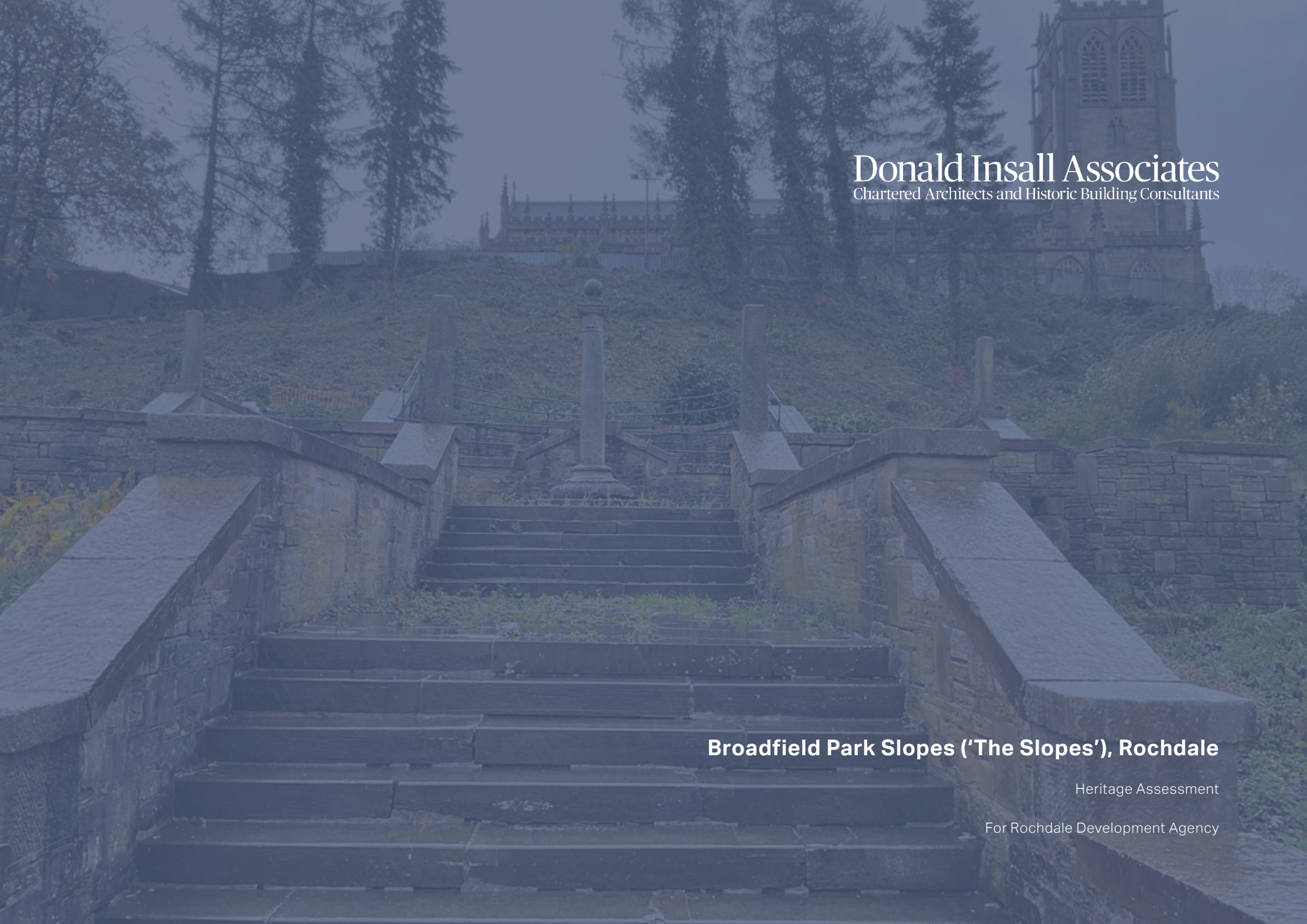




Donald Insall Associates
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Broadfield Park Slopes ('The Slopes'), Rochdale

Heritage Assessment

For Rochdale Development Agency



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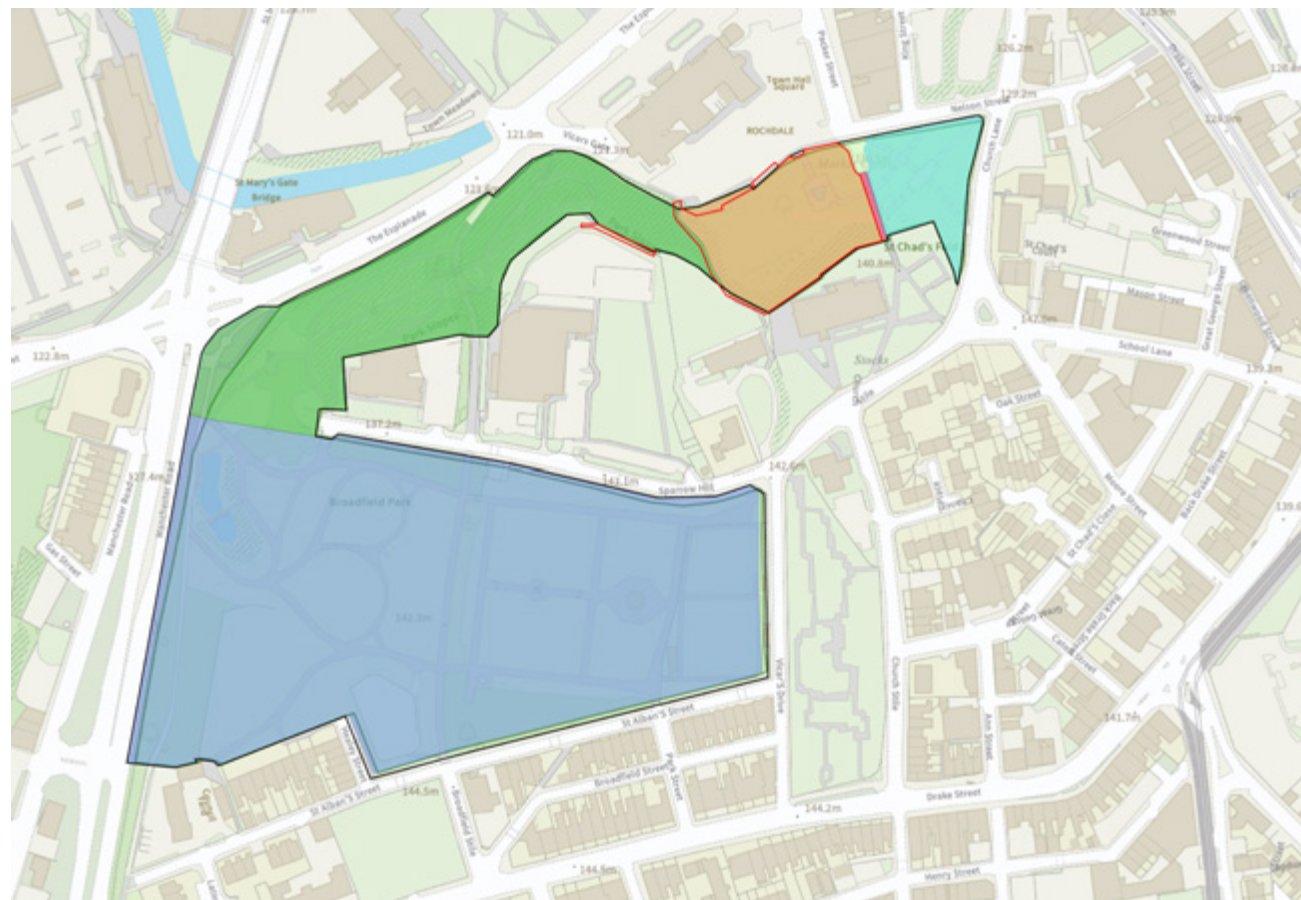
1.0 Summary of Heritage Assessment

1.1 Executive Summary

The Slopes is an area of sloped land situated **between the Town Hall, Church Steps and the Church of St Chad**, which historically was known as Church Slopes. It forms part of an extensive area of sloped land stretching from Nelson Street to Manchester Road that was historically recognised as several different areas, known (from west to east) as **Sparrow Hill Slopes, Broadfield Slopes, Church Slopes and Nelson Slopes**). These were brought into public park use at varying dates and now form part of Broadfield Park, a Registered Park and Garden (Grade II) [Plate 1.1].

The Slopes site originally extended much further north than it does today, with land being lost in the 1870s construction of The Esplanade and the Town Hall.

The Slopes is significant at a national level, its interest principally derived through the role that it plays as part of the group composition of the Town Hall (Grade I) – the jewel in Rochdale's crown – and the designed landscape and townscape setting that was created around this building in a series of phased works extending from the 1860s to the 1940s. It is the relative intactness of this civic set piece and ensemble from which The Slopes retains its greatest interest, combined with its role in views of, from and between the Town Hall and the Church of St Chad (Grade II*) and the contribution that it makes to their setting (and, therefore, to the character and appearance of the Rochdale Town Centre Conservation Area). Some historic interest is also derived from the likely and known historic evolution of The Slopes, and particularly the Georgian water management system that was created at Packer Spout and is believed to remain in situ today.



1.1 The Site and the wider Broadfield Park

Key:

- NHLF Site Boundary for 'Broadfield Park Slopes'
- Outline of full Broadfield Park, Grade II
- The Slopes
- Church steps
- St Chad's Gardens
- Formal Broadfield Park
- Broadfield Slopes and Sparrow Hill Slopes

1.2 Introduction

Donald Insall Associates was commissioned by Rochdale Development Agency in July 2022 to assist in the preparation of a masterplan for Broadfield Slopes, The Esplanade, Rochdale, OL16 1AQ.

The investigation has comprised historic research, using both primary and secondary material, and a site inspection. A brief illustrated history of the site, with sources of reference and bibliography, is in Section 2; the site survey findings are in Section 3. The investigation has established the significance of the site, which is set out in Section 4 and summarised below.

The specific constraints for this site are summarised below. This report has been drafted to inform the design of proposals for the site by Donald Insall Associates and Gillespies. Section 5 provides a justification of the scheme according to the relevant legislation, planning policy and guidance.

1.3 The Site and its Legal Status and Policy Context

The Slopes is located in the Metropolitan Borough of Rochdale, part of Greater Manchester, and is situated within Rochdale Town Centre Conservation Area **[Plate 1.2]**.

The following designated heritage assets are situated within or about The Slopes:

- Market Cross (Grade II);
- Wall to North West of Church of Saint Chad (Grade II), which forms part of its southern boundary.

The Slopes forms part of:

- Broadfield Park (Grade II registered park and garden);
- Town Hall, Square & Esplanade Character Area of the Rochdale Town Centre Conservation Area.

It is also part of the setting of:

- Town Hall (Grade I);
- Church of Saint Chad (Grade II*);
- Former Post Office, corner of Packer Street and Fleece Street (Grade II);
- [Former] Rochdale Museum, The Old Vicarage, Sparrow Hill (Grade II);
- Sun Dial to South of Church of Saint Chad (Grade II);
- The Rochdale Parish Church of St Chad and Regency Drake Street Character Areas of the Rochdale Town Centre Conservation Area.

Non-designated heritage assets (as recognised by Rochdale Borough Council in 2022) in the immediate setting of The Slopes include the Empire Hall, the Flying Horse Public House and NatWest Bank (all on Packer Street).

Alterations to a listed park and garden 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 designation descriptions of the designated heritage assets listed above are included in Appendix I and a summary of guidance on the Rochdale Town Centre Conservation Area provided by the local planning authority is in Appendix II, along with extracts from the relevant legislation and planning policy documents.

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, 66 and 72 of the Act impose statutory duties upon local planning authorities which, with regard to listed buildings, require the planning authority to have *'special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses'* and, in respect of conservation areas, that *'special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area'*.

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 is the **Rochdale Core Strategy** (adopted in 2016). This establishes a commitment to conserving, enhancing and supporting use of designated and non-designated heritage assets that aids local image and identity and contributes to the visitor economy. All development is required to have regard to the design expectations laid out in the associated Design Guide Supplementary Planning Documents.

The **Rochdale Core Strategy** also establishes the requirement for development that is of high-quality design, promotes the development and reuse of under-used land and buildings and seeks to maximize the way in which heritage assets contribute to the Borough's identity and a sense of place and identity.

The courts have held that following the approach set out in the policies on the historic environment in the National Planning Policy Framework 2023 '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). The key message of the NPPF is the concept of 'sustainable development', which for the historic environment means that designated and non-designated heritage assets 'should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance'.

The NPPF recognises that, in some cases, the significance of a designated heritage asset can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. The Framework states in paragraph 194 that:

In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.

Section 4 of this report – the assessment of significance – meets this requirement and is based on the research and site surveys presented in sections 2 and 3, which are of a sufficient level of detail to understand the potential impact of the proposals.

The Framework also requires, in paragraph 199, that:

When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, 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 200 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.

Section 5 of this report provides this clear and convincing justification.

The Framework requires that local planning authorities categorise harm as either 'substantial' or 'less than substantial'. Where a proposed development will lead to 'substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset', the Framework states, in paragraph 201, 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

Where a development proposal will lead to 'less than substantial harm' to the significance of a designated heritage asset, the Framework states, in paragraph 202, that:

...this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

The Framework also requires that the effect of an application on the significance of 'a non-designated heritage asset' should be taken into account in determining the application. A non-designated asset is defined as *'a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest'*, with non-designated heritage assets including *'assets identified by the local planning authority'*, such as those added to a local list. In weighing applications that affect directly or indirectly non-designated heritage assets, the Framework states, in paragraph 203, that:

...a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

Non-designated heritage assets and designated heritage assets comprise 'a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest', with non-designated heritage assets including 'assets identified by the local planning authority', such as those added to a local list. Where non-designated heritage assets are concerned, the NPPF states that 'a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset'.

The Framework also requires local planning authorities to look for opportunities for new development within conservation areas and within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance. Paragraph 206 states that:

Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably.

Concerning conservation areas it states, in paragraph 207, that:

Not all elements of a Conservation Area [...] 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 [...] should be treated either as substantial harm under paragraph 201 or less than substantial harm under paragraph 202, as appropriate, taking into account the relative significance of the element affected and its contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area [...] as a whole.

1.3 Summary of Proposals and Justification

The proposals seek to return all parts of The Slopes to a safe, accessible and positive community use (with positive ripple effects for adjacent areas), allow better appreciation of its centrepiece and historic water reservoir (tank) and market cross, repair its historic fabric, and reduce the risk of further water damage not only to its own landscape and built structures but also to the Town Hall beyond.

To the built centrepiece they include like-for-like masonry repairs, reinstatement of the lost obelisk, the replacement and addition of lighting, repairs to and replacement of railings and handrails, and the addition of new tactile paving for improved accessibility. Landscaping proposals include the creation of two terraced lawn areas, the resurfacing of paths, the addition of benches and repair of a collapsed wall, and the extension of an existing footpath to create a new route running through the gardens. The failed drainage system in the northwest would also be repaired and enhanced, for improved management of the high levels of runoff that have caused damage to the site and its historic fabric in the past and resulted in frequent flooding of the Town Hall car park.

The proposals would lead to substantial public benefits by restoring the designed centrepiece of the gardens to a good state of repair (and preventing continued deterioration), allowing it to be appreciated and enjoyed when illuminated (as was its original design intention), removing the dangers (most notably the unsafe fountain railings) that at present prevent its public use, and increasing its general safety and accessibility

more generally. This would be complemented by the refreshed lawns, footpath extensions and resurfacing (aiding accessibility) and provision of benches that would return the area around and above the centrepiece to public use, restoring The Slopes to its intended function and value as a community asset with a clear character and identity. Improved lighting would also enhance views to and across the site, enhancing the significance of the surrounding group of designated heritage assets and Church Steps adjacent (non-designated heritage asset).

The proposals would secure the long-term and optimum viable use of The Slopes and wider Broadfield Park as a key accessible community space in the heart of Rochdale town centre. The proposals would, therefore, enhance the Rochdale Town Centre Conservation Area, which is identified as 'At Risk', and enhance the special interest of the market cross (Grade II) and setting of nearby listed buildings in accordance with the statutory duties set out in Sections 16, 66 and 72(I) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Sustaining, and indeed better revealing, the significance of the affected heritage assets and reinforcing local distinctiveness in this manner would further accordance with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework and the relevant policies of the Rochdale Core Strategy.

2.0 Historic Background

2.1 The Development of the Area Around Packer Street and the Church of St Chad

2.1.1 Early Development (pre-1066)

The Rochdale area was still only very sparsely populated in the early medieval period, being comprised mainly of forest and unimproved 'waste' and with little land under cultivation. According to scholars of the 19th century, a **Saxon 'castle'** had been situated on Castle Hill but had already been abandoned long before 1000 (although no archaeological remains have been found).¹ This, however, is now challenged, modern scholars suggesting that the first record of the castle actually dates from the late-12th century.²

A manor (feudal estate) continued to exist, however, and a **Saxon church** (probably with the Saxon typical round churchyard) may also have existed by the 1050s, probably positioned on the present-day site of St Chad's (although, again, there is no known evidence). The **wall to the northwest of the churchyard** (Grade II) – discovered in 1903 partially buried (and subsequently re-erected) – was also believed by its discoverer to have been built in the Saxon period (although this has never been proven).

