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Heritage Impact Assessment

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1. Summary of Heritage Impact Assessment

1.1. Introduction and Methodology

Donald Insall Associates were commissioned by HY CO Group Limited in September 2025 to assist them in the development of proposals for the adaptive reuse of Marlsbro House, 52-54 Newton Street, Manchester.

This assessment has been prepared in accordance with the requirement of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024), 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 and Historic England Advice Note 12' (2019); IEMA, IHBC and CIfA: 'Principles of Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment in the UK' (2021).

This report is based on the Heritage Impact Assessment (DIA, 2021) undertaken prior to subsequent strip-out works. The investigation comprised historical research, using both archival and secondary material and consulting the relevant Historic Environment Record (HER), and a site inspection. An illustrated history of the site and building, with sources of reference and bibliography, is in Section 2; the site survey findings are in Section 3. The investigation established the significance of the building, which is set out in Section 4 and summarised below.

The specific constraints for this building are outlined below. This report has been drafted to inform the design of proposals for the building, by Archer Humphryes Architects and Section 5 provides a justification of the scheme according to the relevant legislation, planning policy and guidance.

1.2. The Building, its Legal Status and Policy Context

Marlsbro House is a Grade II-listed building located in the Stevenson Square Conservation Area in the City of Manchester.

Within the immediate setting are the following listed buildings:

- Newton Buildings, 50 Newton Street (Grade II)
- Former Newton Street Police Station (Grade II)
- 45 and 47 Newton Street (Grade II)
- 49 Newton Street (Grade II)
- 50-62 Port Street (Grade II)
- 45, 47, 47a Hilton Street (Grade II)

Within its wider setting are:

- Fourways House (Grade II)
- Former Rochdale Canal Warehouse (Grade II*)
- Bradley House (Grade II)
- 29 and 31 Dale Street (Grade II)

Alterations to a listed building generally require listed building consent; development in conservation areas or within the setting of a listed building or conservation area 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 Stevenson Square Conservation Area provided by the local planning authority is in

Appendix II alongside full relevant extracts of relevant law, policy and guidance for change in the historic environment 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. Sections 16 and 66 of the Act impose statutory duties 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. Section 72 requires local authorities to pay special regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

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.

Of further relevance are the saved policies from the **Unitary Development Plan (1995)** including DC 18 Conservation Areas which draws attention to the desirability of retaining existing features in preserving and enhancing the character of designated conservation areas. Policy DC19 Listed Buildings further indicates that the council will have special regard to securing the retention, restoration, maintenance and continued use of listed buildings.

1.2.3. The National Planning Policy Framework

The courts have held that following the approach set out in the policies on the historic environment in the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) 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).

The Framework requires local planning authorities to look for positive opportunities for new development within conservation areas and within the setting of heritage assets. Proposals that preserve positive elements or enhance/ better reveal their significance, are required to be treated favourably (219).

1.2.4. The Draft National Planning Policy Framework

The draft NPPF December 2025 which has been issued for consultation is also a material consideration, which includes a new structure of the chapter 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment'.

Policy HE4 would stipulate that heritage assets 'should be conserved and enhanced in a manner appropriate to their significance'; it also includes new policies relating to the historic environment.

Policy HE6 stipulates that 'substantial weight should be given to the asset's conservation' and that 'development proposal which would have a positive effect on designated heritage assets should be approved.' Policy HE6 also states that 'important public benefits can include securing the long-term re-use of a vacant or underused listed building and enabling energy efficiency and low carbon heating measures to be employed' and that such benefits can outweigh harm.

1.3. Summary Assessment of Significance

1.3.1. Marlsbro House

A detailed assessment of significance with guidance on the relative significance of elements of setting, fabric and plan form and the extent to which these elements are sensitive to alteration is included in Section 4 of this report.

The following paragraphs are a summary explaining why the listed building and conservation area are considered of nationally-important architectural and historical interest.

Marlsbro House is Grade II-listed and is located within the Stevenson Square Conservation Area. As one of Manchester's most recent listings, Historic England's description is detailed and it summarises that the building is primarily listed for its architectural and historic interest: as a rare early example of heavy-timber floor construction - which strongly influenced the mid-19th century design of industrial buildings in the USA; for its unusual roof construction and use of iron ring-beams within the walls - all of which is little altered. Its historic interest comes from its role as early-19th century former factory in the world's first industrial city, located outside the more typical mill areas of Ancoats and Chorlton-on-Medlock.

In terms of its **cultural and communal value** - whilst Marlsbro House has been a key component of Manchester's music scene for the past 10 years, it ultimately lacks the same musical heritage significance as some of the other studio spaces in Greater Manchester with affiliations to the punk movement of the 1970s and the 'Madchester' scene of the 1980s and 90s. Nevertheless, it represents the continuation of a DIY approach to Manchester's live music culture, one which involves the appropriate of the city's robust post-industrial fabric to provide affordable and authentic spaces in which artists and musicians can rehearse, record and perform.[1]

1 This report goes some way to recording the building's previous uses in order to ascertain its communal value – compiled from archival research and secondary sources - this knowledge could be furthered with the assistance of those who have occupied and used the building.

Externally, the building has been much-altered but retains its original form, fenestration pattern (but not windows), roof and late-Victorian fire escapes – these elements of the building are of **moderate to high significance.** The chequerboard render distinguishes this building from others in the area and makes it a local landmark however it has significantly compromised its legibility as a historic mill and poses a major risk to the historic fabric.

Despite the alterations to the building, **internally** it retains elements of the original mill structure and subsequent historic features, including:

- Cast iron columns and ring beams
- Timber beams
- Timber floorboards
- Timber stair and glazed stair enclosure (the latter at first floor)
- Brickwork to external walls
- Fenestration pattern
- Timber clad lift shaft and car
- The composite timber and iron roof structure
- Timber panelling to the eaves and exit stairs at attic level (fourth floor)
- Interwar 'cold room' in the attic
- Remaining lifting mechanisms – attic level
- Attic windows (though many have been replaced).

The internal partitions have now been removed and revealed the original open plan spaces and features of the building. These spaces and the above elements are of **evidential, aesthetic and historic value** in understanding the original and evolved use of the building and are of **moderate to high significance.** Most of the internal 1960 and later alterations (largely now removed) are of little or no significance, but further detail of these can be found in Section 4 of this report.

The building has been stood vacant for a number of years and is suffering from water ingress with a number of areas now suffering from deterioration of fabric.

1.3.2. Stevenson Square Conservation Area

The area retains its historic street pattern laid down in the late-18th century and overset by Victorian industrial development; with principal streets such as Oldham Street, Piccadilly, Newton Street, Port Street, Dale Street, Hilton Street and Stevenson Square and narrower lanes such as Little Lever Street. The urban grain of Stevenson Square, Oldham Street and Newton Street is tight – bar the obvious open space at Stevenson Square – and most buildings are distinctive with large footprints, placed hard up against the pavements in the main streets and often the narrower lanes – creating a canyon effect. There is an unusual survival of buildings predating 1850, including 69-77 Lever Street as well as many fine Victorian and Edwardian buildings, many of which are listed – most at Grade II.

The large surviving Victorian warehouses are of high architectural value and are a dominant characteristic of the area of analysis, however the original character of the area was largely consistent of early brick cotton mills, which no longer is readily evident to the passerby. The majority of the buildings are commercial, though regeneration has seen the conversion of the former post office depot and mills to residential use. There are elements of the original canal network/basins around Hilton Street and Ancoats, some of the wharves and warehouse sites have been redeveloped for housing, whilst some open areas have remained as surface carparks – allowing a series of long-range views particularly towards Marlsbro House. The remaining dense urban layout of the area affords short-to-mid-range views of the varying streetscapes. In townscape terms, Newton Street has a fragmented and disconnected nature and it frames views north towards Ancoats. Its remaining historic buildings often stand in isolation, and in a pronounced contrast with nearby new developments.[2]

Marlsbro House is prominently sited at the junction of Hilton Street and Newton Street. It is also bound by Faraday Street to the north-east and the rears of property on Port Street to the south-east. It is a prominent building both within and outwith the conservation area and whilst its former use a cotton mill is largely concealed beneath its chequerboard render, it has a distinct landmark character – which divides opinion. Its rear elevation with late-Victorian fire escapes and roofscape suggests a more historic industrial use and belie its otherwise modern appearance.

1.4. Summary of Proposals and Justification

The proposals for Marlsbro House are centred on the sensitive adaptive reuse of a vacant and deteriorating Grade II listed Victorian mill, delivering high-quality co-working and office accommodation on the upper floors, a restaurant and lounge at ground floor, and recording studios, listening spaces and a bar at basement level.

Building on previously approved enabling works, including the removal of later partitions, asbestos remediation and trial fabric repairs, the scheme represents a major stage in securing the building's sustainable long-term use. Externally, the proposals include the removal of inappropriate cement render, the replacement of unsympathetic 1960s fenestration, the creation of a new public-facing entrance, and enhancements to the rear yard, alongside a replacement fire escape. Internally, the works will introduce carefully considered partitions, repair and redecorate historic fabric and improve thermal performance, better revealing the building's historic volumes and historic mill character. While some elements of the proposals would result in minor-moderate 'less than substantial' harm through the loss of limited features and historic fabric, these impacts have been minimised through a heritage-led design process and are substantially outweighed by the benefits of inserting a new use into the building which will secure its repair and long-term conservation, provide an enhanced appreciation of its significance and draw wider positive effects on the historic character and distinctiveness of the Stevenson Square Conservation Area and the Northern Quarter.

2 SLHA, Marlsbro House Heritage Appraisal, 2019, p49

The proposals have been developed within the statutory and policy framework governing heritage assets, including the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the heritage policies of the NPPF. These set a high threshold for change, requiring decision-makers to give great weight to the conservation of designated heritage assets while allowing 'less than substantial' harm to be weighed against the public benefits of a proposal where clear and convincing justification is provided. Although the scheme involves some limited harm, this has been demonstrably justified in the context of securing the building's optimum viable use. When assessed as a whole, the proposals are fully aligned with national and local heritage policy objectives, satisfying statutory duties by preserving and enhancing the significance of the listed building, and supporting sustainable development through the long-term conservation, active use and reintegration of Marlsbro House into its historic context.

2. Historical Background

This history is drawn from a Heritage Appraisal carried out by Stephen Levrant Heritage Architecture, July 2019 which is referenced accordingly and by additional archive research.

2.1. The Development of the Surrounding Area

The site and its immediate surroundings were part of the Lever Estate and in 1780 the area now bounded by Great Ancoats Street, Oldham Street, Piccadilly and Dean Street was purchased from Sir Ashton Lever by William Stevenson. Stevenson planned a genteel suburb on the edge of the town and sold the land in parcels to a series of speculators. What emerged was a grid of streets meeting at Stevenson Square.

Although some genteel housing was constructed, the area failed to establish the intended polite, residential, character. It quickly became attractive to the builders of densely-packed worker's housing, which was accompanied by large-scale industrial developments. By 1800, the area contained several cotton mills, including Thomas Houldsworth's enterprise on Newton Street (1796) **[Plate 2.1]**. The area was transformed by the arrival of a series of Victorian infrastructural and commercial pursuits which turned Manchester into a powerful industrial and commercial centre.

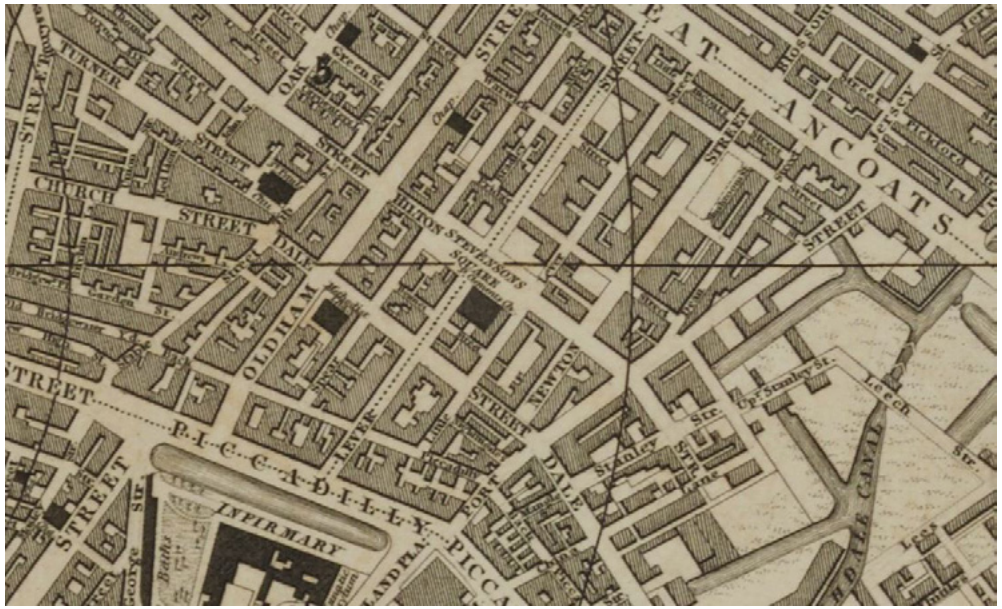
The effects quickly spread and by 1832 Stevenson Square was engulfed by infill development **[Plate 2.2]**. Two decades later, the Square was but a widening in the thoroughfare which sat at the centre of a largely industrial area containing Taylor's thread winding mill and the expanding Newton Street mills alongside a multitude of industrial enterprises **[Plate 2.3]**. Whilst the area's residential population was in decline, Lever Street Methodist Chapel (1848] and the new Methodist Central Hall on Oldham Street (1856) – and a number of pubs and inns – emerged to serve its workers and commercial visitors.

These trends continued in the second half of the 19th century as the area consolidated its emerging identity as a commercial textile warehousing centre **[Plate 2.4]**. This was reflected in the development of a series of impressive purpose built warehouses and associated offices on Dale, Newton and Hilton Streets from the 1870s onwards.

Simultaneously, the main thoroughfare of Oldham Street in particular established itself in a complementary retail role that was increasingly dominated by drapery and haberdashery, supported by hostelries and eating establishments. By 1893, the series of civic amenities had grown to include the police station, post office a variety of inns, pubs and hotels as well as the tram network **[Plate 2.5]**. By the late-19th century, the area's retail had become increasingly specialised towards clothing and a number of purpose-built shops were created in the early-20th century. Textile manufacturing fared less well, the British cotton industry reaching its peak in 1912 and entering a slow decline after 1918. By the 1920s and 30s the tram network had expanded, with a transfer node at Stevenson Square.

Following World War II, the area's retail diversified and shops were modernised, re-fronted and amalgamated. The 1970s closure of Smithfield Market and the construction of the Arndale Centre resulted in high levels of high street vacancy in both retail and warehouse properties - the resultant vacancy and dereliction was particularly visible on Oldham Street.

Demolition and redevelopment has occurred within the area, particularly in the north, and yet both the historic street layout and general footprints of buildings visible in 1956 have generally been retained **[Plate 2.6]**. The tram network has been consolidated and Stevenson Square has now transformed into an commercial and leisure node within the area as part of its rebranding as the 'Northern Quarter' as part of regeneration efforts beginning in the 1990s. Numerous residential and commercial conversion projects have since been undertaken in the Stevenson Square Conservation Area (designated in 1987) transforming into a vibrant commercial and creative district within the city centre.



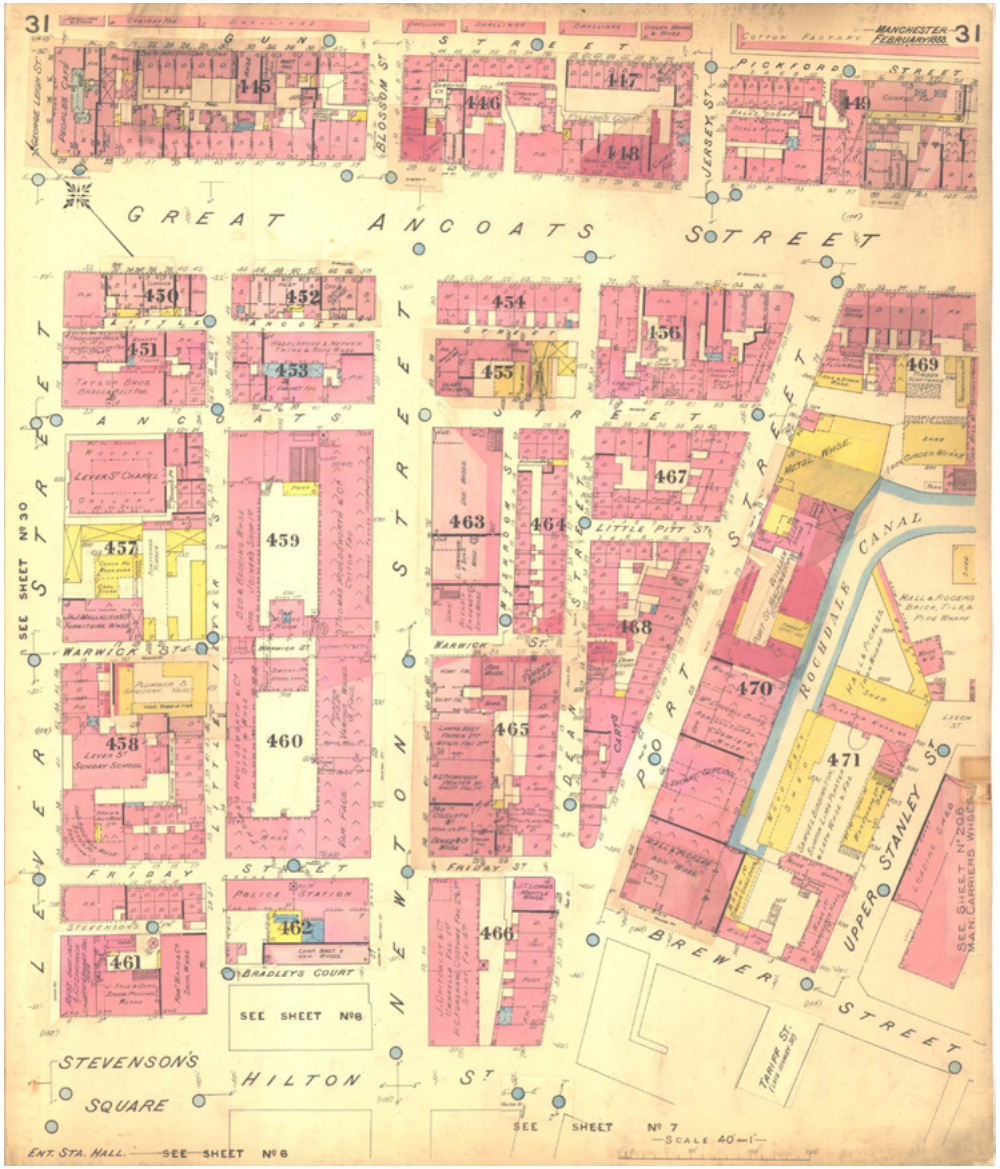
2.2 1832 A New Plan of Manchester and Salford with their vicinities. Manchester University Collection



2.1 1800 Plan of Manchester and Salford. Manchester University Collection



2.3 1851 Ordnance Survey Map. Manchester University Collection



2.4 Charles Goad Fire Insurance Plan 31, 1888, Manchester Archives



2.5 1893 Ordnance Survey Map. Manchester University Collection



2.6 1956 Ordnance Survey map, Manchester Archives

2.2. The Building

Alternative names: *Samuel Barker's Factory, 39 Hilton Street / 52 & 54 Newton Street, Newton Street Ironworks, Wren & Bennet's Machine Works, Tri-Ton Works, Marlsbro House*

2.2.1. Previous Buildings on the Site

The site of the present Marlsbro House was first developed following the sale of land between Lever and Stevenson in 1780 and 1794. The 1800 Plan of Manchester and Salford shows the site partially developed with a building at the centre of the plot, fronting Newton Street and by 1811, the plot had been fully developed **[Plates 2.7 and 2.8]**. It is thought to have been built by Samuel Barker.

In 1818, it was occupied by at least 27 tenants, of which the individual spinning companies employed a workforce of c.159. The spinning factory appears to follow the steam-powered room-and-power model, however the building was occupied by other businesses including a metal spinner.[3] At this time, the mill was described as 'dirty', 'ill-regulated and disorderly'.[4] It is first shown in any detail in c.1822 in the *Plans of all the Spinning Factories within the township of Manchester* (c.1822). In the plan, Block a) was a seven-storey factory, Block b) the four-storey engine house and workshops and Block c) was five-storey factory wing above the entrance gateway off Hilton Street **[Plate 2.9]**.

