway over the River Irwell is now commonly referred to as Stephenson's Bridge, after the railway's chief engineer, and was connected to Liverpool Rd Station by the Approach Viaduct. Liverpool Rd station was closed to passengers in 1844 when the new Victoria Station was opened, but continued to function as a goods and livestock depot. It now forms part of the Museum of Science and Industry and is the oldest surviving passenger station in the world. The Manchester South Junction and Altrincham Railway opened in 1849 to connect the terminal at London Road to the other railway lines serving Manchester and was Manchester's first suburban railway.

DESCRIPTION OF 121 WATER STREET

- 4.1.3. 121 Water Street is a viaduct arch beneath the Manchester South Junction and Altrincham Railway measuring 1,590 square feet. Its opening to the northeast was closed up in the early 21st century with a bare red brick infill containing a metal roller shutter and fire door, and a large window consisting of semi-translucent plastic panels. Its southwesterly opening has been closed in with a bare engineering brick infill containing only a fire exit. A toilet and washhandbasin have been installed in the south corner of the arch, and a storage cubicle in the east corner.
- 4.1.4. The application for listed building consent relates exclusively to alterations to the modern brick infill at the rear of the site (southwesterly face). External works are limited to the installation of two louvres no larger than 700mm x 700mm inset in the infill which would be hidden by mounting decorative metal screens in a powder coat finish to match the colour of the modern brickwork. There would therefore be no impact on the character and/or appearance of the rest of the building. The decorative screens will not be visible from any road, public walkway or residential building.

Exterior

- 4.1.5. The frontage of the site at street level dates from the 21st century. It is characterised by a modern brick façade with modern grey roller shutter, pvc panelled window and grey fire exit. Either side of the site and above it, the original redbrick of the viaduct, dating from the 19th century, is still visible.

Interior

4.1.6. The entire interior of the site is clad in White Bi-orientated Corrugated Greca Sheet and a painted concrete floor, neither of which constitute any part of the historic viaduct structure. Alteration to the interior is limited to cutting the lining in order to fit the extraction.

SETTING

4.1.7. The site is in the Castlefield Conservation Area (boundary shown below). Castlefield, Britain's first Urban Heritage Park, is where much industrial innovation occurred, particularly in the area of transport.

