Manchester City Council

Parsonage Garden's, Didsbury

Parsonage Gardens,
Stenner Lane,
Didsbury,
Manchester
M20 2RQ

Heritage Statement

Project Reference: AMP45727-2

Project Title: Renewal of Two Greenhouses within Parsonage Gardens and curtilage of the Old Parsonage





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1. Introduction

The purpose of this Heritage Statement is to demonstrate the requirement for the renewal of the two greenhouses which are located within both the curtilage of the Old Parsonage, Stenner Lane Didsbury and the St James Conservation Area, Didsbury. It is assumed that the greenhouse located within Parsonage Gardens, also falls within the curtilage of the Old Parsonage. Both greenhouses are aged and have reached the end of their design life. Furthermore, the renewal of both greenhouses is required due to health and safety concerns and to ensure the safeguarding of the public.

Works are also required to the brick boundary wall which separates the Old Parsonage from the neighbouring residential development Philip Godley Lodge. The boundary wall provides structural support to both greenhouses, however, the wall has unstable upper brickwork courses, dislodged coping stones, spalled bricks and a corroded steel lintel to a gate opening.

2. The Site and Historic Overview

The Old Parsonage building, on Stenner Lane, was designated a Grade II listed building on 3rd October 1974, and is still referred to by Historic England as Fletcher Moss Art Gallery, Stenner Lane.

The official listing describes the building as follows:

"*Formerly known as: Old Parsonage STENNER LANE Didsbury. House, now art gallery. Probably early C19; enlarged and altered. Roughcast on brick, slate roofs on 3 levels. Double-depth linear plan on east-west axis, comprised of long main range with end-bays treated as crosswings within the rectangle, and an addition to the east end. Two storeys and 8 windows (1:4:1+2), the end bays higher. The entrance, offset left of centre, has a wrought-iron porch with swept lead roof, doorway with ex situ C17 oak jambs and door. The ground floor has 3 wooden canted bay windows (all different), that at the left end large and flat-roofed with leaded glazing, the next 5-sided with hipped slate roof and leaded glazing including tracery, and the 3rd (to right of porch) with a hipped roof of red tiles and glazing from ground to eaves (one light hinged), and in the right-hand wing a tripartite casement with hooped glazing bars: all these windows with internal shutters. The 1st floor has sashed windows with Gothic glazing*

bars, all square except in the right wing and its addition. Hipped roofs to the end bays, with projecting eaves; various tall chimneys. Rear and interior not inspected. History: formerly the home of Alderman Fletcher Moss, JP, local historian and connoisseur, whose collection of water colour paintings (including many by Turner) formed the nucleus of the gallery's collection."

The Parsonage is sited within the St James' conservation area. The first record of the house is from 1646, the home of Thomas Walker, when it is called Ash House, and referred to as 'the home of the minister'. It is probably the second oldest building in Didsbury after St James' Church.

Prior to 1761, it was owned by the Tatton family, again as a home, and John Davenport also lived there as did William Hesketh. Between 1761 and 1795 it was lived in by the Bamford family and then in 1795 Sam Bethell lived there until 1804. The next occupant, up to 1829, was Miss Twyford, landlady of the Cock Inn until 1824.

In 1832 a grocer (sometimes referred to as a curate), Sam Newell, and his wife, lived in the house and the name was changed to Spring Bank. It was Sam Newell who added the two wings at either end of the house. Sam Newell let the house to Rev W J Kidd. Mr Kidd stayed there for ten years but left because the servants said the house was haunted by the ghost of Mrs Newell.

It is believed that at one time the house was connected to the Cock Inn and this is shown on a map dated 1851. Fletcher Moss wrote that "Over the stables of the Cock Inn and extending into this house, is a large upper room called The Wakes Room, but why the inn and parsonage should overlap and have bricked up doorways, I the owner never could understand" (1906). The doorway is fashioned from a massive oak tree taken from Broad Oak Farm in Didsbury and is beautifully carved, as is a lot of the woodwork inside.

