

DONALD INSALL
ASSOCIATES

John Rylands Research
Institute and Library

Cloister Roofs

Heritage, Design and Access Statement



Contact information

Kate Martyn

Practice Director

Rory Chisholm

Associate Director

Manchester Office

Donald Insall Associates

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

0161 359 4326

www.dia.co.uk

Version Control

Rev	Date	Auth	Check	Notes
001	21.11.25	KXM	KXM	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property rights have been licensed to Donald Insall Associates Limited, and such rights belong to third parties, may not be published or reproduced at all in any form, and any request for consent to the use of such material for publication or reproduction should be made directly to the owner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.

Contents

1.	Summary of Heritage, Design and Access Statement	3
1.1.	Introduction and Methodology	3
1.2.	The Building, its Legal Status and Policy Context	3
1.3.	Project Brief	4
2.	Assessment of Significance	5
2.1.	Introduction	5
2.2.	Assessment of Significance	5
2.3.	Cloister Roofs	11
3.	Summary of Surveys and Investigations	17
3.1.	Existing Condition	17
3.2.	Opening Works Summary – 30 th July 2025	24
4.	Client Brief and Design Development	25
4.1.	Understanding the Brief	25
4.2.	Design Development	25
4.3.	Asphalt Roof	25
4.4.	Buttress Passthroughs	25

Contents

5.	Further Design Considerations	26
5.1.	Access	26
5.2.	Access and Scaffolding	26
5.3.	Sustainability	26
6.	Commentary on the Proposals	27
6.1.	Impact on the Listed Building	27
6.2.	Policy Justification of the Proposals	27
6.3.	Conclusion	28

1. Summary of Heritage, Design and Access Statement

1.1. Introduction and Methodology

Donald Insall Associates were commissioned by the John Rylands Research Institute and Library and the University of Manchester in January 2025 to assist them in developing proposals for the like-for-like replacement of the cloister roofs on both north and south elevations, based on evidence of water ingress within the building.

This assessment has been prepared in accordance with the requirement of the National Planning Policy Framework (2025), 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).

This report has been informed by 'A Conservation Plan for The John Rylands Library, Deansgate,' July 2015, a revision of the first Conservation Plan written in 2000 – 2002. The 2002 Plan was written by Stella Butler, then Head of Special Collections and John Hodgson (Manuscripts and Archives Manager), with advice from Marion Barter and Sandy Roy then of English Heritage North West and from John Prichard of Lloyd Evans Prichard. The revised text for the 2015 Plan were written by Clare Hartwell and Marion Barter of the Architectural History Practice Ltd, and by Rebecca Mills of Lloyd Evans Prichard, who also produced an accompanying condition report. An updated condition report and Gazetteer by DIA was subsequently undertaken as part of the recently completed Next Chapter Project which have similarly informed the production of this report.

The Assessment of Significance contained within the 2015 Conservation Plan is reproduced in Section 2, with updates to the text reflective of the recently completed works and with a particular focus on the area subject of the works now proposed.

The specific constraints for this building are summarised below. This report has been drafted to inform the design of the proposals for the cloister roofs which are outlined in Section 4, supported by the findings of surveys detailed in Section 3. Matters relating to access and sustainability are included in Section 5 and Section 6 provides a justification of the scheme according to the relevant planning policy and guidance.

1.2. The Building, its Legal Status and Policy Context

The John Rylands Library is a Grade I listed building located in the Deansgate/Peter Street Conservation Area in the City of Manchester. Alterations to a listed building generally require listed building consent; development in conservation areas 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 Deansgate Conservation Area provided by the local planning authority is in Appendix II, along with extracts from the relevant legislation and planning policy documents which are summarised below.

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. Section 16 of the Act imposes a statutory duty 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 Site comprises the **Manchester Core Strategy (adopted 2012)** which stipulates that development works should preserve and enhance the existing historic environment. The plan also requires development to reinforce the overall character of the local area and contribute to a coherent physical environment.

1.2.3. The National Planning Policy Framework (February 2025)

The courts have held that following the approach set out in the policies on the historic environment in the National Planning Policy Framework (2025) 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).

1.3. Project Brief

The project brief is to replace the cloister roofs on both the north and south elevations of the original 1890s John Rylands Library on a like-for-like basis, following evidence of water ingress in the building. The work will renew the existing asphalt roofing while keeping the original appearance and detailing. Drainage and flashings, will be reviewed and repaired where necessary to ensure the roof is fully watertight. The aim is to fix the sources of water ingress, protect the historic fabric, and secure the conservation of the cloisters in the long term.