3 'Room-and-power' spinning mills allowed companies that could not afford or did not wish to invest in their own premises the option of renting floor space and access to a power source - some were purpose-built by speculators, whilst others were converted from existing mills.
4 Parliament, 1818, p227

The last mention of Samuel Barker comes from the total destruction of his cotton factory in Newton Street by a fire in February 1823, which was reported in a local newspaper: ' a most dreadful fire broke out on Tuesday week, in Mr Barker's factory, Newton Street, Manchester, which raged with unusual violence, until the whole building, with its contents, were entirely consumed'.[5]

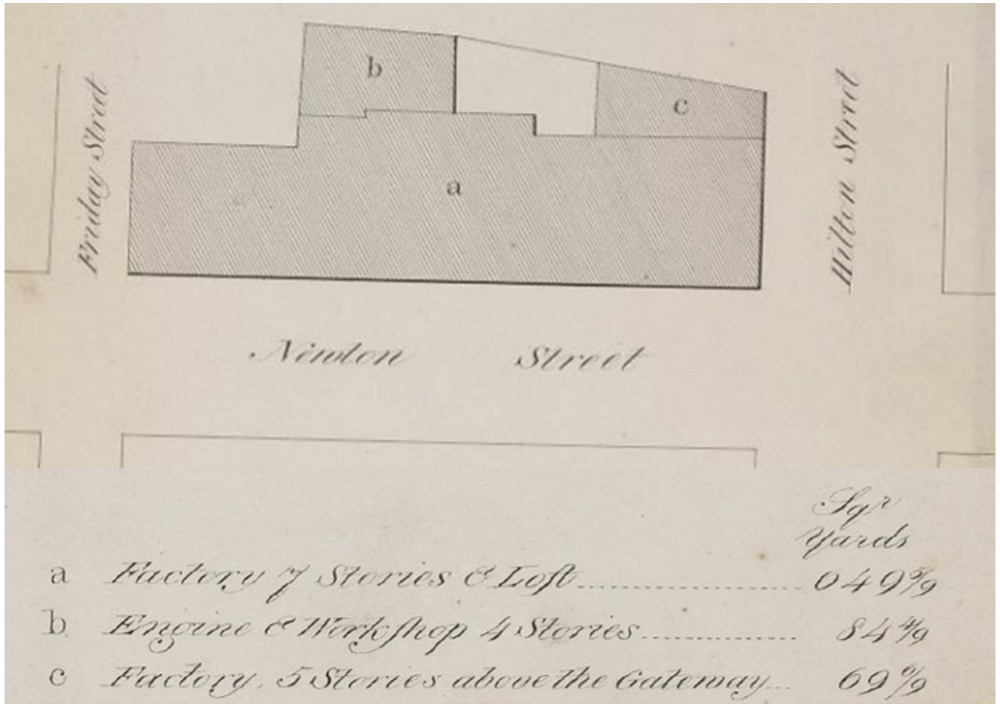


2.7 1800 Plan of Manchester and Salford. Manchester University Collection

5 *Lancaster Gazette and General Advertiser*, 15 February 1823



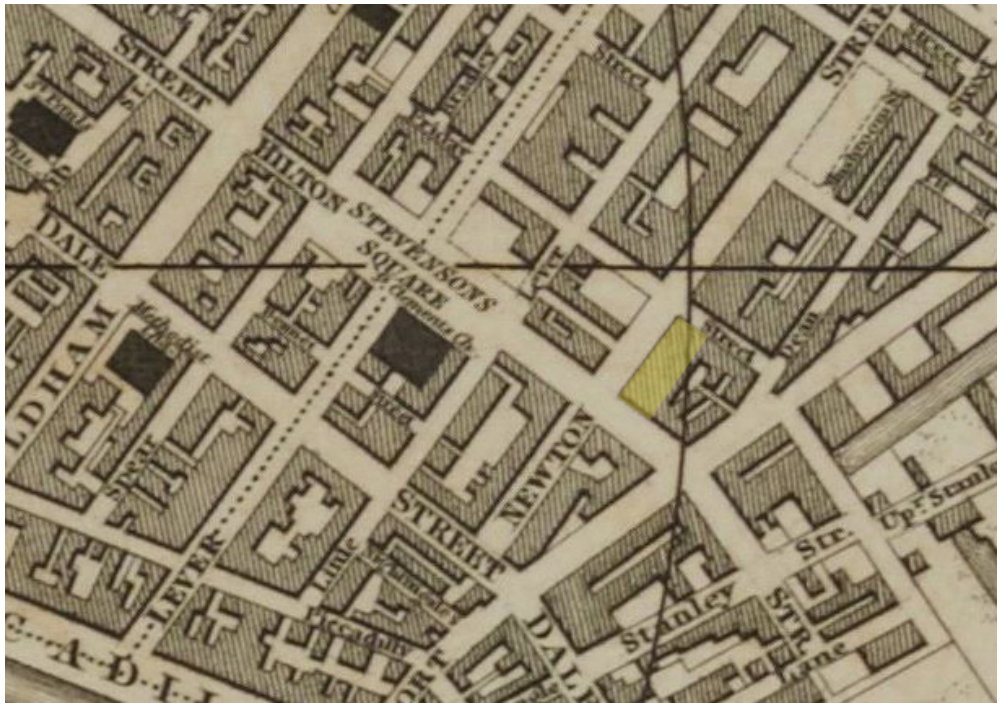
2.8 1811 Plan of Manchester and Salford. Manchester University Collection



2.9 c.1822 Plan of Samuel Barker's Factory, from Plans of all the Spinning Factories within the township of Manchester

2.2.2. Initial Construction and Form

The site was quickly redeveloped, presumably by Barker, following the fire of 1823. Its front elevation – with central four bays projecting forward - resembling that of New Mill (1804). It was erected in red brick, cast iron and timber, with a large chimneystack to the rear and an engine house over the rear yard. Perhaps as a result of the fate of the previous building, it was given a slow-burning internal structure, comprising single rows of slender cast iron columns directly supporting spine beams and thick plank floors.[6] The 1832 *New Plan of Manchester and Salford* shows the site redeveloped by this time with a large rectangular block fronting Newton Street, elevations to Hilton and Friday Streets and access to the rear via an alley off Port Street **[Plate 2.10]**.



2.10 1832 A New Plan of Manchester and Salford with their vicinities. Manchester University Collection

6 English Heritage, 2008, p23

2.2.3. 1820s to 1850s: From Cotton Mill to Ironworks

In the 1830s, Barker's factory was sold and put to a different use. The earliest visual representation of the building – other than in maps - is an engraving produced by engineer James Nasmyth from c.1832 **[Plate 2.11]**. Taken from memory it cannot be completely relied upon – it does feature the kneelered gable and chimneystack to the rear but is represented with seven storeys above ground (it is only five, plus basements). Nasmyth rented space in the building in the foreground fronting Dale Street from Wren & Bennett – engineers who also occupied the study site as an engineering works at this time – the 'X's on the illustration denote Nasmyth's flat and the 'R' denotes the study site.[7] Wren & Bennett were known as millwrights and sewing machine manufacturers, they also produced newspaper printing machines, as well as large castings such as water wheels and iron window shutters for Benjamin Heywood's bank in St Ann's Square.

On the dissolution of Wren & Bennett in 1851, their properties were sold, which included their Newton Street works in April 1851.[8] The advert mentioned three premises:

1st A substantial and recently-erected BUILDING, used as an engineering and millwright's shop, of the dimensions of 145 ft. 6in. in length, fronting Newton-street, and 42ft. 6in. in breadth, four storeys high, and attic. Also various outbuildings adjoining, used as smithies, &c., a steam-engine of 14 horse power, with the gearing attached.

2nd A PLOT of LAND, opposite the last-mentioned, of the dimensions of 54ft. 8in. frontage to Newton-street, and 59ft. 6in. frontage to Friday-street, which may be let with the last mentioned premises.

3rd A Large WORKSHOP, six storeys high, with attics, situate at the corner of Newton-street, Port-street, and Dale-street, having a frontage to street of 162ft., to Port-street of 130 ft. 6in., and Dale-street of 21ft. 3in. —Possession may be had in March next.

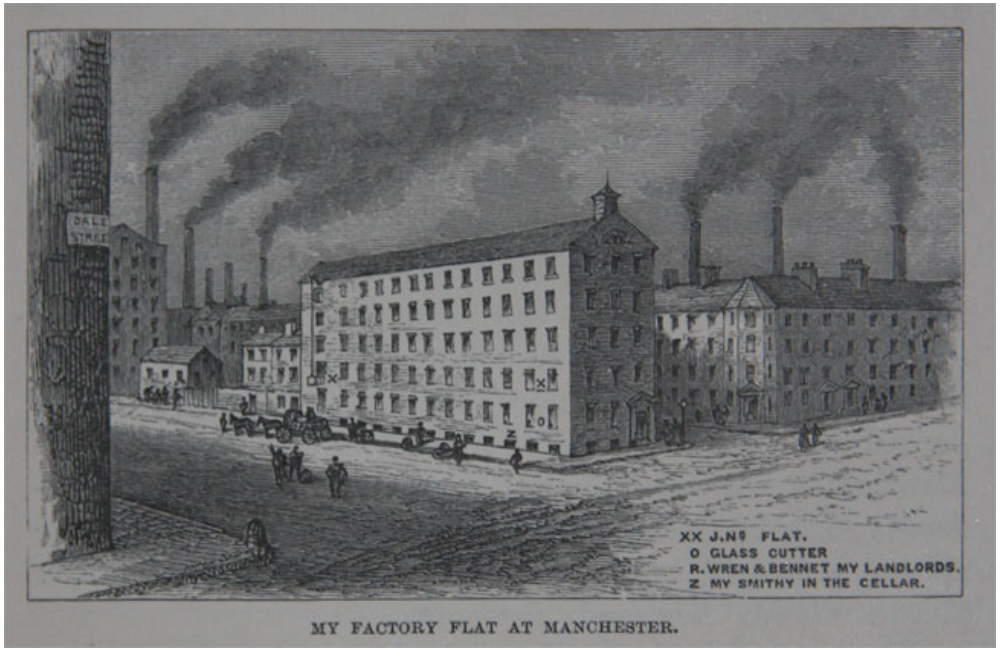
For further particulars, apply at the office of DAVID BELLHOUSE and SONS, Garratt-bridge, Manchester.[9]

The 1851 Ordnance Survey map shows these premises – the first is the study site, whilst the second is the L-shaped plot of land identified as an 'iron yard' **[Plate 2.12]**. An 1858 map shows the study site shortly after the sale; the south-western portion facing Hilton Street has a division from the main bulk of the building – suggesting independent use or perhaps managerial offices segregated from the main portion of the building. There remained a large rear extension and a wing stretching back to the Crown and Anchor. There was access to the small rear yard off Hilton Street and two cottages facing Faraday Street **[Plate 2.13]**.

7 Smiles, Samuel, 1883, pp188-191

8 The business was subsequently known as Wren and Hopkinson.

9 *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser* - Saturday 15 February 1851, https://www.gracesguide.co.uk/Wren_and_Bennett **[Accessed June 2021]**



2.11 Naismith's Manchester Flat and the study site to the left in c.1832. Smiles, Chapter 10



2.12 1851 Ordnance Survey Map - 2. Manchester University Collection



2.13 1858 City of Manchester and its Neighbourhoods. Manchester University Collection

2.2.4. 1850s to 1950s: Ironworks to Mixed Use

It appears that following Wren and Bennett's departure, the buildings went into use by multiple tenants, each using different floors for different purposes, which continued into the mid-20th century. The Goad Fire insurance Plan of 1888 shows the building occupied by J. Critchley & Co Umbrella Factory on the first floor, the H. C. Forshaw Costume Factory on the second and third floors, and a Shirt Factory on the fourth floor **[Plate 2.14]**. The chimneystack on the rear elevation is shown exposed following the demolition of the rear wing (engine house etc.). The plan also shows the building divided roughly in two, with two entrances on Newton Street (No. 52 and No. 54), a large arched opening in the northern bay of the north-west elevation and the dotted box indicating an undercroft or passage into the building. The two cottages facing Friday (Faraday) Street had been demolished, creating a large entrance into the yard.

The remainder of this section runs through a series of historic photographs and maps which demonstrate external changes to the building between the late-19th century and the 1950s.

– The earliest photograph, taken in 1891 from Stevenson Square, shows the large chimneystack to the rear of the building and the gable end facing Hilton Street **[Plate 2.15]**.

– The 1893 and 1908 Ordnance Survey maps show no external change to the study site since the 1888 Goad Fire Insurance Plan **[Plates 2.16 and 2.17]**.

– The replacement of a number of the original cast iron framed windows with Victorian three-over-three and two-over-two sash windows. All windows are roughly square and under brick or stone lintels, with stone cills. The photograph also shows paired raised ground floor entrances with arched lintels and the clerestory glazing at attic level. The sign above ground floor appears to read: 'Umbrella Manufacturer' (probably J Critchley's sign), but it is only partially visible **[Plate 2.18]**.

– The reduction of the chimneystack appears to have occurred between 1891 and 1910 **[compare Plates 2.15 and 2.19, noting that it remains on maps and drawings until the 1959-60 refurbishment]**.

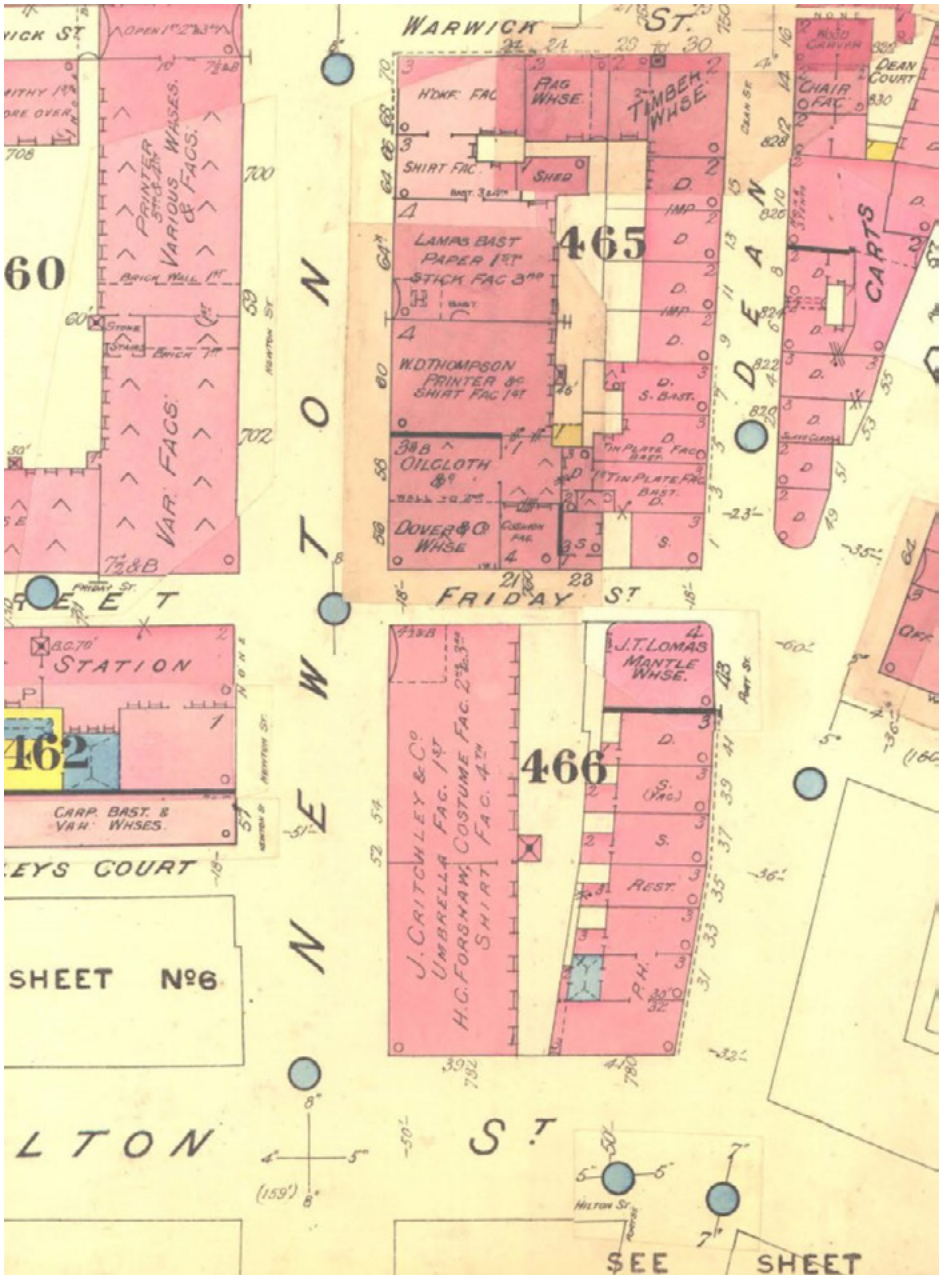
– In the late-19th / early-20th century, the main entrance was moved from Newton Street to Hilton Street, where a new rusticated stone ground floor was inserted (much like others in the area), creating a formal central entrance accessed via a short flight of steps, flanked by two large tripartite sash windows.

– Between 1891 and 1920 the Hilton Street elevation was extended to the apex of the pitched roof to conceal the attic floor and roof from view. Again the clerestory glazing can clearly be seen in a photograph from 1920, along with what appear to be timber sashes to the visible parts of the elevation below **[Plate 2.20]**.

– Aerial photographs from 1932 and 1951 show oblique views of the building – again showing the heightened Hilton Street elevation and the top portion of the stone-clad entrance bay **[Plates 2.21 and 2.22]**.

– The 1934 Ordnance Survey map shows the north angle of the building defined – probably the passage / undercroft shown in the 1888 Goad Fire Insurance Plan **[Plate 2.23]**.

– The 1948 Ordnance Survey map shows that the building had been renumbered by this time – 39 Hilton Street, 52, 54 and 54a Newton Street. No other changes are apparent.



2.14 Charles Goad Fire Insurance Plan 31, 1888, Manchester Archives



2.15 Stevenson Square looking to Hilton Street, 1891. Manchester Libraries



2.16 1893 Ordnance Survey Map - 2. Manchester University Collection



2.17 1908 Ordnance Survey Map - 2. Manchester University Collection



2.18 Little Lever Street east side of Bradley's Court, 1898. Manchester Libraries



2.19 Stevenson Square looking to Hilton Street, 1910. Manchester Libraries



2.20 Hilton Street from Stevenson Square, 1920. Manchester Libraries



2.21 Aerial view, 1932, Britain from Above



2.22 Aerial view, 1951, Britain from Above



2.23 1934 Ordnance Survey Map. Manchester University Collection

2.2.5. 1958-60 Refurbishment: Marlsbro House

A G Garments appear to have occupied the building in the 1940s, producing waterproof clothing and clothing for the army, navy and air force during the Second World War. A major series of upgrades and refurbishment works were carried out between 1958-60 for A G Garments and Marlsbro Limited, designed by the architects Drury and Gomersall of 207 Oxford Road. 'Marlsbro House', as it was renamed, was intended as a raincoat manufacturers, factory, warehouse and distribution building. The cost of the works was approximately £12,000.[10]

The 'existing drawings' dated 1958 show the building prior to conversion, with some 'marked up' alterations. There are no 'existing' Newton or Hilton Street drawings within this pack.

The **yard (rear) elevation** shows something of the 'original' appearance – though altered by this time. The two bays to the left wrap around full height to conceal the roof (extended in the late-19th century). There are segmental-arched windows at basement ground, voussoired lintels above and at fourth floor a string of clerestory windows. There is a mixture of original cast iron framed windows (multi-paned), later Victorian three and six-paned timber sashes, as well as some more anomalous later windows and vented and blocked windows at basement. There is a semi-circular loading entrance at ground floor – infilled with doors and glazing and the remains of the large chimney at the centre and a smaller stack to the right. There are also two external fire escapes, accessed at fourth, third and second floor levels via altered window openings **[Plates 2.24]**. The drawing notes the proposed rebuilding of some sections of wall and the omission of doors, to form new windows. The proposed drawing of this elevation is dated July 1958, it shows the rationalisation of some openings, blocking up of basement windows, replacement of all window frames, removal of the remnants of the main rear chimneystack and creation of a single storey stair entrance block – containing a timber stair **[Plate 2.25]**. The semi-circular loading entrance was blocked / concealed as part of these works.

Whilst there is no 'existing' drawing of the front elevation to **Newton Street elevation**, the 1958 proposed elevations show the two original entrances to 52 and 54 were to be blocked and made into windows, the segmental arches to the basement windows were infilled, as was a large arched opening in the left hand bay at ground floor. The parapet was extended in the right hand bay – facing Hilton Street. New casements were introduced in place of the original and later-19th century window frames. A new opening was introduced in the right hand bay, with a canopy and vertical sign reading: *Marlsbro House* – not dissimilar to an Art Deco cinema **[Plate 2.26]**. The parapet wall was to be stiffened and new brickwork introduced. The drawings also shows that the building was to be faced in 'alternative recessed panels' and polished granite, but the building was instead finished in two tones of grey colourised render in a chequerboard pattern, aligning with the fenestration pattern and granite terrazzo was used around the entrance instead.

The existing **Faraday Street elevation**, shows the original design and surviving metal-framed windows to the first floor and the later 19th century three and six pane timber sashes, one blocked window at basement, another at ground and two at fourth **[Plate 2.27]**. There are no proposed drawings for this elevation, but it was rendered and windows replaced to match the others. Timber entrance doors were introduced – see Section 3.

10 SLHA, 2019, p25

The proposed **Hilton Street elevation** again gives an indication of the previous arrangement – with dotted lines at ground floor indicating former entrances, which were to be blocked up. The proposals followed those to Newton Street – a new entrance at ground floor, framed by granite and with a projecting canopy, new rendered finish applied over the brick, new window frames and lettering reading: *Marlsbro House*. In addition, the entire fourth floor of this elevation was to be rebuilt **[Plate 2.28]**.

The proposed plans and section dated 1958 and 1959 show internal alterations **[Plates 2.29-2.37]**. In summary, the building was altered as follows:

– The removal of earlier staircases and a series of internal walls at basement to third floors. Two staircases against the south-east wall were retained.

– The insertion of a new stair and lift core in the southern corner, which extended from the basement to the fourth floor.

– The creation of a new level access entrance from the corner of Hilton Street and Newton Street, the formation of a new entrance foyer with new concrete floor and a reception area to the north **[Plate 2.31]**.

– The installation of partitions at each level, except the attic (4th floor), to create a series of smaller rooms and new WC facilities. The ground floor was the most altered and contained a showroom and a series of offices, arranged off a new spine corridor. The basement, first to third floors were left almost entirely open plan presumably so that the spaces could be used for manufacturing. Some existing WC areas were retained at basement and first floor.

– The removal of a timber beam and the insertion of a steel spreader beam at fourth floor level.

– The attic floor was left largely unaltered except for the new staircase and lift at its southern corner **[Plate 2.35]**.

