Ryder

Aviva Studios, External Stair
Manchester
Heritage Statement

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Introduction

Purpose

This heritage statement has been prepared in support of the planning application for the addition of an external exit stair and associated modifications to pedestrian and vehicle control systems and street furniture at Aviva Studios for Manchester City Council (MCC).

In line with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2024) and Policy EN3 (Heritage) of the Manchester Core Strategy, a heritage statement must accompany all applications that affect heritage assets, and should describe the significance of the heritage asset and the impact of the proposals on its significance.

This heritage statement follows the approach and structure recommended in Statements of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets Historic England Advice Note 12 (2019).

The heritage statement should be read in conjunction with the Design and Access Statement (DAS).

The nature of the proposal

Use

The proposals create an additional exit route from Aviva Studios existing level 02 south elevation exits to Water Street. This will allow Factory International to hold events of up to 7,000 people, an increase of 2,000 from the current maximum capacity, in a format that they have not been able to offer to date.

Amount

The additional exit route does not add any internal building area.

Layout

The additional exit route utilises existing space on top of the brick vault viaduct and a triangle of existing space between the south elevation of Aviva Studios theatre, the north elevation of an exposed section of the brick vault viaduct, and Water Street.

The new route is conceived as a continuous element bridging the changes in level between Water Street and the top of the viaduct and responding to the geometry and constraints of its surroundings. It is comprised of a stair and a ramped walkway.

Landscape

Existing concrete hostile vehicle mitigation cubes will be relocated to suit the new stair and retain functionality, along with existing cycle racks and signage associated with the Water Street rising bollards.

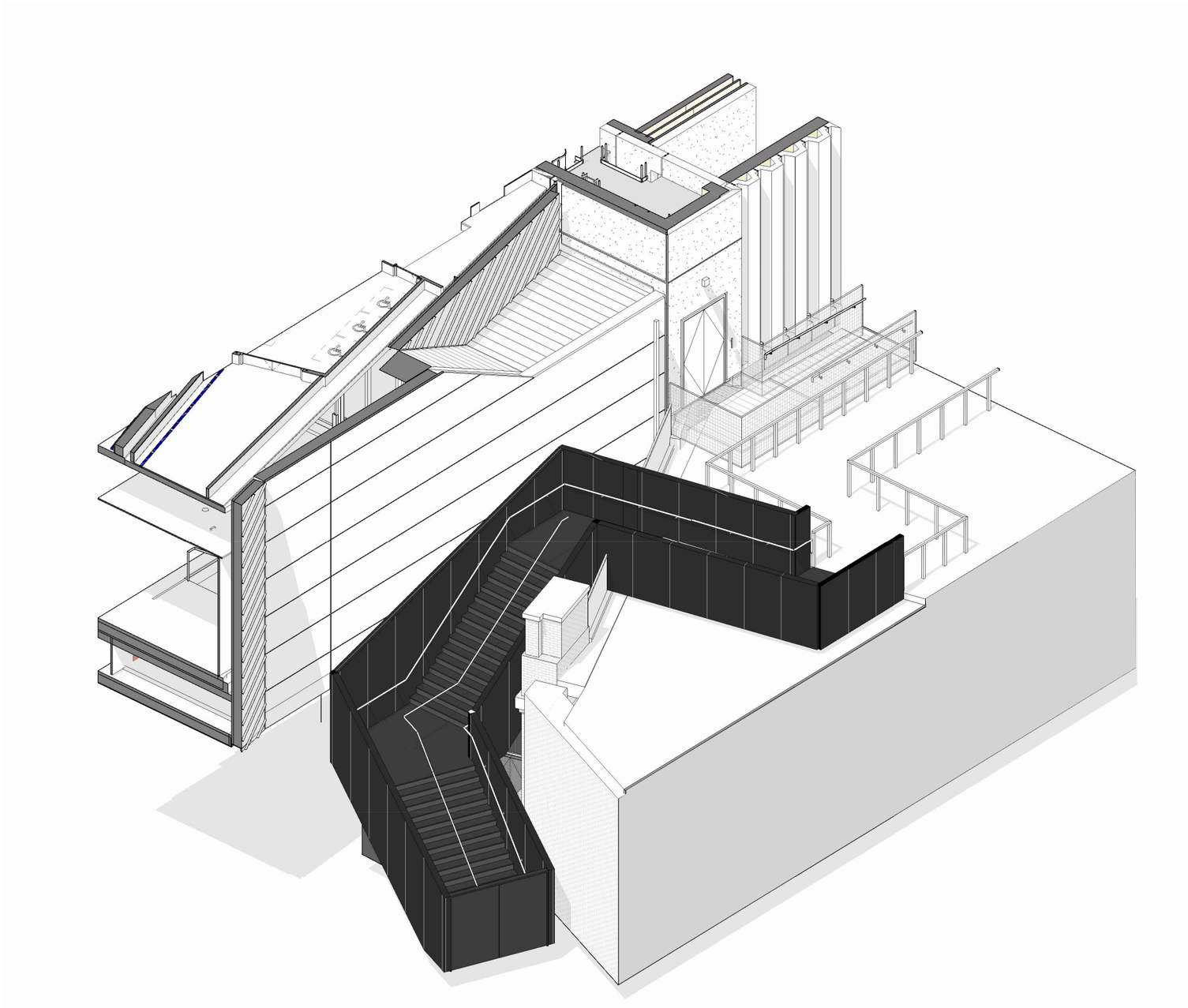
Existing secure lines to storage areas at both upper and lower levels will be retained.

Scale and appearance

The scale of the stair cladding responds to the existing Aviva Studios façades. Black powder coated metal panels will match the colour and appearance of the existing stair enclosure to west elevation of the Hall.

Public benefits

The additional exit route will provide the ability for the public to experience larger capacity events in different formats than is currently available at Aviva Studios.



Proposed axonometric view

Designation records for the heritage asset

The brick vault viaduct forms a section of a listed building appearing on the National Heritage List for England, managed by Historic England, as follows:

Heritage category: Listed building
Grade: II
List entry number: 1200805
Date first listed: 6 June 1994
List entry name: Colonnaded railway viaduct at former Liverpool Road goods depot
Details: Railway viaduct. Probably c.1870. Cast iron. A series of cast iron columns on stone bases supports the viaduct which has cast iron beams showing at the sides.

The proposed site and colonnaded railway viaduct are located within the Castlefield Conservation Area.