2. Assessment of Significance

2.1. Introduction

The purpose of this section is to provide an assessment of significance of the Library so that the proposals for change to the building are fully informed as to its significance and so that the effect of the proposals on that significance can be evaluated. This assessment of the building is taken from the 2015 Conservation Plan which updated the 2002 description to reflect changes in policy during that period – most critically the implementation of the National Planning Policy Framework in 2012. It responds to its requirement 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

2.2. Assessment of Significance

The Grade I listing of the John Rylands Library reflects the exceptional importance of the building, in particular its high level of architectural and historical value. The building is of national and international significance and is mentioned in general accounts of British architecture of the period, as well as in the international context of Sir Banister Fletcher’s History of Architecture, rev. J.C. Palmes, 1975.

The library building incorporates four principal phases which represent the main building of 1899 and three later phases of extensions alongside the recently completed Next Chapter works [Plates 2.1-2.2]. Different areas, while all covered by the current Grade I designation, are of differing levels of significance and in some cases significance varies within the same phase of building.



2.2 Reading Room

2.2.1. The 1899 Building

Historical Value

The John Rylands Library is of exceptional historical significance for several reasons. This includes association with The Rylands family as a reflection of the philanthropy and patronage on the part of a leading industrialist family in Manchester. The city lacked significant aristocratic patronage and the contributions of figures such as John Rylands, Joseph Whitworth, patron of the Whitworth Art Gallery and the merchants and businessmen who founded institutions such as the Portico Library and Royal Manchester Institution is an important strand in Manchester history and national history.

Also relevant is the association with Basil Champneys, an architect of national repute and with Charles Eamer Kempe, who was one of the best known and most accomplished stained glass artists of the day. Another artist of repute associated with the building is the sculptor John Cassidy.

Also relevant is the fact that the Library has been appreciated as a work of architecture and a cultural resource in an enduring way. It was added to the statutory list of listed buildings in 1952, which can be regarded as exceptionally early for a building of this date, at a time when Victorian architecture was generally unappreciated and widely reviled. Cecil Stewart, writing in 1956 described it as ‘undoubtedly the most important architectural event in Manchester during the last decade of the century. In some respects this Library was the most significant undertaking in England, for it marked the culmination of the Gothic Revival so far as secular architecture was concerned.’¹ The building was one of a tiny

handful of Victorian buildings (which did not include the town hall) earmarked for retention in the 1945 City of Manchester Plan.²

There is also exceptional historical value for the collections, which include loose furnishings designed for the building as well as books, manuscripts and works of art.

Aesthetic Value

The Library is of exceptional significance as arguably the most elaborate architectural expression of Art-for-Arts sake secular architecture of its day in Britain. Few other buildings of this type exhibit the freedom and imagination which characterises the Library which has amongst the most interesting and memorable secular Gothic spaces of 19th century Europe, freely embellished by sculpture, stained glass and art metalwork and stylistically expressive of Gothic Revival infused with Art Nouveau freedom.

It is clear that there are differences in the treatment of different parts of the building and a hierarchy is expressed in the level of architectural and decorative elaboration. In general the public areas enjoy the most elaboration and decoration, while secondary areas such as staff rooms and cloakrooms are less decorative. It is argued here that in general terms this hierarchy is strictly reflective of the status of different areas and thus exceptional historic and aesthetic significance can be attributed to both types of area.

The exception is with reference to the basement areas and a group of service rooms and access on the second floor (former kitchen, etc.). The latter are utilitarian in character and have been altered. There has

¹ The Stones of Manchester, p.129

² R. Nicholas, City of Manchester Plan, 1945

been significant alteration of some basements, largely associated with the insertion and upgrading of services and plant, as highlighted in the gazetteer. Those areas with lesser degrees of alteration are utilitarian in character and in some cases incorporate book presses or shelving of plain character and low aesthetic value. The basements are therefore generally considered to be of medium significance for aesthetic and historical values.

Communal Value

The building and the site is considered to have high communal value as a Manchester institution used as a resource by generations of scholars, with value for the relationship with the University of Manchester. The building has exceptional communal value for its contribution to the street scene, and to the diversity of architecture in Manchester city centre.

Evidential Value

This value relates to how the fabric of a heritage asset can yield information about the past. The building exhibits several different phases demonstrating change over a period of over a century. Evidential value may also be present in historic fabric such as wall finishes where layers of paint may be analysed to reveal the original colours of different spaces, to inform future re-decoration. The building has high significance for evidential value.

The first part of this section should be a succinct and lucid paragraph giving a flavour of the building's function, age and architectural character and then summing up the architectural, historical, artistic and/or archaeological significance of the building as a whole, and in the context of the wider historic environment.