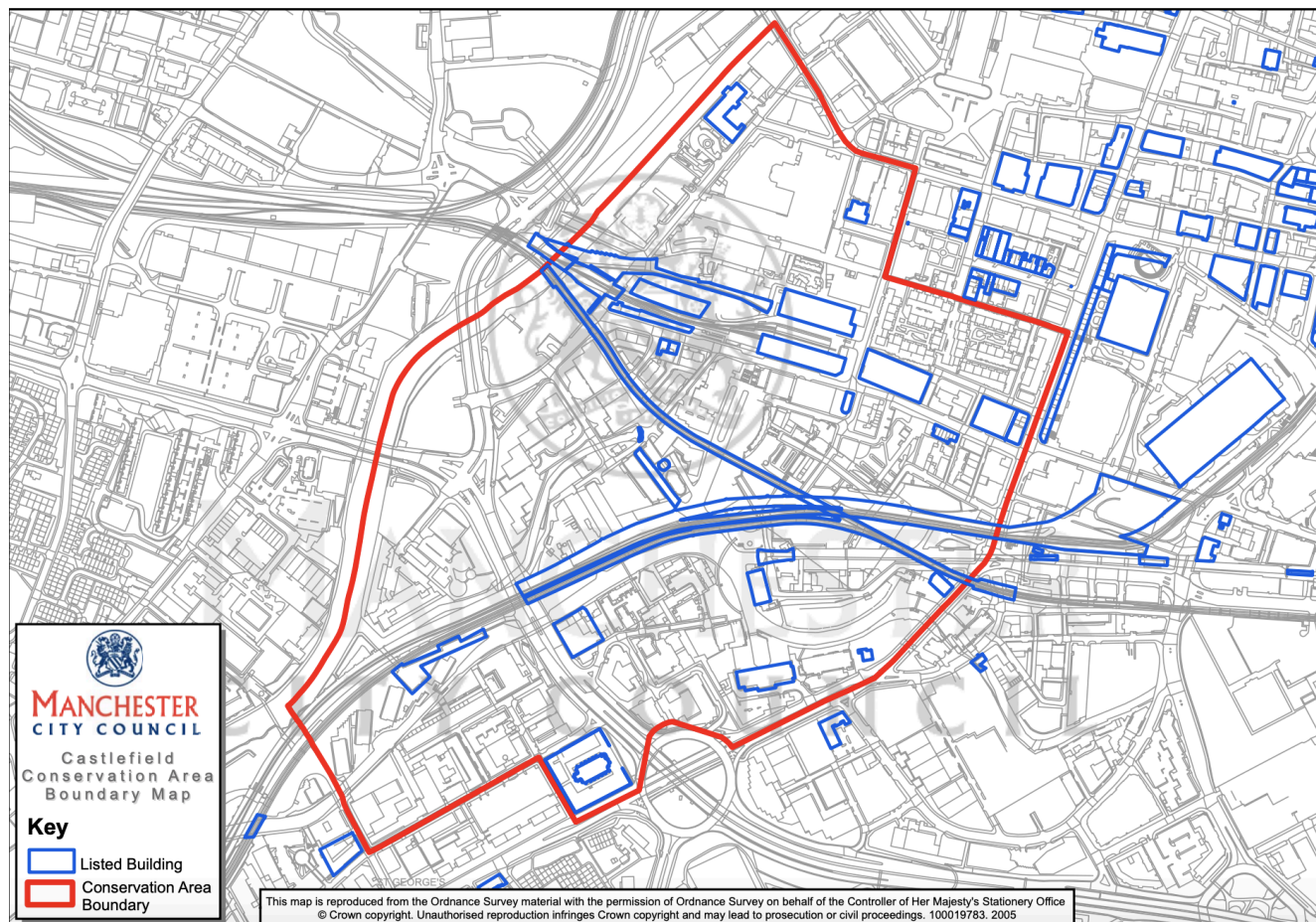


Figure 1: Castlefield Conservation Area Boundary Map

(Source: https://www.manchester.gov.uk/_data/assets/file/0022/123286/castlefield_conservation_area_map.pdf)

4.1.8. The setting of the site comprises three other arches beneath the Manchester South Junction and Altrincham Railway, numbering 122, 124 and 123 Water St. Access to this row of arches is gained from Liverpool Street by Woollam Place, at the mouth of which are two grade 2 listed buildings: the Former Commercial Hotel (NHLE: 1219418) and 123 LIVERPOOL ROAD (NHLE: 1200804). The site is close to a number of other listed heritage assets located around the Water Street junction, namely the RAILWAY VIADUCT OVER RIVER IRWELL LEADING TO LOWER BYROM STREET WAREHOUSE (NHLE: 1254829) ; RAILWAY BRIDGE OVER RIVER IRWELL TO FORMER LIVERPOOL ROAD STATION (NHLE: 1270603) ; RAILWAY VIADUCT LINKING BRIDGE OVER IRWELL TO LIVERPOOL ROAD STATION (NHLE: 1254726) ; FORMER LIVERPOOL ROAD RAILWAY STATION STATION MASTERS HOUSE (NHLE: 1291477) and POWER HALL OF MUSEUM OF SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY (NHLE: 1291458).

DESIGNATION

4.1.9. 37 Manchester South Junction and Altrincham Railway Viaduct is Grade 2 listed (NHLE: 1200837).

The official list description states that this building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest. It was first listed on the 6th of June 1994. As highlighted above, 121 Water Street is also within the Castlefield Conservation Area.

HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