Reference in the Greater Manchester historic environment record

HER number: 12070.1.0
Name: Colonnaded railway viaduct at former Liverpool Road Goods Depot
National grid reference: SJ 8297 9787

Protected status

- Listed Building (II) 1200805: Colonnaded Railway Viaduct at Former Liverpool Road Goods Depot
- Conservation Area (): Castlefield

Full description

Railway viaduct. Probably c.1870. Cast iron. A series of cast-iron beams showing at the sides. (1)

Railway viaduct. Probably c.1870. Cast iron. A series of cast-iron columns on stone bases supports the viaduct, which has cast-iron beams showing at the sides. (2,3,4)

Archaeological potential

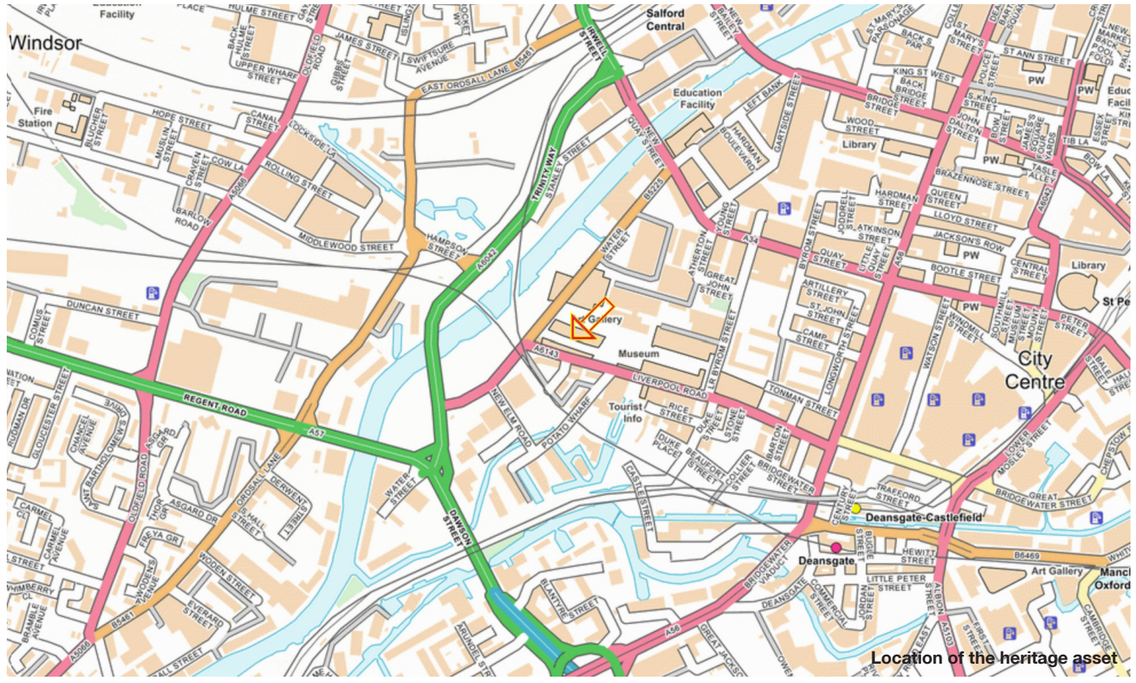
The comprehensive redevelopment of the site through the arrival of the railway in the 19th Century will likely have removed any previous archaeological features associated with earlier periods. The new external stair does not require foundations nor excavation. An archaeological desktop survey is not required for the planning application.

Local planning authority

Consultation has been undertaken with the Council's planning officers and it was advised that any forthcoming planning application should be accompanied by a heritage statement, which should appraise the significance, in line with the NPPF's requirements.



Science and Industry Museum external yard and colonnaded viaduct



Location of the heritage asset

Planning context

National policy and guidance

We have consulted the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2021) and Planning Practice Guidance: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment (2019). Within the NPPF, section 16 conserving and enhancing the historic environment contains paragraphs 189 – 208 referring to significance, setting and harm to heritage assets.

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 proposal on their significance.

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

- The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation
- The wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring
- The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness
- Opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of the place

The following guidance from Historic England has also been consulted:

- Statements of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets Historic England Advice Note 12 (2019)
- Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets (2017)

Local policy and guidance

The Core Strategy and Development Plan (2012-2027) was adopted by Manchester in July 2012.

The following policies are of relevance within the context of the Heritage Statement, particularly the following section :

EN3 Heritage

New developments must be designed so as to support the council in preserving, where possible, enhancing the historic environment, the character, setting and accessibility of areas and buildings of acknowledged importance.

Approach and methodology

Significance

The NPPF defines significance as “the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest”. Such interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic and it may derive “not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting”.

1 Understand the form, material and history of the affected heritage asset(s), and/or the nature and extent of archaeological deposits

This has been carried out through:

- Visiting the site
- Documentary research, architectural history and desk based assessment
- Historic maps and plans to demonstrate the development of the buildings
- Photographs, both new and historic, of the heritage asset
- Drawings including plans and elevations
- Detailed photographs of the features concerned

2 Understand the significance of the asset(s)

The various interests of the heritage asset are described:

Archaeological interest
There will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially holds, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point.

Archaeological and artistic interest
These are interests in the design and general aesthetics of a place. They can arise from conscious design, or fortuitously from the way the heritage asset has evolved. More specifically, architectural interest is an interest in the art or science of the design, construction, craftsmanship and decoration of buildings and sculpture.

Historic interest
An interest in past lives and events (including prehistoric). Heritage assets can illustrate or be associated with them. Heritage assets with historic interest not only provide a material record of our nations’ history, but can also provide meaning for communities derived from their collective experience of a place and can symbolise wider values such as faith and cultural identity.

3 Understand the impact of the proposal on that significance

Where the proposal affects the historic fabric of the heritage asset, this will be described, including: the effect on that fabric including loss or concealment of historic features and fabric which contribute to significance, both inside and out, proposed removals and demolitions and the impact of alterations and extensions, where proposed.

The proposal affects the setting of the remaining heritage asset, therefore the contribution of the setting to the significance of the asset, or the way that the setting allows the significance to be appreciated is described.

Impacts both harmful and beneficial should be noted.

4 Avoid, minimise and mitigate negative impact, in a way that meets the objectives of the NPPF

The NPPF stresses that impacts on heritage assets should be avoided. Therefore, how the impact is to be avoided or minimised has been outlined. Reference is made to the design and access statement.

Where there would be an impact on the significance of the heritage asset, any further archaeological analysis and building recording proposed is described.

5 Look for opportunities to better reveal or enhance significance

In some circumstances, the ability to appreciate significance may be enhanced or otherwise revealed by the proposal, and is outlined within this section. Reference is made to the design and access statement.

Setting

The setting of surrounding heritage assets has been considered, as set out in Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of heritage assets (2017).

Step 1: Identify which heritage assets and their settings are affected.

Step 2: Assess the degree to which these settings make a contribution to the significance of the heritage asset(s) or allow significance to be appreciated.

Step 3: Assess the effects of the proposed development, whether beneficial or harmful, on that significance or on the ability to appreciate it. This carried out through the assessment of the baseline photography and proposed views, with viewpoint locations agreed with NCC.

Step 4: Explore more ways to maximise enhancement and avoid or minimise harm.