2.2.2. The 1913-24 Extension

This extension was built to provide additional office and storage space to designs by Basil Champneys and his son Amien Champneys. The 1920 extension is an almost seamless enlargement of the original building, although a change of style is clear both to the exterior and in the interior. The extension is visible from Wood Street, from the rear of the building and within the atrium. The materials used were consistent with those used in the original structure and its style, although less elaborate, is similar.

This part of the library is considered to be generally of high significance for historic and aesthetic values.

Historical Value

High significance for this value resides in the fact that the extension is a design by the architect of the original building, Basil Champneys, with Amien Champneys. The design of the bookstacks with glass floors is of an innovative type, for which Amien Champneys was responsible. These areas have also been ascribed high historical significance. The exact degree of rarity, innovation and relative importance of these stacks has not been pinpointed.

Aesthetic Value

The design, detail and finish of the extension is of high significance. The work in the office areas, in particular the Stone Corridor and associated rooms, joins almost seamlessly with the older work. Original fixtures such as lamps, panelling and bookcases contribute to this.

The service stair and lift are, with the exception of the decorative metalwork associated with the lift, very utilitarian in design and these areas are considered to be of medium-low significance.

The exposed Wood Street elevation of the extension is considered to be of high historical and aesthetic significance, as the work of the two architects and because it exhibits great care in the design with functional expression of the interior appropriate for the date and position as a lesser elevation. The rear elevation, on the other hand is simply finished in rendered brick. This reflects an unrealised intention to continue building in this direction and it is therefore considered to be a temporary treatment which has a negative impact aesthetically.

2.2.3. The 1957-62 Extension

The 1950s extension lies to the west end of the building and is now largely hidden by the 2007 extension, but partly visible from Wood Street. Designed by Francis Jones & Sons, it is an undistinguished three-storey structure with a flat roof and faced in brick. Its façade can be clearly differentiated from the original building.

Historical Value

The extension is considered to be of medium significance, principally for its association with Sir Isaac Wolfson, the patron, who had acquired a controlling interest in Ryland & Son in 1957 and became the chairman of the company. This demonstrated the continuing connection with the company founded by John Rylands.

Aesthetic Value

The Wolfson Building is considered to be of generally low significance for aesthetic and communal values. It is of reticent and utilitarian design, and constructed of red brick as an extension to the rear of the building. Furnishings are generally of high quality, but are not considered to be of special artistic merit.

2.2.4. The 2007 Extension

The addition by Austin Smith:Lord is considered to be of neutral significance for all heritage values.

2.2.5. The Next Chapter Project (2025)

The recently completed Next Chapter project centred on achieving the next phase in the life of the John Rylands Research Institute and Library to ensure that it continues to form a key destination for engagement and learning. This included a number of minor alterations and interventions seeking to conserve, and better reveal, its significance.

2.2.6. The Deansgate/Peter Street Conservation Area

The Deansgate/Peter Street Conservation Area is significant for its townscape which contributes to Manchester's Victorian industrial identity. A predominantly commercial area its character is also derived from its places of culture and assembly – of which the John Ryland's library is a particular contributor. It forms a landmark building which the conservation area both architecturally and also for its cultural interest and the collections which it holds.

2.3. Cloister Roofs

The cloisters form part of the principal 1899 phase of construction, designed as a low perimeter circulation route to the north and south sides of the building, connecting principal spaces at first-floor level including the principal stair, Exhibition Hall and Committee Rooms and connected via a cross corridor [Plates 2.3 – 2.6].

“By this arrangement the rooms are set back from the street, quiet is ensured and the width for access of light is greatly increased.”³