Ian Miller (Centre for Applied Archaeology at the University of Salford) has suggested that Rochdale had become an important settlement by the end of the

Saxon period, its buildings perhaps centred on the area between the (possible) church in the south and the ford across the River Roch to its north.³

2.1.2 The Medieval Period (1066-c.1500)

A market possibly began sometime in the early 12th century. Norman markets were usually located close to the church, Rochdale's perhaps situated to the south and/or side of St Chad's Church, on Church Lane/ Church Stile. If so, it may have been the reason for the creation of **Church Steps** (originally with 33 steps), built running up the steep slope leading from the crossing over the River Roch to the parish church.⁴ The first known record of a **Church of St Chad** existing is in 1170.

Permission for a weekly market and an annual fair, again perhaps held to the south or side of the church, was gained in the 13th century. It may have been at a similar time that the present-day **Rochdale Bridge** – which certainly existed by 1324 – was constructed next to the older ford. Historic England suggests that the castle to the southwest of the church had remained in use throughout the period and was only now abandoned.⁵ The church itself was probably rebuilt in the 13th century (with additions in the 14th century), with another major phase of works in the 15th century, creating the basis of the **Church of St Chad** (Grade II) as it exists today.⁶

By the end of the medieval period Rochdale town had become a substantial settlement, fed by its role as the centre of an extensive parish and the focal point of the local wool trade. The settlement's geographical location, however, is still unknown, although typical patterns of medieval development would indicate that it was probably located around the Church of St Chad, or in the area between the church and the river crossing **[Plate 2.1]**. Packer Street may also have existed by this time, linking the church and the bridge and perhaps serving as the main thoroughfare into the settlement for the packhorse men (for which see below).

1 Dawson Mattley (1899), p. 1.

2 Centre for Applied Archaeology (2023), p. 7.

3 Information provided to Rochdale Development Agency (RDA) by Ian Miller.

4 RoCH and Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council (2011), p. 13.

5 Historic England (2019), p. 6.

6 Ibid., p. 7.



2.1 Historic Parish of St Chad's Rochdale
(Historic England and Ordnance Survey)

2.1.3 The Early Modern Period (c.1500-c.1800)

The main market was relocated to the north of the River Roch in the 1540s but the area around St Chad's became increasingly important as the ecclesiastical, administrative, economic and social focal point of the extensive parish. St Chad's continued to be invested in (the nave rebuilt in the 1550s), the grammar school was founded in 1565 (on what is now the Broadfield Hotel site) and the new cattle market was also held nearby.⁷ Having displaced Packer Street, Church Lane/ Church Stile also retained its position as the principal southern approach into the town.

At the turn of the 18th century, however, the town centre was migrating north, and by the 1730s the commercial centre and fashionable residential district were firmly situated around The Butts. Whilst generally land to the south of the river was still mainly agricultural (with a cluster of buildings around the church), the Packer Street and Church Lane area was already far more developed, by 1800 occupied by a dense network of houses and manufactories [Plate 2.2].

⁷ Dawson Mattley (1899), p. 3.



2.2 Development at Packer Street, St Chad's still surrounded by fields, 1754-57 (Rochdale Local Studies)

2.1.4 The 19th Century

Rochdale was a major town with a population of 11,000 by 1800 and the first detailed map (published in 1824) shows **Packer Street** already fully developed on either side [Plate 2.3]. By the 1850s the east edge of The Slopes had become more densely packed with buildings, whilst a mixture of residential and industrial buildings filled the entirety of the area to the east of Packer Street (some of it a notorious area of dense housing and industry known as Gank Alley) [Plate 2.4].⁸ The **east side of Packer Street** was cleared of its buildings in the 1860s in preparation for the Town Hall Scheme, with the southern end subsequently left empty (today the site of St Chad's Gardens) and the north redeveloped with large civic and commercial buildings [Plate 2.5].

The elaborate **Town Hall** scheme was completed in 1874, creating **The Esplanade**, constructing the new Town Hall (Grade I), laying out **Town Hall Square**, a new **municipal park** and the **riverbank terrace** opposite, and widening **Rochdale Bridge** [Plate 2.6]. The **tower of the Church of St Chad** was also heightened to enhance the landscape backdrop to the Town Hall (and, to the west, Trinity Presbyterian Church (1869) built to frame The Esplanade) [Plate 2.7]. The Corporation could not, however, prevent the construction of the **Central Corn Mill** on the privately owned land to the immediate south of the Town Hall.

The westernmost part of the sloped land above The Esplanade was opened on 7 May 1870 as **Rochdale District's first municipal park**. The more formal Broadfield Park, situated on the top of the hill, was

added in subsequent years and the two together remodelled by Messrs Stanfield and Son of Todmorden, re-opening in 1874 [Plates 2.8-2.10]. The sloped area to the immediate west of the Town Hall was then added in 1891, having been designed by local resident and donor James Ogden, with its terraces and features such as the Victoria Bridge following in the middle of the decade. The original, westernmost, part of the park was then partly terraced in the early 1900s.

Church Steps had long had a picturesque appeal and this was enhanced by the construction of the Town Hall, a publication of 1876 noting that:

*To come to Rochdale and not mount the steps is considered a breach of good manners, as well as a serious deprivation of a very agreeable exercise. The steps, in fact, are among our most cherished possessions; and they form a most important thoroughfare, with which it would be very unwise to intermeddle to the great prejudice of the inhabitants.*⁹

This picturesque appeal was increased with the creation of the sloped park area to the immediate west of the Town Hall, Church Steps providing views into its dramatic landscape across The Slopes [Plate 2.11].

9 Robertson (1876).

8 Historic England (2019), p. 22; Fishwick (1899), p. 145.



2.3 Growing development around St Chad's, William Swire, 1824 (CLHA)



2.4 Packer Street, 1859 (Rochdale Local Studies)



2.5 Area around St Chad's and Packer Street, Ordnance Survey, 1851
(surveyed 1848) (NLS)



2.6 Rochdale Town Hall, 1878 (Rochdale Local Studies)



2.8 The Esplanade, Library, Town Hall and Sparrow Hill Slopes park (not yet terraced), c.1890 (Map Our Past)



2.7 Sparrow Hill Slopes facing Trinity Presbyterian Church, c.1870s



2.9 Formal gardens in Broadfield Park, undated



2.10 New civic quarter and its public park, OS, 1893 (surveyed 1890-91)
(Rochdale Local Studies)



2.11 Landscaped Slopes to the immediate west of the Town Hall, c.1904

2.1.5 The 20th and 21st Centuries

Public investment around The Esplanade continued across the first half of the 20th century, adding the Art Gallery and Museum (Grade II, 1903), the Cenotaph (Grade II, Sir Edward Lutyens) and the Memorial Gardens (1948), and covering over the River Roch (1904-26) [Plates 2.12-2.13].

The sloped land on Nelson Street had been gifted to the Corporation in 1893 and was opened as **St Chad's Gardens** in 1925, laid out with a series of formal paths [Plate 2.14-2.15]. Packer Spout Gardens followed on The Slopes in the 1930s. The different parts of Broadfield Park retained their individual characters subsequently, although the adjacent land known as Vicarage Field was lost in c.1970 for the construction of what is now **Broadfield Community Primary School** [Plates 2.16-2.17].

Broadfield Park was listed at Grade II in 2001, with the listing covering the westernmost slopes (brought into the park in 1870, remodelled in the 1900s) in the west, the formal park on the top of the hill (1874), the sloped area to the immediate west of the Town Hall (1891, remodelled 1894-95), St Chad's Gardens (1925), and The Slopes (1935, incorporating Packer Spout Gardens). The Slopes, therefore, was the latest and final section of municipal gardens to be created in the area around the Town Hall and the final phase to be added in the large area of parkland and gardens now known as Broadfield Park (Grade II). Broadfield Park was, however, already becoming overgrown, underused and subject to antisocial behaviour at this time, leading to a restoration project delivered in 2003-2007 [Plates 2.18]. Rochdale Town Centre Conservation Area was designated in 1973 (extended in 2011).



2.12 Post Office, Cenotaph, Town Hall and The Esplanade, c.1950
(Map Our Past)



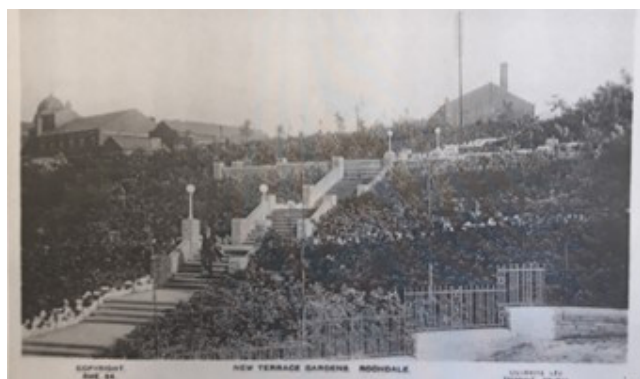
2.13 Broadfield Park and surroundings, OS, 1910 (Promap)



2.14 Nelson Street Slopes prior to the creation of St Chad's Gardens, shown during Tank Week, 1918 (Rochdale History)



2.16 The Park and Slopes, 1949 (Britain From Above)



2.15 St Chad's Gardens (Nelson Street Slopes), undated (Bob Bevan Collection)



2.17 The Park and Slopes (detail), 1949 (Britain From Above)



2.18 Regeneration proposals, 1998 (Rochdale Borough Council)

2.2 The Development of The Slopes: Summary History

2.2.1 The Early Medieval and Medieval Periods (500-1500): Probable Agricultural Use

It seems likely that a well-travelled **route from the River Roch** to the elevated land to its south existed from the earliest days of settlement in Rochdale. Its exact course is unknown but it would have linked the important riverbank and river crossing in the north with the less flood-prone, flat, agricultural land at the top of the sloped land, where any castle and church would have acted as an administrative centre. The southern part of The Slopes was heavily altered during the works of the 1870s but prior to this date ran right down to the **riverbank**.

Whilst the location of the **Norman settlement** is still to be confirmed it seems likely that a forerunner to Packer Street already existed by the medieval period, perhaps with buildings along its west. The **Packer Spout natural spring** is likely to have run down The Slopes (as other springs and streams similarly ran along the sloped land to the west), probably feeding various natural pools or man-made wells or basins. The Slopes themselves were likely either agricultural fields and/or smallholdings (the latter perhaps associated with the houses on the west side of Packer Street).

2.2.2 The 16th to Mid-19th Centuries: Mixed Use

The **Church of St Chad** remained important as the parish church and **Church Steps** were renewed and extended to 122 steps in around 1660, using stone from

nearby Blackstone Edge.¹⁰ Packer Street probably now began to be superseded by Church Lane, changing from a major thoroughfare to a commercial centre, being the focal point of the town's 'warehouses and businesses connected with the packhorse trade', hotels and shops for the prosperous mercantile class, and artisanal housing.¹¹

The Slopes belonged to the lands that had been granted by the De Lascy family to Stanilawe monastery in the 12th century (subsequently passing to Whalley Abbey) and became **glebe** land at some time after the Dissolution of the Monasteries (1530s-40s). By the mid-18th century sections of The Slopes had been leased out and buildings had been constructed along Packer Street, likely including a house on **Leyland Bank**, (part of The Slopes approached from Leyland Brow, an opening off Church Steps). Here, on Leyland Bank, a **privately-owned reservoir** (water tank) was built in around 1760, fed by the **Packer Spout spring** and situated next to one of its pools. This brick-built underground tank s connected to a network of metal pipes, which likely served a few houses on Packer Street, has been described as the '[f]irst town reservoir' created in Rochdale **[Plate 2.19]**.¹²

Development continued and sources of the first half of the 19th century show buildings lining the east of The Slopes, along Packer Street, with industrial complexes including a brass and iron foundry to their rear in the north. The very north of The Slopes was occupied by the Wood Estate, its substantial house and gardens,

plus, cottages, dyehouse and farm buildings fed by the Packer Spout and a spring running down from the west of the church **[Plates 2.20-2.21]**.¹³ The south was less developed and included a '**gravel walk**' accessed from Church Steps (restored in 1810), presumably already utilised as a **viewing platform [Plate 2.22]**.

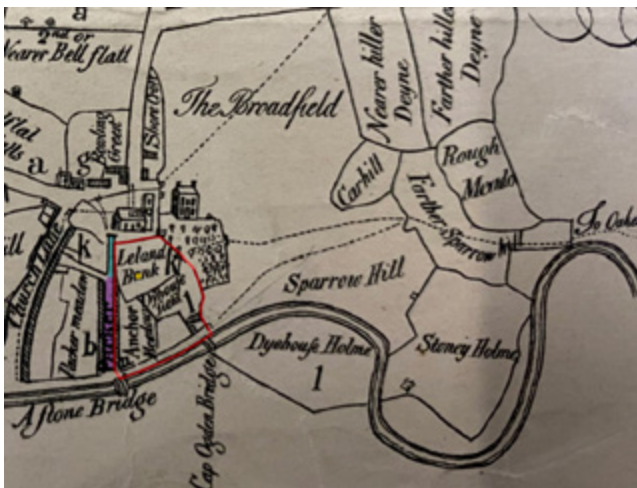
The area to its south was tree covered, whilst **industrial complexes** including a brass and iron foundry bordered the southern part of Packer Street,

13 Historic England (2019), p. 47.

10 RoCH and Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council (2011), p. 17.

11 Centre for Applied Archaeology (2023), p. 10.

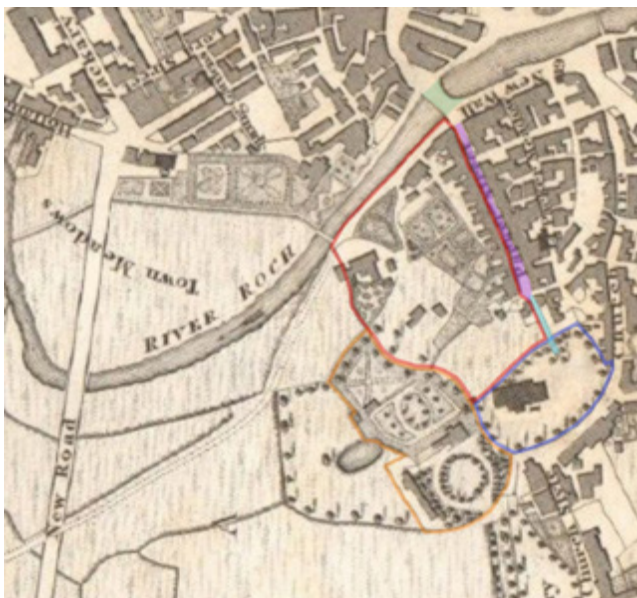
12 Dawson Mattley (1899), p. 7.



2.19 The Slopes and surroundings in 1754-57, reconstruction drawing (Rochdale Local Studies)



2.21 The Slopes, 1844, Castleton Township Tithe Map (Rochdale Local Studies)



2.20 The Slopes and surroundings, William Swire, 1824 (CLHA)

Key:

- The Slopes as existing at this time
- Packer Street
- Church Steps
- Paker Spout reservoir (rough location)
- St Chad's and Churchyard
- Vicarage
- Roch Bridge



2.22 The Slopes, showing the Packer Spout reservoir and the gravel walk, c.1813 or later (Rochdale Local Studies)

2.2.3 The 1860s Onwards: Continued Mixed Use and the Creation of the Town Hall

In the north of The Slopes, the Wood Estate was already decaying by the 1850s, its buildings deteriorated and its land and the Packer Spout polluted by industrial waste.¹⁴ Its setting to Packer Street was now thoroughly urban, lined by houses, manufactories and workshops [Plate 2.23]. With regeneration in mind, in 1863 the Corporation started to purchase, clear and level the land in the north of The Slopes, in preparation for the construction of the new Town Hall [Plate 2.24].¹⁵ This was constructed on the north of The Slopes in the early 1870s, with a detached mortuary to its rear [Plate 2.25].

The middle section of The Slopes remained in mixed use after the completion of the Town Hall, occupied by the Packer Street houses to the east, glasshouses and a new corn mill to their rear, and the Packer Spout reservoir to their south [Plates 2.26-2.27]. Although the tree coverage seems to have been heavily reduced by the early 1870s, early concept drawings for the Town Hall show a grand Gothic building with The Slopes and adjacent land forming a tree-covered, steeply rising, backdrop. The early sources, however, suggest that The Slopes may have initially remained relatively bare [Plates 2.28-2.30. Whether by design or otherwise, the tree coverage had increased by the 1890s, when all or part of The Slopes was donated to the Corporation [Plate 2.31]. Otherwise, however, there was little substantial change subsequently, although photographs show the tree coverage to the rear of the corn mill reduced again by the 1920s [Plates 2.32-2.33].