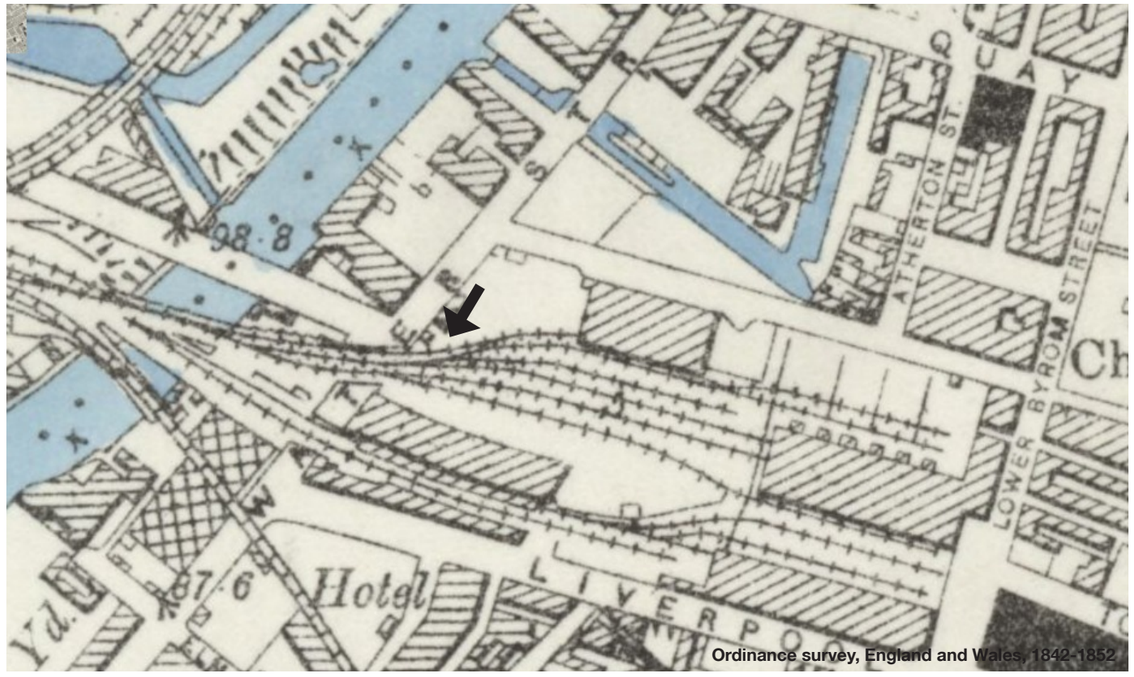
Step 5: Make and document the decision and monitor outcomes.

The heritage asset and its significance
Understanding the form and history

Location

The Colonnaded Viaduct is located within the historic Liverpool Road Goods Depot site in central Manchester, lying within the boundaries of the Castlefield Conservation Area.

- National Grid Reference: SJ 8297 9787
- Spatial Boundaries: The asset sits directly in front of the 1880 Lower Byrom Street Warehouse. It runs parallel to the open yard that links the site's historic eastern tracks to the western exit routes
- Modern Identity: Today, the entire structure is fully integrated into the outdoor complex of the Science and Industry Museum, forming a core feature of its public gallery routes

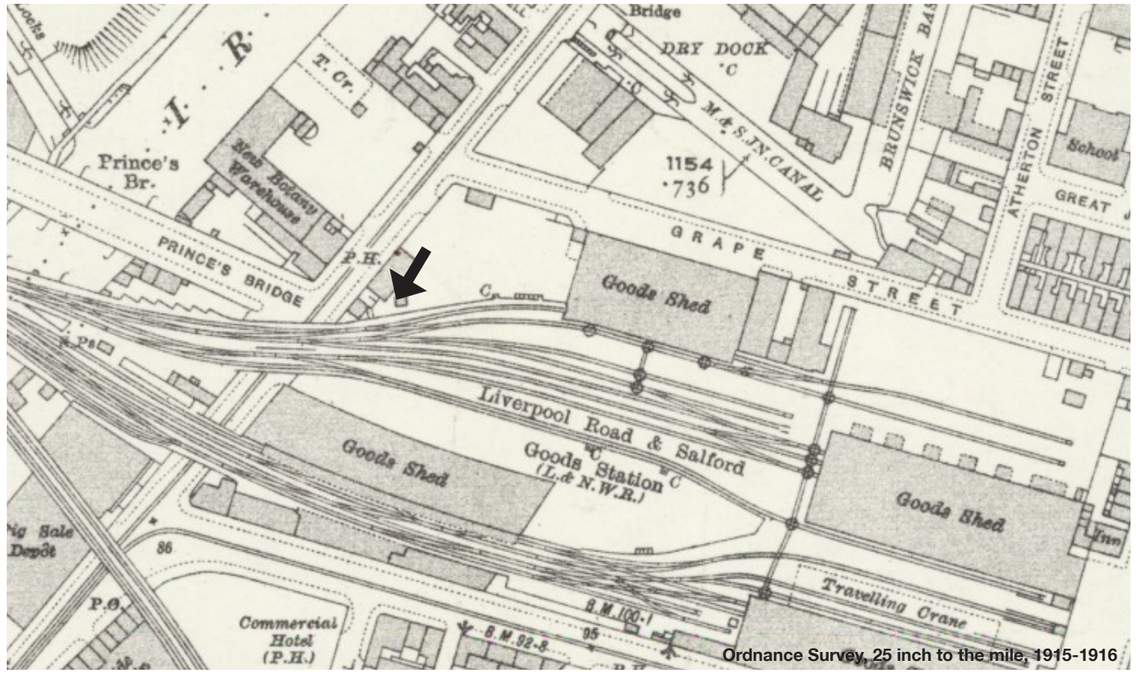


Ordinance survey, England and Wales, 1842-1852

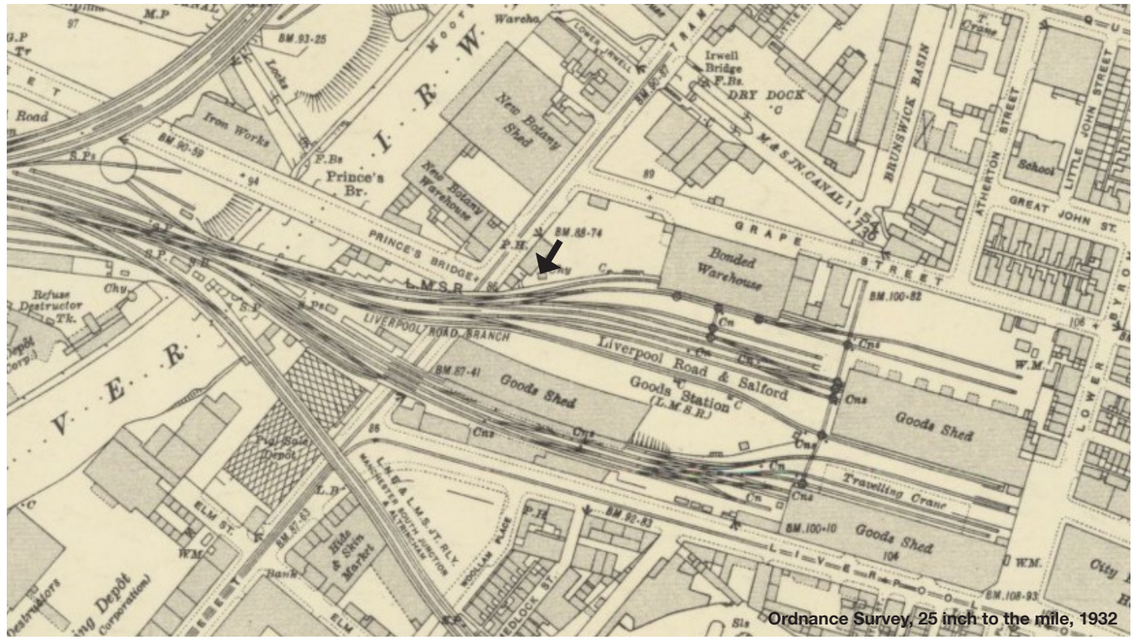
Historic context

To understand the viaduct, one must view it through the lens of Manchester's rapid mid Victorian industrial growth.