4.1.10. In summary, the significance of the building is considered to derive from its:

- **Design interest:** it is an impressive 1 3/4 mile long urban viaduct incorporating a series of well-detailed bridges; some with highly decorative Gothic-style ironwork
- **Date:** it is an early example of a railway viaduct dating from the second phase of railway development - the period from 1841-50 often referred to as 'railway mania' - in which commercial speculation and competition for routes led to the rapid construction of lines and expansion of the railway network
- **Historic interest:** the viaduct forms an important and integral component of the Manchester South Junction & Altrincham Railway, which was one of the country's earliest suburban railways, and Manchester's first; helping to bring this form of transport to the hinterlands
- **Group value:** the viaduct has strong group value with neighbouring railway structures (both contemporary and later), including two other railway bridges crossing the River Irwell (the 1830 Grade I listed stone bridge and the 1869 Grade II listed girder bridge) and their associated viaducts, the Grade II listed Castlefield Viaduct (c1880), the Grade II listed stations of Manchester Oxford Road (1958-60) and Deansgate (1896), and the Grade II listed former goods offices (c1850-60) and train shed (c1881) at Manchester Piccadilly Station

5 IMPACT ASSESSMENT

5.1.1. This section assesses the impact of the development proposals on the listed building at 121 Water Street and Castlefield Conservation Area.