14 Quoted in Fishwick (1889), pp. 335-336.

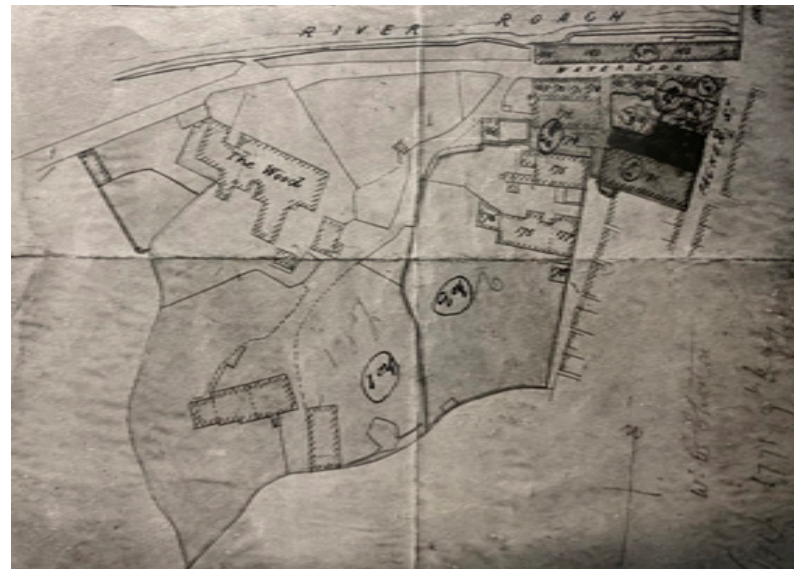
15 Historic England (2019), pp. 118, 10.



2.23 Packer Street buildings (R) backing onto The Slopes, c.1865
(Rochdale Local Studies)



2.25 Town Hall under construction in the north of The Slopes, 1866
(Rochdale Local Studies)



2.24 Land in the middle of The Slopes acquired in 1863
(Rochdale Local Studies)



2.26 Packer Street (leading to Church Steps), with buildings along The Slopes (R) (Rochdale Local Studies)



2.29 Concept drawing showing the Town Hall surrounded on all sides by tree-filled Slopes, *The Builder*, 1866 (RIBA Library)



2.31 The Town Hall with The Slopes behind, and Broadfield Slopes to the west (R), undated (pre-1883) (Rochdale Local Studies)



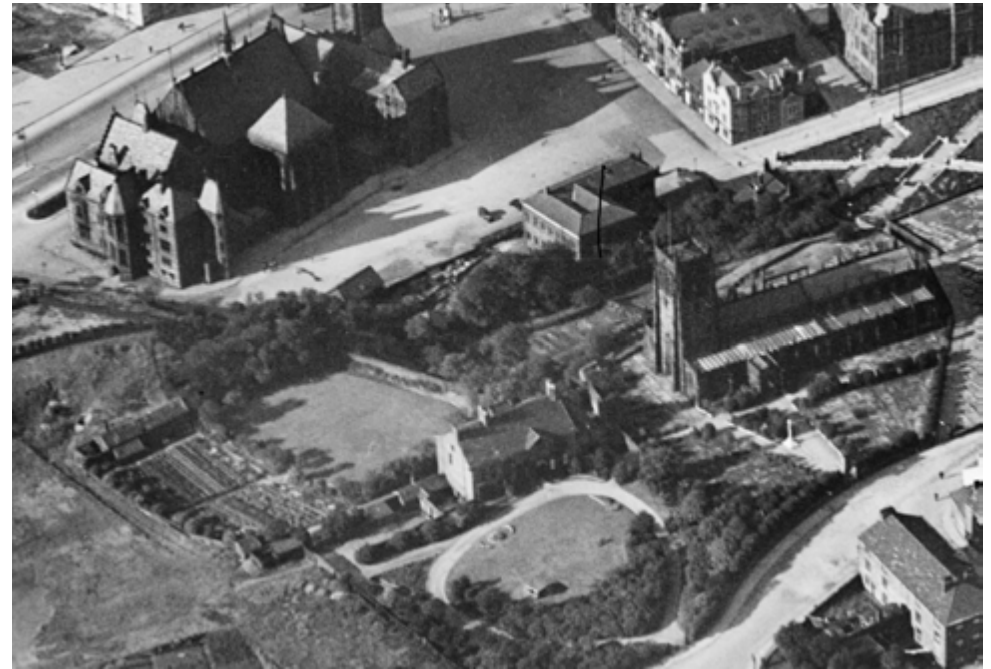
2.27 The Slopes from Town Hall Square, the corn mill in the foreground, late-19th century (Centre for Applied Archaeology)



2.30 The Slopes just visible behind the Town Hall, c.1875, Edward Walter (Rochdale Local Studies)



2.32 *The Slopes, 1926 (Britain From Above)*



2.33 *The Slopes, 1929 (Britain From Above)*

2.2.4 1930s Onwards: Creation of Packer Spout Gardens

The Central Corn Mill and neighbouring buildings were finally demolished in 1934, leaving only their foundations surviving (below ground), their site absorbed into an extension of the **Town Hall Square** that from the very start seemingly also doubled up as parking [Plates 2.34-2.35]. This also absorbed much of Packer Street, although a short remnant was retained in the north where it formed the entrance to Church Steps (still visible today). The middle part of The Slopes, around Leyland Bank, was then turned into a public park (**Packer Spout Gardens**), and the southern section above retained as a steep slope, separated from the new gardens by a retained line of trees.

Fashions had changed since the Victorian creation of the park to the west. Rather than dramatic terracing, the new Packer Spout Gardens – designed by the Borough Surveyors – incorporated a **fountain** (reusing the Packer Spout reservoir), with flower beds to either side (one including the small ‘Cascades’ **waterfall**), retaining a rough **tree-covered area** to the west next to Vicar’s Walk and the adjacent sloped parkland [Plate 2.36]. Entrances were provided from Town Hall Square and Church Steps, from which a similar path led into St Chad’s Gardens. The mortuary, retained in the northwest of The Slopes, was screened from the gardens by an area of trees that continued out from the heavy vegetation on the sloped land to the west [Plate 2.37].

The main entrance into the gardens was from the Town Hall Square and opened onto a series of steps running up towards the walled viewing platform containing the fountain and market cross, this **built centrepiece**

having flagstone paths, sandstone walls and a series of new stone **obelisks** (matching the shaft of the market cross and originally surmounted by lights). It was enclosed within matching stone retaining walls and framed to either side by terraced flower beds and lawns. A matching stone boundary wall built along the north of the gardens from Church Steps to the edge of the mortuary complex contained the entrance from the Town Hall Square [Plates 2.38-2.41]. A new surface water drainage system appears to have been added to carry runoff into the retained Georgian piped system, which carried it to the **18th-century brick water reservoir** (tank) and the new Cascades, the cover to the reservoir removed and a powered fountain and electric pump added. The new fountain and Cascades thus served a dual function, as both visual features and tools for water management.

The finial to the market cross shaft, added in place of a lost cross, was installed at some date in the late 1940s or the 1950s, the gardens becoming the site of the town’s Christmas tree by the 1950s or 1960s [Plate 2.42].



2.34 The corn mill (far right) and other buildings on the west side of Packer Street, c.1930 (Rochdale Local Studies)



2.35 The Slopes during demolition of the corn mill, 1931 (RDA)



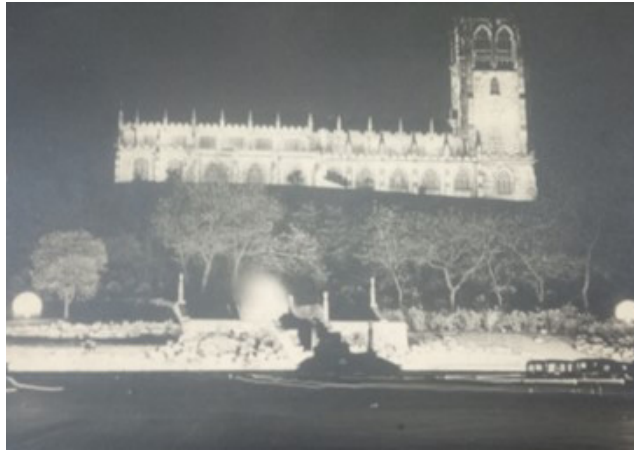
2.37 Packer Spout Gardens and the area of screening to the west, undated (Rochdale Local Studies)



2.37 Packer Spout Gardens, possibly 1930s (Rochdale Town Hall)



2.38 Packer Spout Gardens, the entrance to Church Steps adjacent formed the surviving remnant of Packer Street, c.1935 (Rochdale Local Studies)



2.39 Packer Spout Gardens, the lawns to either side and the church above lit up for the coronation, 1937 (Rochdale Local Studies)



2.41 Packer Spout Gardens and The Slopes, 1949 (Britain From Above)



2.39 Fountain and market cross shaft, with lights to the surrounding obelisks, c.1946 (Rochdale Local Studies)



2.40 Packer Spout Gardens, The Slopes above, and the screening to the mortuary, c.1946 (Rochdale Local Studies)



2.42 Rochdale Christmas tree, possibly 1950s (Rochdale Living Memories)

2.2.5 The Late 20th Century and the Present Day

A **second footpath** from Church Steps (at the higher landing) had been added by around 1965 and the lights to the obelisks were removed at some date subsequently but otherwise the centrepiece seems to have remained essentially unchanged until the 1990s. The tree coverage in the south of The Slopes was, however, already much heavier by 1950s and by the early 2000s the entire area to the north and west of the built centrepiece was filled with trees [Plates 2.43-2.44].

To the west of the terraced lawns, the mortuary was demolished at some date after 1988.

A **restoration project** delivered in 2003-2007 repaired the fountain, added additional handrails and created an entirely new route running across The Slopes to connect with Vicar's Gate and the park in the west. New drainage pipes and channels were also added to the immediate southwest of the fountain at a similar time, seeking to addressing the growing water problem. It may also have been at this time that a new set of steps running down from the viewing platform to the lawn in the west was added.

Despite these works, however, The Slopes was experiencing a number of inter-related problems by the mid-2010s, which to some extent were also visible across Broadfield Park Slopes as a whole. Limited capacity for maintenance meant that excessive seeded trees and other vegetation growth had caused root damage to the built centrepiece, obstructed drainage, generated waterlogging, prevented access to the upper levels in the south and west (facilitating the emergence of 'no-go' areas that became focal points of anti-social

behaviour), obstructed views into and across The Slopes, reducing natural surveillance, and created a general impression of decay. The fountain had also ceased to function by this time, becoming instead a stagnant pond. Perceptions of The Slopes deteriorated, as did legitimate users, creating a vicious cycle, the growing anti-social and drugs-related behaviour spilling out into adjacent streets. In addition, drainage and water management were becoming increasingly problematic as a result of the combined effects of climate change, tree growth, runoff from the properties above and neglect, with the adapted Georgian drainage system overwhelmed and the Town Hall car park experiencing repeated flash flooding.

An extensive **removal of the largely self-seeded tree coverage** has been undertaken as part of the current restoration project of the Town Hall and Esplanade, both to reopen views into and across The Slopes and to assist with drainage [Plate 2.45]. The northern part of The Slopes has been brought into use a temporary equipment store, and the northern boundary wall partially dismantled to allow access.



2.43 Packer Spout Gardens and growing tree coverage on The Slopes behind, c.1965 (Francis Frith)



2.44 Heavy tree coverage behind Packer Spout Gardens, 1981 (Rochdale Local Studies)



2.45 Tree felling on The Slopes to the rear of Packer Spout Gardens, 2022 (Rochdale Borough Council)

2.2.6 Packer Spout

Rochdale was an important part of the packhorse route for the area's wool trade in the late medieval period and early modern period. **Packer Street** (laid at an unknown time) may have been named after the pack drivers who led their horses to rest in **Packer Meadow**, watering them from pools or troughs possibly fed from the underground **Packer Spout**. Packer Street may itself have been part of the medieval packhorse route (before being superseded by Church Lane in the 18th century).¹⁶

In around 1760 the Packer Spout water flow was tapped, part of the water continuing to flow down the sloping land as before and the remainder channelled into a **new water tank** created on Leyland Bank (now the site of Packer Spout Gardens). Analysis of its position as recorded in historic maps shows how the tank occupied the site that is today the Packer Spout fountain, indicating that the works of the 1930s simply retained and uncovered the brick-built semi-oval underground water tank built in around 1760. This, however, has not been subject to archaeological examination [Plates 2.46-2.47].¹⁷

Although comparatively little physical evidence, and no known written record, now survives it is believed that the Packer Spout reservoir was used to feed a **system of piped water** provided to nearby residences and businesses, possibly three or four properties on

Leyland brow and Bank and a similar number on Packer Street.¹⁸ Lead pipes found on Leyland Bank during recent archaeological excavations seem to confirm that at least one property received piped water (from an unconfirmed source) at some point prior to the area's clearance in the late 1860s.

The tank itself was taken over by the private waterworks company that was established in 1806 or 1809 but there is no record of for how long it remained in use as a principal source of domestic piped water. It was presumably redundant for this purpose by the 1850s, when extensive reservoirs were constructed in the surrounding moorland, but may have continued in more informal use subsequently. Recent reports suggest that it may have been used to provide water to the Town Hall and the corn mill to its rear during the 1870s (and perhaps beyond) and 'continued to provide Rochdale with piped water until as late as 1898'.¹⁹

The Packer Spout has also been the driver of certain **local traditions** (of an unspecified date), with a stone basin known as 'The Wishing Well' or 'St Chad's Well' said to have been a focal point of various customs for divining the future. On leaving the church on Palm Sunday, parishioners would cast their palm crosses into the pool, a sinking cross telling of foreboding times ahead. Single maidens would likewise throw straws at the surface, counting the bubbles to discern how many more years it would be before they married.²⁰

A **water tank with lead pipes** was dismantled on The Slopes or the west side of Packer Street in the 1920s. Its exact position is not recorded but it is possible (although not confirmed) that it had played a role in the Packer Spout reservoir system.



2.46 Water tank, seemingly on The Slopes, c.1926-27 (Rochdale Local Studies)



2.47 Water tank system, Packer Street, c.1926-27 (Rochdale Local Studies)

16 Centre for Applied Archaeology (2023), p. 9.

17 It was believed in the past that the reservoir was the small stone tank, uncovered – connected to a series of lead pipes – during the 1927 demolition of Leyland Chambers (the building on Leyland Bank). Bob Bevan suggests that this small tank is likely to have been a secondary holding tank serving the main reservoir.

18 Information provided by Bob Bevan.

19 Dawson Mattley (1899), pp. 21, 23; Ambellia Consultancy (2021); Centre for Applied Archaeology (2023), p. 5.

20 Information provided by Rochdale Archives and Local Studies.

2.3 The Development of The Slopes: Snapshot Map Regression

[Ordnance Survey published 1851] The Slopes at this time still extended down to the bank of the River Roch, with **buildings** lining Packer Street and scattered throughout the west, gardens in between. The Packer Spout reservoir was seemingly covered over and several **paths or tracks** ran through the area.

[Ordnance Survey published 1893] The northern section of The Slopes had been lost for the **Town Hall and Town Hall Square** in the 1870s, with the middle section occupied by the Town Hall **mortuary** in the northwest corner, the **corn mill and glasshouses** in the rear, and **houses and workshops** along Packer Street. The southern area, however, remained undeveloped, occupied by trees before its sudden rise in height.

[Ordnance Survey published 1910] Further land had been lost from The Slopes in order to extend the Town Hall Square, and whilst the Packer Spout reservoir ('Tank') remained in situ. It is not, however, clear how (if at all) the reservoir was being used.

[Ordnance Survey published c.1960] The first detailed map showing The Slopes produced after the works of the 1930s labels it an extension of the **St Chad's Gardens** (created in 1925), the two connected by a **footpath** running across Church Steps. A large drain existed in the southwest corner, with the mortuary still present to the northwest.

[Ordnance Survey published 1988] Later maps show the built centrepiece of the gardens unchanged, the large drain still in the southwest corner and the mortuary complex still extant. An additional footpath from St Chad's Gardens via the higher landing of Church Steps, entering Packer Spout Gardens next to the fountain, existed by around 1965 (and remains extant today) but is not recorded in maps.

[Google Street View 2018; Google Street View 2021; Historic England, published 2021] In subsequent decades The Slopes has retained the **essential form and layout as created in the 1930s**. Minor changes, not recorded in maps, have added steps running down from the fountain to the lawn to its west and a new footpath running along the higher ground in the south.

2.5 Relevant Planning History

Rochdale Borough Council lists the following planning applications of relevance on its online planning portal.