In 1865 Fletcher Moss, then aged 22, moved in with his parents and siblings and he subsequently bought the house in 1885. The Moss family made their money from being corn factors and had their offices at the Corn Exchange in Manchester. By 1893, the buildings are separated although the outbuildings are shared. Most of the oak

panelling, staircase and beams were added by Fletcher Moss. He died in 1919 after an active life of public service and was renowned for his in-depth writing on local history, travel, flora and fauna and local people.

On his death in 1919 Alderman Moss bequeathed the house and gardens to the City of Manchester because he wanted the house and its contents to remain, as far as possible, intact “to show what a comfortable house of the olden times was like”. Unfortunately, the house became difficult to maintain and in 1922 many features, including stained glass and fireplaces, were removed.

The house became a branch of Manchester Art gallery containing much of the Fletcher Moss Collection which included several Turner paintings (now with Manchester Art Gallery). The emphasis of the displays was on items made in or associated with Manchester.

As an ‘economic measure’, the City of Manchester closed the gallery in 1978. It was then used as council offices until 2011. Didsbury Civic Society started a fundraising effort to raise the money to renovate the house and formed a separate charity (owned by the DCS). Over £160,000 was raised and the house was opened in September 2012 as a community space. It is leased to the Trust by Manchester City Council. It has been a major success as a centre for the community, housing classes from children’s drama to art, from lacemaking to yoga. Many of the U3A classes take place in the building. It also hosts business seminars, weddings, and arts events. In the spirit of its time as a much-loved Art Gallery there are ever changing art exhibitions by local artists. As a community space it provides rooms for local group meetings, hosts community events and is now an integral part of the Didsbury community. Its gardens have won several local and national awards having been restored and maintained by the Friends of Fletcher Moss Park and Parsonage Gardens.