- The Birth of Rail Freight: When the Liverpool and Manchester Railway opened in 1830, it revolutionised global transport. While public attention focused on passenger travel, the railway's primary financial driver quickly became raw industrial goods—especially imported cotton and manufactured machinery
- Urban Congestion: By the 1860s and 1870s, the original 1830 station buildings were entirely overwhelmed by the sheer volume of freight. The site shifted from a dual passenger freight hub to an exclusive, high capacity goods yard
- The LNWR Expansion: Managed by the London and North Western Railway (LNWR), the site required immediate architectural innovation to handle heavier rolling loads and manage intense ground-level traffic



Ordnance Survey, 25 inch to the mile, 1915-1916



Ordnance Survey, 25 inch to the mile, 1932

Historic development

Phase 1: Construction and Structural Form (c. 1870)

The Colonnaded Viaduct was erected around 1870 as an elevated railway branch line. Its architectural design was a direct, pragmatic solution to functional requirements.

- **The Columns:** The lower tier consists of a long, rhythmic row of robust cylindrical cast iron columns. These columns are bolted into thick, dressed stone plinths embedded deep into the ground
- **The Decking:** The columns support heavy, horizontal wrought iron longitudinal girders and cross beams. This formed an elevated deck capable of carrying freight trains
- **Dual Level Functionality:** By elevating the tracks, the LNWR created a dual level goods system. Trains dropped off cargo directly into the upper floors of the warehouses, while horse drawn carts and workers moved completely unhindered through the open spaces below

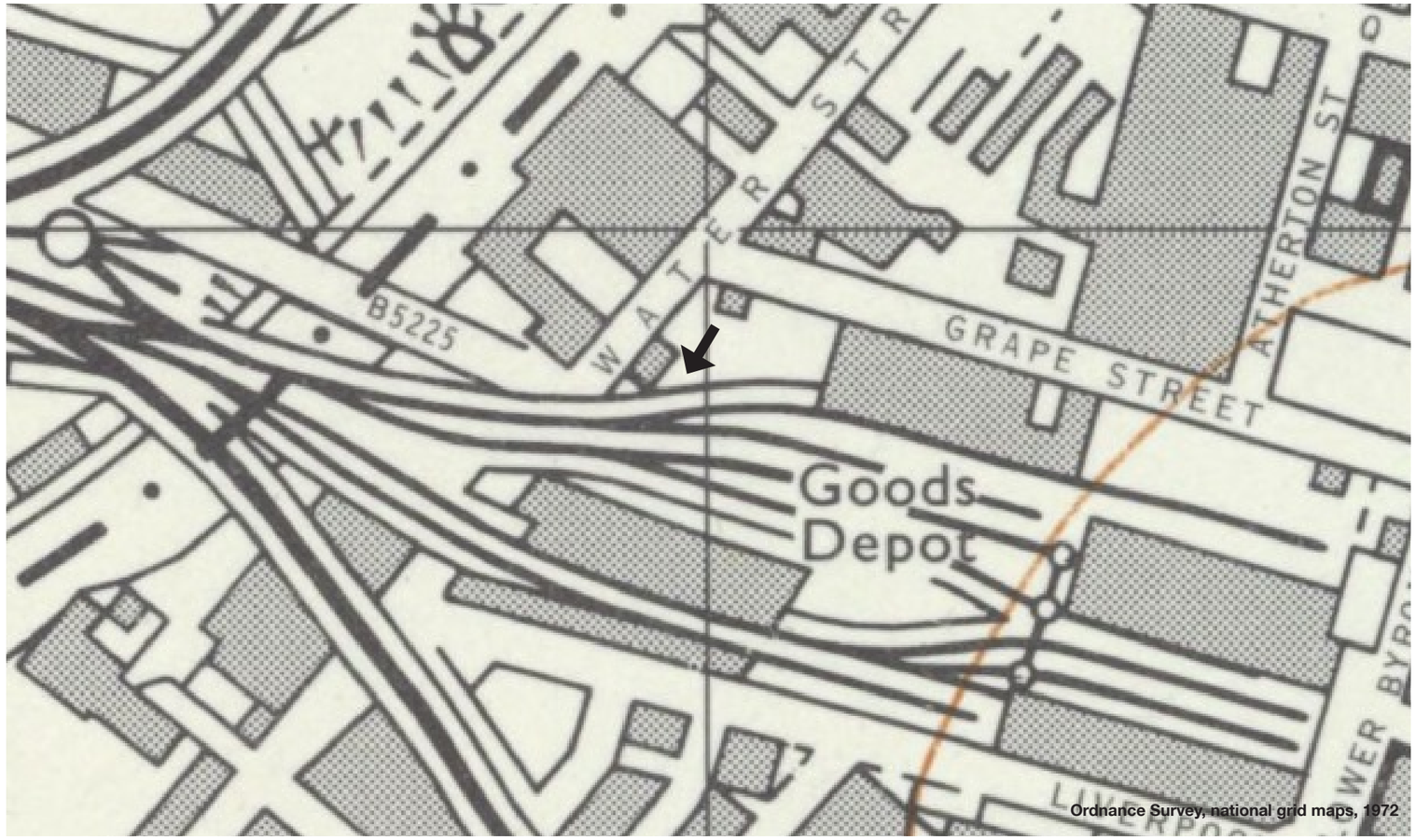
Phase 2: Integration with the 1880 Warehouse

A decade after its completion, the viaduct was directly integrated into the construction of the Lower Byrom Street Warehouse (1880). The elevated tracks on the viaduct were linked straight into the internal floors of the new warehouse. This allowed hydraulic cranes to unload cargo directly from train beds into indoor storage bays.