Broadfield Park, Rochdale

04/D44613; 2004; Withdrawn
Erection Of 1.5M High Railings On Top Of Existing Stone Wall And Erection Of 3M High Gates

05/D45420; 2005; Approved
Erection Of 1.5M High Railings On Top Of Existing Stone Wall And Erection Of 3M High Gates

Packer Spout Gardens, Rochdale

09/A5786; 2009; Approved
Non-Illuminated 8M High Flag Pole Sign

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Map of glebe lands adjacent to Rochdale Canal, 1795, LRO DDCC/ACC 2665

Plan of a parcel of land belonging to the Vicarage, LRO DDCC/ACC 2665

Plan of the township of Castleton, part 2, 1844

Plan of the Vicarage of Rochdale, 1754-57, S9

Plan of land sold to the Corporation in 1863, c.1863, S215

Plan of the glebelands, 1840, S8

Plot of glebe land around Church Lane, R81

Plan of the glebe lands belonging to the Vicarage of Rochdale, R410

Rochdale plan showing the boundary of the glebe land, R232

Rochdale Corporation Minutes of Proceedings of the General Purposes Committee, July 1868-1873

Rochdale parish church. Plan of proposed alteration of the road across the churchyard, undated, S131

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Information and primary sources were also provided by Bob Bevan of Rochdale Borough Council

3.0 Site Survey Descriptions

3.1 The Setting of The Slopes and the Conservation Area Context

3.1.1 Conservation Area Context

The Slopes is situated in what may have been the original early medieval and medieval core of the historic settlement of Rochdale, abutting a main route that perhaps had a course roughly approximate to the present-day Packer Street and Church Steps. It is also likely to have formed part of the early modern or post-medieval settlement, probably as gardens, smallholdings or fields. All that survives of these periods above ground, however, are the Church of St Chad (Grade II), Church Steps and the *possible* 'Saxon' boundary wall (also Grade II), situated to the south and southeast of The Slopes respectively. Otherwise, no buildings from these periods survive above ground.

The setting that has survived around the site is instead the **late-Victorian civic core** that was developed primarily from the 1860s to the 1890s, around the focal point of the new **Town Hall** (Grade I) and the municipal **Broadfield Park and Slopes** (Grade II) to the latter's immediate west and southwest. This new core ran along both sides of **The Esplanade** (created as part of the same works, with new civic and commercial buildings also built along the east side of **Packer Street**). The 1920s creation of **St Chad's Gardens** (on land cleared in the 1860s as part of the Town Hall scheme), and of Packer Spout Gardens a decade later were almost the final steps in the creation of this civic quarter. They were followed only by the **Memorial Gardens**, created to the north of The Esplanade in 1948, prompted by the horrific losses of the Second World War.

The Slopes is bound by the Town Hall and its car park (originally the extended Town Hall Square) in the north, Church Steps and their walled approach to the east, and the boundary treatments of the Church of St Chad in the south. In the west it becomes Broadfield Slopes, marked by a crevice in the north but with the boundary lines shown in historic maps not decipherable on the ground in the south. To its northeast is the new civic square recently created on what was formerly Packer Street, bound by the Town Hall to its west and a row of mainly Victorian and Edwardian commercial buildings along the east. Further east, beyond Church Steps, is the 1920s St Chad's Gardens, also part of Broadfield Park, laid out as a series of formal paths and flowerbeds.

3.1.2 Town Hall (Grade I) [Plate 3.1]

The Victorian **Town Hall** (Grade I) sits to the immediate north, on land that was originally also part of The Slopes. It dominates views from The Esplanade and Packer Street, obscuring the northern part of The Slopes entirely. From the south, in the churchyard, it is also the dominant feature in views across The Slopes to the north and northwest [Plates 3.2-3.3]. There are also clear views of the Town Hall across The Slopes from Church Steps, which open up on rising up the steps (moving in a southerly direction) [Plate 3.4].

There are clear views of the Town Hall from all parts of The Slopes [Plates 3.5-3.6].



3.1 Front of Rochdale Town Hall, viewed from the Cenotaph and Memorial Gardens to the north



3.2 Town Hall spire, visible from the southwest of the churchyard



3.4 Town Hall, visible from Church Steps



3.6 Town Hall, viewed from the Packer Spout fountain



3.3 Town Hall, visible from the northwest of the churchyard



3.5 Town Hall, viewed from the middle of the Site

3.1.3 Broadfield Park and Slopes (Grade II) [Plate 3.7]

The Slopes continues to the west to become **Broadfield Slopes**, which run along the southwest boundary of the Town Hall and car park. Here, a footpath travels along the ridge, running along the side of the Old Vicarage garden wall, the garden at present overgrown and the path temporarily closed during the works. Broadfield Park Slopes becomes more managed in the north (along The Esplanade), where formal footpaths, lawns and flower beds run along a series of Victorian man-made terraces, radiating out from **Victoria Bridge and Birdcage Walk**. Views from this part of Broadfield Park Slopes to The Slopes are currently obscured by site hoarding [Plates 3.8-3.11].

Above, beyond the Old Vicarage and the 1970s primary school, is the formal element of the Victorian park (situated at the top of the hill) [Plate 3.12].

The park also includes **St Chad's Gardens**, through which two footpaths run to the west. One leads to the southern approach to Church Steps (the retained remnant of Packer Street) and the other to a viewing platform (with a bench) that opens onto Church Steps, directly opposite the similar (1930s) opening from the steps to Packer Spout Gardens. There are ordinarily full views between St Chad's Gardens and The Slopes across Church Steps (although these are currently obscured by site hoarding). These views to the west continue across The Slopes, to the sloped parkland beyond (Broadfield Slopes) [Plates 3.13-3.15].



3.7 Broadfield Slopes viewed from the Site



3.8 Broadfield Slopes, viewed from The Esplanade to the north



3.9 Broadfield Slopes, Victoria Bridge



3.10 Broadfield Slopes, looking towards the Site (concealed by hoarding)



3.11 View from Church Steps across the Site to Broadfield Slopes



3.12 Entrance to the formal part of Broadfield Park, Sparrow Hill



3.14 St Chad's Gardens, paths running to Church Steps



3.13 St Chad's Gardens, with Church Steps (R), viewed from the north



3.15 View from St Chad's Gardens across Church Steps and the Site to Broadfield Slopes opposite

3.1.4 Church of St Chad (Grade II*), the 'Saxon' Wall to the North West (Grade II) and the Old Vicarage (Grade II)

Sitting high above The Slopes, the 13th- to 19th-century church is visible from all parts of The Slopes and from the car park to the latter's immediate north, with only a small amount of coverage by trees [Plates 3.16-3.18]. The church tower rises above and is a dominant feature in views, having been extended in c.1870 as part of the designed backdrop to the Town Hall.

As a result of the sudden fall in height to the immediate north of the church there is very little visibility of The Slopes from the west of the churchyard, where only the Town Hall spire can be seen. On approaching the northwest boundary to the churchyard the view opens up to show more of the Town Hall, The Slopes suddenly becoming fully visible when reaching the boundary line itself [Plate 3.19].

There is only very limited visibility from elsewhere in the churchyard, with the land to the immediate north of the church permanently fenced off and temporary metal works hoardings covering the remainder of the boundary line as it borders The Slopes [Plate 3.20]. To the northeast, however, above St Chad's Gardens, there are full northwesterly views into The Slopes, interrupted only by intervening trees [Plate 3.21].

To the immediate northwest of the church is the flagstone boundary marker claimed by its discoverer to be **Saxon**. This has only very limited visibility at present, with inspection from the churchyard prevented by temporary Herras fencing and views from the south on The Slopes obscured by vegetation [Plates 3.22-3.23].

Also located within the churchyard, to the south of the church, are the relocated historic **sundial** and **stocks** (both Grade II).

The 18th- and early 19th-century **Old Vicarage** is situated to the immediate west of the church and has an extensive garden carved out of Broadfield Slopes, from which a footpath runs along its boundary wall. This building and its boundary wall are visible from, and have views into, The Slopes, at present partly obscured by vegetation [Plates 3.24-3.25].



3.16 Church of St Chad, viewed from its churchyard to the south



3.17 Church of St Chad, viewed from the north of the Site



3.18 Church of St Chad, viewed from the Town Hall car park looking across the Site



3.19 The Site fully visible over the 'Saxon' Wall



3.20 Churchyard, views of the Site obscured by permanent and temporary fencing



3.22 'Saxon' wall to the northwest of the Church of St Chad



3.24 Old Vicarage, viewed from the south



3.21 Views into the Site from the unobscured northeast boundary to the churchyard



3.23 View towards the 'Saxon' Wall (obscured by vegetation and not accessible due to tree works)



3.25 Rear of the Old Vicarage, viewed from the middle of the Site

3.1.5 Church Steps (Non-Designated Heritage Asset) [Plate 3.26]

Church Steps are believed to have potentially medieval and certainly early modern provenance, although the exact date of the fabric surviving today is unclear, the steps having been subject to various recorded phases of refurbishment and probably others besides.

The walled steps run down from an opening in the churchyard wall, past a landing from which mirrored openings lead to The Slopes and St Chad's Gardens (that into the latter a later alteration, probably early post-war). A similar landing, again with mirrored openings, is situated below, the steps then opening onto the walled approach formed out of a remnant of Packer Street and retaining its floor of setts and flagstones. The walls to this approach area are newer than those to the steps themselves but non-identical, those in the west being a continuation of the functional southern boundary wall to the Packer Spout Gardens (1930s) and those in the east a continuation of the boundary walls and railings to St Chad's Gardens (1920s), here with a curved profile [Plates 3.27-3.28].



3.26 Church Steps, situated between the Site and St Chad's Gardens



3.27 Approach to Church Steps, walls to Packer Spout Gardens (R) and St Chad's Gardens (L)



3.28 Church Steps, looking to the south

3.1.6 Former Post Office (Grade II) and NatWest Bank, Empire Hall and Flying Horse, Packer Street (all Non-Designated Heritage Assets)

To the east of the Town Hall **Packer Street** has recently been turned into a new civic square. This is lined to the east by a row of large Victorian and Edwardian three-storey buildings that includes the former Post Office (Grade II) and the NatWest Bank, Empire Hall and Flying Horse (all recognised by Rochdale Borough Council as Non-Designated Heritage Assets) **[Plate 3.29]**.

The new square has views from the north into Packer Spout Gardens, the rising land above, Church Steps adjacent, and the Church of St Chad (Grade II) on the top of The Slopes, the latter newly exposed as a result of the tree removal works. From the south there are also views of the Old Vicarage (Grade II) and Broadfield Slopes as they meet The Slopes and then continue around the side of the Town Hall **[Plates 3.30-3.32]**.



3.29 Packer Street's Victorian civic and commercial buildings, viewed from the east of the Site



3.30 New square with Packer Street's Victorian buildings



3.31 New square on Packer Street, looking towards the Site



3.32 New square, looking towards the Site and Broadfield Slopes adjacent

3.2 The Slopes [Plate 3.33]

The Slopes is currently closed to the public due to the current programme of works to the Town Hall and Broadfield Park. As part of these works the northern section of Packer Spout Gardens is in temporary use as a site equipment store and has been temporarily levelled, whilst the southern section has undergone tree works. Despite these changes, however, the two different character areas of The Slopes as it was recreated in the 1930s remain fully legible.

As a result of the works and wet weather the ground was very wet at the time of the visit, with pools of surface water, large areas of mud, and leaves and detritus covering much of the surface.



3.33 The Slopes (elevated) section of the Site, visible behind the Packer Spout Gardens

3.2.1 The Slopes

In the south is what remains of **The Slopes**, a much steeper area of land to the immediate rear of the built centrepiece, rising up to the Church of St Chad behind. This became the site of increasingly heavy tree coverage from the early post-war period onwards, with some removal undertaken in the 1990s. It has been cleared further as part of the current scheme in order to aid drainage and open up views towards the Church of St Chad above. Covered in rough grass and other vegetation (recently cut), this area now contains only a small number of trees, of mixed types and ages. In contrast to the gardens below, there are no built features.

In the west The Slopes continues to become what was historically known as Broadfield Slopes, with no formal boundary marker, although a shallow crevice is visible where the two meet [Plates 3.34-3.36].

From a **post-war opening** made at the higher landing of Church Steps modern steps with sandstone walls lead to a footpath of hardstanding (its surface not visible, being obscured by mud and detritus) [Plate 3.37]. This runs in a westerly direction through the top of the gardens and prior to the current works appears to have looped around the centrepiece before exiting the site at the modern steps inserted in the north boundary. To the north of the centrepiece it now meets a set of modern steps (with handrail) that lead to the **modern, seemingly unsurfaced, footpath**, inserted in the late 1990s or early 2000s. This runs along the southern part of The Slopes towards the gate to the Old Vicarage Garden, where it meets the footpath running through Broadfield Slopes. No formal path was visible above the steps in the park's current condition but a probable

route was observed running to the west along a small terrace (presumably created or enhanced for this purpose) [Plates 3.38-3.39].

Lying adjacent to the path is a modern, basic, **drainage channel**, inserted by the Parks staff using reclaimed stone. A modern drainage **tank and pipes** (probably previously covered) sit nearby, positioned to the immediate southwest of the built centrepiece, and a purpose-built pit lying further to the southwest presumably serves a similar function [Plates 3.40-3.42].



3.34 The Slopes, viewed from the northeast of the Site



3.35 The Slopes, viewed from Church Steps looking west



3.36 Western part of The Slopes, bound by the wall to the Old Vicarage and continuing into Broadfield Slopes



3.37 Post-war steps from Church Steps, with steps into St Chad's Gardens facing



3.39 Probable route of the modern footpath through The Slopes



3.41a The Slopes, modern drainage pipe and tank



3.41b The Slopes, modern drainage pipe and tank



3.38 Modern steps and railing leading up to the footpath running through the upper level of The Slopes



3.40 Modern basic drainage channel, reusing found stone



3.42 The Slopes, modern attempt to deal with water run-off

3.2.2 Packer Spout Gardens

In the north is the **Packer Spout Gardens**, created in the 1930s and designed around the built centrepiece positioned facing what was originally the middle of its frontage onto the Town Hall Square. This northern frontage was narrower than the gardens as a whole, their west end being concealed behind the mortuary complex until this was demolished at some date after 1988.

Community archaeological trenches have been excavated to the northeast, east and west of the built centrepiece and remain open, with a community cabin situated over that in the northeast at the time of writing (November 2023).

The gardens are enclosed in the north and the northeast corner by their original 1930s **boundary wall** that matches the walls to the built centrepiece [Plates 3.43-3.44]. Outside the wall, at its north, is the modern flagstone pavement leading to the entrance into the gardens from the car park (formerly part of the extended Town Hall Square). The remainder of the pavement was presumably removed temporarily during the current works [Plate 3.45].

The north boundary wall marks the original extent of the northern frontage to the gardens (which originally ran only as far as the mortuary complex). At its western end a **short flight of modern steps** with handrail (matching those inserted elsewhere) runs up from the kerb into the gardens. This is a modern addition that formerly connected with the post-war footpath from the higher landing of Church Steps, creating a looped route running through the gardens [Plate 3.46].

There is no boundary treatment to the west of these steps (where the mortuary complex was previously situated), photographs indicating that immediately prior to the current works this simply marked by a series of flowerbeds. The western boundary of this area is then formed by the stone retaining wall that continues out of the sloped area immediately adjacent (officially known as Broadfield Slopes).

The **garden areas** to either side of the built centrepiece no longer retain the intact terraced flower beds and formal lawns shown in historic features. That to the **east** shows a higher degree of survival, with the terraced changes in height still perceptible and two areas of planting surviving. The **Cascades** still run out of the lower surviving line of planting (which is water meadow like, although with its rockery stones hidden), but are currently reduced to a slight trickle, their stones obscured by vegetation. They have a modern footbridge above (choked by plants), suggesting that the waterflow was previously more substantial. To their west are a modern bench and a modern service cabinet that serves the fountain, both abutting the steps up to the viewing platform.

The remainder of the east garden area is covered by rough grass, with modern benches and the temporary archaeological trenches situated both adjacent to the Cascades and to the rear of the north boundary wall [Plates 3.47-3.49]. The original 1930s footpath from the lower landing of Church Steps was not visible (perhaps simply concealed by plant growth) but the opening in the wall of Church Steps is believed to survive (currently concealed by hoarding).

The **garden area to the west** retains a matching area of water meadow-style planting but its terracing survives only as a single terrace, and only immediately adjacent to the built centrepiece. An archaeological **trench** lies at the top of this terrace adjacent to the steps (on the course of the footpath leading to modern steps in the northwest), with the land to its north flattened for use as a **site equipment store**. A **vehicular track** also runs into the gardens from the car park here, providing a works route into The Slopes above, with all of these changes temporary interventions relating to the current works [Plates 3.50-3.51]. Otherwise, the surface is rough grass and self-generated vegetation similar to that of the higher levels of The Slopes above, with the northwest corner (merging with Broadfield Slopes) covered by scrub that continues down from the land above [Plate 3.52].



3.43 North boundary wall to Packer Spout Gardens, matching the walls of the centrepiece



3.45 Modern flagstone pavement leading to the north entrance to the Packer Spout Gardens



3.47 East garden area, remnant planting between the Packer Spout fountain and the Cascades



3.44 East boundary wall to Packer Spout Gardens, meeting the older wall of Church Steps



3.46 Modern steps in the northwest



3.48 East garden area, surviving retained planting and modern bridge over the Cascades



3.49 East garden area, rough lawns, perceptible terracing and surviving planting



3.51 West garden area, terracing part surviving closest to the built feature, with remnant planting



3.50 West garden area, exposed drains and brickwork



3.52 Scrub in the northwest corner, now merged with the west garden area

3.3 The centrepiece to Packer Spout Gardens

This **built centrepiece** of the 1930s remains in situ with comparatively little evidence of change and is the focal point of not only the Packer Spout Gardens but also of The Slopes as a whole [Plates 3.53-3.55]. Symmetrical in design, this was positioned directly above and in front of the main entrance from the Town Hall Square (later the car park), at what was originally the centre of the northern frontage to the gardens.

