



25th November 2025

Brunswick Mill, Manchester – Engine House Heritage Note

Purpose

The purpose of this Heritage Note is to provide a brief assessment of the historic development and significance of the original engine house at the Grade II Listed Brunswick Mill, Bradford Street, Manchester (Figure 1).

Due to the engine house building not being accessible at the time of the production of the original Heritage Statement (Heritage Architecture Ltd. 2021) for the current consented scheme; this Heritage Note provides such an assessment.



Figure 1 – Modern map illustrating the location of Brunswick Mill (outlined) and the engine house (shaded).
(Source: Historic England)

Historic Development

Brunswick Mill was constructed between 1839 and 1842 for Messrs Kelly and Gilmore, cotton spinners who intended to occupy the mill for their own cotton spinning operation. An article in the Manchester Guardian dated the 10th July 1841 records the original building as being constructed by builder Mr Ker. However, it is likely that design input was provided by the famed mill designer William

Fairbairn who was brought in as part of the latter 1840-1 construction works, along with his partner James Lillie, who provided the new iron beams.

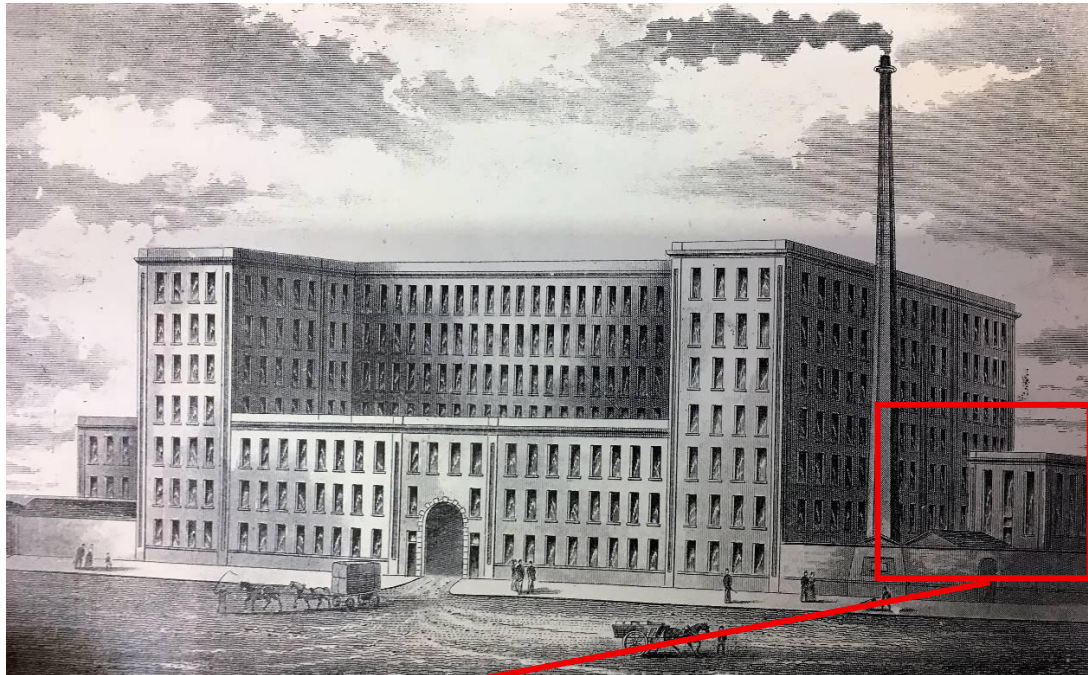


Figure 2 – An 1893 etching of the principal north front of Brunswick Mill as seen from Bradford Road, showing the original engine house and chimney to the right. Although an indicative drawing, showing flat-headed openings to the engine house instead of round-headed openings as was constructed, it does provide the only known view of the original central doorway into the engine house, shown to the bottom of the central opening.

Note the original form of the projecting stuccoed cornice around the eaves of the buildings.



Figure 3 - The 1851 OS map shows the “Engine House” located within a yard area containing the mill chimney, a coal shed and a platform parallel with Bradford Road next to the original location of the mill’s boilers which were housed within the ground floor of the mill.

Note the original stair arrangement (shaded green) leading to the original central door of the first floor level of the engine house.