121 WATER STREET

General Approach

5.1.2. If granted, the change of use proposal would allow a vacant building to be brought back into use and would allow greater appreciation of the listed building by its employees and visitors. The approach to converting the unit into a food and drink establishment seeks to retain the original historic fabric of the building, as well as remaining features of significance, and introduce new elements that are in keeping with the character of the building. The ground floor layout provides a flexible, open space that does not require the removal or demolition of any key architectural features or elements. The proposals work with the existing layout and changes would be removable and reversible. In addition, the proposals would ensure that the site is well maintained and protect it against degradation.

5.1.3. Full details of the proposed scheme are provided on the drawings accompanying the planning and listed building application. In summary, as relevant to the consideration of impacts upon the significance of 121 Water Street the proposals are set out below.

External

5.1.4. The external proposals to the rear of the site (see photograph 2 in Appendix B) are limited to the following:

- Reversible alteration to the brickwork of recent rear infill to make space for two inset louvres for kitchen extraction
- Decorative metal screens to be fitted to the recent brick infills to hide the louvres
- Decorative screens to be powder coated in a RAL colour matching the existing brickwork

5.1.5. The proposed external changes would have no detrimental impact on the condition and appearance of the listed building and would not be visible from the road, public footpaths or residential buildings nearby. There would be no change to the parts of the listed building dating from the 19th century.

Internal

5.1.6. The site is proposed to be used as a restaurant and takeaway. Changes have been kept to a minimum and no features of significance are visible due to a modern lining installed throughout. Internal alteration is limited to changes made to this lining as listed below:

- Two holes are to be cut into the lining to make space for the extraction louvres, no larger than 700mm x 700mm

5.1.7. The proposed works outlined above would not alter the overall layout of the site and would not result in the loss of any key features. The site has a flexible, open plan with limited fixtures. It can, therefore, be converted to an open plan restaurant without the need for significant changes.

- 5.1.8. The introduction of new elements are to make the building viable for future use (modern extraction compliant with regulations associated with the required kitchen equipment). Alterations would be removable and/or reversible, i.e. removing the louvres and decorative screens and replacing the bricks and lining. The kitchen equipment and seating would also be easy to remove if the unit changes use in the future.
- 5.1.9. A mechanical ventilation system is required to make kitchen use safe and comfortable for staff and members of the public. The ductwork and silencers would be contained internally to avoid obtrusive impact on the building or area. The proposals will therefore result in no protrusion which is not in keeping with Manchester City Council's Control of Development guidelines for Castlefield Conservation Area to "ensure that a vertical rhythm in the 'street wall' is maintained when viewed obliquely".

CASTLEFIELD CONSERVATION AREA

- 5.1.10. The proposed external changes would bear no adverse impact on the appearance of the conservation area. The proposed changes are not visible from any road or public footpath and there would be no impact on the setting of adjacent listed buildings. The proposals would bring an active use to the unit and allow it to play a positive role in bringing life and footfall to Water Street, which is characterised by historic buildings repurposed for modern commercial use. This is in line with Manchester City Council's Improvement and enhancement guidelines for the Conservation Area, which posits that new development in the area should make Castlefield "a generator of prosperity for the City, and it is the City Council's intention that this should continue for many years to come".

6 CONCLUSION

INTRODUCTION

6.1.1. In accordance with Paragraph 194 of the NPPF (2023), this report has described the significance of 121 Water Street and the Castlefield Conservation Area. It has also considered the impact of the development on the significance of these two designated heritage assets.