– Internal finishes were specified as follows:

– *Floor finishes: Hall: Terrazzo; reception, showroom and MD's office: carpet; Toilets: Semastic tile; remaining areas: linoleum.*

– *Wall finishes: Plaster. Panel walls – painted and decorated.*

– *Ceilings: suspended.*

[Plates 2.36-2.38] show the building during and following this conversion. Despite this major refurbishment, the building was vacant by 1970, with only the 2nd floor occupied by furriers **[Plate 2.39]**.[11] In 1978, the use of the ground floor was changed for allow for the short term sale of suede and leather for A. & D. Hope Ltd.

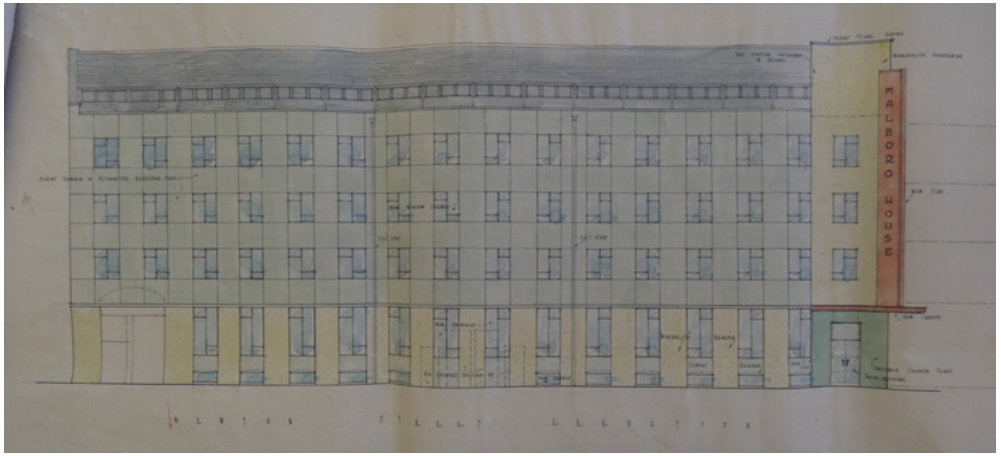
11 Goad Fire Insurance Plan, 1970, Manchester Archives



2.24 Existing rear elevation, July 1958, Manchester Archives



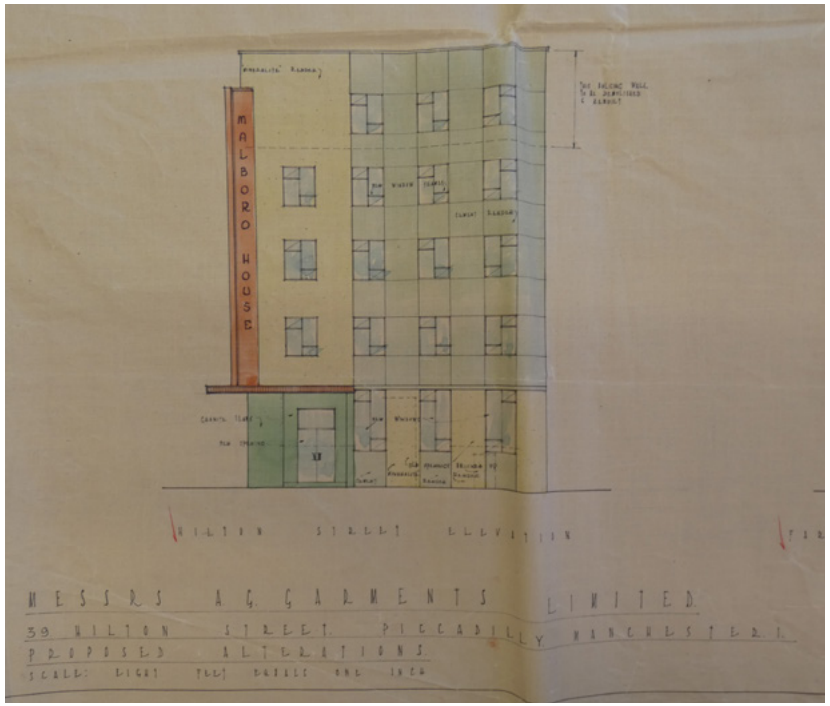
2.25 Proposed rear elevation, July 1958, Manchester Archives



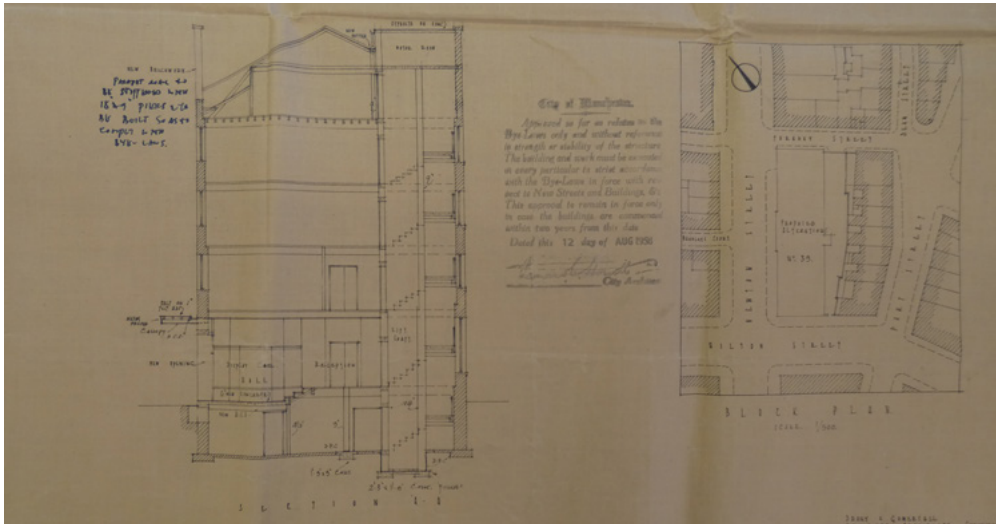
2.26 Proposed Newton Street elevation, June 1958, Manchester Archives



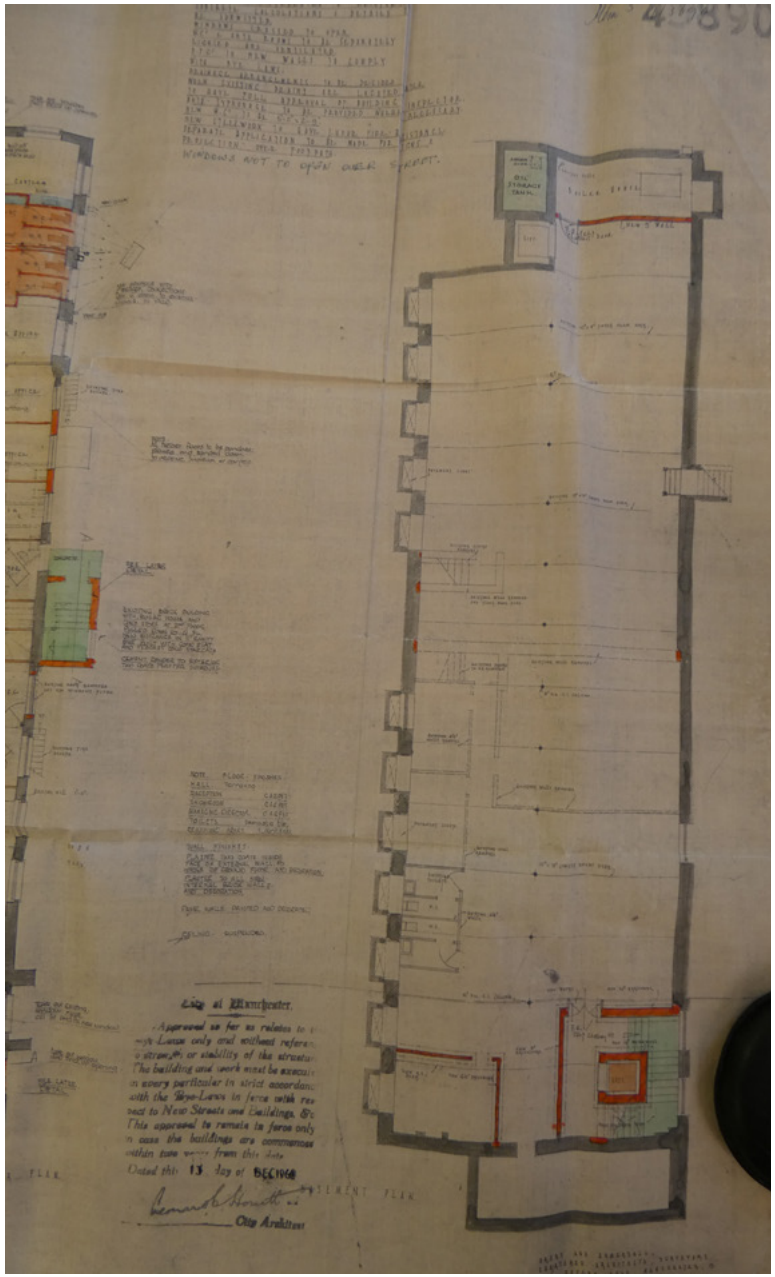
2.27 Existing Faraday Street elevation, 1958, Manchester Archives



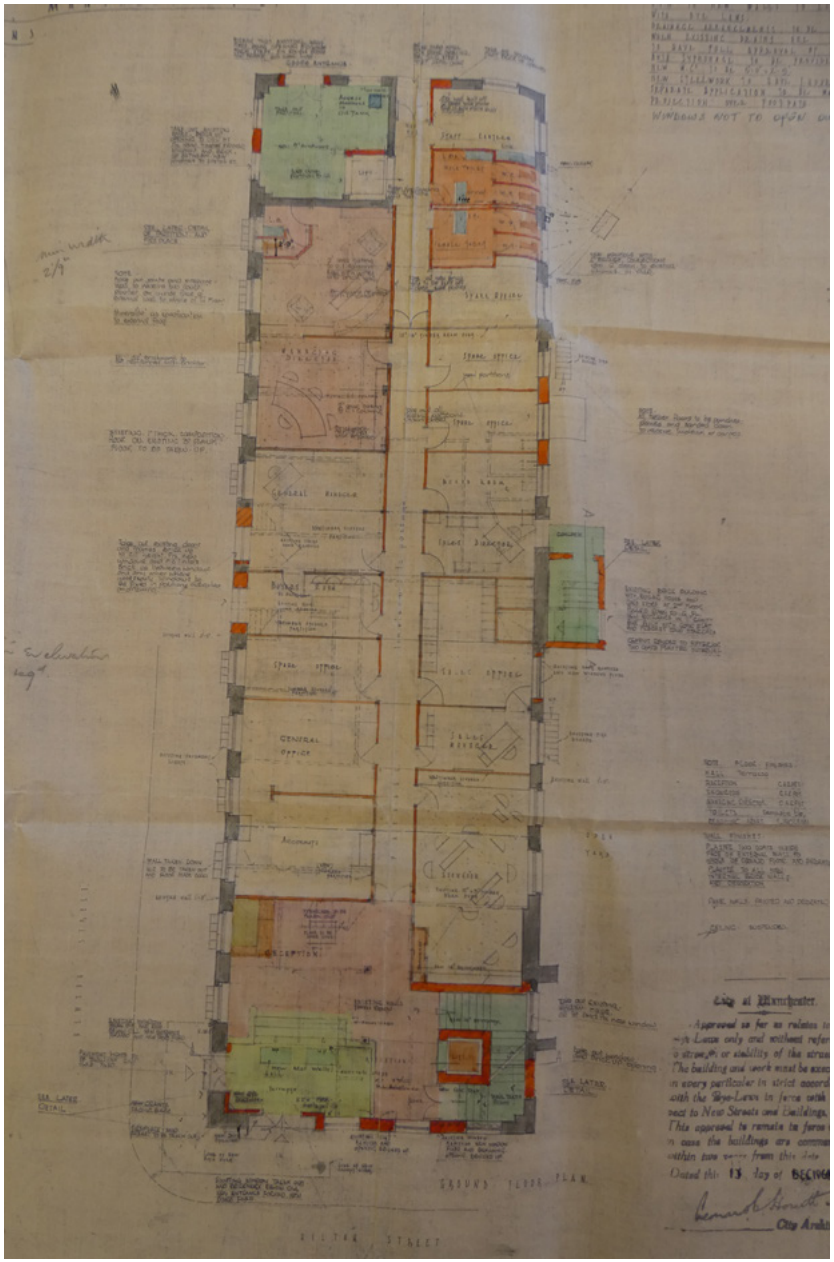
2.28 Proposed Hilton Street elevation, 1958, Manchester Archives



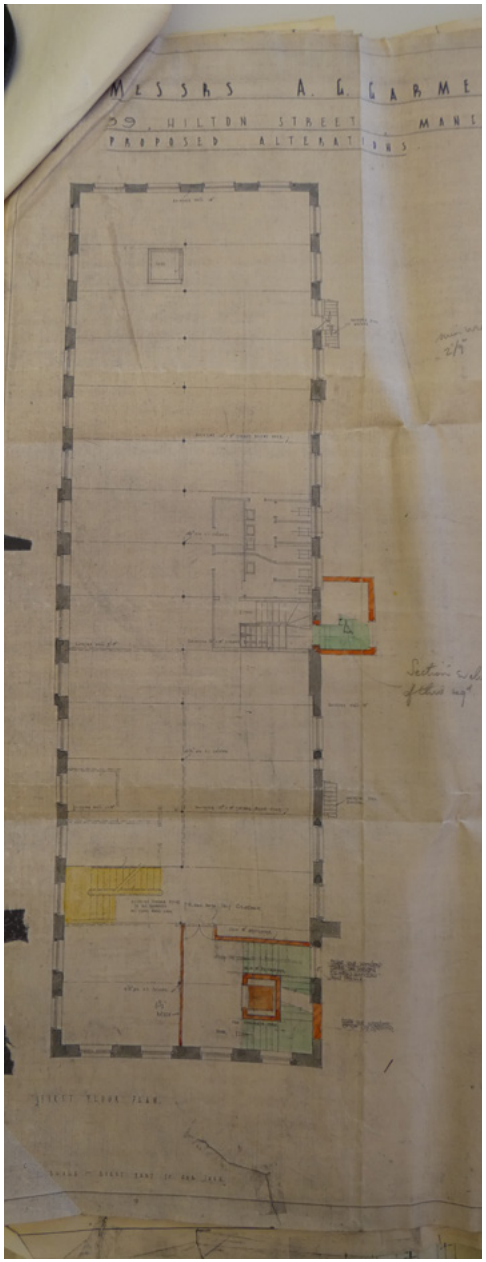
2.29 Proposed section A-A, July 1958, Manchester Archives



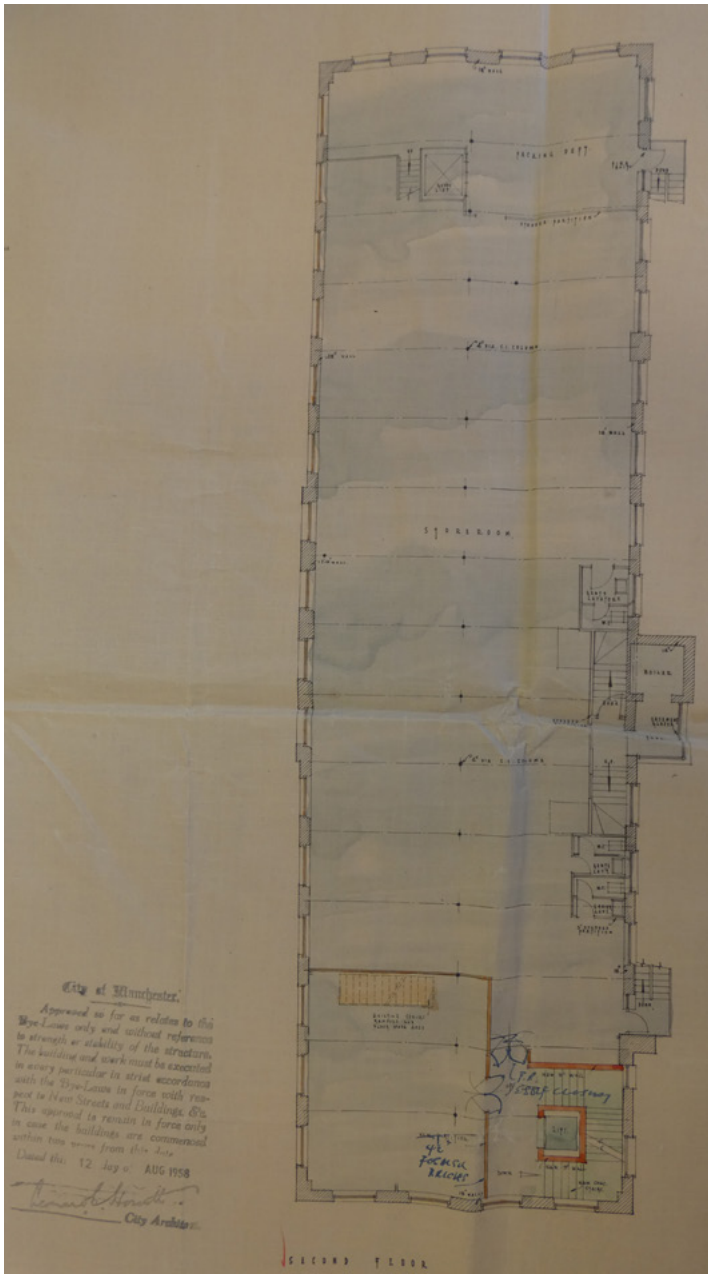
2.30 Proposed basement plan, October 1959, Manchester Archives



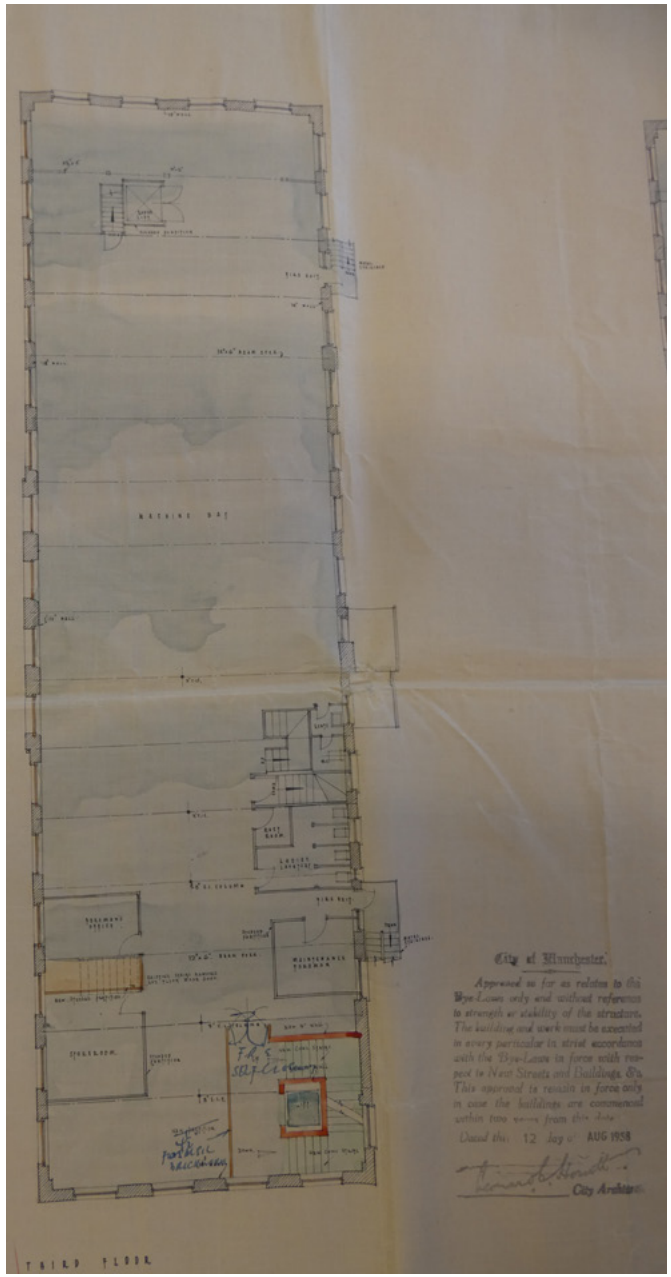
2.31 Proposed ground floor plan, October 1959, Manchester Archives



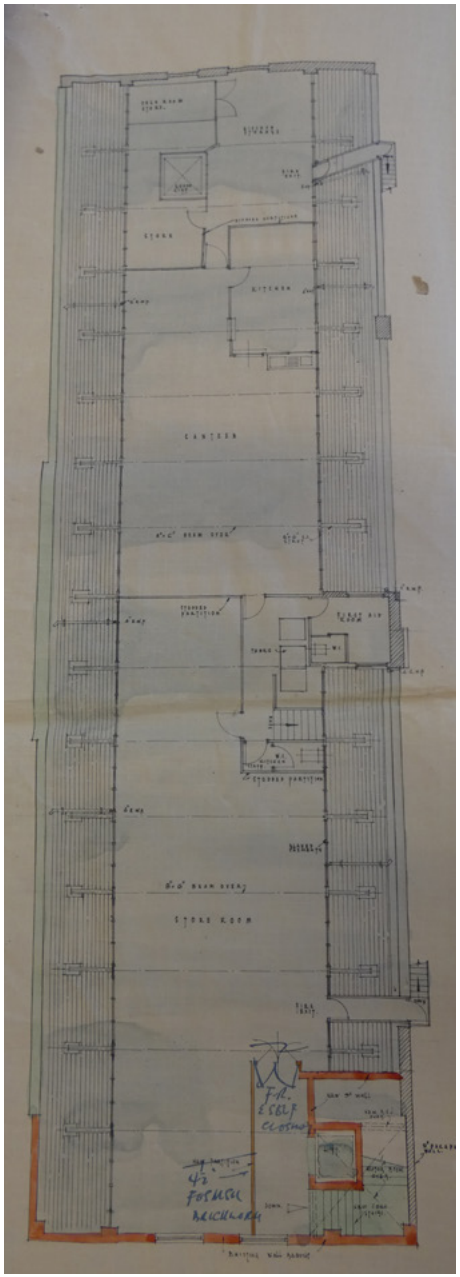
2.32 Proposed first floor plan, October 1959, Manchester Archives



2.33 Proposed second floor plan, July 1958, Manchester Archives



2.34 Proposed third floor plan, July 1958, Manchester Archives



2.35 Proposed attic plan, July 1958, Manchester Archives



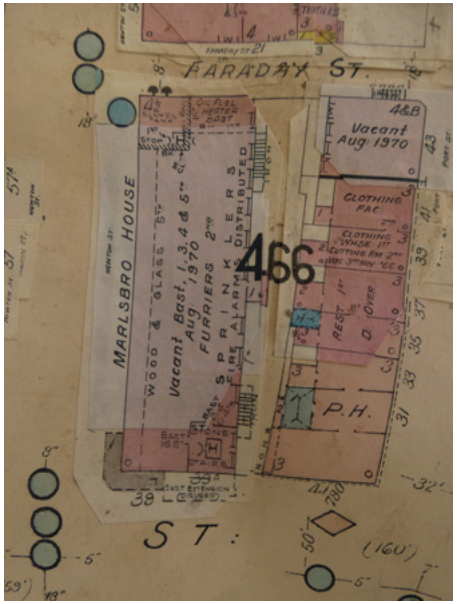
2.36 Hilton Street from Stevenson Square, 1960. Manchester Libraries



2.38 Newton Street, 1967. Manchester Libraries



2.37 Hilton Street, Little Lever Street corner, 1966. Manchester Libraries



2.39 Goad Fire Insurance Plan, 1970. Manchester Archives

2.2.6. 1990s to Present Day: Transition from Clothing to Music Production and Vacancy

Occupancy records note that the building continued in use as a clothing factory or wholesalers and office use until the late-1990s. The building has gradually accommodated new uses including music studios, dance studios and general workspace for various small businesses. To facilitate this multiple occupancy, a series of timber and aluminium stud partitions have been introduced at all levels to create individually-lettable rooms as well as WCs and kitchenettes. The wall construction at basement and third floor has been developed to minimise sound transfer – comprising timber stud with ply, plasterboard and fabric, foam or carpet over. These can be accurately dated to between 2008 and 2010 from stamps on the plasterboard – see Section 3. At basement level, the construction is separated from the south-east and north-west walls by a narrow gap. A series of further minor changes have ensued since the 1959-60 refurbishment, including:

- The creation of a new entrance from Newton Street into a ground floor showroom (c.1984).
- The removal of the external entrance canopy (dating from 1960) by 1986 **[Plate 2.40]**.
- A new external timber door to the basement on Hilton Street (c.1997).
- The introduction of uPVC windows to some windows in the front elevation at ground floor and some to the rear at second floor.
- The removal, flooring over and boxing out of the timber staircases along the south-east wall.
- The introduction of modern kitchen and WC fittings and finishes.