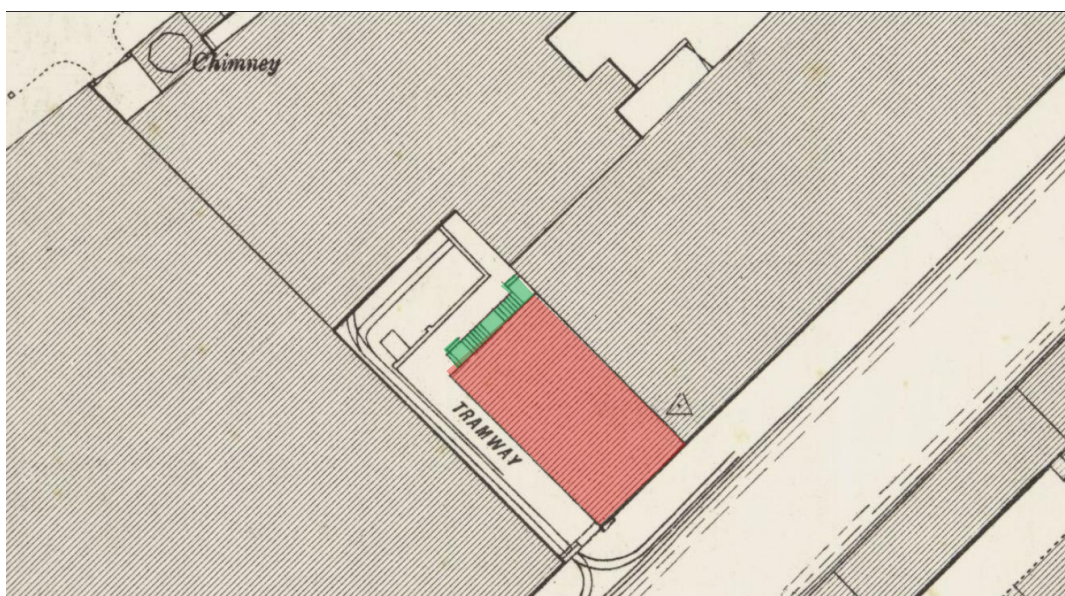


Figure 4 – The 1891 OS map shows that by this date the steps to the engine house had altered with the construction of a matching flight to the left (west), and a new tramway which would have allowed for coal to be transported into the engine yard directly from the canal.

In 1865 Brunswick Mill was bought by Henry Bannerman & Sons, and at some time during the c1880s/90s, the original stuccoed eaves detailing around the perimeter of the mill buildings (Figure 6) was removed and rebuilt at a slightly lower level used decorative red brick (Figure 5) likely due to the deterioration of the original stucco-covered brickwork.

As part of these alterations, the engine house, which was connected to the ??? of the mill, was left unaltered, possibly due to this being a less visible part of the building, and it being more easily accessible for repair. The retention of the original eaves details around the engine house results in this now being the only part of the Brunswick Mill that still retains this intended original 1839-42 feature.



Figure 5 – An example of the c1880s/90s replacement of the original stuccoed eaves detailing with moulded, decorative redbrick as seen around the perimeter of the main mill.

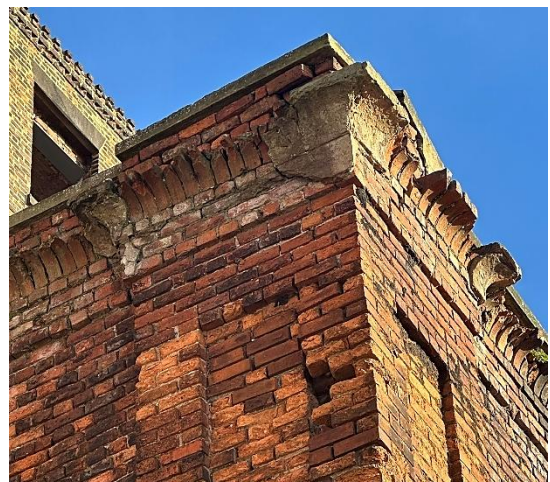
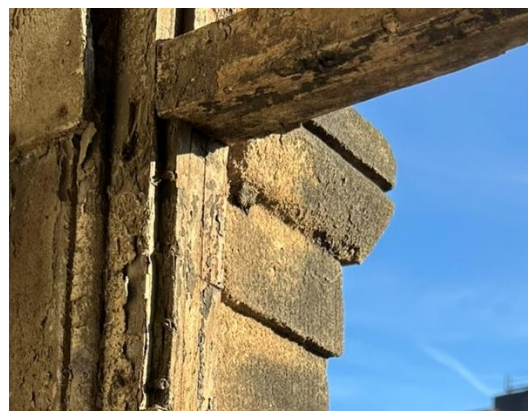


Figure 6 – The northern corner of the original engine house, showing one of the last surviving remnants of the original stuccowork to the eaves. The stucco was applied over a number of differing shaped, sized and positioned bricks to create a faux carved stone effect, which matched the actual carved stonework of the banding between the windows of the engine house as seen in Figure ?? below.