On approach from the main entrance, a wide set of steps with a landing runs up to the viewing platform on which is situated the relocated market cross and the Packer Spout fountain. This platform continues around the rear of the fountain, where a **tablet** bearing the **coat of arms of the Borough of Rochdale** is set within the matching retaining wall [Plate 3.56]. The whole feature is enclosed by 1930s walls with coping stones above, built with paths and steps of flagstone, with five (originally six) stone obelisks positioned on the walls at strategic points. The **fountain** itself is enclosed behind walls and the original railings; internally it has access steps and a modern pump, visible in its northwest corner [Plate 3.57]. To its front, the sandstone **market cross** shaft (Grade II, possibly 18th-century) bears historic carved graffiti and what may be evidence of wear from the old bull-baiting ring, with its base of unknown date and the finial above a post-war addition [Plate 3.58].

The stonework of the built centrepiece is in generally fair condition but there are areas of breakage, missing mortar, lost coping stones and repair (of varying quality), with some steps rising and evidence of damage

caused by damp. There are also some areas of graffiti. The railings to the fountain are in poor condition (with peeling paint and heavy rusting), whilst the stone **obelisks** are incomplete, missing the lights shown in earlier photographs (for which the attachments still survive in places). The two obelisks to the front also have holes indicating that attachments have been removed, although it is not clear what these once held (the coping stones showing no evidence of former railings) [Plate 3.59]. On the rear retaining wall, there is also evidence that a plaque may have existed to the east of the coat of arms and since been lost [Plate 3.60]. The modern inserted steps added at the side of this wall are freestanding, avoiding damage to the fabric, but have a looming handrail that lessens the symmetry and visual impact of the original composition [Plate 3.61].

The greatest change to the built centrepiece has occurred in the southwest corner, where an **opening** has been made in the west wall of the viewing platform and modern **steps and railings** inserted leading down to the grassed area to the west. A modern litterbin sits adjacent [Plates 3.62-3.63].

To the front of the viewing platform, spouts in the walls allow overflow water to discharge onto the garden areas, where remnant planting frames the built centrepiece to either side [Plate 3.64].



3.53 1930s centrepiece, the focal point of Packer Spout Gardens



3.54 Packer Spout Fountain at the centre of the built feature



3.55 Built feature from the rear



3.57 Packer Spout Fountain with original 1930s walls and railings



3.59 Obelisks, showing the light attachments and holes of an unown function to the sides



3.56 Retaining wall with the Borough coat of arms



3.58 Market cross shaft, with a later finial and a base of unknown date



3.60 Possible lost plaque on the retaining wall to the gardens



3.61 Retaining wall with modern steps running up to The Slopes



3.63 Modern inserted opening, steps and handrail



3.62 Modern inserted steps and path leading from the centrepiece to the garden area to the west



3.64 West garden area, water spout from above and remnant planting at the foot of the viewing platform

4.0 Assessment of Significance

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this section is to provide an assessment of significance of The Slopes, so that the proposals for change to the site are fully informed as to its significance and the effect of the proposals on that significance can be evaluated.

The assessment begins with a general summary of the site's history and significance; then the various elements of the site 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 Grade-II listed park and market cross, the listed buildings and non-designated heritage assets adjacent, and the Rochdale Town Centre Conservation Area.

It 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

The Slopes is recognised as significant at a national level through its designation as part of a registered park and garden (Grade II). However, it is of a lower level of interest than the Victorian areas of park to its west (but of similar interest to St Chad's Gardens adjacent).

4.2.1 Architectural Interest

The **core architectural and historic interest** of The Slopes is derived from the role that it plays as part of a formal set piece incorporating the Victorian Gothic Town Hall (Grade I) and its designed landscape setting.

The Slopes survives (above ground at least) as a 1930s municipal park, the market cross (Grade II) relocated here not because of any historic relationship but as an expression of the transitional character of the municipal architecture of the interwar period. The tradition of public spaces arranged around crosses and monuments is clearly observed with the central relocated historic market cross but there was the confidence to offset this with the modern materials, straight lines and simple ironwork of the fountain surround and, in particular, the plain obelisks (now missing their lights) that contrast noticeably with the more traditional character of St Chad's Gardens adjacent. This gives a **degree of architectural interest**, particularly when compared to the more dramatic and formal Broadfield Slopes and the noticeably more ornate architecture of St Chad's Gardens (built only a decade before The Slopes).

The Slopes also has some **moderate to medium architectural interest** in the almost intact survival of its 1930s built centrepiece, although at the current

time this is compromised through the temporary loss of much of the original terracing, planting and lawns (which are believed to have mainly still survived at the onset of the works). Of note is the fountain (and, to a lesser extent, the Cascades), which forms the central focal point, its inclusion and prominence not only reflective of interwar models of municipal park design but also evidence of an at once both practical and creative response to the challenges of water drainage. This fountain was set within terraced gardens with formal beds and lawns, with a contrasting rugged slope above, bringing the design intent of the older Victorian sloped area to the west – part of the original park – in line with contemporary styles. The visual relationship between these different internal components of The Slopes as redesigned in the 1930s became obscured by tree growth in the later-20th century and the recent tree works have now restored full visibility of both the steeply sloped land in the south and west of The Slopes and the Church of St Chad above.

4.2.2 Historic Interest

The **historic identity of The Slopes has evolved** even during the eight decades of its life as a municipal park. It was originally unveiled as the Packer Spout Gardens, this name – and the centrality given to the historic water tank/new fountain – recalling the historic importance of the Packer Spout. By the 1960s, however, it had lost this separate, unique, identity, instead gaining a new significance as part of a single set piece that extended to either side of Church Steps (also incorporating the 1920s St Chad's Gardens). Its identity has since evolved again, Packer Spout Gardens and St Chad's Gardens now generally treated as separate areas but both regarded as part of Broadfield Park and Slopes.

This has the benefit of reinforcing understanding of the shared origins and purpose of the different elements of the Grade II listed park as it survives today.

Beyond this, The Slopes has a **moderate to medium historic interest** underpinned by its earlier evolved history. Situated close to the probable focal point of the historic settlement, The Slopes has borne witness to the evolution of Rochdale as an urban landscape, its own role adapting and changing over time as the character and needs of the settlement evolved. The Slopes' history is, therefore, representative of the broader evolution of Rochdale as it transitioned from a medieval village to a proto-industrial, industrial and eventually post-industrial town centre. This role is likely to have always been greatest in the north and east and lowest in the south and southwest, where the steep land had more limited use. It is complemented by a more **moderate historic interest** lying in the role played by the Packer Spout in providing the people of Rochdale with water, both as one of several natural water sources and as the first known water storage and delivery system to be erected in the town centre. The flagpoles and gravel path recorded on historic maps also suggest that the Slopes could potentially have a longer history of public recreational use, which preceded and paved the way to its eventual formal adoption and landscaping as a municipal park and gardens in the 1930s.

The **market cross** has a moderate historic interest but survives only as a shaft (with a replacement base and finial), removed from its original context and with its provenance unknown. Relocated to the gardens to create a landmark feature, its main interest is as a historic artefact.

Although no physical evidence of its historic use survives above ground on any part of The Slopes there is an **evidential potential** stemming from its possible ability to yield underground archaeology. This could cast light on the associated Georgian Packer Spout water system and, more broadly, on the historic use and development of Broadfield Park Slopes and Packer Street, particularly prior to the 19th century (a detailed written record lacking for this period). Recent archaeological investigations have suggested that the foundations of the 1870s corn mill, for example, survive in the north of The Slopes, alongside late-18th-century floor surfaces.

The Slopes as it survives, therefore, derives its **main tangible historic interest** from its creation as the last stage of a lengthy process to create a municipal park that would be a fitting backdrop to the Town Hall and one of the final phases of the extensive architectural and landscape composition that eventually filled the area between Packer Street, The Esplanade, Manchester Road and St Alban's Street.

4.2.3 The Setting of The Slopes

The Slopes has **group value** with the wider Broadfield Park and Slopes, of which it forms a part (Grade II), the Town Hall (Grade I), the Church of St Chad (Grade II*), the 'Saxon' area of churchyard wall and the Old Vicarage adjacent (both Grade II), and Church Steps (a non-designated heritage asset). These are situated within the **Victorian, Edwardian and interwar civic core**, created from the 1860s onwards and filling an area extending from the north side of The Esplanade to Broadfield Park Slopes and the formal Victorian park behind. Directly facing and overlooked by The Slopes,

the **Town Hall** (designed by William Crossland) is one of the finest Gothic municipal buildings in England. It was Crossland who envisioned the Town Hall surrounded by dramatically rugged Slopes to the sides and rear, the Church of St Chad rising above. This vision is maintained on Broadfield Slopes and the upper level of The Slopes but mediated on The Slopes – and lost altogether on St Chad's Gardens – by the formal lawns and flower beds that were installed as part of the 1930s extension of the park to the west.

With Packer Street, the Town Hall, Church Steps and the Church of St Chad above, The Slopes also forms part of the likely focal point of the **early modern (to c.1700), medieval and potentially even early medieval settlement** of Rochdale. The church, Church Steps and the possibly Saxon wall are, however, the only built features surviving from these earlier periods (above ground), the church and Church Steps with heavy renewal and alterations subsequently.

The Slopes and its setting are, therefore, visible to us today as the **designed setting to the Town Hall** as this was created between the 1860s and 1930s (with the Memorial Gardens a later addition, following the Second World War). These historically derived importance from their proximity to the Town Hall, becoming the site for civic ceremony, commemoration and celebration and the built expression of municipal pride. Within this group, the centrepiece of the new Packer Spout Gardens was introduced as a new minor landmark (whilst also addressing the site's water management needs).

Over time, however, the civic importance of The Slopes and the surrounding area has declined as the nature of public life has changed. Likewise, whilst the Town Hall

Square facing The Slopes, and separating it from the Town Hall, always had an additional practical aspect its conversion by the end of the 20th century into a full-time car had the effect of reducing views into Packer Spout Gardens during working hours, lessening the intended visual impact of the entrance into Packer Spout Gardens and the fountain above, reducing the intended landmark status of The Slopes, and adding a much more utilitarian character to the setting and approach. The creation of the new civic square to Packer Street is now reinstating this civic character to the area to the immediate side and rear of the Town Hall by, re-establishing the civic relationship between the Town Hall and its designed townscape/landscape setting on Packer Street and The Slopes.

The upper levels of The Slopes and Church Steps adjacent, and the churchyard overlooking these, also offer panoramic views out across **Lobden Moors**, towards the summit of **Knowl Hill**.

4.2.4 Rochdale Town Centre Conservation Area

The Rochdale Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal was published in November 2011. The Rochdale Town Hall, Square & Esplanade Character Area is described as follows:

South of the river, the Town Hall Square and The Esplanade (1864-71) was an artistic creation of the highest order with set piece buildings in an expansive layout planned according to romantic and picturesque principles. Rochdale Town Hall and the clock tower rise sublimely from a very large plaza connected to Manchester Road by a ceremonial way, The Esplanade. The scheme is completed by romantic gardens

created on the valley slopes (registered park grade II). The simplicity and the visionary scale of the scene contrast with the adjacent Old Town. Excessive parking dramatically lowers the quality of the scene and the functionality of the plaza.

The Rochdale Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal is currently under revision (May 2023 consultation draft). A Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) heritage-led regeneration programme is also underway, seeking to reverse economic decline, encourage town centre living, support social and economic development, and promote Rochdale's heritage.

The **Town Hall (Grade I)** is regarded as the jewel in Rochdale's crown. Standing on an island site, it forms the major landmark on the Esplanade and within the town centre. The site was cleared to allow for its construction and as a consequence the Town Hall has only a weak relationship with the surrounding historic street pattern (which was altered to accommodate the new building), greatest where it presents its side to Packer Street (the thoroughfare of which was remodelled contemporaneously to serve dually as a civic square and access to the rear of building). The Town Hall's immediate setting was instead remodelled – initially to Crossland's own designs – to create a dignified civic setting for the building. The existence of such an unusually generous space around the Town Hall (extending in all directions but east) is the result of separate phases of investment by the Corporation over a period of over 70 years, in the sustained pursuit of a worthy landscape setting for their Town Hall. Car parking, traffic and associated highway clutter added since the mid-20th century, however, detracts from the overall civic quality of its setting, and the original Victorian Town Hall Square has been altered by modern car parking.

Broadfield Park (Registered, Grade II) and the dramatic topography of its Slopes offer an attractive setting for the Town Hall, whilst providing interesting views of its tower from both the west and the southwest. The restoration work currently reaching completion has restored not only the park's own significance but also that of the designed structures located within it.

Town Hall Square was part of the original composition designed by Crossland, the architect of the Town Hall scheme, and was intended as the literal and symbolic meeting point of the four main roads that entered Rochdale from each compass point. Enclosed by Church Steps and the Church of St Chad to the south and by the new commercial buildings of Packer Street to its east, the square originally wrapped around the side and rear of the Town Hall, with a grand approach provided by the remodelled Rochdale Bridge (widened by Crossland for this purpose). The statue of John Bright – local mill owner and Corn Law campaigner – was added in 1891, beneficently looking out across the town (and sculpted by no less a figure than Sir William Hamo Thorneycroft).

Over time, the section of square to the rear of the Town Hall was lost to parking, turning the section on Packer Street into a de facto access road. The new works are now reinstating the square on Packer Street, adding high-quality public realm, planting and integral artistic interpretation.

The Esplanade (1871) was laid out as part of the landscaping that accompanied the construction of the Town Hall and Town Square, providing a grand setting to the former and an impressive approach to the latter. Intentionally picturesque rather than classical, its

gentle curves mimicked the intended “wilderness” of the sloped land above and the river below, the new road framed at its west end by the new Gothic-style Trinity Presbyterian Church, built as part of the same Romantic (or Picturesque) programme.

The character of The Esplanade began to change in the second half of the 20th century, mainly due to growing traffic pressures. A large junction now dominates the road’s western end, Trinity Presbyterian Church having been demolished. The addition of the Brutalist, large footprint, c.1969 Police Headquarters and Magistrates’ Court has also impacted on the visual setting of the Town Hall.

The conservation area itself is currently on the Historic England Heritage At Risk Register, which lists its condition as ‘very bad’.

4.2.5 Other Adjacent Heritage Assets

The **Church of St Chad** (Grade II*) contributes to the setting of the Town Hall, its heightened tower, significant for its association with Crossland, adding interest and depth to both short and long-distance views when looking across the Slopes from the north of the Town Hall. The most significant building on the southern side of the sloped land, the church itself dates from the 13th century (although with substantial later alterations and additions) and acts as a key landmark building. Its churchyard contains several Grade II-listed features and combines with the front garden to the Old Vicarage adjacent to form an attractive green space that overlooks the abutting green spaces of The Slopes (Packer Spout Gardens) and St Chad’s Gardens. From Packer Spout Gardens there are attractive views up towards the church and its stone wall (part built of

flagstones and claimed to be Saxon in origin (Grade II)), which complements the flagstone Church Steps that rise up towards an opening in the same wall. In addition, the churchyard offers panoramic views across the north riverbank and the land beyond (although this is currently obscured by site fencing).

The **Old Vicarage** (Grade II): This residence of 1723, modelled on a London townhouse and extended in 1820, has lawns to the front and rear that contribute to the green setting to the immediate west of The Slopes. In particular, the long boundary wall to the rear garden winds along Broadfield Park Slopes and provides an attractive feature of visual interest. Currently vacant, however, many of its windows are boarded up and the gardens are overgrown, which detracts from the conservation area.

Church Steps (Non-Designated Heritage Asset) are an important part of the setting of The Slopes and unite it as a group with the Church of St Chad (Grade II*) and churchyard wall above. Their form was a clear influence in the design of both St Chad’s Gardens and Packer Spout Gardens, whilst the landing entrances leading into both unite the two as a (phased) composition. Visually attractive and with clear historic interest, they have been an important part of the identity and sense of place of Rochdale for many centuries. Tree growth had caused them to become overshadowed in recent decades, resulting in declining use, and the current works have restored full visibility, allowing Church Steps to be appreciated as a visual landmark feature that also allows views of the heritage assets adjacent.

4.2.6 Hierarchy of Interest

A hierarchy of interest is an essential tool for managing change. Areas of the highest or high significance are most sensitive to change; areas of medium and low significance are correspondingly more adaptable. Negative elements, and to a lesser extent areas of medium or low significance, also provide the clearest opportunities for change.

Whilst its greatest interest overall is derived from its contribution to the setting of the Town Hall and other heritage assets, in its own internal interest The Slopes has the following hierarchy of significance.