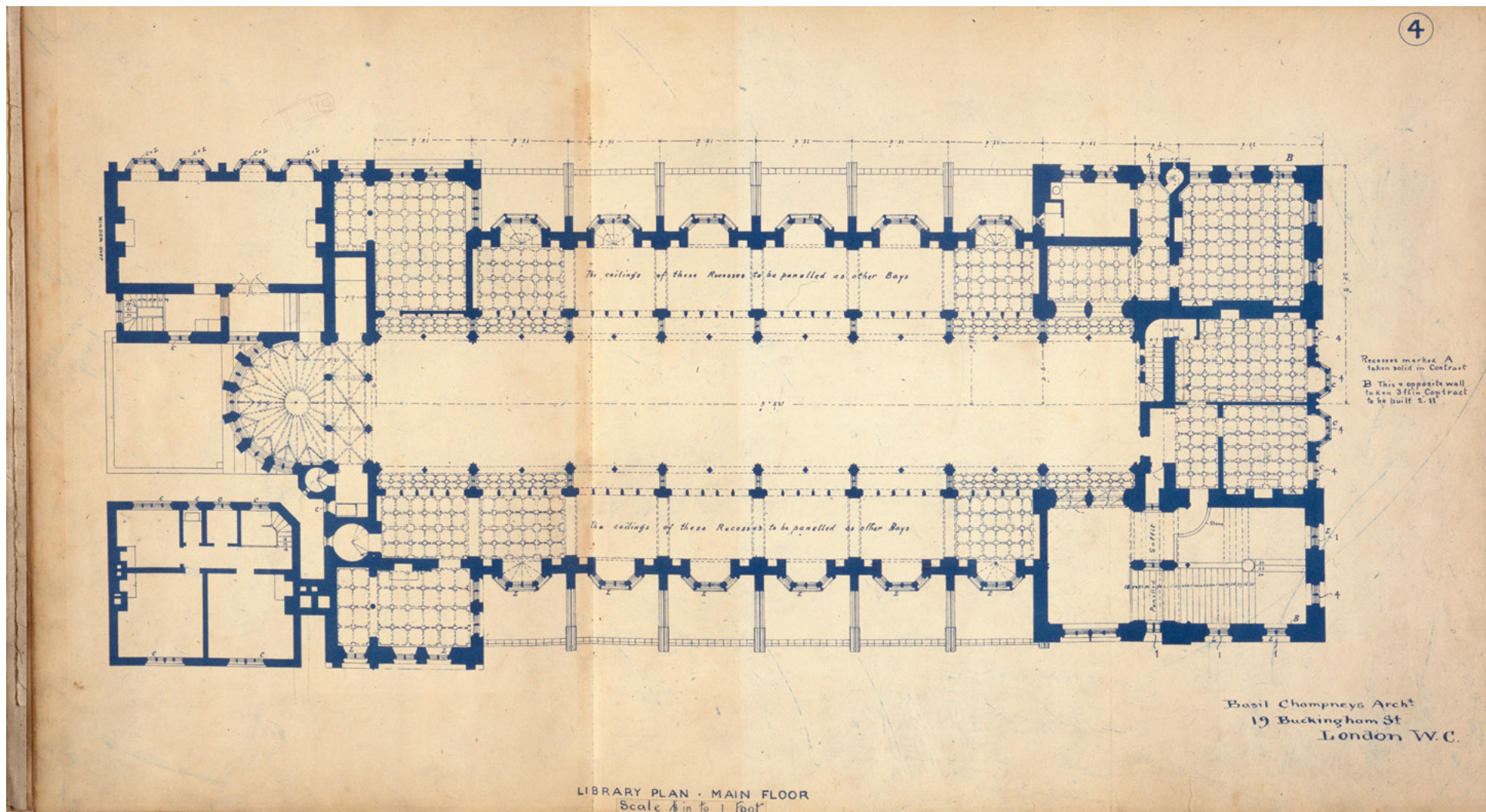
They comprises two vaulted corridors of exposed stone, richly executed to contrast with taller spaces of the main rooms with detailing including ribbed vaults, carved stone bosses and decorative metalwork gates. These are very evocative spaces dimly lit by opaque bullseye glass in the traceried windows. The southern cloister was altered at its western end in 2007 with the insertion of a glass floor and connection to the extension constructed at that time [Plates 2.7 – 2.8].

Externally the cloisters sit at a raised level, forming 1.5 storey wings which flanks both the north and south of the main body of the library. Constructed in red sandstone, with an embattled parapet, broken by the flying buttresses which define each bay. To each bay a pair of traceried windows. The roof runs continuously underneath the flying buttresses, pitched with a flat top and modern asphalt finish [Plate 2.9].

The cloisters are of exceptional significance for their aesthetic, communal and historic value and role as part of the principal circulation within the building. Whilst the roof is an integral part of the composition, concealed from view it is of lesser significance whilst its asphalt finish is of no particular merit. Evidence of water ingress to the interior of the cloisters presents a significant risk to their conservation.

The cloisters are of exceptional significance for their aesthetic, communal and historic value and role as part of the principal circulation within the building.

³ Notes by Champneys. JRL Archive, letterbook 1, pp. 3-6.