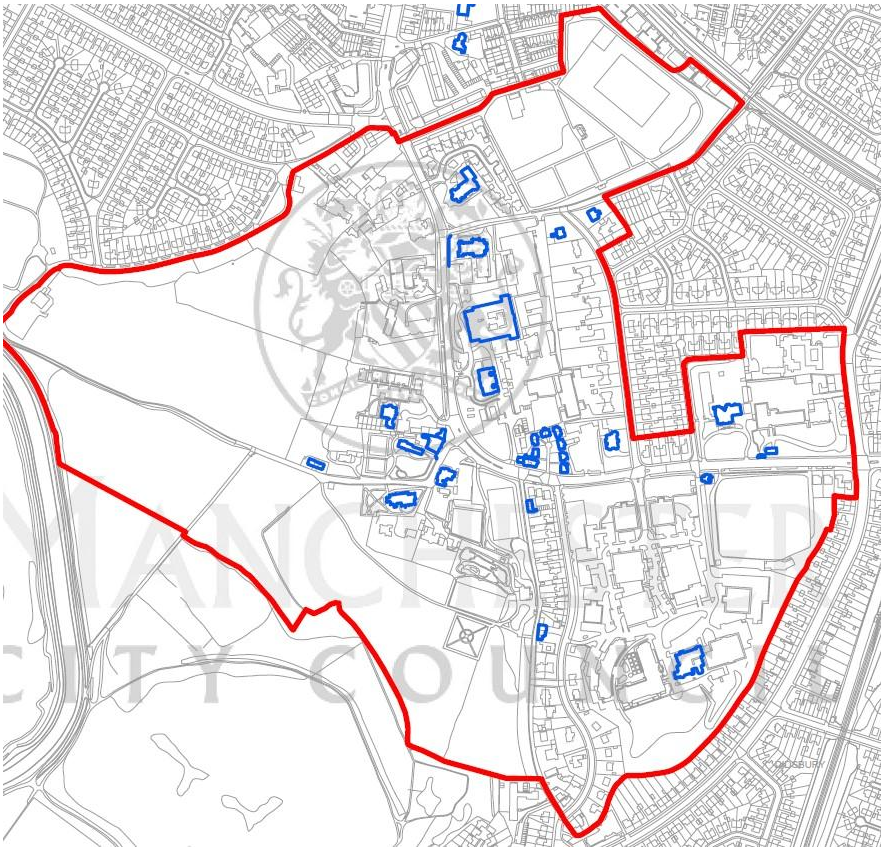


Fig.1 Didsbury, St James Conservation Area



Fig.2 Site Location Plan, Fletcher Moss Art Gallery, Stenner Lane, Didsbury

3. Listing Details

Heritage Category: Listed Building

Grade: II

List Entry Number: 1254682

Date first listed: 03-Oct-1974

Statutory Address: FLECTHER MOSS ART GALLERY, STENNER LANE

4. Background & Proposed Works

Both greenhouses are constructed from aluminium frame with inset annealed glazing panes, supported on brick dwarf walls in stretcher bond to three of the elevations. Each greenhouse has one elevation supported by the boundary wall which separates the neighbouring land. Both greenhouses have a concrete ground floor slab and entrance doors constructed from aluminium frame with inset annealed glazing. It is assumed that both greenhouses were erected circa 1980. The greenhouses are of agricultural greenhouse design and lack architectural features.

The Friends of the Park maintain the Old Parsonage gardens and use the greenhouse for plant propagation and as a meeting place. Due to health and safety concerns, attributed to potential injury from glass fracture and structural instability, both greenhouses are no longer in use. The Friends of the Park are currently using the Old Parsonage as a meeting place, however, this is not considered viable long term.

For the purposes of this document the greenhouse directly behind the Old Parsonage will be known as the Old Parsonage Greenhouse and the greenhouse within Parsonage Gardens will be known as The Alpine House.

4.1 Old Parsonage Greenhouse

The north elevation of the greenhouse is supported by the boundary wall which divides the Old Parsonage with the adjoining residential development known as Philip Godley Lodge. Philip Godley Lodge is a Grade II Listed Building constructed early to mid-nineteenth century. It is assumed that the boundary wall is original and forms part of the boundary treatment between the two properties. Brick courses have been built off the coping stones of the boundary wall to provide support to the greenhouse. The supporting brick courses don’t match with the existing bricks to the boundary wall and

show significant signs of movement caused by rotation of the coping stones and jacking movement of the brickwork due to vegetative growth within the mortar joints. The coping stones should provide weathering protection to the wall. At present the dislodged coping stones cannot be re-laid while they are supporting the upper brick courses and greenhouse.



Image 1: Unstable upper brick course built off boundary wall as seen from Philip Godley Lodge

The unstable brickwork has resulted in movement to the greenhouse aluminium frame and cracked glazing panes. The extensive use of annealed glazing panes are a health and safety hazard as once broken they break into sharp shards which can cause a laceration. Modern greenhouses now use either safely glass or plastic glazing panes.

4.2 Alpine House Greenhouse

The greenhouse is located within Old Parsonage Gardens and has been used to grow alpine plants. The greenhouse is supported by the boundary wall between Philip Godley Lodge and Old Parsonage Gardens. There are no structural concerns with the greenhouse, however, the extensive use of annealed glazing panes are a health

and safety hazard and could cause a laceration if broken. The greenhouse connects to the masonry buildings used by the Friends of the Park.

4.3 Boundary Wall

The brick boundary wall between the Old Parsonage and Philip Godley Lodge is of English Garden wall construction, bonded with lime mortar and topped with a sandstone coping stone. The lime mortar has been flush pointed. Sections of the wall have had additional brick courses build off the original boundary wall using modern clay bricks which have affected the character of the heritage asset. The upper brickwork (not original to the boundary wall) has become unstable because of vegetation growth "jacking" the brickwork. The Old Parsonage greenhouse is supported by the boundary wall which has caused instability of the upper brick courses.