Of the **greatest interest** are:

- The **built centrepiece** as an almost intact composition, being a good example of 1930s municipal architecture and part of the final phase of a nine-decade effort to create a civic quarter worthy of Rochdale and providing a fitting backdrop to the Victorian Town Hall.
- With the other parts of the wider park (particularly Broadfield Park Slopes), the presence of a **large open space across which the character visibly evolves** in line with the phasing of its creation and redevelopment.
- The **spatial relationships** between The Slopes and Church Steps and The Slopes and St Chad’s Gardens, which create a distinct and distinctive ensemble and character sub-area within the park.
- The **internal visual contrast** between the landscaped lower level (Packer Spout Gardens) and the more rugged, steeply sloped upper level of The Slopes, and similar contrasts between The Slopes and the entirely formal St Chad’s Gardens to the east and the entirely rugged and naturalistic Broadfield Slopes to the west.

- **Views from within The Slopes**, at different levels, providing different vantage points from which to view the Town Hall (roof and rear), the town beyond, Broadfield Slopes, Packer Street (with its listed building and non-designated heritage assets) and the new civic square.
- **Open views up and across The Slopes** from Packer Street, the Town Hall and the adjacent sloped areas to either side, providing views of the upper levels of The Slopes itself and of Church Steps, the Church of St Chad and Old Vicarage.
- The **boundary walls to the Church of St Chad**.
- The **terracing and areas of planting** that survive as a remnant of the original 1930s layout.
- The demonstrated presence of late-**19th-century underground foundations** and 18th-century floor surfaces, with the potential for earlier remains to also survive.

Features of **neutral interest**, neither adding to nor detracting from the interest of The Slopes, are:

- **Later interventions**, creating the opening in the wall of the higher landing of Church Steps, the flagstone footpath, and associated steps and buttresses.
- The modern footpath running through the upper level of The Slopes, with its short flight of modern steps and associated handrail.
- The modern benches and bin and the footbridge over the Cascades.

Factors that **detract** (or did detract prior to the commencement of the Town Hall works) from the interest of The Slopes are:

- The **Town Hall car park**, which detracts both from the designed approach to The Slopes and its centrepiece and from views onto the Town Hall from within The Slopes.
- Poor maintenance, excessive tree coverage, lack of lighting, and antisocial behaviour, with resultant reputational problems, which has created a vicious cycle of **declining legitimate use**.
- **Poor water and drainage management**, which (with excessive tree growth) has caused destabilisation to The Slopes and damage to the built fabric.
- Threats to biodiversity caused by **self-seeding**.
- **Graffiti, damage and poor-quality/unsightly repairs** to the market cross and to the walls and flagstone steps of the centrepiece.
- The **loss of one of the six obelisks**, disrupting the designed symmetry of the composition.
- The **loss of the lights to the obelisks**, which is visually detracting (particularly where attachments are exposed) and obscures their original purpose.
- The **rusting and peeling fountain railings** and the poor quality of the water at present.
- The **service cabinet** situated in a highly prominent location to the southeast of the fountain.
- The ground-level modern drainage interventions in The Slopes above the fountain, which are visually detracting.

Temporary factors detracting from the interest of The Slopes during the current works include:

- The current undermining/loss of terracing, beds and formal lawns, obscuring the original design of the garden areas and their role visually framing the built centrepiece.
- The choking of the Cascades by vegetation, and the loss of legibility exacerbated by the undermining of the terracing within which this trickling flow of water originally made sense.
- The loss of the north boundary wall to the west of the fountain to provide works access.

5.0 Commentary on the Proposals

5.1 Description of the Proposals and their Impact on the Listed Park, Adjacent Listed Buildings and the Conservation Area

The proposals for repairs and landscaping works are outlined in the drawings by Gillespies which this report accompanies and are described in detail below. To the built centrepiece they include like-for-like masonry repairs, reinstatement of the lost obelisk, the replacement and addition of lighting, repairs to and replacement of railings and handrails, and the addition of new tactile paving. Landscaping proposals include the creation of two terraced lawn areas, the resurfacing of paths, the addition of benches and repair of a collapsed wall, and the extension of an existing path to create a new route running through the west of the site.

5.1.1 Repairs, replacement and new lighting and railing to the built centrepiece and new tactile paving

Repairs to the built centrepiece: It is proposed to carry out targeted like-for-like repairs, where required, to the Grade-II listed sandstone market cross shaft, the plinth to the north retaining wall (beneath the coat of arms) and the flagstone floors, paths and steps, removing graffiti, ferrous fittings, cementitious mortar and other inappropriate modern repairs, and replacing missing and damaged material. It is also proposed to replace the missing obelisk, restoring the intended symmetry of the original design.

Safety and accessibility improvements: The proposals include the addition of handrails, surface-mounted lights and tactile paving to the centrepiece, the repair and replacement of the railings to the modern steps and the replacement of the railings (currently unsafe) to the fountain. It is also proposed to reinstate period-style lights to the obelisks, add new and replacement lighting at strategic points across the centrepiece and its steps and to the rear, illuminating both the fountain and the feature as a whole.

5.1.2 Landscaping improvements

Replacement paths and landscaping: The designs propose to reinstate the principle of contouring that underlay the original 1930s designs, creating two large lawn areas, that in the west to be looped around by an extension of the footpath running to the west from the centrepiece, which would also be resurfaced. The higher footpath to the west would similarly be resurfaced, the adjacent collapsed wall repaired and benches added. Associated planting would seek to create a balanced palette of habits that can aid biodiversity and habitat creation.

Drainage improvements: In order to address the well documented long-standing drainage problems, it is proposed to restore the existing rill, add a new supplementary pond and insert an additional underground drain (all situated in the southwest of the site).

5.1.3 Impact on heritage assets

The works proposed centre on the conservation and enhancement of The Slopes historic and architectural interest and landscape value, returning the slopes to a good state of physical repair, restoring the visual and spatial coherency of its original composition and allowing it to be enjoyed and fully appreciated again. By bringing The Slopes back into meaningful use in this manner, the designs would reinstate their role in the setting, appreciation and enjoyment of this important group of designated and non-designated heritage assets particularly the Town Hall (Grade I) and the Church of St Chad (Grade II*), and of the conservation area (currently on the Heritage At Risk Register) more generally.

The essential repairs to the 90-year-old built centrepiece and 18th-century market cross shaft would address deterioration, secure their long-term conservation and enhance their heritage value, to be enjoyed by this and subsequent generations. They would be carried out on the conservation principle of minimum intervention, retaining fabric wherever possible, using traditional materials and removing inappropriate modern materials. This would be complemented by the reinstatement of the lost obelisk, and the replacement of the lost lighting, which would allow the centrepiece, the wider gardens and The Slope as a whole to be enjoyed and appreciated as it was originally intended.

Alongside the conservation of The Slopes built heritage, undertaking much-needed improvements to safety and accessibility that would complement and better reveal these historic features, would bring equity of access and increased safety which

would allowing full and equal public enjoyment of this valued green space - enhancing its amenity value as a community asset. The Slopes had become a 'no go area' and the recently completed tree removal works provide the opportunity to relaunch the site as a safe, accessible, well-lit area with natural surveillance and intervisibility from the heritage assets to either side. The replacement of the unsafe 1930s railings to the fountain is essential if the park is to be reopened to community use and would be carefully designed to better reveal and enhance the centrepiece, opening up views of the historic reservoir at its heart. The proposed reinstatement and enhancement of the lost lighting and the resurfacing of currently unmade paths would support increased use of the park, including evening and winter use, supported by the introduction of large lawns available for informal and events use. Complementary improved and new accessibility measures would also be carefully designed to maintain the character and visual appearance of The Slopes whilst encouraging and facilitating movement between Church Steps, the churchyard, the new civic square and the several parts of Broadfield Park, helping to conserve and enhance the significance of the whole group of heritage assets.

The future of The Slopes is currently threatened by long-standing and worsening drainage problems that have culminated in the failure of the current water management system, mainly caused by increased runoff from the properties above (which vastly exceeds the capacity of the inherited Georgian water management system feeding the Packer Spout reservoir/fountain). This has caused damage to The Slopes itself and its built centrepiece and also threatens the Town Hall, which already suffers from the flash-flooding of its car park (expected to worsen with climate change). The proposed interventions are

essential to the survival of the historic fabric of these at-risk heritage assets and would have no detrimental effects, being designed to be visually unobtrusive and situated in the more naturalistic north of the site, where vegetation would provide further screening,

5.2 Justification of the Proposals

As explained in Section 1.2 above, 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 is the Rochdale Core Strategy (2016). Decision-makers must also comply with the requirements of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

This section therefore assesses the impact of the proposals in line with the Rochdale Core Strategy; it then brings to bear the requirements of the 1990 Planning Act and relevant heritage policies in the NPPF.

5.2.1 Rochdale Core Strategy

The proposals aim to promote the sustainable use of a currently under-used area of land, increasing the potential of heritage assets to contribute to local character and identity. As such, they fully accord with **Policy P1**, which requires development proposals to promote 'the development and re-use of under-used land and buildings, maximising the potential for heritage assets to provide a sense of place and image'.

The proposals also meet the requirements of **Policy P2** to 'conserve, enhance and promote key heritage assets' and their wider settings, especially the Rochdale Town Centre Conservation Area (recognised in the Strategy as 'outstanding'), and to use heritage assets 'to strengthen identity and image and support the visitor economy, particularly in development and regeneration schemes'. This policy also encourages the prioritisation of at-risk heritage assets. The Slopes are currently at risk of decay, having been affected by erosion, waterlogging, fabric damage and neglect, whilst suffering from anti-social and criminal behaviour and a resultant loss of a sustainable use, whilst Rochdale Town Centre is recognised as 'At Risk'.

By reducing anti-social behaviour, increasing lighting and enhancing views across the site, the proposals would support the increased and more sustainable use of Church Steps, similarly satisfying **Policy P2's** requirement to 'conserve, enhance and utilise' non-designated heritage assets. Similar positive impacts would be brought to the buildings on Packer Street that are recognised by Rochdale Borough Council as non-designated heritage assets.

The proposals would also increase appreciation of the topography and natural features of The Slopes, thereby 'protecting and enhancing character, landscape and heritage', integrating 'successfully with the key natural features of the borough' and taking 'opportunities to protect and open up important views of hills and valleys', as required in **Policy P2** of the Strategy.

In enhancing views of and across The Slopes, the proposals would also meet the terms of **Policy P3**, which specifies that development should 'relate positively to the [surrounding] topography, landscape

and other features... and... views towards the site' and 'respect and enhance the setting of archaeological features, listed and heritage buildings and spaces and conservation areas'. By conserving, enhancing and safeguarding the 18th-century water tank, Grade-II listed market cross shaft and 1930s built centrepiece, the proposals would also meet the same policy's requirement to 'retain and enhance' designated heritage assets 'and buildings and features of cultural, historic, industrial heritage and/or townscape merit'.

Overall, it is deemed that the individual and combined effects of the proposals would meet the requirement of **Policy P3** to 'positively improve the appearance and character of the site in its setting', particularly where the character and visual and environmental quality of the site are poor, as at The Slopes.

5.2.2 1990 Planning Act

The Act forms the legal basis for decision making where a proposed development will impact listed buildings and their setting 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).

As outlined above, the proposals would preserve the Grade II listed market cross and the setting of the listed buildings adjacent (particularly Rochdale Town Hall (Grade I) and the Church of St Chad (Grade II*))

and would enhance the character and appearance of Rochdale Town Centre Conservation Area – therefore they would meet the statutory duties outlined in the Act.

5.2.3 National Planning Policy Framework

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.

Policy 197 of the NPPF requires local planning authorities to 'take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation' in a manner that contributes to local character and distinctiveness and the sustainability and economic vitality of the local community. The proposals would enhance the significance of The Slopes, the Grade-II registered historic park and the conservation area more widely whilst also enhancing the significance

of designated heritage assets including the restoration of the Grade II listed market cross and the setting of the Town Hall (Grade I) and Church of St Chad (Grade II). This would sit at the heart of the aspiration to return this group of important community assets to public use, alongside restored and revitalised Town Hall – aiding its economic viability – and encouraging tourism – all to the benefit of their continued sustainable use.

The proposals would, therefore, better reveal the significance of a number of designated and non-designated heritage assets to a wider audience, including the jewel in Rochdale's crown, the Town Hall. As such, the proposals are deemed to meet the requirements of **Policy 199**, which states that 'when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation'. The associated benefit this would bring to Church Steps adjacent, enhancing its significance and supporting its sustainable use, would also satisfy **Policy 203**, which requires the effects of an application on the significance of non-designated heritage assets to be taken into account.

Policy 206 requires local planning authorities to encourage new development within conservation areas and the setting of heritage assets that can enhance or better reveal their significance. By enhancing the setting of the Town Hall, neighbouring areas of the park (particularly its Victorian elements), the Church of St Chad and Church Steps, improving views of, from and between these assets, and encouraging greater appreciation of such views, it is deemed that the proposals would enhance and better reveal the significance of the conservation area and a number of designated and non-designated heritage assets, therefore meeting the requirements of **Policy 206**.

5.3 Conclusion

The proposals would secure the long-term and optimum viable use of The Slopes and wider Broadfield Park as a key accessible community space in the heart of Rochdale town centre. The proposals would, therefore, enhance the Rochdale Town Centre Conservation Area, which is identified as 'At Risk', and enhance the special interest of the market cross (Grade II) and setting of nearby listed buildings in accordance with the statutory duties set out in Sections 16, 66 and 72(l) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Sustaining, and indeed better revealing, the significance of the affected heritage assets and reinforcing local distinctiveness in this manner would further accordance with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework and the relevant policies of the Rochdale Core Strategy.

Appendix I Statutory List Descriptions

Broadfield Park

Grade II Listed Park and Garden

List Entry Number: 1001522

Date first listed: 24-Apr-2001

NGR: SD8951612988

A public park designed by Messrs Stansfield and Sons, and opened in successive phases between 1870 and 1874. It was designed to form a setting for Rochdale Town Hall and was extended in the 1930s. The park was formerly known as 'Rochdale Park', or simply 'The Park'.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Broadfield Park and Sparrow Hill Slopes were laid out on former glebe land acquired by the Rochdale Corporation in 1860, and were designed by Messrs Stansfield and Son, Landscape Gardeners, of Todmorden (Wrigley and Sons 1871). By the 1890s Broadfield Slopes had been added to the park and were laid out to a design by, and at the expense of, Mr J Ogden Kilnerdeyne (Souvenir of Rochdale). By 1910 Broadfield Slopes had been extensively remodelled, with a new entrance from the Manchester Road (Derek Lovejoy Partnership 1998). The site of St Chad's Gardens was presented to the town in 1893 but was not laid out until 1925 to a design by the Borough Surveyors Department (ibid). Parts of the western sides of Sparrow Hill Slopes and Broadfield Slopes were destroyed as a result of the widening of the Manchester Road in the 1970s.

The site remains (2000) in use as a public park in the ownership of Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING
Broadfield Park lies to the south of Rochdale Town Hall on a spur of the River Roch and covers an area of c 6.8ha. Broadfield Park is a complex site which incorporates three distinct areas: the formal layout of Broadfield Park on high ground to the south-west of Rochdale Town Hall; Sparrow Hill and Broadfield Slopes to the west of Manchester Road; and The Esplanade, and Packer Spout and St Chad's Gardens lying between Rochdale Town Hall to the north and St Chad's church to the south.

The formal area of Broadfield Park lies on a plateau and is bounded by Sparrow Hill (formerly Vicarage Road) to the north, Vicar's Drive to the east, St Albans Street to the south, and to the west by the footpath which runs between this part of the park and Sparrow Hill and Broadfield Slopes to the west and north. There are terraced houses to the south of this part of the park, while to the north is Sparrow Hill Primary School, the Broadfield Hotel, and the vicarage of St Chad's church. The boundaries of this part of the park are marked by a low stone wall which forms a retaining wall on the northern boundary. The western boundary was marked in the late C19 by an iron fence, now replaced by concrete posts and wire although the central iron gate survives.

Sparrow Hill and Broadfield Slopes lie to the west and north-west of the formal area of Broadfield Park. These two areas are bounded to the south by St Albans Street, and to the east by the footpath which separates it from the formal area of Broadfield Park. To the west this part of the park falls steeply to the Manchester Road (A58). The Slopes continue to the north, separated from the main area of the park by Sparrow Hill. The southern boundary of this part of the park is marked by the

boundaries of Sparrow Hill Primary School, the Museum, and part of St Chad's churchyard. To the north the land falls steeply to The Esplanade. The park boundary is formed by a 1.2m high retaining wall to the north, a retaining wall and banking to the west, a 1.5m high wall to the south, and a low wall to the east.

Packer Spout and St Chad's Gardens at the north-east tip of the site are bounded to the north by Nelson Street, to the east by Church Lane, to the south by St Chad's churchyard, and to the west by Broadfield Slopes. This part of the park is bisected by a flight of 122 stone steps which connect the church with Town Hall Square. Packer Spout Gardens is bounded by a low stone wall to the north and east and by the high stone wall which surrounds the church.