KEY FINDINGS

6.1.2. The assessment has found that:

- The proposals would ensure that the vacant unit is brought back into use and would allow it to be appreciated by those working in and visiting the building;
- The proposals to the exterior of 121 Water Street are limited to the installation of two louvres for kitchen extraction in the modern brick infill at the rear of the site, and two decorative metal screens to hide these louvres, which will be powder coated in a colour matching that of the infill. The proposed external changes would bear no irreversible change on the listed building, and the aesthetic impact they would pose is insignificant. There would be no impact on the setting of adjacent listed buildings. The conservation area would benefit from having a new, active, ground floor use and from the increase in footfall that this would generate.
- The proposals to the interior of 121 Water Street involve the conversion of the site into a kitchen and dining area. This use allows the overall layout to be maintained and for key features of significance to be retained. Changes relate to ventilation required to make the building viable for intended use as a restaurant. Changes have been designed to be removable and/or reversible. The proposals would result in enhancements to the Castlefield area and the significance of the listed building would be preserved.

CONCLUSION

6.1.3. It is, therefore, considered that the proposed development is in accordance with guidance on conserving and enhancing the historic environment within the NPPF and the requirements set out at Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the Manchester Core Strategy 2012 to 2027. The proposals would sustain and enhance the significance of the listed building and its surroundings and ensure it has a new use consistent with its conservation.

APPENDIX A: LISTING DESCRIPTION

Manchester South Junction and Altrincham Railway Viaduct

List Entry Number: 1200837

Grade: II

Date first listed: 06-Jun-1994

Details

The viaduct is approximately 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ mile (2 $\frac{3}{4}$ km) long and incorporates 224 brick arches that average a span and height of approximately 30ft, and a width of 28ft; many of the arches, particularly those near to Manchester Oxford Road Station and Deansgate Station, have been in-filled and converted into commercial premises. The tallest arches can be found in the section between Manchester Piccadilly and Oxford Road stations where the ground level is lower. A brick parapet has been altered and rebuilt in places and later repairs have been carried out to some of the arches.

The viaduct incorporates a series of predominantly arched, cast-iron bridges by Edward Taylor Bellhouse, William Baker and William Cubitt that cross various streets, the Rochdale Canal, and the Bridgewater Canal. The bridges have an average span of 70ft, although one of Baker's bridges, which spans the Rochdale Canal has a span of 105ft. A number of the bridges incorporate highly decorative Gothic-style ironwork and detailing and castellated towers (referencing the location of a Roman fort at Castlefield), whilst others, such as a bridge over Gloucester Street are more classically detailed. A bridge over Egerton Street by William Baker was replaced in steel in 1976. Some of the viaduct's brick arches and bridges are skewed. The Irwell Bridge at the north-west end of the viaduct is of brick with two segmental arches, each of approximately 65ft span, with a central pier and cut-water. Rusticated stone voussoirs and pilaster strips exist to the central pier and abutments, and the parapet above the western arch incorporates cast-iron panelling.

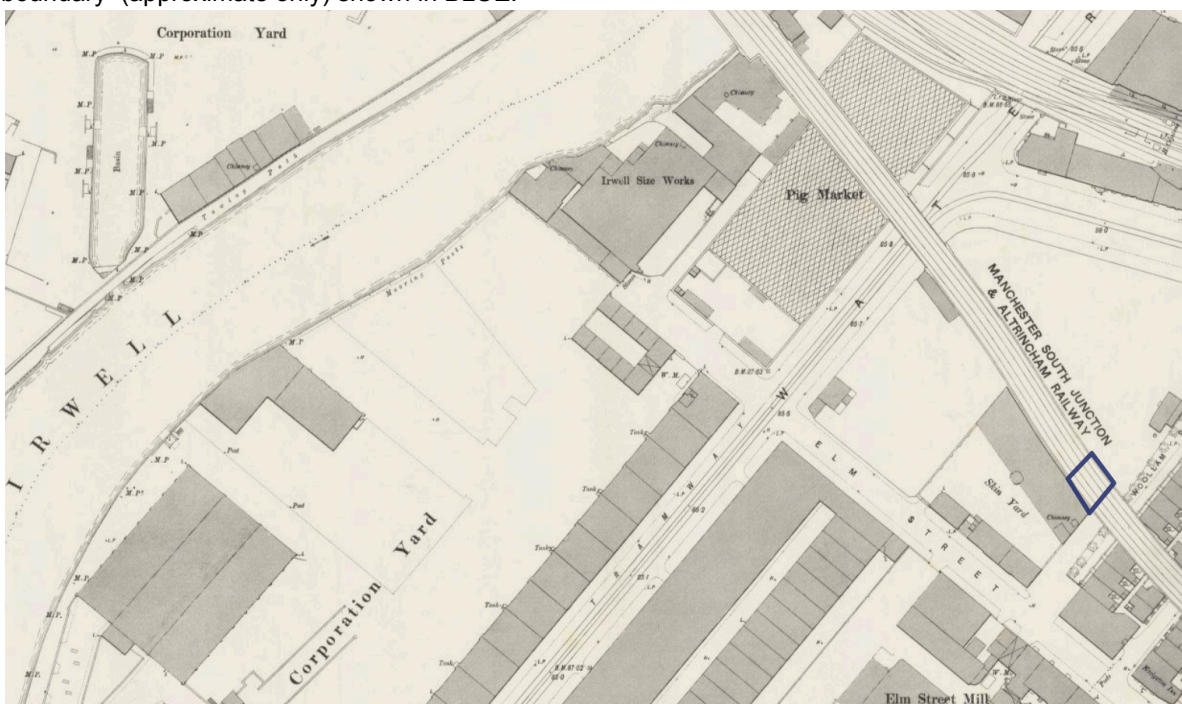
Following electrification of the line in the C20 the viaduct now incorporates a series of C20 and early-C21 gantries along its course. Also along the viaduct's course are a number of attached or abutting buildings, most of which are later in date and are un-related to the viaduct's use; all are excluded from the listing, which relates solely to the viaduct. Manchester Piccadilly Station, Deansgate Station and Manchester Oxford Road Station (the two latter stations being constructed on top of and to the side of the viaduct) are all separately listed at Grade II.