Figure's 7 & 8 – A view of the principal, northwest elevation, showing one of the three round-headed window openings with carved stone (possibly grit stone) string course between the windows (Figure 7) and a view of the stringcourse from inside the building (Figure 8).

In 1908 Brunswick Mill became the first mill in Manchester to convert from steam power to electricity. A new electric transformer house was constructed in the central courtyard of the mill complex, resulting in the redundancy of the original engine house.

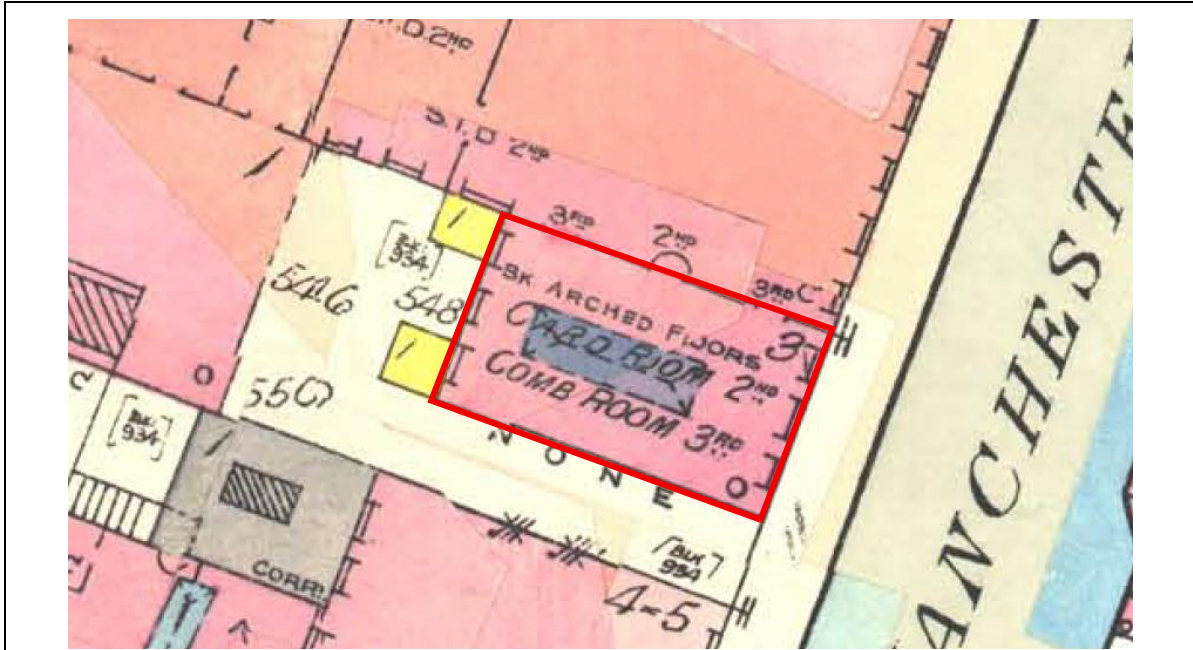


Figure 9 – 1928 (updated to 1943) Goads Fire Insurance Plan – This plan shows that by 1942 the engine house had been out of use for this purpose for 20 years, and is now set over three floors, with a card room at third floor level, and a comb room on the second floor level below. The function of the ground floor level has not been indicated, however, the plan does show that the floor levels within the building were “brick arched floors”.

Consequently, in 1908 the original engine house was converted to become part of the wider mill with the insertion of a new reinforced concrete floor across the double-height engine room to form three floor levels. The 1928 Goad Fire Insurance plan in Figure 9 above describes the 2nd floor level as being a “Card Room” whilst the new third floor level was the “Card Room”.