From the formal area of Broadfield Park on the plateau to the south-west of the Town Hall, the ground falls steeply to the west and south. There are extensive views across Rochdale and surrounding open country from the park.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES There are four entrances to the formal part of Broadfield Park. Two entrances give access from the public footpath which crosses the site linking St Alban's Street and Sparrow Hill on the western boundary of this part of the site. A further entry at the north-east corner gives access from Sparrow Hill and Vicar's Drive, and an entry on the southern boundary of the site gives access from St Albans Street.

There are further entrances to the Sparrow Hill part of the park. An entry on the northern boundary gives access from Sparrow Hill, an entry on the eastern boundary gives access from the public footpath linking

St Albans Street and Sparrow Hill, a further entry at the south-west corner gives access from St Albans Street, and an entry at the north-west corner gives access from Manchester Road and The Esplanade. These entrances are marked by stone gate piers although the gates are missing.

Two entrances to the southern boundary of Broadfield Slopes provide access from Sparrow Hill, and two further entrances on the northern boundary give access from The Esplanade. The sunken path which runs north/south across the site has its steep sides retained by massive rockwork. There are no entrance gates.

There are five entrances to Packer Spout and St Chad's Gardens (formerly Nelson Street Slopes). Two entrances on the northern boundary give access from Town Hall Square. Both these entrances have steep flights of stone steps leading to the Market Cross and to St Chad's churchyard. A further entrance at the north-east corner of the site gives access from Nelson Street and Church Lane, and an entrance to the south-east gives access from Church Lane. On the southern boundary an entrance gives access from St Chad's churchyard. These entrances are marked by stone piers. The eastern part of this area is closed to public access (November 2000).

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS Broadfield Park has four distinct areas. Broadfield Park itself is on a level site and has a formal layout. Sparrow Hill, to the west of the formal area, has serpentine paths and a small lake. Broadfield Slopes, to the north of Sparrow Hill, has massive earth terraces following the contours of the hill and providing platforms for views across the Pennines to the north. Packer Spout and St Chad's

Gardens, to the south-east of the Town Hall, have a formally laid out path system connected by flights of stone steps.

The western part of Broadfield Park has large sunken lawns with elaborate ornamental bedding, at the centre of which is a statue of Alderman G L Ashworth, JP (listed grade II) erected in 1878. The decorative iron fence which originally protected the statue has been removed. The paths are tarmacked with stone steps leading down to the sunken lawns. Three C19 pavilions around the perimeter of the sunken gardens were lost or removed in the early part of the C20 (Derek Lovejoy Partnership 1998). The Jubilee Drinking Fountain (Co-operative Memorial) at the south-west corner of the sunken garden was presented to the town by the Provident Society in 1907. The stone fountain is disused and has lost the four lions which sat on plinths around the centre, and the pinnacle which completed the central canopy. From this point the path runs east past modern timber trellis-work and planting beds and the former site, about 30m from the St Albans Street entry, of a glacial boulder found at Castleton and placed in the park in 1893.

The octagonal stone plinth of a bandstand occupies the central section of the park. The supporting columns and canopy have been removed and only the decorative iron railings survive. What remains of the structure is protected by modern iron railings. The bandstand was presented by Alderman Duckworth in 1893. Two bowling greens occupy the eastern section of Broadfield Park: that at the south-east corner of the park was opened in 1908 when the footpath running diagonally across this area, the former glebeland, was diverted. The bowling green at the north-east corner was opened in 1927. The bowls pavilions on the eastern

boundary of the park date from this period and the single-storey brick building to the south-west of the bowling area close to the St Albans Street entrance dates from the 1970s.

A footpath which starts opposite Broadfield Stile to the south of the site runs north/south between Broadfield Park and Sparrow Hill Slopes, linking St Albans Street with Sparrow Hill and then continuing north to The Esplanade. The footpath is of York stone and is flanked with trees and shrubs. In the Sparrow Hill Slopes area of the park the ground falls steeply to the west and north and the path system follows the contour of the land. Winding paths enclose areas of open lawn surrounded by trees and shrubs with some terraces to the west and north marked by hedgerows supported by concrete posts and wire fences. There are extensive views out across the surrounding countryside to the north and west.

A modern play area at the south-east corner of this part of the park occupies the position of one of the C19 'Play Grounds' or outdoor gymnasias (ibid). The second gymnasium, the south-west corner of the park, and part of the original western boundary were lost when the Manchester Road was widened in the 1970s. The footpath system in the northern half of Sparrow Hill Slopes reflects the C19 layout but two former footpaths in the west part of the park and a major part of the footpath system in the central and south-west area were lost as a result of the road widening. A pond occupies the north-west corner, at the lowest part of Sparrow Hill, close to one of the main entrances at the intersection of Manchester Road and The Esplanade. The irregularly shaped pond, lined with York stone, was part of the C19 design but has been reduced as a result of late C20 road widening. The grassed

and wooded area along the western boundary of Sparrow Hill was laid out following the road scheme, when the former through road, Vicarage Road, was truncated and renamed.

In the Broadfield Slopes area the three levels of terraces and footpaths running parallel to The Esplanade reflect the extensive remodelling of this part of the park in the early years of the C20. The sunken pathway running north/south from Sparrow Hill to The Esplanade between banks of rockwork divides Broadfield Slopes into eastern and western sections, connected by the 'Victoria Bridge', an ornate iron footbridge. The Rochdale Dialect Writers Memorial lies midway along the central footpath of the western section of Broadfield Slopes. The Memorial, backed by an area of ornamental planting (2000), was erected in 1900 to commemorate local dialect writers Edwin Waugh, John Trafford Clegg, Miss Lahee, and Oliver Ormerod. The statue of John Bright (listed grade II) at the north-west edge of Broadfield Slopes was moved from Town Hall Square to this position overlooking the roundabout in the 1970s when the original landform and looped path system were destroyed as part of the road-widening scheme. The eastern section of Broadfield Slopes is open grass with a central path running down to The Esplanade. The southern part of this area was reduced in the late C20 to create playing fields for Sparrow Hill School.

Packer Spout and St Chad's Gardens lie to the east of Broadfield Slopes. Church Steps, a steep flight of 122 stone steps, lie in the central area of the site and link the Town Hall Square to the north-west and St Chad's churchyard to the south. The garden to the east of Church Steps is arranged around three main interconnecting paths with a central sitting area (this

area was closed to the public November 2000). Paths lead off from the west of Church Steps to an area paved with York stone, laid out in the 1930s, around a drinking fountain and Market Cross. This part of the park rises steeply from the Town Square but former views to the north across the town and open countryside beyond are blocked by mature trees and shrubs.

Tree cover within the park is predominantly sycamore, with some ash, lime, and hawthorn. Elm trees were removed from the park in 1980(8). The vegetation of the park is more extensive now than at earlier periods and many of the views out from the park are blocked by over-mature trees and shrubs.

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Description written: January 2001 Register Inspector: JAR Edited: May 2001

Market Cross, St Chad's Gardens

Grade II Listed Building

List Entry Number: 1031929

Date first listed: 12-Feb-1985

NGR: SD8965113208

SD 8913 SE ROCHDALE SAINT CHAD'S GARDENS
11/98 Market Cross

G.V. II

Market cross. Date uncertain but probably C18. Stone. Heavy moulded stone base with tall shaft. The cornice and ball finial above the shaft collar are replacements for the cross itself.

Listing NGR: SD8965113208

Wall to the North West of Church of Saint Chad, Church Stile

Grade II Listed Building

List Entry Number: 1054859

Date first listed: 12-Feb-1985

NGR: SD 89632 13143

SD 8913 SE ROCHDALE CHURCH STILE
(north-west side)

11/45 Wall to north-west of Church of Saint Chad G.V. II

Wall. Date uncertain. Whitworth stone flags. Approximately 24m by 1m high consisting of 23 vertical stone posts, grooved on either side to accommodate 22 inserted flags. Was discovered partially buried in

1903 and re-erected by Dr Wilson who considered it to be of Anglo-Saxon origin.

Listing NGR: SD8963213143

Town Hall, The Esplanade, Rochdale, OL16 1AZ

Grade I Listed Building

List Entry Number: 1084275

Date first listed: 12-Feb-1985

NGR: SD 89584 13253

THE ESPLANADE (South east side) Town Hall (Formerly listed as Town Hall and Police Station) 25.10.1951

GV I Town hall. 1866-1871, W.H Crossland; tower 1883 by A. Waterhouse. Ashlar, Westmorland slate roof.

The reception room, Lord Mayor's Parlour, the Small Exchange, members lounge and committee rooms are placed to either side of the entrance hall (or the Exchange). The grand staircase rises to the first floor Great Hall and small staircases terminate the essentially axial plan.

To the south west of the hall on the upper floor is the Council Chamber (formerly Court room) and retiring room. Gothic revival in an elaborate form with Continental antecedents. Facade of fourteen bays is asymmetrical but balanced with linking bay and tower added to left. Outer bays have triangular gables and are of three storeys, although they differ in treatment. The next two on left and three on right have an arcade across the ground floor, then tiers of plate glass windows, mostly mullioned with cusped heads, and end above a corbelled balcony in a stepped

gable richly panelled with blind tracery. The central seven bays (containing the Hall) are flanked to left by a slim octagonal stair turret with stone spirelet and to right by an octagonal stair tower with tall two-light pointed windows and a steep pyramidal slate roof with cresting. The central three bays have a heavily buttressed porte-cochere supporting heraldic beasts and acting as a balcony to the Hall which is lit by tall three-light windows with geometrical tracery. Battlements behind which rises an immense slate roof with central wooden fleche.

The tower, a version of that at Manchester Town Hall rises sheer from the plinth through three stages to the broader clock stage where gables surmount each face flanked by pinnacles. Above this a short octagonal lantern carries a stone spire. The whole facade is richly carved with naturalistic foliage in the style of Southwell Minster. The main feature of each return wall is a tall semi-octagonal stair tower with lead windows and pyramidal slate roofs.

The rear is comparatively plain, but the centre is occupied by the great stair hall of three bays with weathered buttresses and very tall three-light windows, roofed separately. The entrance hall is 5x3 bays with quadripartite red and white stone vaulting, fine carved capitals of Southwell Minster type carved by Thomas Earp, polished granite columns and Minton floor tiles; it forms an undercroft to the hall and was intended as an Exchange. The reception room has three pierced diaphragm arches, two Tudor arched fireplaces with castellated mantles and heraldic panels, and wall paintings depicting the various machines used in textiles. The Lord Mayor's Parlour has a similar fireplace, chamfered beams carried on corbels representing the sections of an orchestra, William Morris stained glass

depicting the seasons and months of the year, and wall paintings.

The members lounge has a vaulted ceiling carried on granite corner columns. The Small Exchange has the industries of Rochdale represented in the stained glass and ceiling paintings. The vaulted stair hall has one flight which returns in two with clustered columns rising between the flights. The heavy marble handrail rests on a stone arcade, the upper landings are supported on flying ribs and the stained glass represents the towns with which Rochdale traded. The Great Hall has a painted timber roof with angelic hammer beams: Henry Holiday's wall painting of 1870 depicts King John signing the Magna Carta, the stained glass is by Bayne of Heaton But and Bayne and includes two rose windows to the gables. A large organ is housed in three pointed arches. The Council Chamber and Court Room are elaborately decorated with carved timber fittings. Most rooms have original painted wall pattern designs by Best of Rochdale and oak linenfold panelling of varying designs.

The design was selected by competition in 1864 and is an important early departure from High Victorian heaviness.

The Builder 7:4:66, 7:10:71, and 12.2.76. B.o.E.

Church of St Chad, Church Stile

Grade II* Listed Building

List Entry Number: 1045812

Date first listed: 25-Oct-1951

NGR: SD 89666 13145

SD 8913 SE ROCHDALE CHURCH STILE (north-west side) 11/42 Church of Saint 25.10. 1951 Chad

G.V. II*

Church. Tower C13 and later, top stage added in 1870. Nave arcade columns partly C14, arches in south aisle C14, clerestory 1557, chancel and chapel 1883-8, otherwise of various Victorian restorations. South aisle, porch and belfry by W.H. Crossland, chancel and chapels by J.S. Crowther. Rossendale stone, Yorkshire stone and slate and copper roofs. Nave with aisles, clerestory, central west tower and south porch. Chancel with chapels to north and south. Largely in a Decorated style. Castellated 5-bay nave and aisle with square headed 3-light cusped windows and 3- light traceried windows to aisle in mixed style with hood moulds. Weathered buttresses and crocketed pinnacles. South porch has diagonal weathered buttresses, grotesque gargoyles, crocketed pinnacles, statue of St. Chad and arched opening with heavily enriched ogee shaped surround. The 3-stage castellated tower has offset angle buttresses surmounted by carved heads and decorative pinnacles, elaborate bell-stage, gargoyles and crocketed pinnacles. The 6-bay castellated chancel has clerestory and side chapels with square-headed traceried clerestory lights and 3-light, four-centred arches to chapel with Perpendicular tracery. Buttresses and pinnacles as above but with grotesque gargoyles. The chancel roof

is higher than that of the nave, the east window is of 6-lights with Perpendicular tracery. Interior: 6-bay nave arcade with alternating round and octagonal piers with stiff-leaf and upright-leaf and headed capitals, and some with broaches at the springing of the arches. The arches are double chamfered and the roof of an ornate tie-beam construction. The chancel is also of 6 bays with clustered columns. Fittings: plain C14 font, some Perpendicular stalls and chapel screens, C17 twisted-baluster communion rail in south chapel. W. Morris west window 1872-4, A.S. Wild, Top o'th'Steps, 1970 and B.o.E.

Former Post Office, Corner of Packer Street and Fleece Street, 10 Fleece Street, Rochdale, OL16 1LY

Grade II Listed Building

List Entry Number: 1038535

Date first listed: 29-Mar-1982

NGR: SD 89676 13308

This list entry was subject to a Minor Enhancement on 13/11/2019

SD 8913 NE 11/85

ROCHDALE, FLEECE STREET 10, Former Post Office, corner of Packer Street and Fleece Street

(Formerly listed as County Court Building, PACKER STREET (east side))

29.03.82

GV

II Former post office, now public house. Built in two phases; the first, comprising the northern three bays, was completed in 1875, the second phase of two bays was added after 1892 in matching style. It was probably built to a design by James Williams (1824-92), the first surveyor for post offices at the Office of Works, an office he held from 1859 to 1884. He designed very similar post offices in classical and Italianate styles at Newcastle and Stockton-on-Tees, for example.

This post office was superseded when the new post office in the Esplanade opened in 1927. The building in Packer Street later became the County Court offices (c1930s-1998) and is now (2019) a public house.

Ashlar. Five bays to Packer Street and three to Fleece Street; three storeys. Symmetrical main elevation but for door in left-hand bay. Major and minor Doric pilasters to ground floor, coupled on side facade with Doric entablature. Windows have rectangular lights over framed by consoles. First floor windows have dentil cornices and moulded architrave. Second floor has guilloche sill band, moulded architraves and heavy entablatures with Greek key and dentil detail.

Rochdale Museum, The Old Vicarage, Sparrow Hill

Grade II Listed Building

List Entry Number: 1025899

Date first listed: 25-Oct-1951

NGR: SD 89612 13120

This list entry was subject to a Minor
Amendment on 12/11/2019

SD 8913 SE 11/107

ROCHDALE SPARROW HILL Rochdale Museum, The Old
Vicarage. (formerly listed as the Vicarage)

25.10.1951

GV II Vicarage, now museum. c.1724 and c.1820. Brick with stone basement, stone features, C20 tile and stone slate roofs. Double depth with central staircase plan with later additions to left and right. Two storeys with attic and two basement storeys. Five bays with two bay addition to left and gabled single storey addition to right. Windows are eight-pane sashes with flat gauged brick arches, stone sills and keystones. Square bay window to left addition. Six-panel fielded door, overlight and segmental hood with carved shell and cherub, on enriched console brackets. Wood modillion eaves cornice continues round left addition and over central gable. Stone quoins.

Rear facade c.1820, re-used stone mullioned windows and door surround. Projecting stair bay. Good panelling to most rooms. Entrance hall connects with stair by segmental arch with panelled pilasters, keystone and soffit. Original staircase with open string, column-on-vase balusters and deep handrail.

Said to be built for Samuel Dunster D.D. (Faculty applied for 1724) who "adopted the plan of his house in Marlborough Street, London," William Robertson 1889 The social and political history of Rochdale, being a companion volume to 'Old and new Rochdale and its people' and 'Rochdale past and present' Rochdale: the author

Sun Dial to South of Church of St Chad, Church Stile

Grade II Listed Building

List Entry Number: 1084270

Date first listed: 12-Feb-1985

NGR: SD 89651 13104

SD 8913 SE ROCHDALE CHURCH STILE (north-west side) 11/44 Sun dial to south of Church of Saint Chad G.V. II

Sun-dial.1783. Stone. Baluster shaft on circular plinth with nosing. Dial not in place. Formerly located on site of present War Memorial. Included for group value.

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(l) 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 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 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 of the above Act 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.

Similarly, section 72(l) of the above Act 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

Rochdale Core Strategy (2016)

The Rochdale Core Strategy was adopted in October 2016 and contains the following policies of relevance.