Boohoo purchased Marlsbro House in 2020 and which point the building was deemed unsafe and it was vacated. The building was subsequently stripped of its modern fitout and partitions and subject to asbestos removal (this has been completed aside from the 4th floor which has recently been subject to listed building consent to be undertaken).



2.40 Marlsbro House, 1986. Manchester Libraries

2.3. Architect's Biography: Drury and Gomersall

Partners: Francis Edson Drury and Joseph Gomersall

Designated: 1923

Dissolved: 1956

The Manchester architects, Drury & Gomersall were responsible for a number of cinemas in the North West in the 1930s. With a small staff, they had considerable experience in preparing schemes for cinemas efficiently and competitively, completing two or three major schemes each year – which is evident in their considerable project list below. Joseph Gomersall, who ran the Manchester office, had a background of theatre work and restoration. He travelled widely in Europe and picked up ideas that were to influence the work of the office. Drury & Gomersall attempted to provide 'original' cinemas and, failing inspiration from contemporary sources, would consult Bannister Fletcher's History of Architecture. Drury did not work appear to have had any active role in the Manchester office and was to become better known for his textbooks on building construction, produced in association with Jaggard.[12]

List of Works:

- The New Adelphi Picture House, Market Place, Swinton
- Additions to Social Club Hampshire Street Cheetham
- Capitol (Plaza) Cinema Swinton
- The Regent Picture Theatre Fallowfield
- Printing Works; Waterloo Road and Allison Street, Cheetham
- Alterations and additions. Gomersall's Jewellers Clifton Street Blackpool
- Alterations; 22 Chester Road Hulme
- The Dominion Cinema Ordsall Lane Salford
- The Regal Super Cinema. 80 Manchester Road Broadheath Altrincham
- The Broadway Cinema 52 Church Street Eccles
- Extension and Alteration. Kings Road Cinema Rochdale
- Factory. 14-16 Shaw Street and Dutton Street Cheetham
- Extension to Works: Jesse Oldfield Elsinore Road Old Trafford
- Alterations to Premises: Withington Road Whalley Range to form Seven Shops
- The Pyramid (Later Odeon) Sale
- Alterations: Olympia Picture House Hyde Road Gorton
- Petrol Filling Station Showroom Shops Houses Seymour Road/Bury Old Road Crumpsall
- Re-construction: Empire Theatre 40 Oldham Road Ashton-Under-Lyne
- Rebuilding: Regal Cinema Widnes
- Extension of "The Empress" Cinema Higher Road Urmston
- "Verona" Cinema 285 Stockport Road Guide Bridge Ashton-under-Lyne
- Reconstruction: Embassy Cinema. Bolton
- Proposed Cinema. Stockport Road Longsight
- Cinema: Trocadero Hotel Central Beach Blackpool

12https://manchestervictorianarchitects.org.uk/partnerships/drury-and-gomersall **[Accessed June 2021]**

- Broadway Cinema The Broadway (later Burnley Road) Accrington
- Factory: Waterloo Road and Allison Street Hightown
- Reconstruction and Modernisation of "Globe" Cinema Liverpool Road Irlam
- Reconstruction: The Grand Banbury Oxfordshire
- Mineral Water Works Water Street Macclesfield
- Plaza Cinema Rochdale Road Collyhurst Manchester
- Additions to Ardwick Stadium Hyde Road
- Petrol Service Station and Garage New Wakefield Street Manchester
- Modernisation. "New Kings Cinema" Kingsway/Oldham Road Rochdale
- "Four Ways" Cinema Charlestown Road /Moston Lane East New Moston
- The Mayfair Cinema Bury Old Road Whitefield
- Rebuilding portion of Factory and alterations to Works Manchester
- Acid Plant Golborne near Wigan
- Rebuilding Alexandra Billiards Hall and Pavilion Cinema Old Street Ashton-under-Lyne
- Branch Bank, Dukinfield
- Renovation: Majestic Cinema King William Street Blackburn
- Extension to Foundry: Albion St Thomas St and Lewis St Miles Platting
- Theatre Royal Peter Street Manchester

2.4. Relevant Planning and Building Control History

2.4.1. Planning

145172/LO/2026

Listed Building Consent for removal of timber panels at fourth floor in association with asbestos removal.

Approved: Mon 13 Apr 2026

132546/LO/2021

Listed Building Consent - Asbestos removal (internal works only)

Approved: Tue 15 Feb 2022

131357/LO/2021

LISTED BUILDING CONSENT Soft strip of basement and third floors in advance of asbestos removal

Approved: Thu 14 Oct 2021

051430/FO/CITY2/97

Formation of a new access to basement

Approved: Wed 26 Mar 1997

022338

Formation of new entrance to showroom and retention of canopies.

Approved: Thu 11 Oct 1984

F08450

Use of the ground floor of manufacturing and wholesale premises for the sale of Sueded & Leather garments to the public on one day per month.

Approved: Tue 16 May 1978

2.4.2. Building Control

FP/97/25955

Revised plans for alterations to warehouse,

Decision date: Mon 02 Jun 1997

Reference: FP/97/25585

Alterations to warehouse

Decision date: Tue 13 May 1997 (note: withdrawn)

Reference: FP/91/06573

Alterations to offices

Decision date: Thu 28 Feb 1991

2.5. Sources and Bibliography

Manchester Archives

Maps collection

Drainage Plans

University of Manchester

Maps Collection

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Hartwell, C, Hyde, M & Pevsner, N, *Lancashire: Manchester and the South-East* (Yale University Press, 2010).

Haslam, Dave. 'Dave Haslam goes in search of the recording studios that launched the Manchester music scene', I Love Manchester, https://ilovemanchester.com/dave-haslam-searches-city-recording-studios-launched-manchester-music-scene **[accessed August 2021]**.

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Centre for Applied Archaeology, University of Salford; Miller, Ian. *Archaeological Desk-based Assessment,* (2018)

Stephen Levrant Heritage Architecture Ltd. *Heritage Appraisal: Marlsbro House, 52 Newton Street, Manchester*, (July 2019)

https://manchestervictorianarchitects.org.uk/partnerships/drury-and-gomersall **[Accessed June 2021]**

3. Site Survey Descriptions

The following site survey was undertaken in 2021, whilst strip-out works have been subsequently undertaken they were done so to inform and enable the adaptive reuse of the building which is now being brought forward by the current owner. For images of the site post strip-out works please refer to the Design and Access Statement which this report accompanies.

3.1. The Setting of the Building

Marlsbro House is prominently sited at the junction of Hilton Street and Newton Street. It is also bound by Faraday Street to the north-east and the rears of property on Port Street to the south-east.

The area retains its historic street pattern laid down in the late-18th century and overset by Victorian industrial development; with principal streets such as Oldham Street, Piccadilly, Newton Street, Port Street, Dale Street, Hilton Street and Stevenson Square and narrower lanes such as Little Lever Street.

The urban grain of Stevenson Square, Oldham Street and Newton Street is tight – bar the obvious open space at Stevenson Square – and most buildings are distinctive with large footprints, placed hard up against the pavements in the main streets and often the narrower lanes – creating a canyon effect. There is an unusual survival of buildings predating 1850, including 69-77 Lever Street as well as many fine Victorian and Edwardian buildings, many of which are listed – most at Grade II. The majority of the buildings are commercial, though regeneration has seen the conversion of the former post office depot and mills to residential use. There are elements of the original canal network/basins around Hilton Street and Ancoats, some of the wharves and warehouse sites have been redeveloped for housing, whilst some open areas have remained as surface carparks.

3.2. The Building Externally

The building is rectangular in plan, of four storeys plus a basement and attic; it is of red brick, timber and cast iron construction, faced in cement render and with windows dating from 1960.

3.2.1. North-West Elevation

The front elevation faces north-west and is 16-bays wide, the central four bays project by approximately 200mm – at the centre of this bay were the original entrance doors (blocked in 1960) **[Plate 3.1]**. The render is applied in a chequerboard pattern which aligns with the fenestrations pattern, it is of light and dark grey (integral colouriser), with grey paint at ground floor level. Windows are metal casements (all appear to date to 1960) set within original openings, with modern external roller shutters at the ground floor – most with graffiti; windows have slim concrete sills, but no lintels. Most of the basement windows are blocked, some are vented and have bars / grilles and the lightwells feature pavement lights. At the north gable is a parapet with kneeler. A short parapet with narrow coping stones rises above the third-floor windows, partly concealing the loft. The right-hand bay has a square parapet which rises to the ridge height of the pitched roof, reading as a stair tower. This is the principal entrance bay, with a 1960 entrance surrounded by grey giant terrazzo panels with a plain wrap-around fascia. There is a secondary entrance door in the third bay from the right, with modern door, no surround and roller shutters. There are alarm boxes, rainwater pipes, signage and security cameras across the elevation. 'MARLSBRO HOUSE' lettering (once illuminated) runs vertically on the right hand bay and adjacent at attic level is a box sign with 'MC' within a coat of arms.



3.1 Front Elevation from the NW (Insall)

3.2.2. South-West Elevation

The south-west elevation faces Hilton Street **[Plate 3.2]**. It is four bays wide and generally matches the front elevation, with a matching but wider entrance set in terrazzo panels in the left hand bay – with a plain fascia continuing from the front. On the centre is a blocked window opening and to in right hand bay is a tall timber panelled door with applied moulded beads creating 18 panels (late-20th century opening leading to the basement). Above are three levels of metal-framed casements (1960). The top floor of this elevation was reconstructed as part of the 1960 works, replacing the late-Victorian construction which conceals the gable-end and attic storey. At ground is a Hilton Street sign, another 'MARLSBRO HOUSE' lettered sign and box sign at fourth floor – as on the front elevation. Further alarm boxes and cameras. To the right is a single storey rendered wall with grille-gate, adjoining the pub.



3.2 Hilton Street Elevation (Insall)

3.2.3. North-East Elevation

Its north-east elevation faces Faraday Street. It is four bays wide, with a coped, kneelered gable **[Plate 3.3]**. It generally matches the front in appearance, with three roller shuttered door openings – one raised - and a shuttered opening at ground floor. Above, three floors of metal casements in squarish openings, frames dating from the 1960s. There is a 'Faraday Street' sign to the right, two alarm bells and cameras and rainwater pipe runs to the left.



3.3 Faraday Street Elevation (Insall)

3.2.4. South-East Elevation

The south-east (rear) elevation faces the narrow yard **[Plate 3.4]**. The chequerboard render continues only as far as the first windows in the right hand bay and wraps around blindly on the two left hand bays – enclosing the lift and overrun. The rest of the rear wall is in plain buff-coloured render, most of the windows are of 1960, some later uPVC. There are two external metal fire escapes – probably late-19th century - which serve the second bay from the right and third from the left, accessed from dormers at attic level altered window openings. There is a central pediment - which breaks the parapet – the location of the former cotton mill chimneystack (reduced by c.1910, removed and capped in 1960). There is a narrow chimneystack which rises above the parapet between the fourth and fifth bays from the right, and another projects at the right-hand side of the left-hand bay. There is a single-storey rendered-brick entrance projecting from the central bay and another smaller one two bays to the left. There is a projecting I-beam above ground floor level, in the second bay from the right. Random rainwater / waste pipes, lights, air conditioning units etc.

The rear yard is enclosed by metal security gates and its surface is tarmacked.

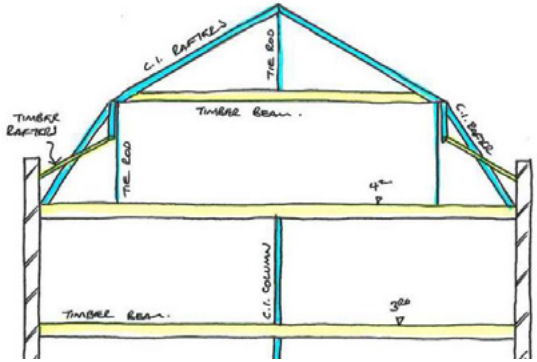
Overall its roof appears as a mansard or gambrel: there is a central pitched roof, which is slated under its various applied coverings such as felt or asphalt (seen from Google earth / drone footage). This roof drops to a clerestory on each side and pitches out from this to the parapet **[Plates 3.5 and 3.6]**. These secondary slopes are pierced by cast-iron stays (actually principal rafters) running at a steeper pitch from the eaves above the glazing, out to the parapet. Very unusual. There are flat sections of roof over the bay facing Hilton Street, with a flat lift overrun.



3.4 Partial rear elevation (Insall)



3.5 Partial rear elevation (Insall)



3.5 Sketch section of roof (Westlakes)



3.6 View of roof with cast iron rafters (Insall)

3.3. The Building Internally

The building is set over seven floors, inclusive of basement and attic floors. Each floor was originally largely similar in plan form and decoration - comprising plain painted brick walls - which is still evident today. Each floor retains its original central line of slender cast iron columns (which progressively reduce in diameter up the building) which support thick timber beams (the ends are supported on the external brick walls), which in turn support the deep timber plank floorboards of the floor above – an early form of slow burning fire-prevention construction. Within the external walls are cast iron ring beams and quadrant brackets at the angles. The building was subdivided into many smaller rooms, using modern studwork. The 1959-60 stair and lift core is located at the south angle of the building, it is constructed from reinforced concrete, with terrazzo flooring with vinyl or carpet over. The lift appears to be contemporary these works. There is a lift shaft on the north side of the building, which is probably early-20th century.

'Original' refers to the 1820s construction. '1960' refers to the major refurbishment at this time and 'modern' refers to any fabric since the 1960s refurbishment with more specific dates noted if known.

3.3.1. Basement

Accessed via an external entrance only, the basement was inspected prior to strip-out.

B001 is a 1960 lift and wrap around staircore at the southern angle of the building; concrete steps with vinyl over, timber handrails, plaster walls and ceiling **[Plate 3.7]**.

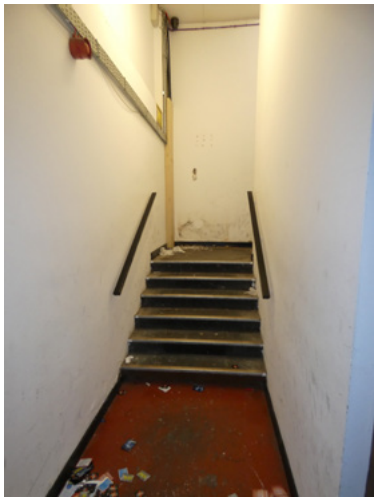
B002 is set beneath the stair, it is a small service room. It is accessed via a modern ply door and with a mesh door behind. Concrete floors, walls and ceiling with exposed steel beam with breezeblock infill above **[Plate 3.8]**.

B003 is a lift lobby with screeded floors, plaster walls and ceiling, metal concertina lift door, veneered door to B011; all contemporary with 1960 refurbishment. All beams are boxed in, those running SE-SW may be encased historic beams. Exposed pipework, including sprinkler system and fluorescent lighting **[Plates 3.9-3.10]**.

Opposite is **B004**, a partitioned room lined with soundproof fabric; exposed pipework, including sprinkler system **[Plate 3.10]**. Off B004 is a brick wall to **B005** – a very small room along the NW wall. The lightwell window is blocked, painted plaster walls and ceiling. Was a WC, since removed **[Plate 3.11]**.

B006 is another partitioned room, lined with soundproofing fabric – some has been pulled away revealing a section of painted brick wall to **B007** – probably early-20th century. There is an original cast iron column in the east side of the room. Exposed pipework, including sprinkler system and wall-mounted bulkhead light **[Plate 3.12]**.

B007-B010 are WCs set within brick walls, set against the NW wall. Painted brick dividing walls, sheet (asbestos?) material to NW wall and ceilings, mid- to late-20th century clay tile floors. Ramshackle vanity units and standard modern sinks and bogs. Windows / lightwells blocked from view **[Plates 3.13-3.14]**.



3.7 B001 (Insall)



3.8 B002 (Insall)



3.9 B003 (1)



3.10 B003 (4)



3.10 B004 (1)



3.7 B001 (Insall)



3.12 B006 (5)



3.13 B007 (1)



3.14 B009

B011-16, B019-21, B023-27

Off the main spine corridor to the north east is a continuous series of subdivided rooms of various sizes. The partitions on the SE wall side of the building are not fixed to the south east wall – leaving a walkable gap behind which the timber stud and plasterboard partitions can be seen – and dated to 2008 **[Plate 3.15]**. Behind are the original brick walls, painted white. It is the same on the NW, though this gap is not accessible. The partitioned rooms are largely the same – designed as studios to muffle sound. Floors are either screed, sometimes with lino / vinyl or carpet over. Walls are layers of fabric, plasterboard and ply over softwood or aluminium studs. Ceilings are mostly covered in fabric, where exposed they are overboarded. Their ceilings contain sprinkler systems and fluorescent lighting, some is suspended via plastic conduit. Some windows / lightwells are blocked, whilst others are boarded out in deep sockets, here some pavement lights are visible. Where the partitions have been partially removed, painted brick external walls are visible **[Plates 3.16-3.22]**.

B017 is the lift shaft. It contains metal concertina doors, probably from the 1960 refurbishment. The shaft is red brick lined and a double opening with concertina door is visible at ground level – parallel with the Newton Street elevation **[Plates 3.23-3.24]**. **B017a** is a small lift lobby, it is finished much the same as the main corridor, with screed floors, painted walls and a boarded ceiling **[Plate 3.25]**.

B018 is the plant room at the NE end of the building. Its walls appear to be original brick, painted or plastered, except the wall to B019 which is brick, probably from 1960. One bricked / concreted and vented window opening with arched lintel in the SE wall. There is an RSJ running NE-SW above the door, with breezeblock infill above it. Angled bulkhead in N angle. Ceiling is plastered, the floor is screed. There is a late-20th century wall-mounted boiler against the NE wall, further floor-mounted kit and a series of ceiling-mounted pipes. Modern brick enclosure high on the NW wall, part of boiler system **[Plate 3.26]**.

B022 is a lobby and staircase set between B020 and B023, the latter leading up to the rear yard. The stair appears to be 1960s, timber treads and risers with lino and metal tread ends, simple timber newels and a timber handrail. Plasterboard and brick walls flank the stair, which rises into a small single storey extension. The fire doors are modern. The staircase enters the building via a blocked original basement window, under segmental arch brick lintel **[Plates 3.27-3.29]**. The lobby is much the same as the remainder of the corridor – screed floors, plasterboard walls, veneered doors in varnished frames, encased original timber beams, partially expressed cast iron columns.