At some point after the date of the 1943 Goad map above (presumably in the 1950s) the original jack-arched brick floor dividing the ground floor level from the engine room at first floor level was removed and two reinforced concrete floors were inserted; one at a slightly higher first floor level (see Figure ??) and another to subdivide the engine room into two floor levels, connected with the ground floor level with a new staircase.

Building Description

The engine house formed a small, two-storey building connected to the south-west corner of the mill. Its design followed that of the mill building with shallow brick pilasters to each corner and projecting eaves detailing, which comprised shaped brickwork that was stuccoed to emulate decorative curved stonework (see Figure ??).



Figure 10 – A reconstructed view of the principal north-west elevation, showing the original extent of the three openings shaded yellow, the original location of the central doors to the centre, an example of the original glazing pattern to the right, and the original location of the steps to the left.

The fenestration pattern, however, was entirely different to the mill, with the north-east elevation comprised of two very tall, narrow, round-headed window openings with a wider opening to the centre that also incorporated entrance doors/steps. The rear, south-east elevation, comprised three equal, narrow window openings, whilst the side, north-west elevation used three blind openings.

Internally the building was functional in style, with bare brick walls (later painted) and brick, jack-arched floors to the first floor level and the roof level. The roof level was designed with a large timber skylight, whilst the windows of the building were formed of long, large-paned casement windows.



Figure 11 – A view looking towards the north-west elevation (left) and south-west elevation (right) which illustrates its three original blind openings.



Figure 12 – A view of the rear, south-east elevation as seen from the canal towpath, showing the three original window openings.



Figure 13 – Detail of the northern corner of the engine house, illustrating the original brick and stucco arrangement.



Figure 14 – A view looking west across the engine house roof, showing the raised timber skylight to the centre of the flat roof.

The original use of the ground floor level of the engine house is unknown but likely accommodated storage, fuel and the underside mechanism of the steam engines above. The first floor level formed the principal, double-height engine room, accessed via short flight of steps and external door to the bottom of the tall central window opening.

The mill originally ran on 2 steam engines housed within the first floor of the engine house; a two-crank beam engine, which was attached via large stone blocks against the south-west wall (see Figure 25), and a single-crank horizontal engine, which would have been positioned elsewhere on the floor. Together, both engines provided power to the 100,000 mule and ring spindles in the mill via a series of line shafting which ran from the engines, through openings within the western mill wall (see Figure 26 and along the ceiling of each mill floor to the looms.



Figure 15 – A view looking north across the ground floor level, showing the inserted c1950s concrete floor and staircase (left) at a slightly higher level.



Figure 16 – A view looking towards the south-east (rear) wall showing the three blocked windows which would have looked onto the canal.



Figure 17 – A closer view of the principal north-west elevation, showing a blocked window opening top-left which was blocked due to the insertion of the c1950s reinforced floor.



Figure 18 – A view looking north across the first floor level, which was formed with the c1950s reinforced concrete floor and ceiling.



Figure 19 – Looking north across the top, second floor level, formed in the c1950s with the insertion of its concrete floor, which runs across all window openings.



Figure 20 – Looking south towards the rear elevation, showing the three original round-headed window openings onto the canal.



Figure 21 – A closer view of the southern three windows, showing their deep reveals and bullnose edges. Note the original brick, jack-arched ceiling/roof.



Figure 22 – One of the three southern windows, showing the remains of its original timber casement windows.



Figure 23 – A detailed view of one of the southern windows showing evidence of original opening fixings to the frame.



Figure 24 –A view looking north across the second floor level.



Figure 25 – A view of the original stone bearing blocks to the north-west wall from which would have supported the original flywheel of the steam engine.