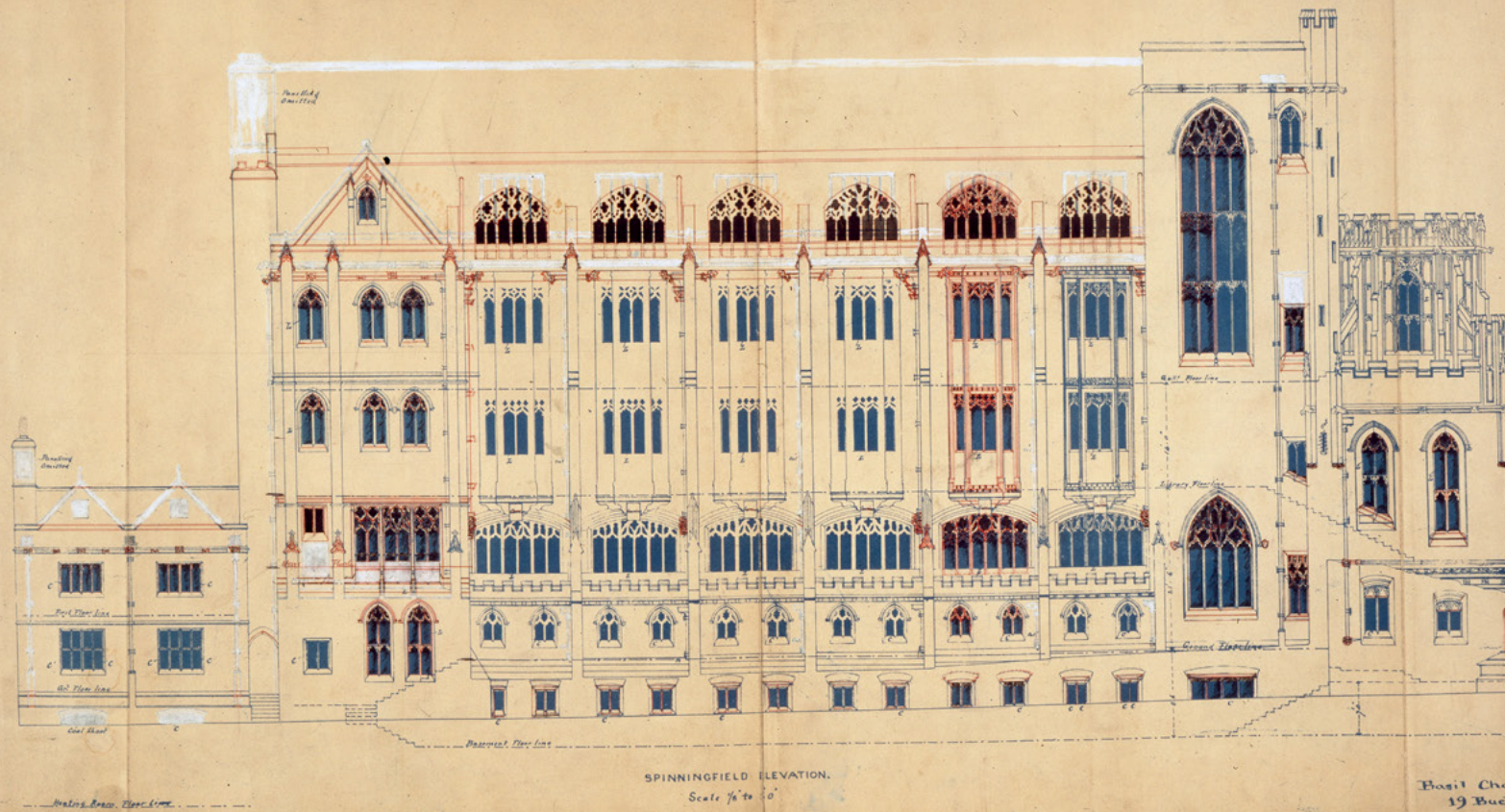


2.4 Library Main Floor plan showing flanking cloister roofs, 1890 (UoM)

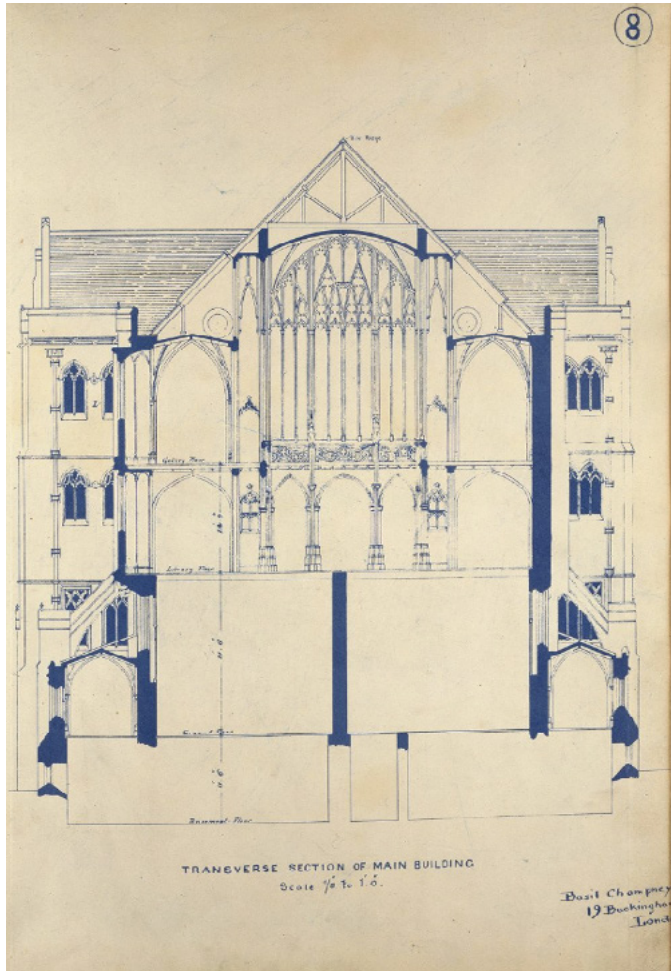


15

9



2.6 Spinningfield - Brazenose Street elevation, 1890 (UoM)



2.7 Section through cloister roofs, 1890 (UoM)



2.8 Cloisters, 1900 (UoM)



2.9 South clerestory and cloister roof, 2003 (UoM)

3. Summary of Surveys and Investigations

3.1. Existing Condition [Plates 3.1 – 3.13]

The cloister roofs on both the north and south elevation at John Rylands Library have asphalt coverings that are cracked in places. Connections between bays (through the flying buttresses) (see Plate 3.9) show inadequate coverage, and localised damage to the surrounding stonework is believed to have led to water ingress internally. Overall, the asphalt is aged (see Plate 3.7) and below modern installation standards, contributing to ongoing deterioration and internal water ingress (see Plate 3.12).



3.1 Brazenose Street Cloister Elevation



3.2 Brazenose Street Cloister Roofs



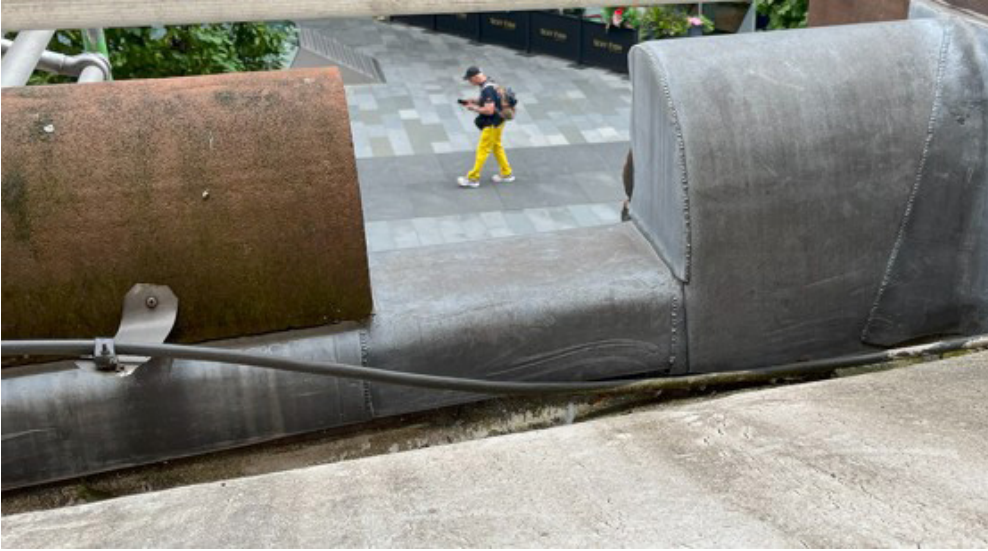
3.3 Brazenose Street Cloister Roofs



3.4 Asphalt Gutter with Lapped Lead



3.5 Asphalt Gutter with Lapped Lead



3.6 Asphalt Gutter with Lapped Lead



3.7 Asphalt Gutter, Asphalt Sill, Lapped Lead



3.8 Asphalt Gutter, Asphalt Sill, Lapped Lead



3.9 Asphalt Gutter with Buttress Passthrough



3.10 Opening Up Works



3.11 Opening Up Works



3.12 Internal - Signs of Water Ingress



3.13 Internal - Signs of Water Ingress

3.2. Opening Works Summary – 30th July 2025

Opening-up works on the south elevation cloister roofs (see Plate 3.10) revealed that the existing asphalt was laid over a concrete base with a layer of screed and two layers of asphalt separated by mesh (see Plate 3.11). Minor cracking was observed (see Plate 3.3), and the asphalt was found to have been installed below modern standards. Leadwork to the parapets and flashings was generally in good condition (see Plates 3.4 and 3.8), and CCTV surveys showed the downpipes to be clear, however leaf guards are recommended to prevent blockages. Limited or no asphalt or lead coverage was noted in connections between bays, and damaged stonework was identified to the surrounding stonework within these areas.