B028 is the main spine corridor – which is an early-21st century addition. In the main portion of the corridor there is a row of 12 original painted cast iron columns with capitals and flanges; they are thicker at this level than on the upper floors and are at the centre of the plan, semi-submerged within the modern partitions which form one side of the corridor. The floor is screeded, ceilings are painted board or plaster, the walls are painted plasterboard, there are a few off the peg timber skirtings. All doors are cheap veneer. The columns support the original timber beams, which are encased / overboarded. The corridor ceiling is filled with service runs - exposed pipework, including sprinkler system, metal trunking and fluorescent lighting. Each room has a fuse isolator above its door. There are two sets of double doors enclosing the lobby which leads to the external staircase to the rear yard (B022) **[Plates 3.30 – 3.33]**.

B029 is a squarish space, off the southern end of the main corridor (B028) and contains a modern kitchenette with a few fixed cabinets and a base unit set against the wall with B008-B009 **[Plate 3.34]**.



3.15 Basement, view behind B019-21 (4)



3.16 B011 (4)



3.17 B012 (2)



3.18 B013 (9)



3.19 B014 (1)



3.20 B015 (2)



3.21 B023 (2)



3.22 B025 (2)



3.23 B017 and B017a (1)



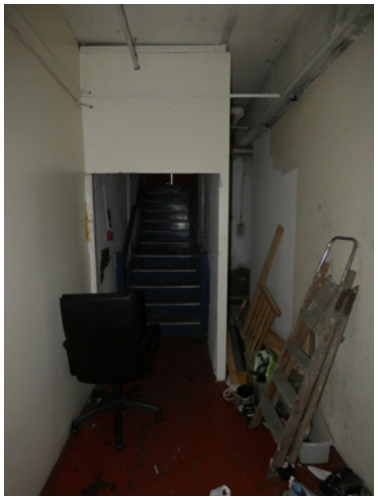
3.24 B017 and B017a (8)



3.25 B017a (3)



3.26 B018 (18)



3.27 B022 (1)



3.28 B022 (2)



3.29 B022 (6)



3.30 B028, looking south



3.31 B028 between B015-21 (5)



3.32 B028 near B023 (3)



3.33 B028 Typical cast iron column and overclad beam



3.34 B029 (1)

3.3.2. Ground Floor

As at December 2021, during strip-out works, this floor comprises:

– Main entrance lobby with tiled 1960 steps, metal balustrades, suspended ceiling and later ramp (**G001**).

– Small offices – formed by mid- and late-20th century partitions – to be removed as part of the soft strip (**G002**, currently used as site office) **[Plate 3.35]**.

– Small service area with lift in the north east corner (**G004**) **[Plate 3.36]**. Timber, tongue and groove clad lift shaft with asbestos sheeting over. Screed floor. Metal-clad (modern) ceiling with bulkhead. Exposed brick walls of a variety of ages. Top of an arch in the Newton Street elevation is visible (access to undercroft), now blocked with flettons.

– A timber stair leading to the rear yard has been uncovered during the soft strip – it sits within an entrance lobby constructed in 1960. Some of the treads appear more historic - suggested possible reuse **[Plate 3.37]**.

– The remainder is largely a single open-plan space (**G003**).

– The floors are screed or remnants of raised flooring. No historic floor finishes are visible at present.

– Some late-20th century partitions remain – at the centre and SW end of the building (aluminium stud and plasterboard), these will be removed as part of the strip-out.

– The original ceiling structure is visible following the strip-out of the suspended ceilings, this comprises deep principal beams running NW-SE. They are supported on the external brick walls and a series of cast iron columns – placed centrally within the floorplan **[Plate 3.38]**.

– The ceiling is finished in thin tin sheets in some locations **[Plate 3.39]**.

– The suspended ceiling has revealed arch-headed lintels to the rear windows **[Plate 3.40]** and the arched opening to Newton Street **[Plate 3.41]**.

– Mid-20th century sprinkler system.

– Probably mid-20th century radiators beneath windows in rear wall.

– Modern trunking / cable trays.

– Modern plaster wall finishes and radiators with grilles set beneath uPVC windows in the NW wall.

– Plasterboard casing over the historic timber staircase remains in situ **[Plate 3.42]**.

Prior to the strip-out, the main volume of the ground floor was subject to a higher degree of partitioning, including a central wall subsuming the cast iron columns.



3.35 Partitions forming office - G002, Ground Floor



3.36 Lift shaft in G004, Ground Floor



3.37 Ground Floor Stair to Yard



3.38 G001, Ground Floor



3.39 Ceiling in G001, Ground Floor



3.40 Arched lintels in rear wall, Ground Floor



3.41 Arched entrance from Newton Street, Ground Floor



3.42 Plasterboard around timber staircase, Ground Floor

3.3.3. First Floor

As at December 2021, during strip-out works, this floor comprises:

– 1960 lift and staircore, with plastered walls, lino floor and boarded ceiling (**F001**).

– A largely open-plan space (**F002**), with a series of cast iron columns – placed centrally within the floorplan **[Plate 3.43]**.

– The floors are screed. No historic floor finishes are visible at present.

– Some late-20th century partitions and a historic timber screen remain at the centre of the building (timber stud and plasterboard) – in **F003 [Plates 3.44 and 3.45]**.

– Painted brick walls.

– The removal of partitions has revealed the top of the arched opening to Newton Street **[Plates 3.46 and 3.47]**.

– Bricked and breeze-blocked windows in the rear wall **[Plate 3.48]**.

– The lift shaft at the north end of the building remains – now isolated, clad in plasterboard and with concertina doors exposed.

– Asbestos-clad ceiling and beams remain.

Prior to the strip-out, the main volume was divided by a transverse partition to the centre, with smaller cellular rooms to the southern section and an enclosure around the lift area.



3.43 First Floor



3.44 Partitions around timber staircase, First Floor



3.45 Partitions and screen around timber staircase, First Floor



3.46 Arch revealed in front wall to Newton Street, First Floor



3.47 Arch revealed in front wall to Newton Street, First Floor



3.48 Rear wall, First Floor

3.3.4. Second Floor

As at December 2021, during strip-out works, this floor comprises:

– 1960 lift and staircore, with plastered walls, lino floor and boarded ceiling (**S001**) **[Plate 3.49]**.

– A largely open-plan space (**S002**) - with a series of cast iron columns – placed centrally within the floorplan **[Plate 3.50]**.

– The floors are screed. No historic floor finishes are visible at present.

– Flue revealed at the SW angle **[Plate 3.51]**.

– Some late-20th century timber stud and plasterboard partitions remain around the historic timber staircase **[Plate 3.52]**.

– Painted brick, limewashed and plastered walls (of a variety of ages). Some cills have a slight bullnose, many have been replaced with modern brickwork **[Plate 3.53]**.

– At the NE angle, soft strip works have uncovered one of the cast iron quadrant brackets **[Plate 3.54]**.

– The lift shaft at the north end of the building remains – now isolated, clad in plasterboard and with concertina doors exposed.

– Asbestos-clad ceiling and beams remain.

Prior to the strip-out, the second floor was divided transversely with a central partition subsuming the central columns.



3.49 S001, Second Floor



3.50 S002, Second Floor



3.51 Flue, S002, Second Floor



3.52 Partition around timber stair, S002, Second Floor



3.53 Part-plastered walls, S002, Second Floor



3.54 View of cast iron bracket, S022

3.3.5. Third Floor

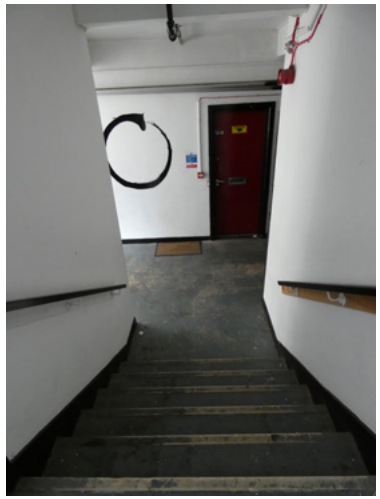
The third floor was inspected prior to the strip-out commencing.

T001 / T002 is a 1960 lift and wrap around staircore and lobby at the southern angle of the building. Concrete stairs, with terrazzo (unconfirmed) covered with vinyl. Plain plaster walls and boarded ceilings, timber skirtings, metal concertina door to the lift, cheap timber veneer doors with vision panels to T003 and solid door to the continuation of the stair leading to the fourth floor. One metal casement in the SW wall. Sprinkler system, services and fluorescent lighting fixed to the ceiling. All 1960s and later finishes **[Plates 3.55-3.57]**.

T003 is a lobby / waiting area / kitchenette with screeded floors with carpet over, plaster walls, part-tiled walls around the kitchenette, plasterboard / sheet asbestos ceilings and late-20th century painted doors to T004, T006 and T016. Multiple ceiling-mounted services including sprinkler system pipes, conduit trays and fluorescent lighting **[Plate 3.58]**.

T004-T018 / T020-T022 and T025

Off the main spine corridor – T016 – is a series of subdivided rooms to the north west and south east. The rooms are largely the same – designed as studios to muffle sound or store rooms. Floors are either screed over original plank floors (presumed), sometimes with lino, laminate flooring or carpet. Walls are layers of fabric / carpet, plasterboard and ply over softwood studs, windows are built out in the same and some have internal soundproof shutters to further block sound. The timber studs are stamped, with no date but where exposed, the plasterboard is dated to 2010. Windows are all 1960 metal casements. Ceilings are mostly covered in fabric / carpet, where exposed they are overboarded with ply or sheet asbestos. Their ceilings contain a sprinkler system and fluorescent or bulkhead lighting, some is suspended via plastic conduit. Where the partitions have been partially removed, painted brick external walls are visible. T004 and T006 contain sub-partitioned recording rooms – T005 and T007. In T012 the ceiling has partially collapsed due to water ingress and the original timber beam has been temporarily propped. This enables a rare glimpse of the original fabric of the building – firstly the beam and secondly the narrow timber fillets which cover the joints between the larger timber planks, which run NE-SW. Also in this room, part of the SE wall is also uncovered, revealing painted brick. T015 is located to the N end of the building, it is a further studio but deserves mentioning as it contains two timber props – one column and another angled prop – both are machined timber, painted white and are likely to be mid- to late-20th century **[Plates 3.59-3.75]**.



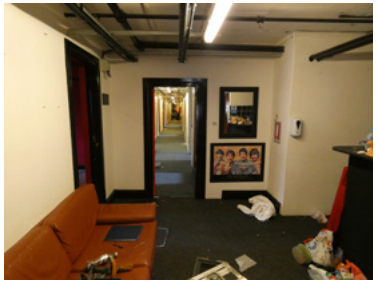
3.55 T001



3.56 T002



3.57 T002



3.58 T003



3.59 T004



3.60 T005



3.61 T005



3.62 T008



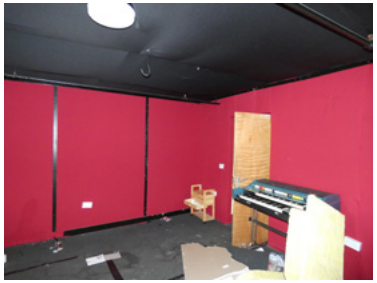
3.63 T009



3.64 T010



3.65 T012



3.66 T013



3.67 T014



3.68 T015



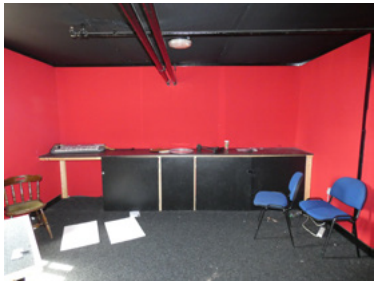
3.69 T015



3.70 T017



3.71 T018



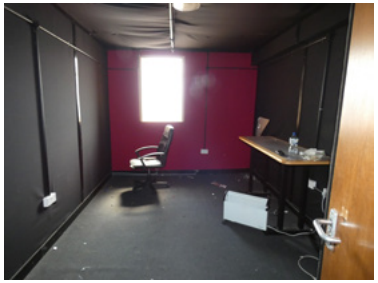
3.72 T021



3.73 T022



3.74 T022



3.75 T025

T016 is the main spine corridor. Again, there is a row of 12 painted cast iron columns with capitals and flanges at the centre of the plan, semi-submerged within modern partitions which form one side of the corridor. The floor is screeded, ceilings are painted board, the walls are painted plasterboard, there are a few off the peg timber skirtings. All doors are cheap veneer. The columns support the original timber beams, which are hidden by a lowered ceiling. The ceiling is filled with service runs - exposed pipework, including a sprinkler system, metal trunking and fluorescent lighting **[Plates 3.76-3.77]**.

T019 is a stretch of corridor leading off T016 to the northern fire exit. Same as T016. The fire exit door is modern, surrounded by ply infill. Clearly an adapted window, brickwork is visible to the right **[Plate 3.78]**.

T024 is a timber half-turn staircase which looks to be early- / mid-Victorian. The stair features timber treads and risers, with bull-nosed ends and timber stringers. The newel is a squared timber post with a depressed / shallow pointed top, and the handrails are also timber – turned to the NE wall (possibly early-20th century) and probably late-20th century replacement along the SW wall. It is capped at various floors – including to the second floor below with plasterboard. Access from the corridor is via a hefty timber boarded door, which looks to be from the 1960 works, and a plasterboard partition. The NE wall of the stair is made up of timber stud, with plaster over, timber plank, and a high level opening which contains breeze blocks. The NW external wall is brick, partially painted, it contains windows at third and second floor level – metal casements in arched lintels and will bull-nosed cills, bars over the second floor window. The third floor window is split by an apparent extension of room T022. The SW wall is plastered. Drainage pipes and sprinkler pipes criss-cross the ceiling, plastic conduit is fixed to the walls **[Plates 3.79-3.81]**.

T026 is located off T003, it is a modern kitchenette, adjacent to a modern fire escape door with a modern narrow timber casement adjacent – set within an original arched opening. Laminate floor in kitchenette areas, with modern kitchen fittings **[Plates 3.82-3.83]**.

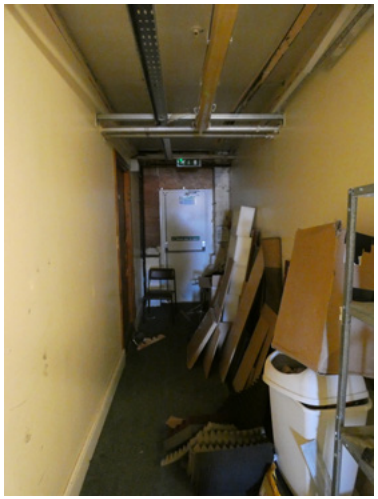
T027 and T028 are modern WCs, set against the staircore. Modern veneered doors in painted timber frames. Modern tile effect lino, plastered walls and ceiling and modern fittings. Window is barred and partially blocked and divided between the two WCs **[Plates 3.84-3.86]**.



3.76 T016 looking NE



3.77 T016 looking SW



3.78 T019



3.79 T024 (2)



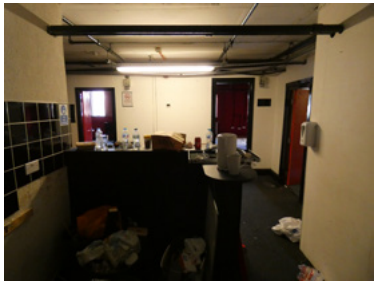
3.80 T024 (11)



3.81 T024 (14)



3.82 T026



3.83 T026



3.84 T027



3.85 T027



3.86 T028

3.3.6. Fourth Floor

As at July 2021, prior to strip-out works, this floor comprises:

– 1960 lift and staircore, with plastered walls, screed floor and boarded ceiling (**FF001**). Plaster lost on SW wall, revealing original brickwork. 1960 timber doors lead to FF004 **[Plate 3.87]**.

– Small office / studios – modern timber stud partitions, carpeted floor, timber slatted ceiling (**FF002 and FF003**) **[Plate 3.88]**.

– Two large open-plan spaces divided by a modern timber studded partition with glazed vision panel (to be removed) (**FF004 and FF005**) **[Plates 3.89-3.91]**. The floors are historic timber floorboards – of a variety of ages and sizes – the wider more historic boards run NE-SW, whilst the narrower boards run at 90 degrees laterally across the space (see Plates 3.89-3.91). One area appears to frame an infilled hoist opening **[Plate 3.92]**. Some areas of floor have sheet ply over the boards. Walls beneath the clerestory glazing and around rooms **FF009 and FF010** are vertical timber tongue and groove – probably early-20th century. Clerestory windows are a variety of ages, none appear to be original though some are probably late-19th and early-20th century timber, with later replacements, some are missing glass **[Plates 3.93-3.94]**. Ceilings feature timber beams running NW-SE, between which is thin timber boarding, some is missing or is overboarded with asbestos sheeting (see Plate 3.91 and **[Plate 3.95]**. Fixed to the beams and boards is a range of services – a mid-20th century sprinkler system, later strip lighting, mid- to late-20th century conduit / ceiling roses. At the northern end of FF005 is a service lift with mid-20th century outer concertina shutters and boarding externally, early-20th century scissor shutters and a timber-panelled lift car **[Plate 3.96]**.

– **FF006** is a free-standing early-20th century cold store in metal, with Bakelite light switch within **[Plate 3.97]**.

– **FF007** is a fire escape passage, with two timber steps, plain vertical timber cladding to the walls and ceiling with cross-bracing. 20th century timber fire escape door **[Plate 3.98]**.

– There is a kitchen area (**FF008**) located off FF005, timber panelling and asbestos sheeting, with a Belfast sink on legs **[Plate 3.99]**. Raised ceiling follows roof profile, is clad in asbestos.

– Room **FF009** is not fully accessible – contains a WC – features tongue and groove vertical panelling **[Plate 3.100]**.

– The historic timber staircase has been overboarded off **FF010 [Plate 3.101]**.

– **FF011** is another fire escape passage, much the same as FF007 but with a four-panelled timber door providing access to the passage, the mid-20th century exit door has modern timbers providing a temporary barrier **[Plate 3.102]**.

Historic England's description of the structure, most of which is visible at this level, within the loft above or through the windows **[Plates 3.103-3.105]**:

The roof structure is a composite of timber and iron, taking a mansard form. Iron I-section upper rafters are connected by an iron pin to the timber collar. A central wrought-iron tension rod runs from the ridge to the collar. Additional iron T-section rafters run at a steeper pitch down from the collar. The collar rests on cast-iron posts with a shoe for the purpose cast into their heads. A wrought-iron tension rod runs from the shoe to the timber tie-beam. The lower principal rafters are partly external as they rise through the lower-pitched roof below the clerestory, and are fixed to the external face of the shoe. The trusses are connected by cast-iron purlins with lugs to retain timber rafters in place, and which curve upwards at

their ends where they are bolted to the principal rafter. Between the trusses, the loft wall is formed of a cast-iron framework which is pinned together, with a middle rail, posts forming three windows between trusses, and a top rail incorporating a gutter for the upper slate roof. The junctions of the middle rail display sockets which would accommodate vertical posts (now absent) supported off the tie-beam, thus supporting the clerestory. The structure now displays some distortion and cracking to the tie-rods and the rails.



3.87 FF001



3.88 FF002 and F003



3.89 FF004



3.90 FF005



3.91 FF005



3.92 Floor with potential infilled hoist, FF004



3.93 Modern reeded glazing, FF004



3.94 Early-20th century glazing, FF004



3.95 Timber boarding to ceiling, FF005



3.96 Lift shaft, FF005



3.97 Cold store, FF006



3.98 Fire escape passage, FF007



3.99 Kitchen, FF008



3.100 WC, FF009



3.101 Boarded over staircase off FF010



3.102 Fire escape passage, FF011



3.103 SE Wall



3.104 View of cast iron principle rafters, NW



3.105 View of eaves, with cast iron rafters and purlins

4. Assessment of Significance

4.1. Introduction

The purpose of this section is to provide an assessment of significance of Marlsbro House and the Stephenson Square Conservation Area so that the proposals for change are fully informed as to their significance and so that the effect of the proposals on that significance can be evaluated. The assessment begins with a general summary of the building's history and significance; then the various elements of the building are assessed according to a sliding scale of significance, reflecting the extent to which they contribute to the special architectural and historical interest of the listed building.

This assessment responds to the requirement of the National Planning Policy Framework 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'.

4.2. Assessment of Significance

4.2.1. Introduction

The site was initially developed in phases during the late-18th and early-19th century and the owner - Samuel Barker, a small-time industrialist - ran a 'room and power' cotton spinning factory here. These buildings were destroyed by fire in February 1823 and a new building was quickly erected in its place. It was given a slow-burning internal structure of red brick, cast iron and timber and the roof structure was an unusual hybrid of timber and iron, with its attic floor lit by clerestory windows. Its front elevation resembled that of nearby New Mill (1804), but on a far smaller scale and to the rear was a large chimneystack extending from the engine house within the rear yard.[13]

Despite the presumably not insignificant expenditure on rebuilding, the building quickly went into use as an engineering works – occupied from at least the early-1830s until 1851 by Wren and Bennett. It is possible that the unusual roof structure was adapted / augmented with iron elements during this phase.[14] Between the late-19th century and the early-20th the building went into multiple occupancy, with a gradual shift towards clothing manufacture and wholesale. By this time, a series of changes had been made to the exterior - the rear chimneystack was reduced in size, external rear iron fire escapes were introduced, many of the cast iron windows were replaced with timber sashes, the gable end to Hilton Street was heightened and squared off and the main entrance shifted from Newton Street to Hilton Street. The internal alterations are not recorded, but it appears that secondary floorboards were introduced (only currently visible at fourth floor), the hoist/lift was converted into a lift shaft and the fourth floor was refurbished for use as a canteen.