Image 2: Spalling brickwork and corroded steel lintel around gate opening. Note lifting of brickwork above lintel caused by expansion of steel lintel.

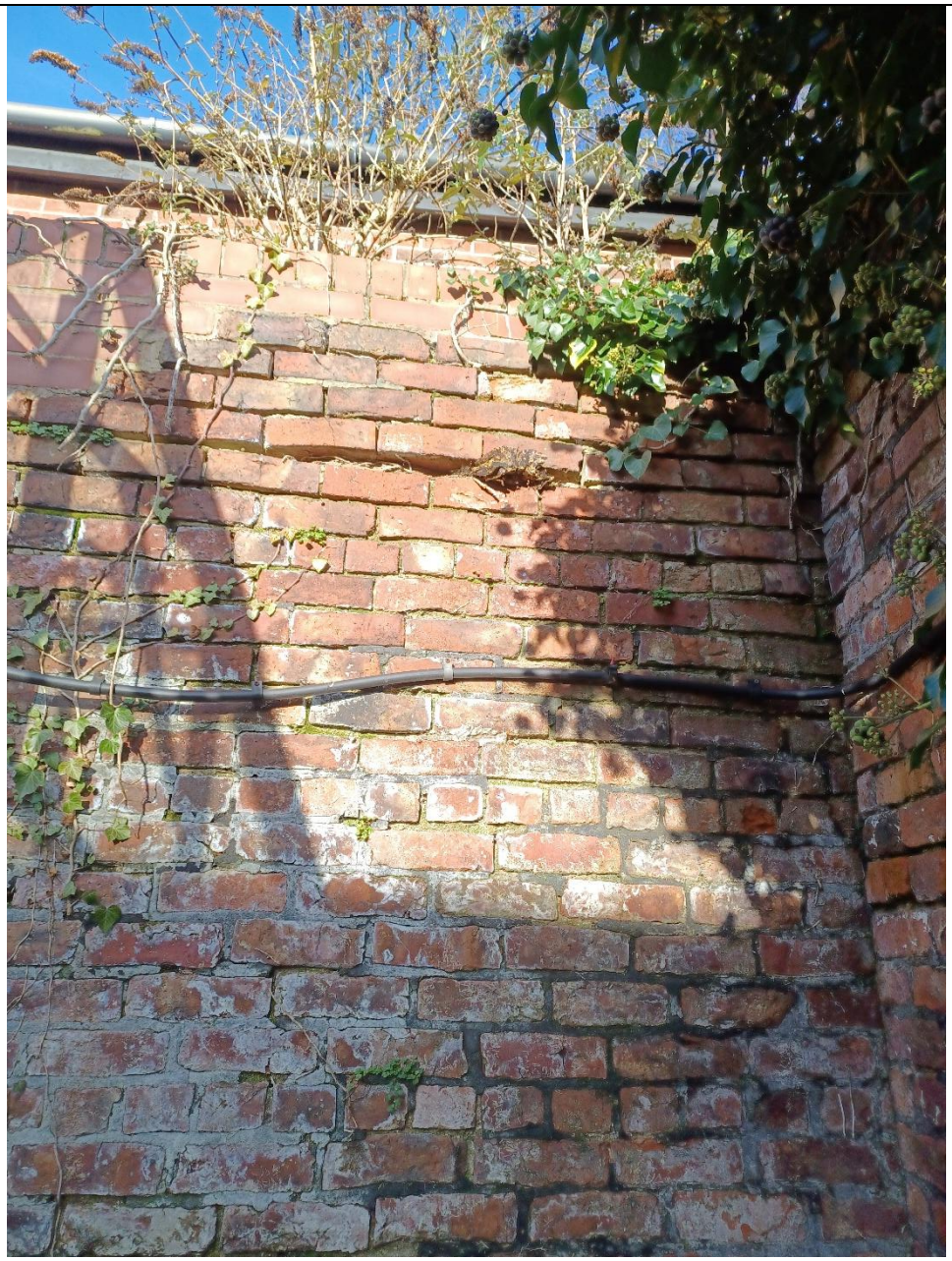


Image 3: Upper brick courses have been built off the heritage wall, vegetation within the mortar joints has caused structural instability of the upper wall.