Phase 3: Decline, Closure, and Museum Era (1975–Present)

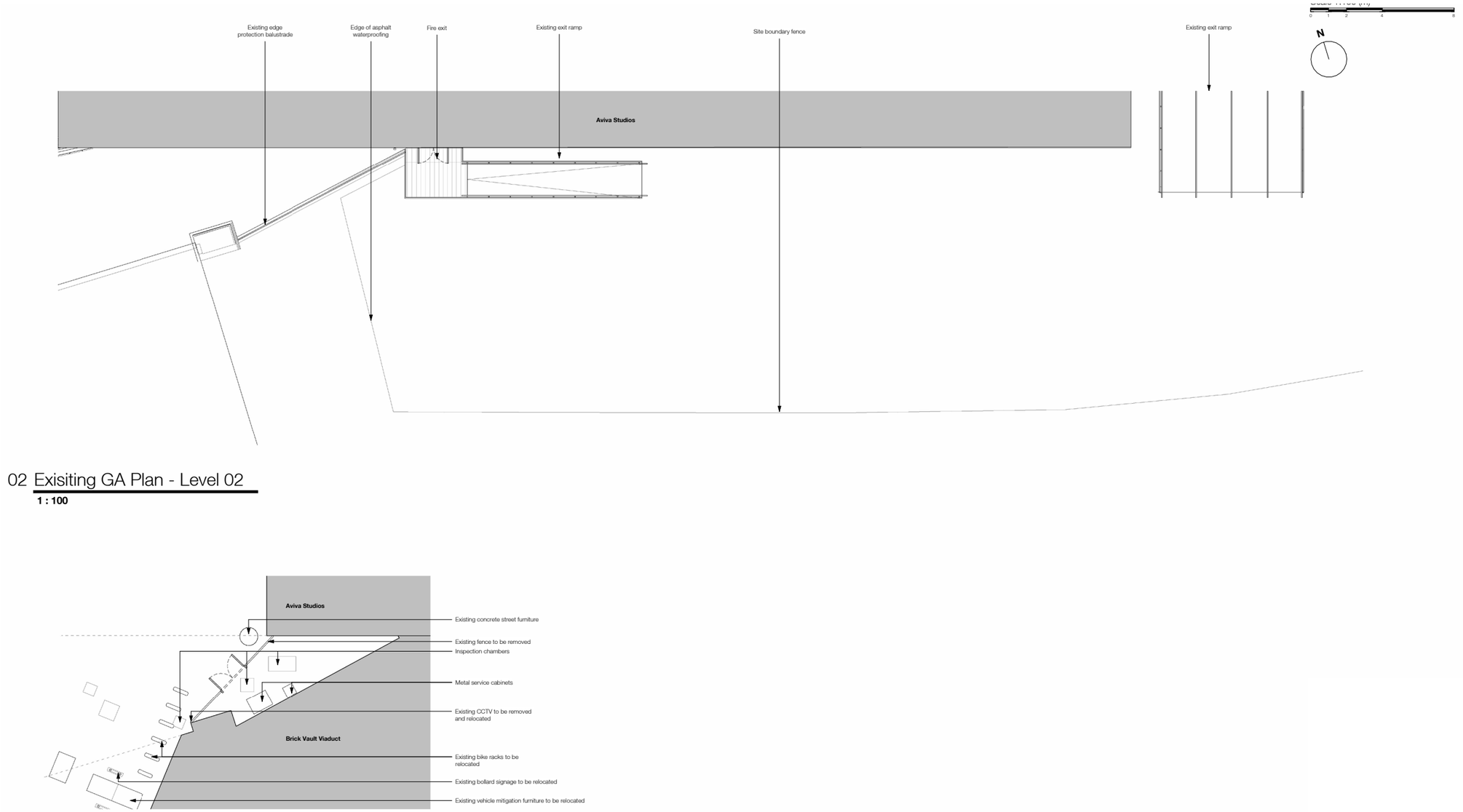
The structure remained a working piece of railway infrastructure for over a century:

1. 1975: British Rail officially closed the Liverpool Road Goods Depot due to the decline of traditional rail freight.
2. 1978–1983: Greater Manchester Council purchased the site. They began a restoration campaign to convert the derelict depot into the world's first museum dedicated to the industrial revolution.
3. Present Day: The viaduct stands as a Grade II listed asset. It is a vital structural asset that demonstrates how Victorian engineers used advanced metallurgy to solve complex transport problems.



Ordnance Survey, national grid maps, 1972

Existing drawings



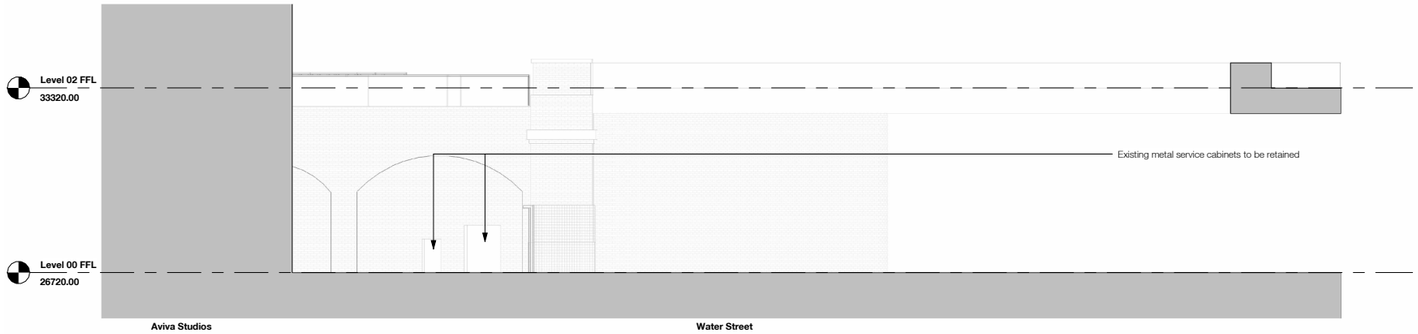
02 Exisiting GA Plan - Level 02

1 : 100

01 Exisiting GA Plan - Level 00

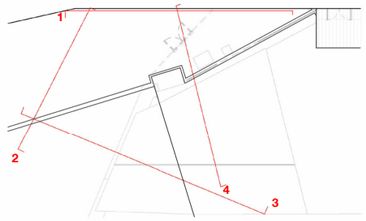
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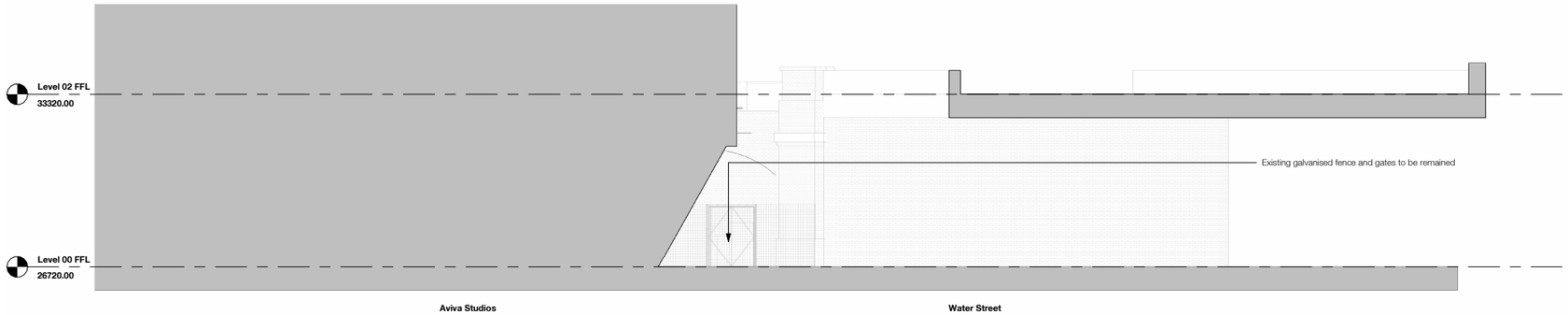
Existing GA plans – Level 00 (Water Street) and Level 02 (top of viaduct)