Listing NGR: SJ8382597704

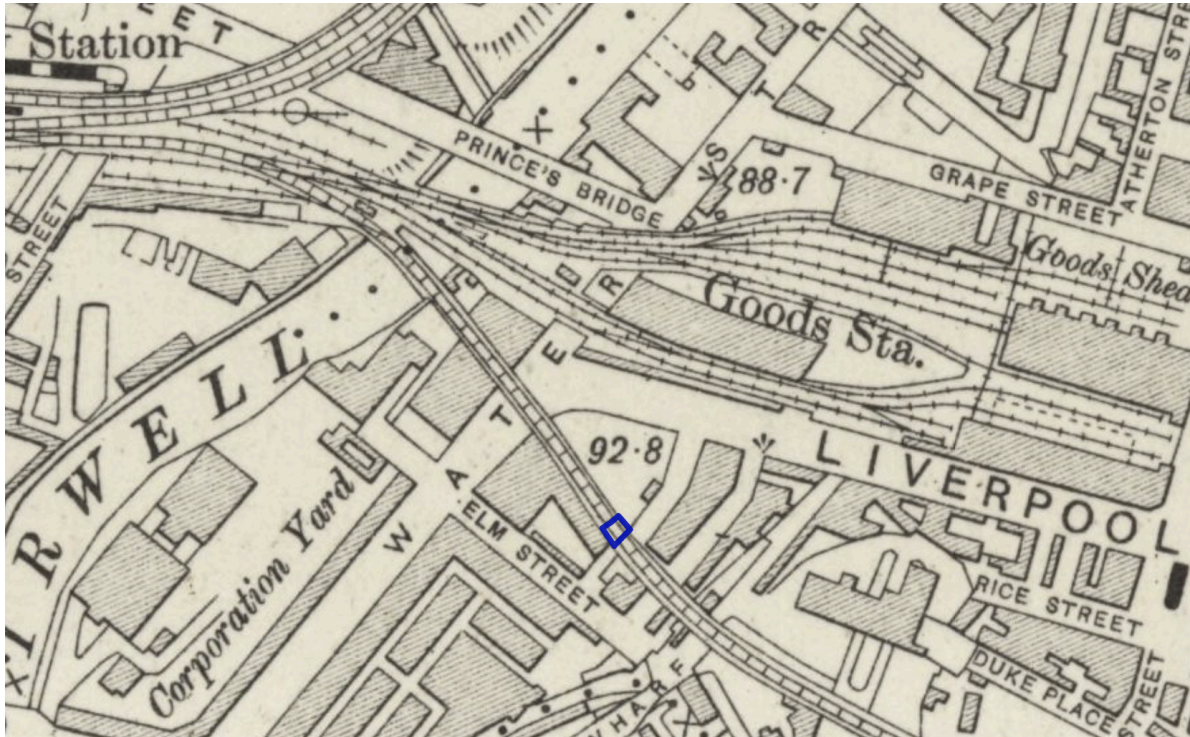
APPENDIX B: HISTORICAL MAPPING AND SITE PHOTOGRAPHS



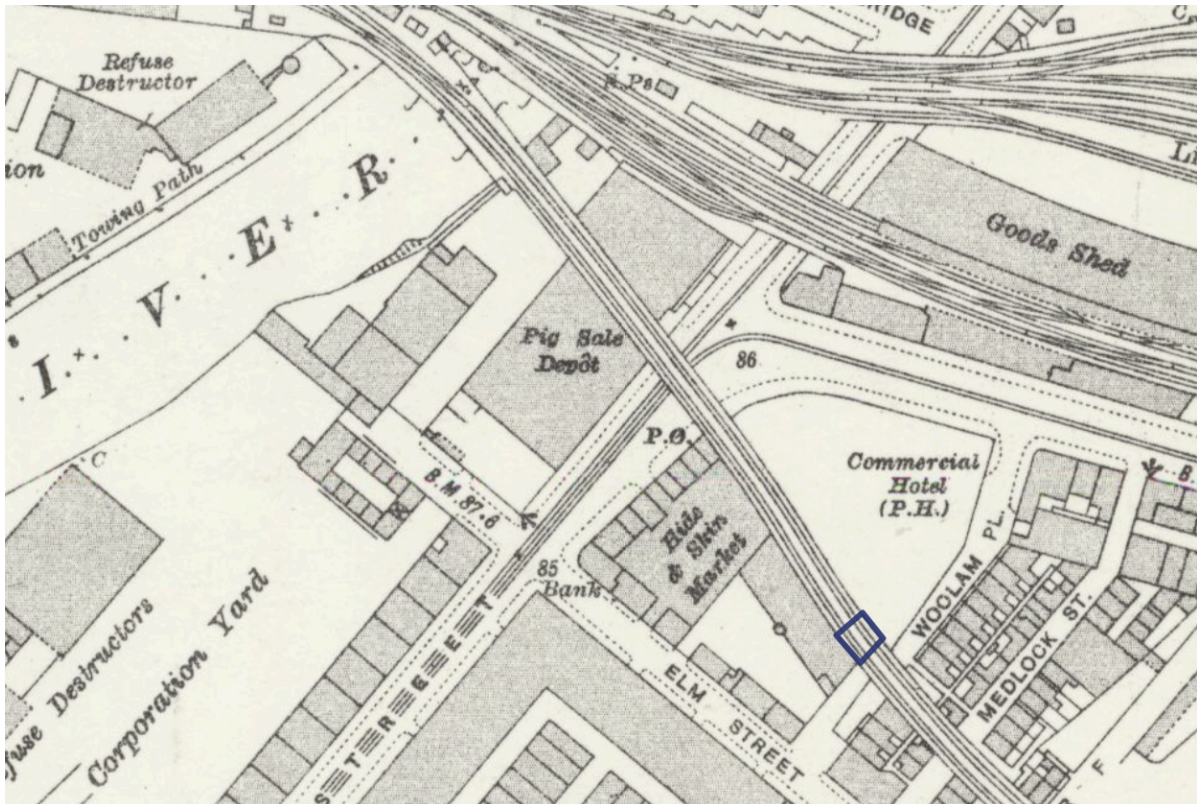
Historical Map, Ordnance Survey, Published in 1848 (Source: National Library of Scotland). Site boundary (approximate only) shown in BLUE.



Historical Map, Ordnance Survey, Published in 1891 (Source: National Library of Scotland). Site boundary (approximate only) shown in BLUE.