The building underwent a major refurbishment in 1958-60, by local architects Drury and Gomersall on behalf of A.G Garments and Marslbro Limited – the former known for their production of garments for the

13English Heritage, 2008, p23
14Detailed investigations of the roof have not been possible due to access and further investigation is required.

forces during the Second World War. The building was rebranded and renamed and its once austere red brick elevations and industrial appearance were masked by an eye-catching chequerboard rendered façade, new windows and doors, terrazzo entrance cladding, an entrance canopy (since removed) and neon signage – not dissimilar to a cinema (which Drury and Gomersall were best-known for). The remains of the large chimneystack to the rear were also removed. Internally, walls and timber staircases were removed to make way for modern manufacturing processes and a variety of partitions were introduced particularly at ground floor to provide showroom areas and offices. Again despite this huge expenditure, by the early-1970s most of the building was vacant.

The building remained in use by clothing wholesalers until the late-1990s, after which it went into a more mixed occupancy, including music studios and small-scale office spaces. From the early-2000s to present day, the building has been occupied by a series of music studios, dance studios, martial arts groups and other small businesses. This is reflected in the more recent WCs, kitchenettes and particularly the multi-layered 'sound-proof' partitions, found at basement and third floor.

The internal partitions have now been removed and revealed the original open plan spaces and features of the building. These spaces and the above elements are of evidential, aesthetic and historic value in understanding the original and evolved use of the building and are of moderate to high significance. The following assessment is however based on the condition of the building prior to strip-out works. The building has been stood vacant for a number of years and is suffering from water ingress with a number of areas now suffering from deterioration of fabric.

4.2.2. Summary of Significance

As one of Manchester's most recent listings, Historic England's description is detailed and it summarises that the building is primarily listed for its architectural and historic interest: as a rare early example of heavy-timber floor construction - which strongly influenced the mid-19th century design of industrial buildings in the USA; for its unusual roof construction and use of iron ring-beams within the walls - all of which is little altered. Its historic interest comes from its role as early-19th century former factory in the world's first industrial city, located outside the more typical mill areas of Ancoats and Chorlton-on-Medlock. However, the description contains no mention of cultural or communal value.

In terms of its cultural and communal value - whilst Marlsbro House has been a key component of Manchester's music scene for the past 10 years, it ultimately lacks the same musical heritage significance as some of the other studio spaces in Greater Manchester with affiliations to the punk movement of the 1970s and the 'Madchester' scene of the 1980s and 90s. Nevertheless, it represents the continuation of a DIY approach to Manchester's live music culture, one which involves the appropriate of the city's robust post-industrial fabric to provide affordable and authentic spaces in which artists and musicians can rehearse, record and perform.[15]

15 This report goes some way to recording the building's previous uses in order to ascertain its communal value – compiled from archival research and secondary sources - this knowledge could be furthered with the assistance of those who have occupied and used the building.

The building embodies the following values which contribute to its overall significance:

Evidential

Despite a variety of alterations, the building retains a series of elements which demonstrate the activities which took place in the building which contribute considerably to the understanding the original uses and activities that took place within the building and to the building's **evidential value**. These include:

– External form, brickwork walls and fenestration pattern including the clerestory window openings;

– Roof form and timber and iron structure;

– Internally – the cast iron columns, iron wall plates timber plank floors and timber joists; Victorian timber staircase along the north east wall, timber framed screen to the stair at first floor timber, early-20th century panelling at fourth floor and to the lift shaft and car.

The early-21st century studio partitions at basement and third floors are of **low evidential value** in their representation of the building's more recent music studio use. The render, metal casements, principal entrance and stair/ lift core (1960) are of **lower evidential value** representing the conversion of the building for a clothing manufacturer.

Historical

The building is of **high historical value** as *an early-19th century factory in the centre of the world's first industrial city, outside the clusters of mills in the suburbs of Ancoats and Chorlton-on-Medlock*.[16] It is one of the earliest commercial buildings within the Stevenson Square Conservation Area and reflects the transition of Stevenson Square from a genteel residential area into a key industrial one. It also reflects the wavering state of the cotton industry during the 1820s – as following rebuilding it was rapidly converted for alternative use. Its appearance, although masked beneath render and with replacement windows, can still be read as a former factory - especially its front elevation which resembles New Mill (1804). Its slow-burning construction - which reflects the fate of its predecessor – is evident in its slender cast-iron columns, hefty timber spine beams and thick plank floors. The building also reflects the multiple phases not only of its own occupation and use but of the wider area and the continual repurposing of the industrial fabric of Manchester.

Aesthetic or Architectural

Despite the external appearance of the building, the original design and function of the building is still evident in its size, form and fenestration pattern. Internally, it is a similar story – where the numerous modern partitions and finishes conceal the building's plan form and features – however its former layout, structure and function is legible in some areas. The building is of high aesthetic or architectural values:

– As a rare early example of heavy-timber floor construction, a concept providing both robustness and fire-resistance which appears to have originated in Manchester and which strongly influenced the mid-C19 design of industrial buildings in the USA, in particular New England;

– For its unusual variation of a roof designed using both iron and timber elements, in this case including a cast-iron clerestory running the full length of both sides;

– Unusually for its date also incorporating iron ring-beams in the walls, to which the timber cross-beams and the heavy floorboards are fixed;

16 Historic England listing description: List UID: 1466846

– With little alteration to the technologically interesting structural fabric.[17]

Its external finishes disguise it as a 1960s commercial building, which is probably why it has been listed so late in the day. Whilst these finishes are not special or unusual in the context of mid-20th century architecture – in fact they are rather mundane and they conceal original brickwork - the render does afford the building something of a local landmark status and reference point within the Northern Quarter, and to a lesser extent so does the graffiti which feature on its elevations and shutters. Very little appears to remain of the 1960 internal scheme. Overall this phase of works is of low aesthetic value. The early-20th century timber tongue-and-groove panelling at fourth floor and to the lift shaft is of modest aesthetic value. The early-21st century internal fit out and studios are of no aesthetic value given their more recent date, off-the-peg materials and typical construction – they detract as they conceal historic fabric.

Communal or Cultural

The building also holds **cultural or communal values** for its association with the companies and individuals who have inhabited it including its creator Samuel Barker and engineers Wren and Bennett, umbrella manufacturers J Critchley & Co and more recently the series of music production companies including Hope and Sunshine studios. These associations are more intangible, only really discernible through study or word of mouth. The use of the building as part of the wider Manchester music scene in the early-21st century is interesting but not unique and whilst it has hosted well-known performers it does not appear to be associated with any particular musical event or movement. This building represents the constant shape-shifting of Manchester's post-industrial fabric to serve new uses and overall the building's communal value is considered to be multi-layered and **moderate**.

17 Historic England listing description: List UID: 1466846

4.2.3. Hierarchy of Significance

The building's special interest is manifest in the fabric and form of the building, which has the following hierarchy of significance[18]:

Of **high significance** and particularly sensitive to change are:

– The building's overall external form, including its roof; although the raised south gable conceals the building's roof form and detracts;

– The original open plan form, which is discernible but currently obscured by modern partitions;

– The building's original brick, timber and iron construction, including:

– *cast iron columns,*

– *external red brick walls with arched openings (recently uncovered),*

– *iron wall plates,*

– *hybrid iron and timber roof structure,*

– *timber plank floors;*

– Victorian timber staircase, although altered and part blocked, including a once glazed timber screen at first floor.

Of **moderate significance** and therefore less sensitive to change are:

Slate roof coverings – although they are currently concealed and so their contribution to significance can only be presumed at this stage;

– Two late-Victorian fire escape stairs, including timber-panelled access corridors from the fourth floor;

– Timber roof sarking;

18 This fabric will be reviewed following the soft strip.

– Early-20th century timber panelling at fourth floor level – concealing the eaves storage and WC areas, lining out the roof;

– Lifting mechanisms (age / provenance will be reviewed properly once asbestos removal works have taken place);

– Timber framed clerestory windows at attic level, of a variety of dates, are of moderate to low significance;

– Interwar 'cold room';

– Probable early-20th century hoist shaft, lift car and mechanism at fourth floor (its age / provenance will be reviewed properly once asbestos removal works have taken place).

Of **low significance** and therefore less sensitive to change are:

– The signage on the elevations dates from 1960s and is of **low historic, communal** and **aesthetic value;**

– The chequerboard render distinguishes this building from others in the area and makes it a local landmark. The render itself is of **low historic and evidential value**. This render however is visually poor and both conceals and has physically damaged the original brick beneath, which **detracts;**

– Timber stair within 1960 rear entrance extension, probably made in part with reused historic fabric;

– Kitchen fittings, including Belfast sink, at fourth floor.

Of **neutral significance, neither contributing to nor detracting** from the significance of the whole and therefore a clear opportunity for change are:

– Single storey entrance extension to the rear;

– 1960 metal-framed windows;

– WC partitions at basement.

The partitions at basement and third floors reflect the recent studio use and are of **some limited evidential and communal value,** however the fabric itself is of a very recent date, typical construction and of **no architectural value;**

– 1960 timber stair at basement level;

– 1960 tiled ground floor lobby with steps and later ramp at the southern end of the building;

– 1960 and later sprinkler system, although its pipework adds to the building's industrial aesthetic;

– Modern newels, handrails and access doors to the Victorian staircase;

– 1960 staircore at the southern end of the building;

– Modern WC and kitchen fittings;

– Modern timber staircase at basement floor.

Factors which are negative and detract from the building's significance and offer an opportunity for enhancement are:

– Rendered rear elevation;

– uPVC windows;

– Felt roof coverings;

– Aside from their limited value noted above, the studio partitions at basement and third floors conceal original plan form and features, which **detracts considerably**;

– All modern partitions, which conceal historic plan form;

– The poor-quality replacement windows at fourth floor;

– Suspended ceilings which obscure historic ceiling structures;

– Asbestos overboarding / boxing out to historic columns, beams and lintels;

– Screed which covers most floors (timber plank and possibly stone floors are expected beneath).

4.2.4. Setting

The setting of the building contributes little to appreciation of its significance, primarily due to the extent to which later alterations have removed legibility of the building as a 19th century mill. The only elements of note are those that hint at this former use including the positioning of the building on the strong 18th century street grid, its back of pavement position and proximity to more legible commercial, industrial and residential buildings of the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries as well as views that highlight its overall form and, in particular, its gabled roof which is most evident from the north along Newton, Dean and Port Streets where the north elevation is most evident, with intermittent views of the clerestory windows from the east and south-east and south-west along Port and Hilton Streets.

4.2.5. Stephenson Square Conservation Area

The conservation area is historically significant illustrating the urban development of estate land in the 18th century with smaller-scale residential and commercial premises, later evolved in the Victorian period with larger-scale purpose-built industrial buildings. This is evident in the immediate context of the site, despite broader loss of the area's earlier buildings, where remnants of the smaller-scale residential-cum-workshop premises for cottage industry (50-62 Port Street) sit close to larger, later, industrial premises including No.50 Newton Buildings (c.1900 hat manufactory) forming a multi-layered and varied streetscape.

The area retains its historically significant urban form with a strong grid pattern of streets, laid down in the late 18th century, and generally overset by Victorian industrial development with a generally tight urban grain with large footprint buildings hard against the pavement. The large surviving Victorian warehouses are of high architectural value and are a dominant characteristic of the area of analysis, however the original character of the area was largely consistent of early brick cotton mills, a characteristic which no longer is readily evident to the passer by. The majority of the buildings are commercial, though regeneration has seen the conversion of the former Post Office Depot and mills to residential use. There are elements of the original canal network/basins around Hilton Street and Ancoats, some of the wharves and warehouse sites have been redeveloped for housing, whilst some open areas have remained as surface carparks – allowing a series of long-range views particularly towards Marlsbro House. The remaining dense urban layout of the area affords short-to-mid-range views of the varying streetscapes. In townscape terms, Newton Street has a fragmented and disconnected nature, and it frames views north towards Ancoats. Its remaining historic buildings often stand in isolation, and in a pronounced contrast with nearby new developments.19

19 SLHA, *Marlsbro House Heritage Appraisal*, 2019, p49

Marlsbro House is a prominent building within the conservation area. The 1960s works, including rendering and addition of a parapet to the south elevation, detract from the special interest of the area by largely concealing the former use of the building as a cotton mill to the exterior, compounded by the earlier loss of elements such as the chimney, though the chequerboard render, whilst divisive, has a landmark quality. However, some elements of the exterior hint at this industrial origin including the overall building form, including the gabled roofscape, though this is only evident on the north elevation, and scale, as well as detailing such as the Victorian fire-escapes to the rear. The rear elevation, whilst incorporating the fire escapes, lacks the landmark pattern of the main elevations and is generally visually poor exacerbated by views through the site, along its rear yard, from Hilton Street and Faraday Street which detract from the quality of the street scene as whilst industrial in nature, are formed of hard standing flanked by intimidating palisade fencing which together form a poor-quality gap in the built form. The condition of the building further detracts from the street scene and its vacancy and underuse forms part of a broader cumulative loss of vitality and the important historic commerciality of the area.

5. Commentary on the Proposals

5.1. Introduction

The proposals are centred on the adaptive reuse of Marlsbro House including a high quality, co-working and office space on the upper floors, a restaurant and lounge at ground floor and recording studios, listening room and bar at basement level.

All proposals should be understood within this context of renewal, and the overall heritage-specific public benefit of bringing a vacant and deteriorating building of national and local interest back into use and the consequent impact on the historic character and vibrancy of the Stevenson Square Conservation Area.

The proposal follows the implementation of a series of enabling works, agreed with Manchester City Council via correspondence and listed building consents, for the soft strip of later internal partitions and other finishes, as well as asbestos removal and trial areas of cleaning and fabric repair. This work, as part of that overall narrative of renewal, has had a clear and positive impact on the building's interest as a Victorian mill, better revealing the internal historic volumes and fabric as well as laying the necessary foundation for a sustainable long-term use.

The current proposals form a major stage in the building's conversion and have been designed to create high-quality internal spaces for commercial use, enacting much needed repair and improving the thermal efficiency and useability of the building in the long-term. They are outlined in the drawings and Design and Access Statement by Archer Humphryes, but in brief comprise, externally, removal of the chequerboard sharp cement render, replacement of the 1960s fenestration, installation of a new glazed public-facing entrance, as well as the erection of a replacement external fire escape stair and enhancement of the rear yard. Internally, building on the previously approved strip-out, it is proposed to insert more considered partitions and fitout to enable the proposed uses and undertake a programme of repair and redecoration.

5.1.1. Render

In the 1960s, the brickwork of the Victorian mill was rendered with a sharp cement in a chequerboard pattern. As established in Section 3, the render itself is of no interest and actively detracts, not only visually but materially through damaging the brickwork and contributing to dry rot due to a lack of permeability. Although the chequerboard pattern is evocative of the later uses of the building - including as part of the Manchester music scene - it is in a poor visual condition and significantly detracts from the understanding of the building's historic use and the potential contribution this could make to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Trial areas have shown that hand tools can successfully remove the modern cementitious render to both the front and rear elevations without causing unnecessary damage to the brickwork. As such it is proposed to remove the render in full and undertake a scheme of conservation repairs informed by full condition and structural surveys.

The removal of the render would present major benefits to the legibility of the building as a Victorian mill and conservation of its historic fabric, better revealing its significance and reinforcing the historic character and appearance of the Stevenson Square Conservation Area.

5.1.2. Fenestration

The current metal windows date to the 1960s conversion, with some later uPVC additions. Other than the clerestory windows, the main fenestration contributes only to the interest of the building as a mill through retention of the overall pattern including the regular, strong, rhythm which speaks to the earlier use. The design and finish of the windows has a neutral impact as later additions when viewed in context with the modern rendered finish. They are however a replacement of the earlier Victorian sashes (themselves replacements for the original iron windows) and as part of the render removal there is clear opportunity for enhancement. It is proposed to replace all windows; at upper floors and to the rear and side elevations, the historic three-over-three timber sash pattern will be reinstated (albeit double glazed). The Victorian sashes were present from the late-19th century until the 1960s, a greater duration than the original iron windows, and given that their design and finish would more closely align to the historic design than a steel replica of the earlier multi-pane units this presents a more authentic approach. At ground floor (Newton Street façade) these will be single pane in association with the proposed commercial use – this follows the same approach found on numerous listed buildings within the conservation area, where single pane windows at ground floor sit comfortably within the elevation expressing their commercial uses in contrast to the upper floors. Cills will be reinstated to their original levels and new stone cills inserted.

To Faraday Street the ground floor openings will have vents at upper level (to serve the internal plant area) with timber boarding below, glazing to the comms room and timber boarded doors to serve the central access and means of escape from basement level (see 5.1.3 entrances below). To the rear elevation a spandrel panel will be location in the return bay at ground floor with louvres otherwise located at upper level in windows behind the stairs and at low level to minimise their visual impact. The use of louvres to these secondary elevations would have only a minor impact on the appearance of the building and must be considered against the greater impacts that alternative plant locations previously considered would bring (see 5.1.7 Decoration and MEP below).

The clerestory windows themselves were identified as having moderate to low significance as earlier, though not original, additions with greater importance given to the overall form of the clerestory level as a key roofscape feature indicative of the historic roof form. It is proposed to replace these windows with metal units replicating their design to maintain their role in the understanding of the unusual roof construction. It is further proposed to reinstate the windows (three pane arrangement to follow the upper floors) and pavement lights at basement level.

The reinstatement of windows at upper floors which follow the historic timber sash pattern and opening up the basement lightwells will further reinforce the building's significance as a Victorian mill and forms part of the major benefits of the proposals (alongside the removal of the render). Maintaining a single pane design at ground floor (Newton Street only) will cause no harm to significance from the existing arrangement and the necessary replacement of the clerestory windows to maintain their role in the roof structure again will, on balance, cause no harm. Overall the proposed window replacement will present a significant enhancement to the appearance of the building and its role in the conservation area whilst improving internal thermal efficiency.

5.1.3. Entrances

At the southwest corner of the building is a terrazzo clad entrance installed in the 1960s conversion. This is, generally, of its time and of limited interest itself, but has a poor relationship to the street scene limiting the vitality of the street through a relatively heavy visual appearance. It is proposed to maintain this entrance as the principal entrance to the offices at upper floors with a new metal framed door set within the reinstated brick facade. A similar glazed door will be inserted to the rear corner on Hilton Street.

Internal alterations are required to create level access to the lift (which will be repositioned at a lower level) including the removal of a section of original floor structure which survived the 1960s remodelling and its replacement with a steel and concrete deck. Whilst this will see the loss of historic fabric (visible at basement level), it is a fragmentary remain in an otherwise heavily altered area and, when considered in context of the retention of the equivalent structure visible throughout the principle parts of the building, is not considered to cause undo harm to significance.

To Newton Street, the historic brick arch in the centre of the façade (as evidenced internally) will be reinstated (with a new curved profile brick edging) to provide access to the ground floor. This will be mirrored on the rear elevation to create a visual and physical link from front to rear with glazed partitions to the flanking coworking lounge and restaurant. An elevation drawing from 1958 highlights the presence of an arch in the rear elevation, however this was uncharacteristically mis-aligned rather than forming a single route through the building. Whilst the proposed relocation will therefore not be a return to the original design, this arch is no longer present in the rear elevation and it will follow the pattern more commonly found on industrial buildings throughout the city. Furthermore, it will have a particularly positive impact on the proposed internal uses and connectivity through to the rear amenity area. To enable level access and to accommodate platform lifts to the front and rear, minor structural interventions are again required to the ground floor which will see some loss of fabric to the floor structure.

To the north corner of the ground floor it is proposed to make alterations to the ground floor level and undertake basement excavation works to allow for a means of escape from the basement (timber boarded door exiting onto Faraday Street) and allow for the insertion of a comms room. These interventions are proposed within a discreet secondary area and avoid the need to intrude into the main ground floor space, therefore minimising potential impacts on the significance of the building.

5.1.4. Basement

It is proposed to bring the basement area back into a meaningful use as a recording studio and listening room, reinstating the role of the building in its later life as part of the city's music scene to the benefit of the vibrancy and vitality of the Stevenson Square Conservation Area and the local distinctiveness of the Northern Quarter more widely.

To enable this proposed use, it is required to strip-off modern paint finishes to the brickwork and to address the current water ingress. It has been demonstrated that this cannot be treated externally and therefore it is proposed to install damp proofing in the form of a cavity drainage system. A new floor slab is also required. The proposed tanking system is

a non-intrusive method which allows moisture to travel down the back of an 'egg-crate' type system and into a controlled, below-screed perimeter drainage channel with a minimal number of fixings required in order to fix this system securely in place. As such it presents the least invasive means of securing the proposed use of the floor level.

Ancillary spaces will be located at either end of the floor plan to allow the central area to be read as a single space within the recording studios and green room forming pods inserted and the columns running exposed through the bar. The overall design approach would present an significant enhancement to the basement area which was previously subdivided into two rows of cellular rooms, awkwardly abutting the central columns and devoid of historic character.

5.1.5. Ground and Upper Floors

The strip out of later partitions, services, suspended ceilings and asbestos has significantly enhanced the building's interest, enabling a better appreciation of the historic internal volumes and exposing original features by removing the overall cellular room structure. It is now proposed to undertake a number of interventions to enable the reuse of the building, working alongside its historic character and celebrating its historic features.

At ground floor a central winter garden will be created, aligned with the arched openings to the front and rear, with glazed partitions to the flanking coworking lounge and restaurant. Fixtures and fittings within the two spaces will largely be set away from the historic fabric and features with an open kitchen / DDA WC / showers and kitchen located at either end of the floor plan and following the same principles as above.

To the office floors (1st – 4th floors) office spaces will be formed by glazed partitions set within minimal timber frames which will allow the volume and original features to all remain readily appreciated with demountable partitions offering flexibility and ensuring the intervention is entirely reversible.

Both lift cores will be retained in their current location, albeit increased in footprint to meet modern requirements and with a comms riser and capacity for a ventilation duct to lift 2 at the northern end of the building. Similarly WCs will be stacked at the opposing ends of the floorplan. This approach will cluster solid partitions around the existing solid cores and prevent the need for more intrusive interventions elsewhere across the floors.