4. Client Brief and Design Development

4.1. Understanding the Brief

The works focus on conservation-led repair and re-roofing of the cloister roofs at John Rylands Library, a Grade I listed historic building. The project addresses cracked and aged asphalt, inadequate rainwater protection between bays, and water ingress, which are affecting the buildings fabric.

The project will deliver like-for-like asphalt replacement installed to modern standards, with continuous coverage through the buttresses via lead-lined passthroughs. The new asphalt, finished with a solar-reflective coating, will enhance durability, protecting both the historic fabric and the interior of the building.

4.2. Design Development

The design for the cloister roofs at John Rylands Library addresses existing cracking, inadequate coverage, and water ingress while respecting the historic fabric. Works include like-for-like asphalt replacement to modern standards and continuous, watertight connections through the buttresses using lead chutes and detailed asphalt linings, ensuring improved performance and long-term durability.

4.3. Asphalt Roof

The existing roof will be replaced like-for-like with a three-coat asphalt system, reinforced with mesh to a total thickness of 30 mm. The mesh will be secured on steep slopes, and a white, solar-reflective finish applied to improve durability (*see drawings 2401, 2402 and 2500 for details*).

4.4. Buttress Passthroughs

The buttress connections will be fitted with prefabricated lead chutes lined with asphalt to create a watertight link to each cloister bay. The asphalt lining will use a staggered joint for continuity, and the lead will be dressed into the existing flashings to help provide a durable and watertight finish (*see drawings 2401, 2402 and 2500 for details*).

5. Further Design Considerations

5.1. Access

Access to the library will remain clear throughout the works, with any necessary safety measures in place to protect visitors and staff without disrupting normal use.

5.2. Access and Scaffolding

Scaffolding will provide safe access for the works at both Wood Street and Brazennose Street. The freestanding structures will be stabilised with kentledge, with projections where tubes meet the stone, and are “butted” against the building for stability. At Wood Street, scaffolding will pass over the road to maintain access, while at Brazennose Street, water-filled IBCs will be used for kentledge.

5.3. Sustainability

This project is part of the ongoing maintenance strategy for John Rylands Library. Like-for-like asphalt replacement prolongs the roofs’ lifespan, mitigates water ingress, and reduces the need for future major repairs. Durable materials and solar-reflective finishes enhance performance while preserving the historic fabric.

6. Commentary on the Proposals

6.1. Impact on the Listed Building

The John Rylands Research Institute and Library is one of the finest neo-Gothic buildings in Europe and is of exceptional international significance, for the collections it holds, the ingenuity and beauty of its architecture and its connection to both Mrs Enriqueta Augustina Rylands and her architect, Basil Champneys. Also of note is the manner with which it has endured as a key destination for learning and engagement through the radically changing urban and socioeconomic context of the 20th and 21st centuries; remaining relevant to the communities which it serves and further reinforced by the recently completed New Chapter project. The cloisters form a key public route and are an integral part of the library's exceptional significance both for their particular character defined by the richly detailed decorative stonework and their role within the circulation of the building.

The existing asphalt covering is of no particular merit and, concealed from view, its importance lies principally in its functional role in protecting the fabric and features of the cloisters below – currently at risk owing to evidence of water ingress. The roof works now proposed seek to remedy identified issues with the cracked and aged asphalt covering, to increase rainwater protection between bays and to improve the performance and long-term durability of the new asphalt covering in order to protect the internal fabric - it is this which underpins both the requirement and justification for the works. The proposed scaffold would abut the historic fabric with no fixings required and as such would have no impact on the significance of the building.

6.2. Policy Justification of the Proposals

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. This section therefore assesses the works first against the policies of Manchester City Council's Core Strategy (2012) and saved policies from the Unitary Development Plan (1995) before bringing to bear the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the heritage policies in the National Planning Policy Framework.

6.2.1. Local Policies

Policy EN3 Heritage in the Core Strategy establishes a presumption in favour of 'development that complements and takes advantage of the distinct historic and heritage features of its districts and neighbourhoods, including those of the city centre' and that '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 not be an adverse effect on its architectural historic character'.