The brickwork around a gate opening (Image 2) within the wall has spalled and requires renewal. The steel flat lintel supporting the upper brickwork above the opening has corroded and expanded resulting in jacking of the brick courses above the lintel.

4.4 Proposed Works

The proposal is to demolish each greenhouse due to health and safety concerns associated with the annealed glazing and concerns over structural stability as noted above. The buildings are also aged and have reached the end of their design life.

4.4.1 Old Parsonage Greenhouse

The existing greenhouse would be replaced with a new greenhouse installed in the same location within the site. The scale of the Old Parsonage Greenhouse would be almost identical to the existing greenhouse – see plans and elevation drawings.

The new greenhouse would be supported by dwarf walls constructed in English garden wall bond. The dwarf wall would use reclaimed bricks and would be bonded and pointed in NHL lime mortar to match the adjacent boundary wall. The proposed greenhouse would be located adjacent to the boundary wall and would not rely on the boundary wall for structural support. Siting the new greenhouse away from the boundary wall will facilitate access for maintenance of the boundary wall and greenhouse. The smaller greenhouse adjacent to the larger greenhouse will be removed, this will then provide sufficient space for the proposed greenhouse to be sited away from the boundary wall and allow adequate circulation space.

The proposed greenhouse would be constructed from an aluminium frame with inset glazing panes. The aluminium frame, rainwater goods and doors would have a pastel sage RAL 7032 coloured factory paint finish. Toughened safety glass would be used for the glazing panes as the material is stronger than the existing annealed glass. When broken, toughened glass shatters into small, blunt pebbles instead of sharp shards.

Two sliding entrance doors located at the gable ends will provide level access and a clear opening width of 1270mm. The external ground surface would be re-laid to provide level access into the building. The existing concrete floor slab would be extended to account for the proposed greenhouse being set away from the boundary wall. The concrete slab will provide a flat and even surface to the internal floor. Concrete foundations of a minimum of 200mm depth would support the external walls.

The roof ridge would include cresting and end finials to provide a traditional appearance in keeping with the historic character of the site. Adjustable slated louvres would be present to the longest elevations to provide adjustable ventilation. Additional ventilation control would be provided by openable rooflights.

4.4.2 Alpine House

The existing greenhouse would be replaced with a new greenhouse installed in the same location within the site. The scale of the proposed Alpine House Old Parsonage Greenhouse would be slightly reduced – see plans and elevation drawings.

The new greenhouse would be supported by dwarf walls constructed in English garden wall bond. The dwarf wall would use reclaimed bricks and would be bonded and pointed in NHL lime mortar to match the adjacent boundary wall. The proposed greenhouse would be located adjacent to the boundary wall and would not rely on the boundary wall for structural support. Siting the new greenhouse away from the boundary wall will facilitate access for maintenance of the boundary wall and greenhouse. The footpath adjacent to the greenhouse will maintain a width of 2 meters to allow an unobstructed width to ensure unhindered two-way wheelchair traffic as per BS 8300 recommendations. The Friends of the Park have been consulted and agreed that the nearby lawn can be taken back (500mm Max) to ensure that a 2-meter footpath is provided.

Following the removal of the existing greenhouse concrete ground slab, the external ground will be resurfaced with self-binding aggregate to match the existing footpath surfacing.

The proposed greenhouse would be constructed from an aluminium frame with inset glazing panes. The aluminium frame, rainwater goods and doors would have a pastel sage RAL 7032 coloured factory paint finish. Toughened safety glass would be used for the glazing panes as the material is stronger than the existing annealed glass. When broken, toughened glass shatters into small, blunt pebbles instead of sharp shards.