01 Elevation 1

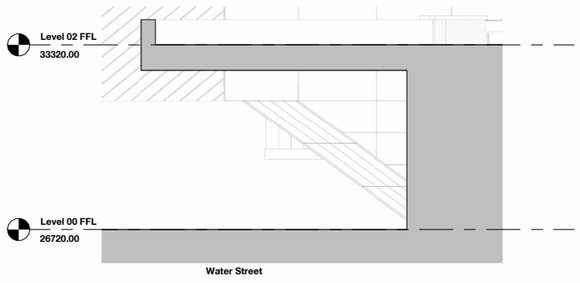
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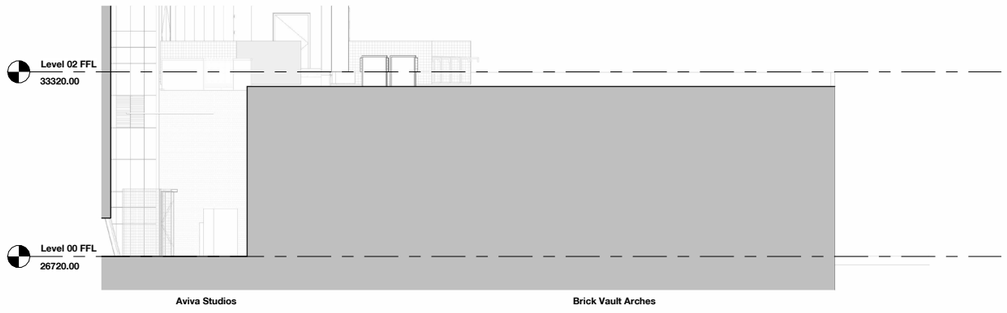
02 Elevation 2

1 : 100



03 Elevation 3

1 : 100



04 Elevation 4

1 : 100

Existing elevations

Assessing the significance of the heritage asset

Archaeological interest

The comprehensive redevelopment of the site in the 19th century associated with the development of the railway will likely have removed any previous archaeological features associated with earlier periods. The proposed external stair does not require foundations and does not require any excavation.

Archaeological and artistic interest

While the architectural and artistic interest of the viaduct is high, the northern brick section of viaduct forming the site is of lower value than the southern, cast iron colonnaded section. The overall asset is an intact example of mid to late Victorian ironwork engineering. Its aesthetic appeal lies in its rhythm of slender cast iron columns. Its functional, spatial design allowed upper level rail haulage while preserving ground level space for busy warehouse operations.

Historic interest

The historic interest of the viaduct is high as it provides illustrative and associative value regarding the growth of the London and North Western Railway (LNWR). It captures Manchester's transition into an industrial goods capital and stands as physical evidence of the over century long freight use of the site.

Contribution of Setting to Significance

National policy explicitly reinforces that significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting. The setting of the Colonnaded Viaduct is critical to its comprehension and makes an exceptional contribution to its overall significance:

- Spatial Context: The viaduct bridges the gap between the historic track network and the 1880 Lower Byrom Street Warehouse
- Group Value: It sits nestled within a dense landscape of railway heritage. This includes the Grade I listed 1830 Warehouse and George Stephenson's 1830 Viaduct
- Cohesive Setting: This industrial landscape forms an unbroken, highly authentic visual enclave within the Castlefield Conservation Area. It directly illustrates the evolution of cargo handling across a century of innovation

Design mitigation

The proposals use the following strategies to limit impact upon the Grade II listed asset:

Physical impact

An initial options appraisal, included within the Design and Access Statement, assessed the heritage impact of each potential route, and directly informed the preferred solution. The proposals are fully reversible, requiring no alteration to the heritage asset beyond the localised drilling to brickwork for fixings associated with the modifications to the existing CCTV installation.

Material distinction

The proposed staircase has a clean, modern aesthetic using colour and materials aligned to Aviva Studios. This provides a clear architectural distinction between old and new.

Footprint and alignment

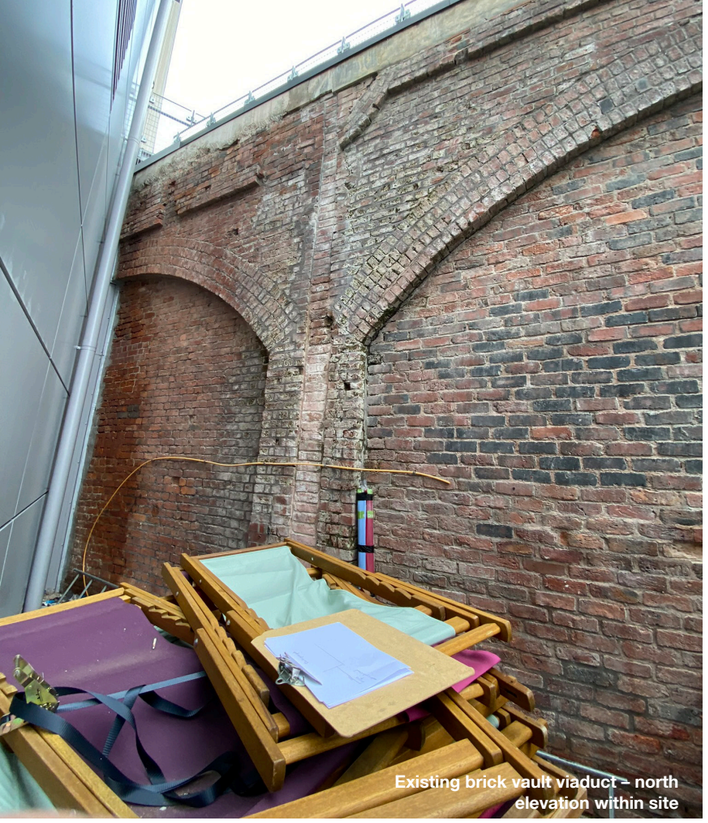
The staircase is positioned within a triangular space between the northern face of the viaduct and Aviva Studios. This placement minimises impact of the new stair in key view corridors along Water Street and within the Castlefield Conservation Area.