As has been outlined in detail throughout this report, the proposals seek to conserve and therefore safeguard the cloisters and their contribution to the John Rylands Library as a resource for future generations whilst maintaining its important role as an educational and cultural destination

in the city. The works proposed have been developed to ensure they are consistent with the significance of the Grade I listed building whilst bringing forward a scheme of repair and upgrade to the cloister roofs which will ensure the conservation of both the internal spaces and external fabric in the long term.

6.2.2. The Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

The overarching statutory duty to preserve listed buildings and their setting (Section 16) requires that any harm should be given significant importance and weight in the decision making process. As has been outlined above, the proposals would as a minimum preserve the special interest of the building, and indeed bring an enhancement through securing the protection of the interiors of exceptional significance and their conservation in the long-term. Therefore the presumption against the grant of permission is not engaged.

6.2.3. The National Planning Policy Framework

Any proposals for consent relating to heritage assets are subject to the policies of the NPPF (2025). This sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. 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.*

The proposed scheme very much accords with these policy ambitions; ensuring the long-term conservation of the fabric of the John Rylands Research Institute and Library to ensure that it continues to form a key destination for engagement and learning and as a cultural destination of exceptional significance. As such the scheme of works proposed gives great weight to the asset's conservation and causes no harm to its significance.

6.3. Conclusion

This Heritage, Design and Access Statement has demonstrated that the proposals accord with the requirements of local and national legislation, policy and guidance to preserve the special interest of the listed building and that the design approach taken is grounded in best practice. Overall, the significance of the John Rylands Research Institute and Library would be preserved whilst securing its conservation in the long term. The proposals therefore would conserve the listed building in manner according to its significance and met the tests for sustainable development outlined in the NPPF (2025) in so far as they relate to the historic environment.

Appendix I - Statutory List Description

**John Rylands Library and attached railings, gates and lamp standards
(Formerly Listed as: DEANS GATE Rylands Library)**

**Listing NGR: SJ8356898213
Grade I**

Library. 1890-99, by Basil Champneys, for Enriqueta Augustina Rylands in memory of her husband; with back extension 1912, also by Champneys. Red sandstone (roof not visible). Rectangular plan at right-angles to street, plus back extensions. Decorated Gothic style with Arts and Crafts accent. Two unequal storeys with the appearance of 3 storeys, designed like a church raised on a crypt, the facade composed of a 2-storey 3-bay centre (like the gatehouse of a monastery) flanked by square 2-storey 2-bay wings, with an embattled parapet to the whole and large octagonal lanterns over the wings; and, set back behind these, the east window of the reading hall flanked by square towers. The centre has very elaborate Gothic decoration throughout, including a 2-centred arched portal containing coupled doorways with a trumeau, a tall 2-light window each side, 2 small canted oriels above the portal, lacy blind tracery on all surfaces enriched with finely-detailed carving, and open-work arcading in the battlements; and the set-back 3-light east window of the hall has delicate reticulated tracery and shafts carried up to a similar open-work parapet. The walls of the wings and the towers, by contrast, are plain except for string courses enriched with grotesques: the wing to the left has tall transomed staircase windows at 1st floor with staggered sills, and low segmental-headed windows below these, that to the right has tall windows at ground floor and short ones above, and both have octagonal corner turrets with flying buttresses thrown back to the octagonal

lanterns. The lanterns have transomed 2-light windows, blind tracery and open-work battlements like those of the centre, and the towers behind them have slender octagonal corner turrets and small 2-light windows above the level of the octagons. Return sides in similar style. Fine bronze forecourt railings with central double gates flanked by lamp standards, all in Art Nouveau style. Interior: very fine vaulted entrance hall and winding vaulted staircase; church-like reading hall with much elaborate decoration, including traceried arcades, rib-vaulted ceiling, panelled reading alcoves with oriel windows, statues of John Rylands and Mrs Rylands, etc. History: built to house the theological library of John Rylands (leading textile manufacturer and philanthropist), subsequently augmented by purchase of other collections, and now one of the finest in the country.

Appendix II - Planning Policy and Guidance

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Section 16 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.

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 setting out guidelines for all development in Manchester and providing a framework on which to base decisions about planning applications. Although the UDP has now 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:

- a. not grant Listed building consent for the demolition of a listed building other than in the most exceptional circumstances, and in any case, not unless it is satisfied that every possible effort has been made to continue the present use or to find a suitable alternative use;

- 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;
- e. permit demolition only where there are approved detailed plans for redevelopment and where there is evidence of a firm building contract;
- 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)

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 (February 2025). 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.

Other Relevant Policy Documents

National Planning Policy Guidance (2024)

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

Historic England: Conservation Principles and Assessment (2008)