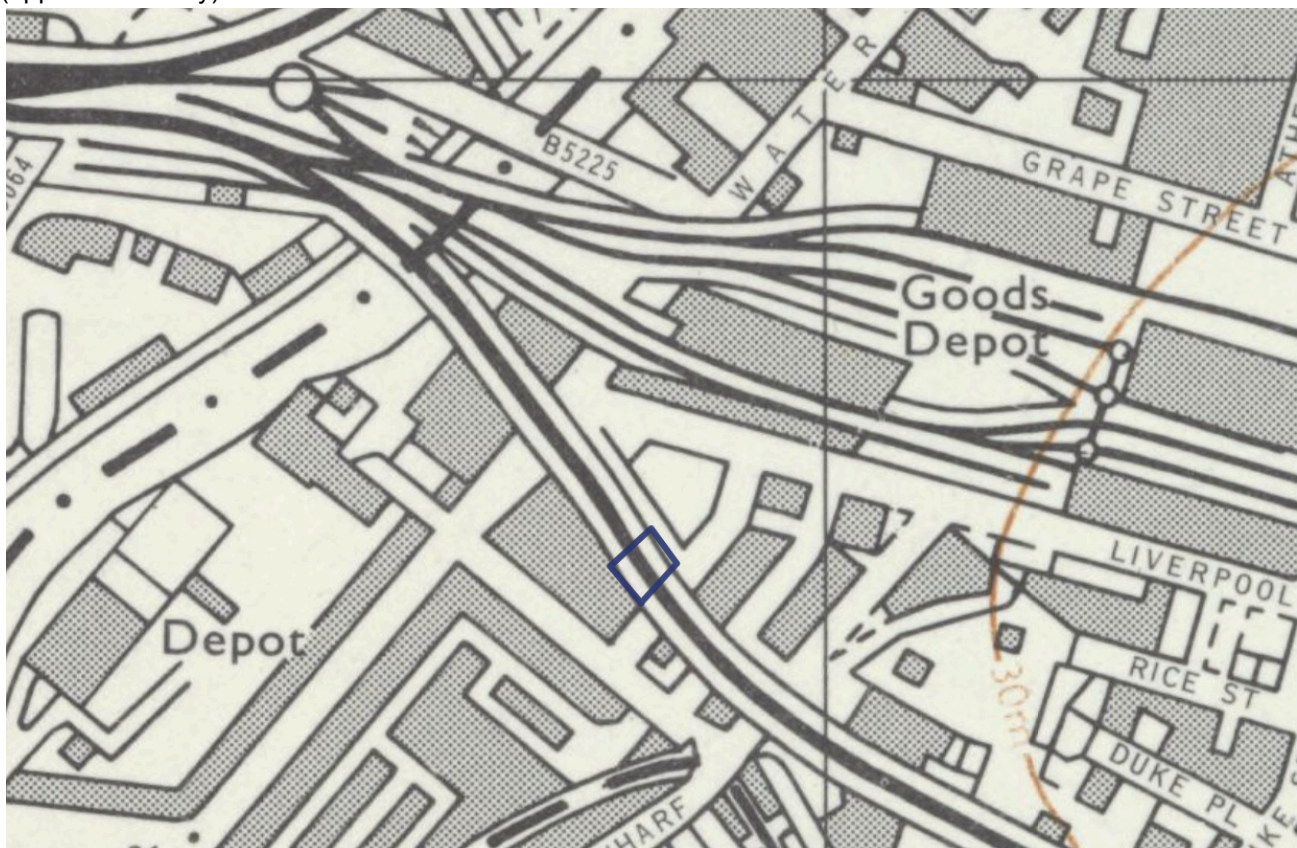
Historical Map, Ordnance Survey, Published in 1909 (Source: National Library of Scotland). Site boundary (approximate only) shown in BLUE. [OS Six-inch England and Wales, 1842-1952](#)



Historical Map, Ordnance Survey, Published in 1922 (Source: National Library of Scotland). Site boundary (approximate only) shown in BLUE.



Historical Map, Ordnance Survey, Published in 1956 (Source: National Library of Scotland). Site boundary (approximate only) shown in BLUE



Historical Map, Ordnance Survey, Published in 1972 (Source: National Library of Scotland). Site boundary (approximate only) shown in BLUE



1. Façade of 121 Water Street from Woollam Place.



2. Rear infill of 121 Water Street.



3. Site interior rear showing toilet cubicle on left.



4. Site interior front showing storage cubicle on right.



APPENDIX C: REFERENCES

British Standards Institute (BSI) (2013) Guide to the Conservation of Historic Buildings (BS 7913: 2013)

Core Strategy Development Plan Document (July 2012). Published by Manchester City Council;

Manchester City Council (2026) Castlefield Conservation Area Prepared by Manchester City Council;

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Historic England (2022) National Heritage List for England (NHLE)

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