The proposed reuse will require the removal of elements identified as being of moderate evidential significance as indicative of the building's earlier (though not original) use, however wherever possible these will be retained as features within the proposed reuse.

The historic multi-leaf car and landing gates to lift 1, lift motor and pulleys and traditional timber hoist guide rails and a wooden lift car to lift 2 all contribution to the understanding of the building's historic character and it is intended to incorporate these into the proposed interior design scheme in appropriate locations such as the reception and lift landing areas. Likewise the large diameter water pipes / and gate valves and large diameter fire alarm bells will be retained as part of the internal decorative scheme.

The Victorian staircore to the middle of the building - identified to be of high significance as evidencing the building's 19th century uses - albeit heavily altered and in a poor condition would be retained and restored and brought into use an office pod at first floor. The freestanding interwar

cold storeroom at 4th floor is of some interest and it would be relocated as part of the proposed scheme; given that it is unrelated to the historic mill character its relocation elsewhere in the building is not considered to undermine the evidential value it holds.

Overall, the proposed floor layouts at ground and upper floors will bring the building back into a sustainable use and have been carefully designed to minimise their impact on the significance of the building whilst enabling its historic character – revealed during the enabling strip-out works – to be better revealed and celebrated. Central to this is a greater appreciation of the building's historic internal volume, its timber structure, brick walls and defining cast iron columns as a central spine feature (having previously been semi-embedded in partition walls flanking one side of a corridor).

5.1.6. Fabric Retention and Repair

The strip out of later partitions, services, suspended ceilings and asbestos has significantly enhanced the building's interest by revealing historic fabric, including the columns, brick walls and ceiling / floor structure. Despite degradation of fabric through water ingress, poor quality interventions and fire damage, specialist surveys undertaken have demonstrated that these key features can be retained as part of the building's reuse - albeit with necessary reinforcements to the beams to ensure their structural capacity. As outlined in detail in the supporting technical reports, in areas where decay or structural limitations have been identified this will include PFC beams applied to the timber beams, steel support brackets to transfer loads to the column heads and new concrete pad stones.

It is also proposed to remove the top layer of the floor build up, recent trial areas have demonstrated that this can be successfully undertaken without causing damage to the mill boards and beams below. A new floor build up will then sit on top allowing the underside of the mill boards, beams and column heads to remain visible, as revealed during strip-out works, and better revealing the internal historic character of the building. At 4th floor the building was not originally intended for occupation and later adapted for storage use with the inserted floorboards inadequate for reuse – as such new floorboards akin to the mill boards elsewhere within the building will be laid on top of retained beams below.

5.1.7. Decoration and MEP

The scheme will introduce high-quality finishes to the interior, with the historic cast iron columns as the defining visual feature with exposed MEP routes positioned on the inside face of the new partitions to avoid competing with them. MEP routed internally has been designed to be the minimum necessary with exposed ceiling mounted equipment and trays with supporting supplies routed within the floor build-up above to avoid the need for detracting suspended ceilings. Plant areas are proposed to be located discreetly within the rear courtyard, concealed behind the roof parapet and located internally to the north end of the ground floor to avoid intruding into the open floor plates and to minimise intrusive routes through the building or visually prominent equipment externally.

As part of the internal redecoration it is proposed to remove later, non-breathable, paint and render from the exterior walls (as has been successfully undertaken through trial works), with a new lime plaster applied at ground floor and limewash to the upper floors. Retained timber

structural elements will likewise have layers of paint removed (successful demonstrated through trial testing) and be stained or repainted. These works will better reveal features and fabric from the building's earliest phase, allowing them to be appreciated as part of its adaptive reuse whilst ensuring the protection of the fabric in the long-term.

5.1.8. Roof Works

At roof level water ingress and earlier remediation works (such as laying asphalt over the slates) have demonstrably caused extensive damage to the roof fabric and structure and floor levels below. From earlier investigative works it is clear that both the roof covering and sarking boards require replacement, whilst it would appear that the some metal purlins and the full metal and timber queen post trusses can be saved and retained with reinforcements as required. The full details for this will be informed by specialist surveys undertaken following the asbestos removal required but will be based on the principle of repairing and reusing all fabric possible and at this stage include spliced repairs of rotten timber rafters and the installation of a pair of PFCs offset from the retained clerestorey line.

To the centre, as part of the replacement roof covering and sarking boards, the lower section of the roof will be cutaway on both sides to create terrace areas, glazed doors inserted and discrete glazed balustrades added for fall protection. Whilst this will alter the historic form of the roof, its two tier mansard / gambrel style roof form means that this alteration could be sensitively accommodated without impact on the appearance of the building and the primary roof structure would be retained in full. Furthermore, and alongside the removal of the modern ceiling boards, this will allow people to engage with the cast-iron stays and the roof's unique structural form of high significance in a manner only possible through section drawings at present. Rooflights proposed at the apex of the roof will further enhance the internal qualities of the roof space.

As part of the approved asbestos removal application it is proposed to remove the early 20th century timber panelling (retaining an element as evidence if it is demonstrably possible to do so during the asbestos removal process). Whilst this has some significance as an illustration of a later phase of the building's evolution, it is comparatively minor in context of the building's primary interest, founded in its earlier mill fabric. Notwithstanding, it is proposed to reproduce and reinstate the wainscoting to maintain its visual role and contribution to the historic character of the roof space.

5.1.9. Rear Landscaping and Fire Escape

It is proposed to retain and refurbish the southern of the two Victorian fire escape stairs but decommission its use. The northern stair is unable to provide a safe, compliant evacuation route and is demonstrably failing with the existing ferrous fixings expanding and blowing the brickwork. As such it will be replaced with a new metal stair to provide a secondary means of escape from the north of the building with areas of brickwork repaired following its removal. Although this will see the loss of one Victorian stair, this approach will balance the need for a safe fire escape route whilst retaining one stair for its evidential value (with elements salvaged from the north stair used in its repair) and contribution to the historic industrial character of the building whilst avoiding the need for a more intrusive intervention internally.

It is proposed to revitalise the poor quality rear courtyard, removing structures dating from the 1960s works and including new courtyard gates, the retention and relaying of courtyard cobbles and the erection of refuse and cycle storage areas and external seating including a glazed canopy structure. These works will revitalise the current condition of the courtyard area, bringing in into an active use whilst discreetly housing required ancillary structures away from the listed building and streetscene.

5.2. Summary of Impacts

Proposal	Mitigation	Resultant Impact
Render removal	Condition survey and conservation-led scheme of repair to revealed brickwork	Major benefit
Fenestration replacement	Single pane only to the commercial frontage to Newton Street and return to Victorian-style timber 3/3 sash elsewhere, enhanced thermal performance and louvres in secondary/concealed locations as part of a coordinated enhancement strategy	Major benefit
Entrances		
Principal office entrance	Enhancement to current appearance	Minor benefit
Reinstatement of brick arches to front and rear to form central entrance and access to rear courtyard	Relocation of rear arch mitigated through extent of alteration here and visual and operational benefits of aligning with front entrance	Front arch: moderate benefit Rear arch: minor 'less than substantial' harm
Internal alterations to accommodate lifts, access to basement and comms room	Limited to extent of fabric removal necessary	Minor 'less than substantial' harm
Basement	Cavity drainage tanking utilised as the most suitable for historic fabric to enable floorspace to be in active use	Moderate 'less than substantial' harm
	Layout and MEP designed to reinstate a sense of historic volume, plan form and character derived through exposing features such as central columns	Moderate benefit
Ground floor	Layout, MEP and glazed partitions designed to reinstate a sense of historic volume, plan form and character derived through exposing features such as central columns, beams, ceilings and wall finishes	Moderate benefit

1st – 3rd floors	Layout, MEP, office partitions and clustering of circulation and WCs etc designed to reinstate a sense of historic volume, plan form and character derived through exposing features such as central columns, beams, ceilings and wall finishes Retention of key features (relocated where necessary) including 1st floor Victorian stair, historic lift features, large diameter water pipes / and gate valves and large diameter fire alarm bells	Moderate benefit
4th floor	Reinstatement of single volume, removal of modern ceiling boards and relocation of 4th floor cold store within scheme	Moderate benefit
	Retention of section of early 20th century panelling (as part of otherwise full removal)	Minor 'less than substantial' harm
Roof	Scheme of repair, replacement and reinforcement of roof fabric limited to that necessary to secure its retention, rooflights sensitively located at apex level	Neutral
	Creation of roof terraces and cutaway of roof to the front and rear mitigated by its two tier mansard / gambrel style roof form where only upper section of glazed doors will be visible and viewed in context with the clerestory windows Exposure of cast-iron stays and the roof's unique structural form to view in full	Moderate 'less than substantial' harm
Rear landscaping	Sensitive scale of proposed canopy, decorative louvres to refuse and cycle store areas, retaining and relaying of courtyard cobbles alongside general revitalisation	Minor benefit
Fire escape	Retention of one Victorian fire escape and elements salvaged from removed fire escape in its repair	Moderate 'less than substantial' harm

5.3. Justification of the Proposals

The proposed works seek to build on the earlier enabling strip-out works to bring substantial benefits to the building – better revealing historic fabric, the volume of internal spaces and enabling appreciation of the building as a historic mill where this was previously highly compromised through both the exterior rendering and internal partitioning.

As identified above, whilst there are elements of the proposals that would cause some minor or moderate 'less than substantial' harm to the significance of the listed building – principally through the loss of some historic features and fabric – a careful design process has been undertaken to ensure that these are the minimum necessary, largely focused on fabric and features that it is not possible to retain as part of a scheme of adaptive reuse and otherwise mitigated through retention and relocation as part of the internal scheme of redecoration.

As a consequence these would be significantly outweighed by the overarching and critical public benefits of the scheme centred on securing the long-term conservation of the building, better revealing its most significant elements, most notably the internal construction and external appearance, and enhancing its longevity through much needed repair and improvements to thermal efficiency. The benefits this will draw to the building itself as a Grade II listed building of national interest are clear – including public access to and appreciation of its historic mill construction and use. However, it is perhaps the consequent benefits this will draw to the Stevenson Square Conservation Area and Northern Quarter more widely which will have the greatest impact both in terms of the reinstatement of its historic character in the streetscape and the contribution to the area's vitality and local distinctiveness through its proposed basement and ground floor uses.

As explained in Section 1.2, 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 Manchester Core Strategy (adopted 2012) and the saved policies from the Unitary Development Plan (1995). Decision-makers must also comply with the requirements of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. This section assesses the proposed development first against the Core Strategy, and then brings to bear heritage policies in the NPPF and the requirements of the 1990 Planning Act.

5.3.1. Local Policy

Policy EN 3 'Heritage' of the Core Strategy indicates development must preserve or enhance the historic environment, and makes a key reference to the need to take advantage of the distinct historic and heritage features of its districts and neighbourhoods - this is echoed in policies DC 18 Conservation Areas and DC 19 Listed Buildings of the Unitary Development Plan.

The proposals include some areas of intervention and alteration which would cause minor – moderate 'less than substantial' harm to the listed building and therefore may be considered to meet these policy requirements only in part. However, the proposed scheme of adaptive reuse would meet their clear presumption for the retention, restoration, maintenance, and ongoing reuse of heritage assets and would, overall, overwhelmingly enhance the special interest of the listing building and the distinct historic character of the conservation area.

5.3.2. Legislation and National Policy

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservations Areas) Act 1990 forms the legal basis for decision making where a proposed development will impact listed buildings or a conservation area. For listed buildings it sets out that the decision maker 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' (s. 16 and 66), and for conservation areas, that *'special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that [conservation] area'* (s. 72).

These statutory requirements set a high bar for allowing development that would harm heritage assets.

However, the statutory requirements must be viewed in light of the relevant heritage policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). As noted by the court in *Mordue v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government* (2015): *'Paragraph 134 of the NPPF appears as part of a fasciculus of paragraphs, set out above, which lay down an approach which corresponds with the duty in section 66(1). Generally, a decision-maker who works through those paragraphs in accordance with their terms will have complied with the section 66(1) duty.'* Although the court was concerned with the previous version of the NPPF and section 66 specifically, the same approach is considered appropriate in respect of the heritage policies in the current NPPF and in respect of the section 16 and 72 duties.

It is therefore important to consider the proposed development against the relevant NPPF policies.

As explained above, there are elements of the proposals that would result in some harm to the listed building. This would be 'less than substantial' harm in accordance with the terminology of the NPPF. Whilst the Core Strategy does not make provision for harm to heritage significance to be weighed directly against public benefits, the NPPF, which is a material planning consideration, does allow for this. As noted above, the courts have previously held that a decision-maker that properly works its way through the relevant paragraphs of the NPPF will typically have satisfied its statutory duties under the 1990 Act (see *Mordue v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (2015)*).

Paragraph 212 of the NPPF makes clear that great weight should be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets, irrespective of whether the harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance and that clear and convincing justification is required (paragraph 213) for any caused. Section 5.1 of this report and the Design and Access Statement and technical reports which it accompanies has provided this clear and convincing justification.

Paragraph 215 of the NPPF further states that any 'less than substantial' harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

The National Planning Policy Guidance indicates that examples of heritage-specific public benefits include:

- Sustaining or enhancing the significance of a heritage asset and its setting
- Reducing or removing risks to a heritage asset
- Securing the optimum viable use of a heritage asset in support of its long-term conservation

It is considered that in this case, the 'less than substantial' harm to the listed building resulting from the proposals would be significantly outweighed by the following public benefits.

– The scheme will **secure the long-term conservation of a listed historic building** that has been vacant for over five years and is currently at risk due to water ingress, structural instability and ongoing deterioration. Bringing the building back into sustainable use will remove the threat of further decay and loss.

– Comprehensive repair and conservation works, including roof repairs and the retention and refurbishment of an early queen-post roof structure, will **safeguard important historic fabric** and ensure the continued survival of a significant heritage asset for future generations.

– The removal of inappropriate and damaging cement render, external roller shutters and other poor-quality interventions will **arrest fabric decay** and restore the building's architectural integrity, reversing harm caused by earlier unsympathetic alterations.

– The reinstatement of historic windows and the reopening of the concealed entrance arch on Newton Street will **enhance the legibility of the building's original design and historic function**, revealing a distinctive heritage asset that has long been obscured within the streetscape.

– The refurbishment will result in a **marked enhancement to the character and appearance of the Stevenson Square Conservation Area**, strengthening local distinctiveness and improving the visual quality of this prominent corner site at the junction of Newton Street and Hilton Street.

– Internal works will **better reveal the building's historic plan form, volumes and industrial character**, including exposed mill boards, timber beams, brick walls, columns and ceiling heights, enabling occupiers and visitors to understand and appreciate its historic significance.

– The use of lightweight and highly glazed internal partitions will preserve views through the building, allowing the **scale, depth and industrial origins** of the structure to be appreciated as part of the public experience of the space.

– The introduction of an external secondary means of escape represents a **heritage-led design solution**, avoiding unnecessary intervention in significant internal fabric and allowing historic features to remain exposed, intact and legible.

– The proposed mix of uses, including a ground-floor restaurant, basement bar and music-related uses, will **reintroduce culturally relevant activity** to the Northern Quarter, contributing to its historic identity as a place of creativity and performance.

– The development will generate **increased footfall, activity and natural surveillance**, providing an active frontage to Newton Street and contributing positively to the vitality, safety and vibrancy of the local area.

– The reuse of the building will **eliminate the negative impacts associated with long-term vacancy**, including graffiti, criminal damage and visual blight, thereby improving perceptions of the local environment.

– The introduction of Part M–compliant lifts and improved access will ensure the building is **fully accessible to people of all abilities**, widening public access to a listed building that has historically been difficult to experience.

– Improvements to thermal performance, alongside cycle storage and shower facilities, will **support sustainable modes of travel and reduce environmental impact**, ensuring the building's continued use while aligning with modern sustainability objectives.

– The restoration and reuse of the rear courtyard will bring an underutilised space back into active use, **enhancing amenity for occupiers and visitors** and improving the setting of the heritage asset.

Overall and on balance, therefore, the proposals would comply with Paragraph 215 of the NPPF. The NPPF heritage policies are a powerful material consideration for the purposes of section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Act 2004 and it is considered that the public benefits of the scheme outweigh the 'less than substantial' harm even when such harm is given great weight (as required by the relevant statutory duties), such that planning permission and listed building consent should be granted for the scheme.

5.4. Conclusion

The proposals present a major opportunity to secure the long-term conservation of Marlsbro House as a Grade II listed building, better revealing its significance as a Victorian mill and presenting major benefits to the historic character of the Stevenson Square Conservation Area and vitality of the Northern Quarter more widely. Although some harm has been identified within the proposals, this harm is 'less than substantial' and in accordance with the terminology of the NPPF (para 215) would be easily outweighed by the many compelling benefits offered by the scheme.

The proposals would therefore meet the tests for sustainable development outlined in the NPPF in so far as they relate to the historic environment and would overcome the presumption against development set out in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Appendix I - Statutory List Description

Marlsbro House

52-54 Newton Street, Manchester, M1 1ED

List Entry Number: 1466846

Date first listed: 18th November 2019

Summary

Factory, 1823, probably designed by millwrights and engineers Wren and Bennett as their own manufacturing shop, but possibly a re-purposed room-and-power cotton mill.

Reasons for Designation

Marlsbro House, a factory building of 1823, is listed at Grade II for the following principal reasons:

Architectural interest:

* as a rare early example of heavy-timber floor construction, a concept providing both robustness and fire-resistance which appears to have originated in Manchester and which strongly influenced the mid-C19 design of industrial buildings in the USA, in particular New England;

* for its unusual variation of a roof designed using both iron and timber elements, in this case including a cast-iron clerestory running the full length of both sides;

* unusually for its date also incorporating iron ring-beams in the walls, to which the timber cross-beams and the heavy floorboards are fixed;

* with little alteration to the technologically interesting structural fabric.

Historic interest:

* as an early-C19 factory in the centre of the world's first industrial city, outside the clusters of mills in the suburbs of Ancoats and Chorlton-on-Medlock.

History

The building shows similarity to cotton mills from the turn of the C19, with the four central bays on Newton Street projecting slightly. This might reflect the earliest known development of the site, with a square building in the centre of the block, which is shown on William Green's map of 1787 to 1794. This was probably the first phase of Samuel Barker's mill (the owner of the first phase building on this site). By approximately 1822, a gazetteer of Manchester mills depicted a cotton-spinning mill spanning between Faraday Street and Hilton Street, of seven storeys plus a loft, with a four-storey rear engine house and a five-storey rear extension over a gateway to the rear. Unfortunately this mill suffered a fire in February 1823, which reportedly left 'the whole building...reduced to a heap of ruins'. This strongly implies that the building was completely rebuilt after the fire.

The engineers Wren and Bennett occupied the building by 1831, when James Nasmyth rented space from them in the adjacent building, (then known as their 'old building', on the site of the present Newton Buildings). They described themselves in 1841 as millwrights, machine makers and engineers, and made components for iron-framed buildings, machinery for cotton mills and steam engines, among other items.

Although a drawing by Nasmyth does show a seven-storey structure in the 1830s, this was drawn from memory many years later and cannot be relied on. When the building was advertised for sale by Wren and Bennett

in 1850, the details confirm that it was its present height, and its roof appears to be original to the fabric. Several Manchester mills of the period incorporate iron in their roof structure, and some incorporate iron beams, but no others are known with iron ring-beams embedded in the outer walls. The listed contemporary Manchester cotton mills are all between six and eight storeys tall, although shorter examples are known to have existed. It is possible that Marlsbro House was rebuilt as a cotton mill in 1823, and then sold prior to 1831. Fluctuations in cotton prices during the 1820s brought boom and bust conditions and could have forced a sale.

After the 1851 sale, some of the original 42-pane cast-iron windows were replaced with timber sash windows, and the main entrance was relocated to Hilton Street, surrounded by a stone façade. The 1888 Goad fire insurance plan shows that the rear outbuildings were cleared by then, except for the chimney, and the building was in use by J Critchley's umbrella factory and HG Forshaw's costume factory, as well as an unnamed shirt factory. The current fire escapes are not marked on that plan. Prior to an aerial photograph of 1932, the Hilton Street gable was built up to create a flat parapet which wrapped around the first bay of the rear wall. The 1931 and 1962 Goad plans confirm a variety of uses including offices, warehouses and clothing manufacture.

Around 1960, the building was altered to its present appearance, as a raincoat factory by the owners AG Garments. A new full-height reinforced-concrete stair and lift core was inserted in the south end and a new level-access entrance created at the south-west corner, sheltered by a wraparound canopy, now removed. Windows were replaced and the building was rendered front and back, with the large arched rear loading entrance filled in. What remained of the chimney was removed, and flat-roofed, rendered brick entrances were built for the rear fire escapes from the basement. The Hilton Street parapet was wrapped around the first bay of the front wall. More recently, internal partitions have created smaller spaces on all the floors except the loft, concealing much of the historic fabric from view.

Details

Factory, 1823, probably designed by millwrights and engineers Wren and Bennett.

MATERIALS: red brick with applied cement render, some iron framing, slate roofs.

EXTERIOR: prominently sited at the junction of Hilton Street and Newton Street, in Manchester's 'northern quarter'.

The building is of four storeys plus a basement and loft, and 16 bays long. The front faces north-west, the central four bays projecting by approximately 200mm. Render is applied in a checked pattern of light and dark grey, with grey paint at ground floor level. Windows have modern metal frames, with external roller shutters at the ground floor. Slim concrete sills are visible, but no lintels. At the left is a gable parapet with kneeler. A short parapet rises above the third-floor windows, partly concealing the loft. The right-hand bay has a square parapet which rises to the ridge height of the pitched roof, reading as a stair tower. This is the principal entrance bay, with a mid-C20 entrance surrounded by grey mosaic panels. Another entrance to the ground floor is in the third bay from the right, with modern door and no surround. The pitched roof is slated with an applied coating. A clerestory is set back from the parapet, with cast-iron stays (actually principal rafters) running at a steeper pitch from the eaves above the glazing, out to the parapet.