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4.4.3 Boundary Wall

Unstable upper masonry courses built off the heritage wall are to be removed and the original wall height reinstated. Areas of missing coping stones are to be reinstated with sandstone copings to match original heritage copings in design and dimensions.

Spalled bricks around the gate opening are to be removed and replaced with reclaimed bricks to match heritage brickwork of the boundary wall. The corroded flat plate steel lintel above the gate opening is to be removed and replaced with a stainless-steel lintel to match the design and dimensions of the existing lintel. Any disturbed bricks will be re-laid or replaced with reclaimed bricks to match the heritage brickwork.

Unbonded coping stones and bricks are to be removed and re-laid. All reinstated or re-laid bricks and copings to be laid on NHL lime mortar joints pointed flush to match existing.

5. Impact Assessment

The proposed replacement greenhouses are considered to provide an enhancement of the setting of the Old Parsonage and associated curtilage. The new development has been designed to reflect traditional greenhouse forms, incorporating appropriate detailing such as cresting and finials. These features will enhance visual amenity and better align the structures with the historic character of the site. The scale of the

replacement greenhouses will remain comparable to the existing, ensuring that their presence remains subordinate and sympathetic to the listed building and gardens.

Material selection has been carefully considered to include the use of reclaimed brick, NHL lime mortar matching the existing boundary walls, to ensure visual amenity and reinforce the historic coherence of the site. The designs preserve the character of the historic garden setting and Old Parsonage.

The proposals will deliver improvements to the visual amenity of the site. The removal of unstable and unsightly brickwork, particularly adjacent to the Philip Godley Lodge, will enhance the appearance of the curtilage. The replacement structures will provide a high quality and coherent design in comparison to the existing deteriorated greenhouses. The proposed materials used are of high quality with factory powder-coated paint finishes to all metals.

The proposals address health and safety and structural concerns. The introduction of safety glazing and the removal of unsafe structural elements will remove safety hazards while ensuring the long-term usability of the structures. By replacing ageing and unstable fabric, the development will help prevent ongoing maintenance issues, thereby supporting the sustainable management of the boundary wall which is a heritage asset.

The proposal also delivers functional and accessibility benefits. Improved access arrangements will support inclusivity and compliance with the Equality Act 2010, ensuring the greenhouses can be used more inclusively. The enhanced facilities will enable plant propagation within the greenhouses prior to their introduction into the gardens, contributing positively to the upkeep and presentation of the grounds. In turn, this supports the community appreciation of the public garden setting.

Finally, the greenhouses will be sourced from an established supplier, ensuring a high-quality design and durability. The proposed development will provide a long-term enhancement rather than a temporary or visually harmful intervention.

6. Conclusion

The above proposals will enhance the visual amenity of the Old Parsonage curtilage and associated gardens. The removal of the unstable brickwork to the boundary wall will reinstate the heritage asset to its original character. The re-bedding of the coping stones and renewal of spalled bricks will provide weathering protection and prolong the life of the wall which has historically provided boundary treatment to the curtilage of the two listed buildings.

The design of the new greenhouses is sympathetic to the surrounding setting, and were possible, utilises the use of traditional design features and materials to mitigate any detrimental impact and to compliment the surrounding heritage assets. The design of the new greenhouses is an enhancement on the existing structures which provide little architectural delight and don't complement the surrounding historic building fabric. The scale of the new structures remain comparable to the existing structures. The greenhouses will remain strictly subordinate to the Old Parsonage.

Crucially, the proposals introduce improved, inclusive access arrangements that comply with the Equality Act 2010. Consequently, the proposals sustain and enhance the significance of the heritage assets, resulting in a long-term positive impact and contribute to the enjoyment of the public gardens.

The scheme complies fully with the statutory duties of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and relevant Local Plan heritage policies.