Impact assessment

The proposed design has carefully considered both strategic position and detailed composition and material/colour to ensure conservation of the heritage asset. In accordance with the decision making framework of the NPPF, the proposals are deemed to create Less than Substantial Harm by minimising any proposed physical modification to the asset and minimising impact on strategic views within the Castlefield Conservation Area.

Public benefits and policy justification

The NPPF requires that any "Less than Substantial Harm" be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. The proposals can be justified as the additional exit route will provide the ability for the public to experience larger capacity events in different formats than is currently available at Aviva Studios.



Existing brick vault viaduct – north elevation within site



Existing brick vault viaduct – north elevation within site



Existing brick vault viaduct – north elevation within site

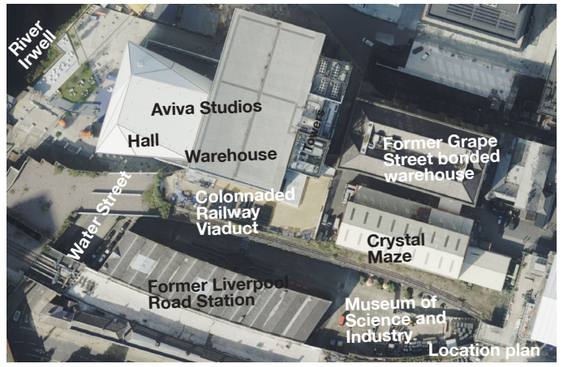


Existing brick vault viaduct – wider north elevation



Existing brick vault viaduct – abutment to Water Street bridge

Setting of surrounding heritage assets
Identifying heritage assets and their significance



The listed brick vault viaduct forms part of the significant group of historic buildings associated with the early development of the railway.

Former Grape Street Bonded Warehouse (Grade II)

Heritage category:	Listed building
Grade:	II
List entry number:	1457402
Date first listed:	31 July 2018
List entry name:	Former Grape Street railway bonded warehouse
Location description:	Quay Street, Manchester, M3 3JE
District:	Manchester (Metropolitan Authority)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
National grid reference:	SJ8307297946

Details

Former railway bonded warehouse, built 1867 to 1868 for the London and North Western Railway; it underwent internal modifications in the C20 and early C21.

Materials: red brick construction with blue engineering brick detailing including banding and quoins, with Welsh slate roof coverings.

Plan: the warehouse has a rectangular footprint and is orientated east west. There are six floors including a lower and upper ground floor.

Exterior: five and a half storeys, with four storeys to the south side where the ground level is higher, beneath hipped roofs of slate. All windows have segmental heads, brick voussoirs, blue brick keystones and reveals, ashlar springers and cills, and are fitted with metal multi pane casements. Taking in doors are timber with glazed uppers. Ground floor entrances are fitted with double battened timber doors.

The 12 bay north elevation has six loading bays arranged in three pairs, with taking in doors to the first to fourth floors, and the remains of brackets for the hoists above. The ground floors of the loading bays have small window openings. The other bays have tall, wide, arched entrances to the ground floor, and arched windows to the upper floors. The six bay west elevation has two loading bays with taking in doors and three lower ground floor doors. The ground level at the southern end of this elevation is higher and there is another door at first floor level (formerly access for an internal railway line). The 12 bay south elevation has three large first floor doors where the railway tracks would have originally entered the warehouse. The remainder of this elevation has a similar arrangement to the north elevation, but has three single loading bays. The east elevation is largely blind, with a regular arrangement of arched recesses and there is a first floor door to the higher south end (similar to that on the west elevation). Part of the east elevation's lower floors is obscured by the attached former stable block. The building has a dentilled parapet. At the top of the west elevation is a painted sign reading 'Bonded Warehouse'. Behind the parapet is the twin hipped roof housing some C20 plant.

Interior: it was not possible to gain access to the buildings, and the following description is based on other available information. All of the floors are supported by cast iron cruciform and circular-hollow columns. The lower and upper ground floor levels are also supported by substantial brick piers, some of which have blue brick quoins and chamfer detailing to the corners. Along the southern edge of the lower ground floor are sections of brick arches. The three lower floors are fire proof constructions with wrought iron girders and brick jack arch ceilings. The upper three levels have timber floors. Most of the ceilings are covered in modern ceiling tiles. The lower four floors are subdivided by C20 and C21 plasterboard and concrete block partitions to form office and studio spaces, and there are several C20 and C21 inserted stairs and lift shafts, particularly on the north side of the building. The upper two floors remain as large open spaces. The top floor is open to the roof and is topped by a twin queen post roof structure, within which there are the remains of the original hoist machinery.



Setting of surrounding heritage assets
Identifying heritage assets and their significance

Old Warehouse to North of Former Liverpool Road Railway

Heritage category: Listed building
Grade: I
List entry number: 1282991
Date first listed: 8 May 1973
List entry name: Old Warehouse to North of Former Liverpool Road Railway Station
District: Manchester (Metropolitan Authority)
Parish: Non Civil Parish
National grid reference: SJ 82990 97886

Details

Railway warehouse. c.1830, together with Liverpool Road Railway Station (q.v.), by George Stephenson and his son Robert; altered. Red brick in Flemish bond, with sandstone dressings and slate roofs. Long slightly curved plan, convex to the railway line and concave to the rear. Three storeys but presenting only 2 storeys to the raised level of the track, 10 individually gabled bays arranged in pairs, with slotted pilasters between each pair and at both ends, a moulded stone cornice (carried round the whole), a small lunette on the cornice in the centre of each bay, and stone gable copings linked by short flats. In each pair of bays (except the 5th pair, at the right hand end), one bay has a segmental headed wagon archway with stone surround, three small segmental headed barred windows above the archway with linked sills and wedge lintels (except the fourth bay where the wagon entrance has been raised so as to leave only the heads of the windows) and one 2 stage loading slot to left or right, and the other bay has two loading slots. The last pair of bays both have the wagon archway form. The right hand loading slot in the third bay has a hoist pulley over the lintel, and apparently altered brickwork over the other loading slots suggests that all were formerly equipped with similar hoists. The left hand return wall has (inter alia) a small pediment to the centre, with an oculus; the three storey six window right hand return wall has a doorway with stone surround at the left end of the ground floor, two segmental headed doorways at first floor level, and narrow rectangular windows diminishing in the height. The three storey rear, with cornice and lunettes like the front, and pilasters which have small windows, has three stage loading slots arranged singly or in pairs corresponding to those at the front, with hoists over all except one at the west end and two at the east end, doorways with stone surrounds next to the single slots, and small rectangular barred windows with wedge lintels. Interior: timber construction visible.