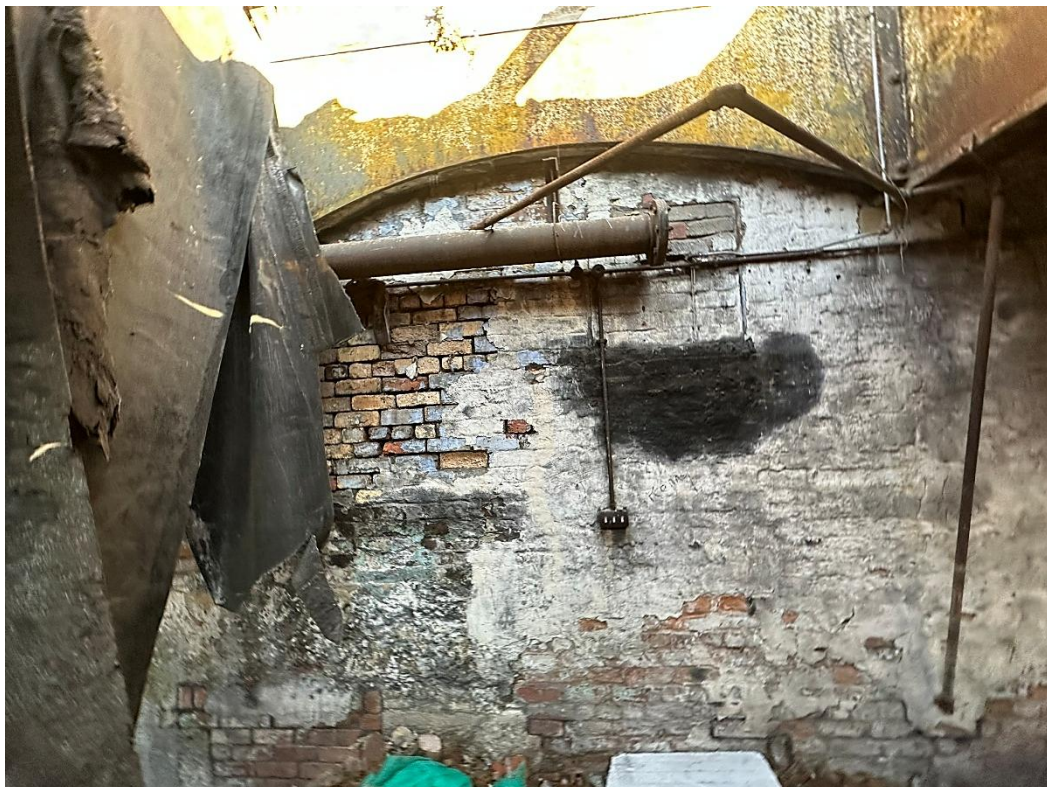


Figure 26 – The north-west wall between engine house and mill, showing the now blocked openings from which the original line shafting would have connected into the mill machinery.



Figure 27 – Looking up at the original central skylight and the remains of its timber skylight structure.



Figure 28 – Detailed view of the original jack-arched ceiling.

Significance Appraisal – Methodology

This significance assessment uses recognised criteria to assess the heritage significance and interest of the Site. The assessment of significance accords with the requirements of the NPPF (2025) and uses Historic England's methodology outlined in its 2019 document, "Statements of Heritage Significance". Historic England's "Conservation Principles. Policies and Guidance", 2008 has also been utilised as part of the following assessment.

High significance relates to those parts or elements of the Site deemed to be of particularly special interest. These components are *fundamental* to the understanding of the building and its architectural design concept and play a major role in reflecting its historic, artistic/architectural or archaeological interest.

Medium significance relates to those components of the Site deemed to be of special interest. They are *important* to the understanding of the architectural design concept and play a considerable role in reflecting its historic, artistic/architectural or archaeological interest.

Low significance relates to those components of the Site deemed to be of more modest interest. They provide a relatively minor contribution to the understanding of the architectural design concept and a modest role in revealing its historic, artistic/architectural or archaeological interest.

No significance/Detrimental features and elements that do not contain any special interest. These can detract from the significance of the building and maybe evidence of modern or ad-hoc refurbishments, or poor craftsmanship.

Statement of Significance

The engine house building forms an integral part of the wider Grade II Listed Brunswick Mill, yielding **high historic interest** resulting from its original engine house use, the building design and window arrangement, which is more considered to that found across the wider mill building, and which denotes the building's original use and pride in the original engine.

The components of the building determined to be of **high significance** include:

- **The external elevations, including the brick pilaster details, surviving stone window sills, original window openings/dimensions, original brick jack-arched roof/ceiling and lantern opening, surviving original brick and stucco eaves details, any surviving evidence within the building relating to its use as an engine house.**

The components of the building determined to be of **low significance** include:

- **The c1950s reinforced concrete floor levels and staircase, which denote the change in building's use.**
- **The surviving timber elements of the original skylight structure.**

- The surviving original window frames.

The components of the building determined to be of **no significance** include:

- The brick infill to original window openings to the north and south sides of the building,