Returning at the left, the north-east (Faraday Street) wall is four bays deep, with coped, kneelered gable, and matches the front in appearance.

Returning at the left again, the checked render continues only as far as the first windows. The rest of the rear wall is in plain grey-brown render. External metal fire escapes serve the second bay from the right and third from the left, accessed from altered window openings. A small chimney stack rises above the parapet between the fourth and fifth bays from the right, and another projects at the right-hand side of the left-hand bay, which is blind and check-rendered. Single-storey rendered-brick entrances project in bays (from the left) 7 and 11. The roof matches the front in appearance.

Returning at the left again, the south-west (Hilton Street) wall matches the front, with a matching entrance at the left, and a tall wooden door with applied moulded beads creating 18 panels, at the right.

INTERIOR: the main construction is of 'slow-burn' type which omits joists in favour of heavy floorboards (probably 7 inches deep) resting directly on the cross-beams, which are centrally supported by a single line of cast-iron columns. Unusually, this is supplemented by cast-iron ring beams built in to the brick walls at the head of each floor. These are formed of inverted T-beams, with iron quadrants across the internal angles of the building. On the third floor the quadrants have empty slots which probably accommodated vertical wrought-iron tie-rods. The beams also feature metal spigots which angle down into mortices in the ends of the timber cross-beams, with a bolt for securing the fixing. In the end walls the beam soffit exhibits bolts for fixing the ends of the heavy millboard flooring. The combination of these structural elements forms a diaphragm at each floor.

The roof structure is a composite of timber and iron, taking a mansard form. Iron I-section upper rafters are connected by an iron pin to the timber collar. A central wrought-iron tension rod runs from the ridge to the collar. Additional iron T-section rafters run at a steeper pitch down from the collar. The collar rests on cast-iron posts with a shoe for the purpose cast into their heads. A wrought-iron tension rod runs from the shoe to the timber tie-beam. The lower principal rafters are partly external as they rise through the lower-pitched roof below the clerestory, and are fixed to the external face of the shoe. The trusses are connected by cast-iron purlins with lugs to retain timber rafters in place, and which curve upwards at their ends where they are bolted to the principal rafter. Between the trusses, the loft wall is formed of a cast-iron framework which is pinned together, with a middle rail, posts forming three windows between trusses, and a top rail incorporating a gutter for the upper slate roof. The junctions of the middle rail display sockets which would accommodate vertical posts (now absent) supported off the tie-beam, thus supporting the clerestory. The structure now displays some distortion and cracking to the tie-rods and the rails. The wall below the clerestory is timber-boarded.

Much internal subdivision and lining out obscures the historic fabric, and no other features of interest were visible.

Sources

Books and journals

Williams, M, Farnie, D A, Cotton Mills in Greater Manchester, (1992), 58-65

Websites

Langenbach, Randolph, Better than Steel? (Part 2) Tall Wooden Factories and the Invention of "Slow-burning" Heavy Timber Construction, Conservationtech Consulting, 2010., accessed 19/10/2019 from https%3A%2F%2Fwww.conservationtech.com%2FRL's%2520resume%26%2520pub's%2FRL-publications%2FMilltowns%2F2013-ICSA-TimberMiniSymp-Keynote%2FLANGENBACHSlowBurningKEYNOTE.pdf&usg=AOvVaw2Mo4a4vaCnfa2-fiBHow3F

Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service
Monument Full Report

Marlsbro House

HER Number 13901.1.0

Listed Building

13/07/2021

Monument Type and Dates

COTTON MILL (AD 18th Century to AD 19th Century - 1780 AD? to 1823 AD)

Evidence DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

1780 AD - 1823 AD

FACTORY (AD 19th Century to 21st Century - 1823 AD? to 2050 AD)

1823 AD - 2050 AD

IRON WORKS (AD 19th Century - 1831 AD? to 1870 AD?)

Evidence DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

(Former Type) COTTON MILL (AD 19th Century to 21st Century - 1823 AD to 2050 AD)

Use: 1823 AD - 1830 AD

1823 AD - 2050 AD

Description and Sources

Initial development of the study area may be traced to the early 1780s, when William Stevenson of Urmston purchased some 25 acres of fields that corresponded broadly to an area bounded by the present day Oldham Street, Piccadilly, Great Ancoats Street and Port Street. Stevenson laid out a grid of streets, centred on Stevenson Square, ready for development.

Late eighteenth-century maps of the study area show it to have contained two blocks of buildings, one fronting onto Newton Street, and the second on the south side of Faraday Street **[then named Friday Street]**. The character of these buildings is uncertain, although it is likely that those on Faraday Street comprised two properties that were used, at least in part, as dwellings. By 1819 the study area had been developed entirely, and was dominated by a large steam-powered cotton mill, erected along the Newton Street frontage to a height of seven storeys with an engine house to the rear. The building was extensively remodelled to become an iron works by the time of the 1850 OS map, listed as Newton Street

Iron Works (OS map) (Wren and Bennett's Machine Works on Adshead 1851). The two properties on the Faraday Street frontage were occupied by small businesses. The machine works was remodelled during the later nineteenth century, and the former engine house to the rear of the building was demolished and replaced with a large yard area; the two properties on Faraday Street were also demolished. Further remodelling had occurred by the time of the 1891 and 1893 OS maps: the engineering works was reduced to four storeys and reduced in size to create a larger yard area. The building was in multiple occupancy

by the late 1870s, and may have been vacant by 1909 as it is not listed in trade directories (Slater). Goad's Insurance plan of 1913 shows the building in use again and incorporating a hoist to each floor in the NW corner and a square-section chimney to the rear elevation. A directory for 1963 lists the building as Marlsbro House, occupied by Marlsbro Ltd, wholesale clothiers.

The site has a high potential to contain buried remains of archaeological significance within the yard area to the rear of the extant building. In particular, any surviving buried remains of the early C19 steam power plant associated with the original cotton mill are considered to be of local/ borough archaeological importance, and their damage or destruction as part of the proposed development will require an appropriate mitigation strategy. (1)

"I think the building was erected at some date between 1849 and 1888, and [was] given its present exterior in 1930." (2)

Site visited 21st February 2017. Some minor vegetation growth and damaged windows noted; some of the render is coming away also. Fair condition, partly occupied. Below-ground archaeological potential: low. (3)

The building had been erected as a cotton mill by 1819, but was rebuilt after a conflagration in 1823. The current structure comprises six floors, inclusive of basement and attic storey, and is of red brick construction with flat buff stone arches to each window. It was subject to remodelling in 1959–60, when a ground-floor entrance was inserted and the current grey render was applied over the original brickwork. The Hilton Street elevation is four bays wide, and the same 1950s chequerboard render decoration is repeated at every floor level. (4)

Following receipt of an application for a Certificate of Immunity from Listing, Historic England assessed the building in 2019, and in November of that year it was Listed at Grade II:

Summary

Factory, 1823, probably designed by millwrights and engineers Wren and Bennett as their own manufacturing shop, but possibly a re-purposed room-and-power cotton mill.

"Reasons for Designation

Marlsbro House, a factory building of 1823, is listed at Grade II for the following principal reasons:

Architectural interest:

* as a rare early example of heavy-timber floor construction, a concept providing both robustness and fire-resistance which appears to have originated in Manchester and which strongly influenced the mid-C19 design of industrial buildings in the USA, in particular New England;

* for its unusual variation of a roof designed using both iron and timber elements, in this case including a cast-iron clerestory running the full length of both sides;

* unusually for its date also incorporating iron ring-beams in the walls, to which the timber cross-beams and the heavy floorboards are fixed;

* with little alteration to the technologically interesting structural fabric.

Historic interest:

* as an early-C19 factory in the centre of the world's first industrial city, outside the clusters of mills in the suburbs of Ancoats and Chorlton-on-Medlock." (EXTRACT)(5)

Sources

(1) Unpublished document: Oxford Archaeology North. 2008. Newton Street, Manchester. Archaeological Desk-based Assessment. Ian Miller & Alan Lupton.

(2) Unpublished document: Mike Jenner. 2006. An architectural and historical assessment of Marlsbro House (52, 54 & 54a Newton Street, and 39 Hilton Street) Manchester. Mike Jenner. p2

(3) Digital archive: GMAAS. 2017. GM Textile Mill Survey Review. GMAAS.

(4) Unpublished document: Salford Archaeology. 2018. Archaeological Desk-based Assessment: Marlsbro House, 52, Newton Street, Manchester. Ian Miller. Gazetteer ref. 1; p123

(5) Website: Historic England. 2020. The National Heritage List for England: https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/. Accessed 27/02/2020

Appendix II - Planning Policy and Guidance

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

The Act is legislative basis for decision making on applications that relate to the historic environment.

Sections 16, 66 and 72(I) of the Act impose a statutory duty upon local planning authorities to consider the impact of proposals upon listed buildings and conservation areas.

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.

Similarly, section 66 states that:

In considering whether to grant permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority, or as the case may be the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Section 72(I) states that:

[...] with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

Local Policy

Manchester's Local Development Framework – Core Strategy Development Plan Document (adopted July 2012) contains the following policies of relevance:

Policy CC 9 Design and Heritage

Design of new buildings will need to be of the highest standard in terms of appearance and function. The standards and guidance explained in other LDF policies should be the basis for the approach to design, with particular attention to be given to the City Centre context and character. Development in Manchester City Centre should preserve or enhance the heritage assets that have been identified, including listed buildings, conservation areas and scheduled ancient monuments. The Council will support high density and mixed use development in the City Centre, but developers must recognise the specific design challenges that must be overcome to ensure complementarity of function and form. New development must support the range of uses the Council expects in the City Centre and contribute to a coherent and integrated physical environment.

Policy EN 1 Design Principles and Strategic Character Areas

All development in Manchester will be expected to follow the seven principles of urban design, as identified in national planning guidance and listed above and have regard to the strategic character area in which the development is located. Opportunities for good design to enhance the overall image of the City should be fully realised, particularly on major radial and orbital road and rail routes. Design and Access Statements submitted with proposals for new development must clearly detail how the proposed development addresses the design principles, reinforces and enhances the local character of that part of the City and supports the achievement of the Core Strategy Strategic Objectives.

1. City Centre Character Area

The City Centre contains a rich legacy which reflects its urban evolution to the current day and includes listed buildings, conservation areas, archaeological remains and an historic street pattern. Its core area presents a particularly dense environment that accommodates a wide and closely integrated range of uses including commercial, civic and residential activities. Relative to the amount of development there is limited open space and this includes a range of civic and less formal green spaces and waterways. Outside the core and associated with the Inner Relief Route there are less active and less densely developed areas with significant elements of cleared land. The City Centre is the focus of the City's transport routes.

– Developers will be expected to consider the City's heritage and continue the rich pattern of activity in the core area.

– While there will be opportunities to create landmark buildings, developments should also contribute positively to the experience of all at street level. Wherever possible the opportunity should be realised to enhance existing and provide new areas of meaningful open space, and the maintenance and improvement of the City's permeability should be considered in all proposals.

[...]

Policy EN 3 Heritage

Throughout the City, the Council will encourage development that complements and takes advantage of the distinct historic and heritage features of its districts and neighbourhoods, including those of the City Centre. New developments must be designed so as to support the Council in preserving or, where possible, enhancing the historic environment, the character, setting and accessibility of areas and buildings of acknowledged importance, including scheduled ancient monuments, listed buildings, registered parks and gardens, conservation areas and archaeological remains. Proposals which enable the re-use of heritage assets will be encouraged where they are considered consistent with the significance of the heritage asset.

The **Unitary Development Plan** for the City of Manchester (UDP) was adopted by the Council on 21 July 1995; the following relevant policies remain extant.

18. CONSERVATION AREAS

DC18.1

The Council will give particularly careful consideration to development proposals within Conservation Areas.

The Council will seek to preserve and enhance the character of its designated conservation areas by carefully considering the following issues:

i) the relationship of new structures to neighbouring buildings and spaces;

ii) the effect of major changes to the appearance of existing buildings;

iii) the desirability of retaining existing features, such as boundary walls, gardens, trees, (including street trees);

iv) the effect of signs and advertisements;

v) any further guidance on specific areas which has been approved by the Council.

The Council will not normally grant outline planning permission for development within Conservation Areas.

Consent to demolish a building in a conservation area will be granted only where it can be shown that it is wholly beyond repair, incapable of reasonably beneficial use, or where its removal or replacement would benefit the appearance of character of the area.

Where demolition is to be followed by redevelopment, demolition will be permitted only where there are approved detailed plans for that redevelopment and where the Council has been furnished with evidence that the development will be undertaken.

Development proposals adjacent to Conservation Areas will be granted only where it can be shown that they will not harm the appearance or character of the area. This will include the protection of views into and out of Conservation Areas.

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:

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;

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;

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;

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;

Permit demolition only where there are approved detailed plans for redevelopment and where there is evidence of a firm building contract;

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.

Stevenson Square Conservation Area

The following information was taken from the 'Conservation Areas' page on Manchester City Council's website.

Introduction

Stevenson Square conservation area lies on the north-eastern edge of the city centre of Manchester. It is one of a group of three designated by us in February 1987; the others are Shudehill and Smithfield. Stevenson Square is the most easterly of the city centre conservation areas, and was subsequently extended in December 1987 to include houses on Lever Street and Bradley Street.

The original area is bounded by Oldham Street (a common boundary with the Smithfield conservation area), Great Ancoats Street (a common boundary with the Ancoats conservation area), Spear street, faraday Street, brewer Street, China Lane, Hilton Street, the rear of Back China Lane, Dale Street, Lena Street and Piccadilly. The extension to the conservation area is bounded by Spear Street, Houldsworth Street, Lever Street and Faraday Street.

Stevenson Square and its building today

The Stevenson square conservation area represents a significant portion of the city centre in which the majority of Victorian buildings remain intact. Many are listed by the Department of the Environment as being of special architectural or historic interest. Very few buildings from the 18th century are still standing in the conservation area. The earliest include a few groups of houses and two public houses.

Numbers 69-77 Lever Street form a row of five three-storey merchants' houses with Tuscan pilaster door cases and sash windows with single glazing bars.

At the time of construction in 1787, the residences were also places of work. Skilled artisans lived in the three-room (one up, one down, and basement) 'back houses' which were built in the back yards and fronted on to Bradley Street. These dwellings were large by comparison with other, poorer houses built later in the vicinity. This group of houses is unique in the world, as they are the only example of their type still standing.

Numbers 8-14 Lever Street also form a group of Georgian houses, larger and more elaborate than 69-77, with two having acanthus leaf capitals and fluted entablature on the Tuscan pilaster door cases.

Numbers 50-62 Port Street are small, three-storey Georgian houses which were also used for business purposes. In this case, shop fronts were added in the mid-19th century. Just one of this group, no. 54, has a typical fustian weavers' horizontal, sliding-sash window at eaves level.

Numbers 24-28 Dale Street form a small group of Georgian houses, two of which have been converted to a public house.

The Brunswick Hotel on Piccadilly is an early-19th century three-storey building which has been extended to include nos. 2 and 4 Paton Street. They are finished in stucco and have Tuscan pilaster door-cases.

The majority of buildings of architectural or historic interest in the conservation area are Victorian or early-20th century. Most are related to the cotton industry, often warehouses, showrooms or workshops. These buildings are taller than the earlier examples and create a varied matrix of building mass, divided by largely dark, narrow streets. Wealth produced by the cotton industry can be seen reflected in the buildings, either stone or brick with stone dressings, many of which are elaborately decorated. Towards the end of this period terracotta became popular and was extensively used either in conjunction with brick or on its own.

The most significant street redeveloped for textile uses during the Victorian and Edwardian periods is Dale Street. It changes direction at the junction of Newton Street and Port Street, increasing the importance of the buildings at this point.

Number 35 Dale Street is a particularly fine example constructed in buff terracotta and orange-red brick, with numerous pinnacles and pediments forming an interesting skyline.

Numbers 69-75 Piccadilly form a symmetrical five-storey stone building in Victorian Gothic style, with grouped windows in the centre bays, built around 1850.

Numbers 77-83 Piccadilly were designed by Clegg and Knowles and dated 1877. A four-storey stone building with attic floor in Victorian eclectic style, which is richly decorated with stone carvings inspired by several sources.

107 Piccadilly is a Jacobean-Baroque style warehouse and showroom with offices, designed for a cotton manufacturer. Constructed in 1899 of red sandstone and red brick, it is a typical, lively design by local architect Charles Heathcote, who developed his own, inimitable style.

No. 50 Newton Street is an early-20th century five-storey building with attic dormers. The three middle floors are linked by giant arcade windows with buff terracotta quoins contrasting with smooth red brick.

The older streets would originally have been muddy tracks. The most important of these were later cobbled. With the increased transportation demands of commerce in the world's first industrial city, the Victorians paved the streets with durable gritstone setts. In some smaller streets these are still visible, together with cast-iron kerbs which were resistant to damage otherwise caused by the iron rims of cart wheels.

National Planning Policy Framework

Any proposals for consent relating to heritage assets are subject to the policies of the NPPF (2024). 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.

Concerning conservation areas and world heritage sites it states, in **paragraph 220**, that:

Not all elements of a Conservation Area or World Heritage Site will necessarily contribute to its significance. Loss of a building (or other element) which makes a positive contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site should be treated either as substantial harm under paragraph 214 or less than substantial harm under paragraph 215, as appropriate, taking into account the relative significance of the element affected and its contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site as a whole.

Consultation Draft NPPF (December 2025)

Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

HE4: Securing the conservation and enhancement of heritage assets

1. Heritage assets, as an irreplaceable resource, should be conserved and enhanced in a manner appropriate to their significance. To achieve this, development proposals which would affect the significance of heritage assets, including any contribution made by their setting should:

a. Maintain or secure a use consistent with their conservation, taking into account the importance of maintaining the assets, the positive contribution they can make to sustainable communities including local economies, and the positive contribution they can make to local character and distinctiveness;

b. Avoid harm to the significance of heritage assets, and instead preserve and enhance this significance.

2. If harm to the significance of heritage assets cannot be minimised or avoided, there should be a clear and convincing justification in accordance with the policies in this chapter.

3. Where there is evidence of deliberate neglect of, or damage to, a heritage asset, the deteriorated state of the asset should not be taken into account in any decision relating to the asset.

4. Proposals for enabling development, which would otherwise conflict with other policies in this Framework but which would secure the future conservation of a heritage asset, should be considered on the basis of whether the conservation benefits outweigh the disbenefits of departing from the policies concerned.

HE5: Assessing effects on heritage assets

1. Development proposals affecting heritage assets should be accompanied by an assessment of the significance of the assets affected (including any contribution made by their setting) and of the potential effect of the proposal on their significance. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is necessary to understand the potential effect of the proposal on their significance. The relevant historic environment record should be consulted as a minimum, and appropriate expertise employed where necessary.

2. Assessments of the potential effects of development proposals on heritage assets and their setting should identify whether proposals would be likely to:

a. Have a positive effect, which is where a heritage asset would be enhanced, or its significance better revealed; or

b. Have no effect on the significance of the asset; or

c.Result in harm to the significance of the heritage asset, either from work affecting the asset itself or from development within its setting. The degree of harm should be identified: substantial harm would occur where the development proposal would seriously affect a key element of the asset's significance; or

d. Cause the total loss of the significance of the heritage asset.

3. In making this assessment it is the effect on an asset's significance rather than the scale of the development which should be considered.

4. Decision makers should be satisfied that this assessment accurately reflects the effects on heritage assets caused by the proposals.

5. Where a development proposal involves, or has the potential to involve, heritage assets with archaeological interest, an appropriate desk-based assessment should be employed and, where necessary, a field evaluation.

HE6: Proposals affecting designated heritage assets

1. When considering the potential effect of a development proposal on a designated heritage asset, substantial weight74 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 effect amounts to a positive effect, harm, substantial harm, or total loss of its significance.

2. Development proposals which would have a positive effect on designated heritage assets should be approved.

3. Where a development proposal would harm the significance of a designated heritage asset the effect on the asset and its significance should be weighed against any public benefits resulting from the proposal. Important public benefits can include securing the long-term re-use of a vacant or underused listed building, and enabling energy efficiency and low carbon heating measures to be employed.

4. Where a development proposal would cause substantial harm to, or the total loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset, consent should be refused unless it can be demonstrated that the development is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh the harm or loss, or if all of the following apply:

a. The nature of the heritage asset would otherwise prevent all reasonable uses of the site; and

b. No suitable use for 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 not possible; and

d. The harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the asset back into use.

5. Within this context, development which would cause substantial harm to, or the total loss of, the significance of grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional; while development which would cause substantial harm to, or the total loss of, 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.

HE9: Conservation areas

1. Development proposals within or affecting the significance of conservation areas should:

a. Retain and restore buildings and other features which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area wherever possible; and

b. Consider the area's special architectural or historic interest (as identified as part of the designation of the conservation area) in the design of development.

2. Not all elements of a conservation area will necessarily contribute to its significance. Where a development proposal would result in the loss of a building or other element which contributes to the character or appearance of a conservation area that is desirable to preserve or enhance, the assessment of impact should take into account the relative significance of the element affected and its contribution to the significance of the conservation area as a whole, and the effects of this considered in accordance with policies HE5 and HE6.

3. Proposals that preserve those elements of a conservation area that make a positive contribution to it (or which better reveal its significance) should be approved.

Other Relevant Policy Documents

National Planning Policy Guidance

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

Historic England: Conservation Principles and Assessment (2008)