Railway Viaduct Linking Bridge Over Irwell to Liverpool Road Station

Heritage category: Listed building
Grade: II
List entry number: 1254726
Date first listed: 20 June 1988
Date of most recent amendment 6 June 1994
List entry name: Railway Viaduct Linking Bridge Over Irwell to Liverpool Road Station
District: Manchester (Metropolitan Authority)
Parish: Non Civil Parish
National grid reference: SJ 82918 97896

Details

Railway viaduct, with attached animal ramp at east end of south side, including bridge carrying railway line over Water Street to former Liverpool Road Station. 1830 with bridge rebuilt 1905. Brick viaduct, iron bridge. Viaduct has arcade of segmental arches (that at the west end with springing built into stone abutment of bridge over river); animal ramp attached at right angles, also of brick with parapets and cobbled deck. Iron girder bridge over street. Retaining wall to Water Street with monumental banding. Although rebuilt, forms integral element of railway structures associated with Liverpool Road Station, the first passenger railway station in the world, linking it to the bridge over the river Irwell.



Heritage impact assessment

Impact on significance

The construction of the additional external exit route will have an impact on the significance of the heritage asset. As detailed in the options appraisal section of the DAS, it is not feasible to locate the route in an alternative location.

There are a large number of heritage assets in the surrounding area, and these will not be affected by the development due to intervening built form and scale of the development.

Avoiding harmful impact

The NPPF stresses that impacts on heritage assets should be avoided. This section describes how impact is to be avoided or minimised, and should be read in conjunction with the DAS.

Justification of harmful impact

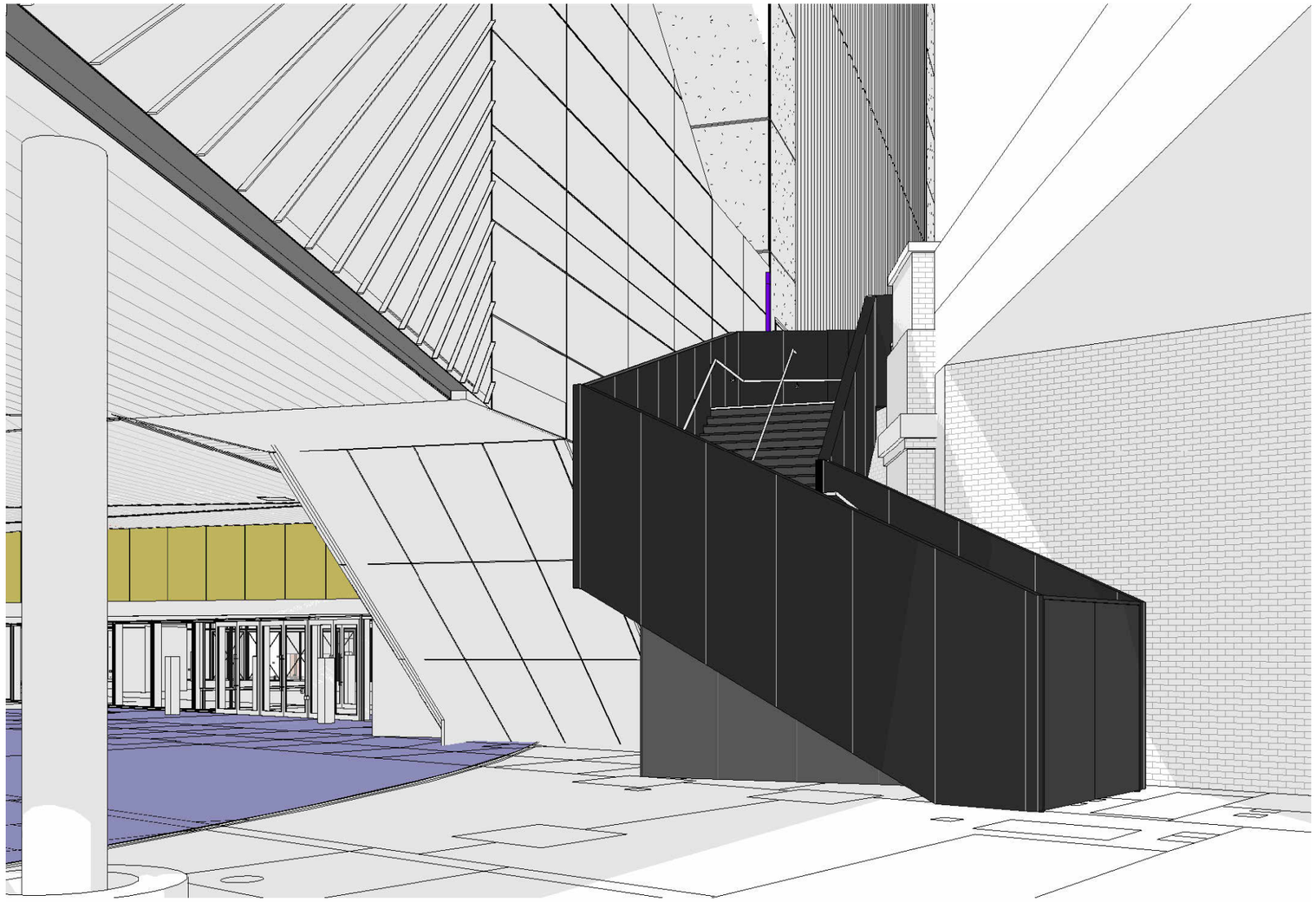
If it is recognised that despite the efforts to avoid and minimise harmful impact and enhance significance described in the previous section, the proposals will result in some harmful impact to the heritage asset. Justification for this impact is described below.

A new external exit route is required to enable events with occupancies of over 5,000 to be accommodated at Aviva Studios.

This will expand the types of performance and event which can be hosted with the associated public benefits.

Recording

Photographs indicating existing views of the viaduct and its surroundings have been included with this report and the DAS. No further recording is currently understood to be required.



Water Street – proposed view from West

Conclusions

The addition of an additional external exit route to the south of Aviva Studios requires careful consideration of its impact upon the significant group of surrounding historic buildings and structures. The initial options appraisal contained at pages 10 and 11 of the Design and Access Statement considered heritage impact as one of the key aspects of viability.

In developing proposals for the additional exit route, we have adopted several design principles to ensure that its impact is mitigated. These are

1. The proposed exit route is not attached to the listed brick vault structure, it is supported from Water Street, bridging over the existing parapet, and spanning onto the viaduct top.
2. The ramped walkway at the upper level is supported by concealed metal spreader plates sat on the top of the brick vaults, no penetrating fixings are proposed.
3. The stair geometry maximises the available space between the new stair and the historic structure.

In considering the appropriate form and materials for the new stair, the visual impact upon the existing brick elevation was balanced against the practical need to ensure that the new stair could not be confused as a new entrance to Aviva Studios. This negated consideration of a more transparent design approach.

The proposed new stair continues the design language of the existing and adjacent Aviva Studios exit stair enclosure to the new stair through a solid, geometric form, with black metal cladding.

The current close range views of this section of elevation of the brick vault viaduct will be impacted through being partially obscured by the new stair, however the primary area of interest, namely and abutment detailing would remain unobscured from the majority of viewpoints.

Balancing the limited impact of the setting of the heritage asset against the principals of minimising harm and enhancing significance, it is considered that the proposals would result in less than substantial harm. The proposals can be justified as the additional exit route will provide the ability for the public to experience larger capacity events in different formats than is currently available at Aviva Studios.

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