P1 Improving Image

We will require high quality design in all new developments, and this will be particularly important in the following areas, which are crucial to the image of the borough:

2. Local gateways to centres, communities and attractions;
4. Town centres; and
5. Prominent sites, regeneration areas and key visitor attractions.

We will ensure new development improves the image of the borough by:

- a. Requiring design which is of a high standard, demonstrating innovation and originality;
- b. Working with developers of major developments to incorporate public art in the design of buildings and spaces or contribute to public art projects as appropriate;
- c. Helping to 'green' the urban environment, for example by securing tree planting on sites and along streets and roads;
- d. Promoting the development and re-use of under-used land and buildings, maximising the potential for heritage assets to provide a sense of place and image.

P2 Protecting and enhancing character, landscape and heritage

1. We will protect and enhance the borough's character, the distinctiveness of its town centres, housing areas and countryside, and the qualities of its landscapes, utilising the considerable potential of these assets in development and regeneration schemes. We will do this by:

- a. Requiring new development to integrate successfully with the key natural features of the borough, e.g. river valleys and the Pennine landscape;
- b. Requiring new development to take opportunities to protect and open up important views of hills and valleys which are part of the borough's unique character;
- c. Restoring the River Roch and other water bodies to their place as key and attractive features of the borough, including opening up waterways where they have been covered, and enhancing their setting, heritage assets and biodiversity potential;
- d. Protecting, enhancing and utilising outstanding cultural landscapes, such as the Cheesden Valley area and around Littleborough and Hollingworth Lake; and
- e. Conserving and enhancing townscape character.

2. We will protect the borough's heritage by:
 - a. Conserving, enhancing and promoting key heritage assets, both statutory and nonstatutory, including consideration of their wider settings. Key heritage assets of the borough include:

- i. Four outstanding conservation areas: Central Rochdale, Middleton and Littleborough town centres and Rock Nook / Summit;
- ii. Other designated assets such as listed buildings, conservation areas, registered parks and scheduled ancient monuments;

b. Conserving, enhancing and utilising other non-statutory heritage assets of local interest, be they buildings, parks, gardens or archaeological sites, including promoting their sensitive restoration;

c. Using heritage assets positively and intelligently to strengthen identity and image and support the visitor economy, particularly in development and regeneration schemes; and

d. Prioritising the conservation of heritage assets at risk from decay, giving special attention to designated heritage assets in this regard.

P3 Improving design of new development

We will require all new developments, including associated landscaping, regardless of location in the borough, to adhere to high standards of design. The following design principles should be adhered to wherever relevant:

- Enhance the borough's identity and sense of place, by respecting context where it is positive and having regard to the scale, density, massing, height, layout, landscape, materials and access of surrounding buildings and areas in general;
- Minimise impact upon the environment, and help adapt to the impacts of climate change, including by

re-using existing buildings and materials (maximising the benefits of existing embodied energy) and utilising sustainable drainage (Policies G1 and G2);

- Design buildings and spaces so that quality and appearance can be maintained over time.

All developments should have regard to the principles outlined in the following documents (or equivalent documents which replace them), which set out in detail the Council's design expectations for new development:

- Urban Design Guides SPDs, September 2007
 - o Urban Design Guide SPD, September 2007.

Design and access statements and design briefs must include demonstration of how these design principles have been taken into account in the design of development proposals.

Oldham and Rochdale Urban Design Guide. Supplementary Planning Document (2007)

The Urban Design Guide was adopted in 2007 and establishes design principles for development of all types.

2 Character

Enhancing identity and sense of place
To transform the quality of the two boroughs, new development must create a positive character, with an identity that relates to the specific characteristic of Oldham and Rochdale.

2a Development must respond positively to its context:

- where the local context is positive, new development should reflect local urban design characteristics.
- where the local context has a weak or negative character, new development must improve the quality of the area. It may do this by introducing new street patterns and building forms to create a distinctive new identity;
- all new development should relate positively to the topography, landscape and other features (such as canals) of the wider area, and respond positively to views towards the site
- all new development should respect and enhance the setting of archaeological features, listed and heritage buildings and spaces, and conservation areas; and
- all new development should contribute to the cultural and historic qualities of the surrounding area/

2b Development must respond positively to its site and contribute to a distinctive sense of place. It should:

- use the topography and orientation of the site to enhance local distinctiveness;
- retain and incorporate existing natural and landscape features of ecological, environmental, amenity or cultural value (e.g. mature trees, planting, streams, ponds, hedgerows, greens, commons);
- retain and enhance archaeological features, listed buildings, historic parks and gardens, and buildings and features of cultural, historic, industrial heritage and/or townscape merit;
- remove unattractive or inappropriate buildings,

elements or features that detract from the quality and/or character of the site and its surroundings;

- incorporate where possible and appropriate new, well designed publicly accessible open spaces, landmark elements, landscape, lighting features and public art;
- ensure that new development will positively improve the appearance and character of the site in its setting, creating a new quality benchmark for further development in the immediate locality. This is particularly important where the existing site and context are of poor visual or environmental quality or are weak and lacking in character.

11 Well designed buildings

11a Character: Development must contribute to a distinctive sense of place. It should:

- be of high quality contemporary design, seen to be of its age and for its specific function. Development should avoid imitation and copying of historical architectural detail except where justified for works to listed buildings or historic landscapes or in conservation areas;
- contribute positively to the prevailing street scene and improve it; and
- interpret and incorporate architectural features, materials and landscape components that are attractive, valued and contribute to the quality of the surrounding area. That is, use the local context to inform detail, materials and landscape.

11e Materials and Detailing: Good quality design – whatever the architectural style – tends to introduce visual richness through the use of:

- good quality materials and the use of texture; and
- 'depth' that gives light and shade.

Materials should be used to support the overall architectural and urban design approach, and should be sensitive to the immediate site context.

Rochdale Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal (2011)

Rochdale Town Centre Conservation Area was designated in 1980 and extended in 2011 to include Duke Street and certain select additional buildings of townscape and historic interest. The character of the conservation area was summarised in the appraisal prepared by Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council and RoCH in 2011.

The appraisal describes individual buildings within the conservation area.

6. ROCHDALE TOWN HALL, SQUARE & ESPLANADE

South of the river, the **Town Hall Square and The Esplanade** (1864-71) was an artistic creation of the highest order with set-piece buildings in an expansive layout planned according to romantic and picturesque principles. Rochdale Town Hall and the clock tower rise sublimely from a very large plaza connected to Manchester Road by a ceremonial way, The Esplanade. The scheme is completed by romantic gardens created

on the valley slopes (registered park grade II). The simplicity and the visionary scale of the scene contrast with the adjacent Old Town.

6.1 Rochdale Town Hall

Rochdale Town Hall is one of the most ambitious Victorian town halls in England. In terms of vision, design and decoration only a handful of other buildings can match it, all in much larger towns or cities. In terms of Gothic design, there is only Manchester Town Hall to compare.

The Town Hall is recognised as the defining building of Rochdale. It stands centre-stage in our creative thinking towards the town centre. The final cost was over £160,000, a vast sum but to which must also be added the costs of creating Town Hall Square, terracing the Roch, The Esplanade and Park Slopes, and the associated costs for erecting Trinity Presbyterian Church and the extensions to St. Chad's Church, including adding a new belfry to the tower. Thus the overall scheme was immensely ambitious and expensive.

Most towns conservatively chose the old classical style for their town halls but in 1864 Rochdale chose Gothic, thereby making a clear statement as to its individuality and aspiration. The Town Hall is crammed with art and design celebrating Rochdale, its people, technology, geography, history and industry. It was placed in a magnificent and picturesque setting - which took more than fifty years to complete.

Rochdale Town Hall is the finest expression of High Victorian aesthetics, a building of rare picturesque beauty. Its quality and richness mirrors the sophistication of the underlying aesthetic theory. The

Town Hall and its setting are given over to romanticism and architectural theatre to inspire feelings of the beautiful, picturesque and sublime. The Picturesque lies in the irregular gothic shapes of the Town Hall, the remodelled Saint Chad's Church and other buildings. It also lies in the asymmetrical layouts, planting and the design of Town Hall Square, The Esplanade and Park Slopes and (originally) in the sound of the swiftly flowing River Roch. The Sublime, the most dramatic of emotional responses, is induced by the Town Hall rising as a single mass from the middle of a flat plaza, the artificially steepened valley sides and St. Chad's Church looming high up above the Square. However, the principal element of the sublime was the soaring verticality. There is no attempt to moderate or tone down the sense of the sublime and it has not been possible to find another example where such a tall tower deliberately overwhelms its square quite to this degree.

The western side is very different. The architecture is broken down into a complicated elevation of buildings, roofs, chimneys and finials that merge into the picturesque landforms to the south. On Park Slopes, Crossland marked the best viewing spot with a line of ornate railings that still exist. The picturesque west elevation draws the visitor to the building along The Esplanade.

6.2 Town Hall Square

Town Hall Square is part of the Crossland master plan. Originally, Town Hall Square was a beautifully urbane and uncluttered space. It joined all four parts of Victorian Rochdale together, the north, via Yorkshire Street, the east, via The Butts, the south, via Church Steps, and the west via The Esplanade – altogether a very symbolic piece of town planning. Commercial

buildings were planned and built on the eastern side of the Square. Crossland and Crowther's enlargement of St Chad's Church enclosed the Square from the south. Crossland also doubled the width of Rochdale Bridge, transforming it into a wide platform so people could sweep down Yorkshire Street over the river and into the Square unhindered by any obstruction. Access from the south was via the ancient Church Steps which gave excellent views across the Square.

6.3 The Esplanade

It was laid out in 1871 and formed a seamless extension of the "wrap-around" Town Hall Square. The Esplanade is the picturesque equivalent of a long symmetrical vista to a classical town hall and square. However, unlike classical design, nothing is perfectly straight, symmetrical or "on axis" and everything appears informal and accidental. For example, from the west, the gently curving Esplanade never quite frames the Town Hall. Over the decades, the junction of The Esplanade with Manchester Road has been the principal gateway to Rochdale Town Hall and centre.

The fast-flowing River Roch was another element to the design that imparted a sense of wild-ness so beloved by the Romantics. The character of the river varied: at the Butts it was wider and slower and had been crossed by a bridge and ford for centuries but adjacent The Esplanade it was narrow and faster running. The land levels adjacent the Roch were raised thereby alluding to the cliff-like edges and foot bridges found in fantasy illustrations of the picturesque. A footbridge and cutting was also created for Bird Cage Walk where it runs through Park Slopes.

6.3.1 Library, Museum & Art Gallery (Touchstone)

The library (now museum and local studies) was designed by Jesse Horsfall in 1883 in a free-Elizabethan style, after the original library in the Town Hall was damaged by the fire that destroyed the clock tower. The council decided to construct a new library on The Esplanade; Touchstones. The Museum and Art gallery were added in 1903 and 1912, again by Horsfall, and an angled extension that addressed Manchester Road was built in 1913.

6.4.1 Park Slopes

The Broadfield Hotel The hotel was built in 1904 as a residence for the District Nurses. It is on the site of the former Rochdale Grammar School.

6.4.2 Statue of John Bright The statue of John Bright by Hamo Thornycroft was moved from the Town Hall Square to this position in Broadfield Park. John Bright was a local mill owner and MP for Birmingham, most famously remembered in Rochdale for his campaigning for the repeal of the Corn Laws.

National Planning Policy Framework

Any proposals for consent relating to heritage assets are subject to the policies of the NPPF (July 2021). 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:

195. 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 197 of the NPPF identifies the following criteria in relation to this:

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 199 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 200 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 201 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 202 of the NPPF states the following:

202. 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.

In terms of non-designated heritage assets, the NPPF states:

203. The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

The Framework requires local planning authorities to look for opportunities for new development within conservation areas and world heritage sites and within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance. Paragraph 206 states that:

... Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably.

Concerning conservation areas and world heritage sites it states, in paragraph 207, 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 200 or less than substantial

harm under paragraph 201, 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.

National Planning Practice Guidance

The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) was published on 23 July 2019 to support the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the planning system. It includes particular guidance on matters relating to protecting the historic environment in the section: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment.

The relevant guidance is as follows:

Paragraph 2: What is meant by the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment?

Conservation is an active process of maintenance and managing change. It requires a flexible and thoughtful approach to get the best out of assets as diverse as listed buildings in every day use and as yet undiscovered, undesignated buried remains of archaeological interest.

In the case of buildings, generally the risks of neglect and decay of heritage assets are best addressed through ensuring that they remain in active use that is consistent with their conservation. Ensuring such heritage assets remain used and valued is likely to require sympathetic changes to be made from time to time. In the case of archaeological sites, many have no active use, and so for those kinds of sites, periodic changes may not be necessary, though on-going management remains important.

Where changes are proposed, the National Planning Policy Framework sets out a clear framework for both plan-making and decision-making in respect of applications for planning permission and listed building consent to ensure that heritage assets are conserved, and where appropriate enhanced, in a manner that is consistent with their significance and thereby achieving sustainable development. Heritage assets are either designated heritage assets or non-designated heritage assets.

Part of the public value of heritage assets is the contribution that they can make to understanding and interpreting our past. So where the complete or partial loss of a heritage asset is justified (noting that the ability to record evidence of our past should not be a factor in deciding whether such loss should be permitted), the aim then is to:

- capture and record the evidence of the asset's significance which is to be lost
- interpret its contribution to the understanding of our past; and
- make that publicly available (National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 199)

Paragraph 6: What is "significance"?

'Significance' in terms of heritage-related planning policy is defined in the Glossary of the National Planning Policy Framework as the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.

The National Planning Policy Framework definition further states that in the planning context heritage interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. This can be interpreted as follows:

- **archaeological interest:** As defined in the Glossary to the National Planning Policy Framework, there will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially holds, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point.
- **architectural and artistic interest:** These are interests in the design and general aesthetics of a place. They can arise from conscious design or fortuitously from the way the heritage asset has evolved. More specifically, architectural interest is an interest in the art or science of the design, construction, craftsmanship and decoration of buildings and structures of all types. Artistic interest is an interest in other human creative skill, like sculpture.
- **historic interest:** An interest in past lives and events (including pre-historic). Heritage assets can illustrate or be associated with them. Heritage assets with historic interest not only provide a material record of our nation's history, but can also provide meaning for communities derived from their collective experience of a place and can symbolise wider values such as faith and cultural identity.

In legislation and designation criteria, the terms 'special architectural or historic interest' of a listed building and the 'national importance' of a scheduled monument are used to describe all or part of what, in planning terms, is referred to as the identified heritage asset's significance.

Paragraph 7: Why is 'significance' important in decision-taking?

Heritage assets may be affected by direct physical change or by change in their setting. Being able to properly assess the nature, extent and importance of the significance of a heritage asset, and the contribution of its setting, is very important to understanding the potential impact and acceptability of development proposals.

Paragraph 13: What is the setting of a heritage asset and how should it be taken into account?

The setting of a heritage asset is defined in the Glossary of the National Planning Policy Framework.

All heritage assets have a setting, irrespective of the form in which they survive and whether they are designated or not. The setting of a heritage asset and the asset's curtilage may not have the same extent.

The extent and importance of setting is often expressed by reference to the visual relationship between the asset and the proposed development and associated visual/physical considerations. Although views of or from an asset will play an important part in the assessment of impacts on setting, the way in which we experience an asset in its setting is also influenced by other environmental factors such as noise, dust, smell and vibration from other land uses in the vicinity, and by our understanding of the historic relationship between places. For example, buildings that are in close proximity but are not visible from each other may have a historic or aesthetic connection that amplifies the experience of the significance of each.

The contribution that setting makes to the significance of the heritage asset does not depend on there being public rights of way or an ability to otherwise access or experience that setting. The contribution may vary over time.

When assessing any application which may affect the setting of a heritage asset, local planning authorities may need to consider the implications of cumulative change. They may also need to consider the fact that developments which materially detract from the asset's significance may also damage its economic viability now, or in the future, thereby threatening its ongoing conservation.

Paragraph 15: What is the optimum viable use for a heritage asset and how is it taken into account in planning decisions?

The vast majority of heritage assets are in private hands. Thus, sustaining heritage assets in the long term often requires an incentive for their active conservation. Putting heritage assets to a viable use is likely to lead to the investment in their maintenance necessary for their long-term conservation.

By their nature, some heritage assets have limited or even no economic end use. A scheduled monument in a rural area may preclude any use of the land other than as a pasture, whereas a listed building may potentially have a variety of alternative uses such as residential, commercial and leisure.

In a small number of cases a heritage asset may be capable of active use in theory but be so important and sensitive to change that alterations to accommodate a viable use would lead to an unacceptable loss of significance.

It is important that any use is viable, not just for the owner, but also for the future conservation of the asset: a series of failed ventures could result in a number of unnecessary harmful changes being made to the asset.

If there is only one viable use, that use is the optimum viable use. If there is a range of alternative economically viable uses, the optimum viable use is the one likely to cause the least harm to the significance of the asset, not just through necessary initial changes, but also as a result of subsequent wear and tear and likely future changes. The optimum viable use may not necessarily be the most economically viable one. Nor need it be the original use. However, if from a conservation point of view there is no real difference between alternative economically viable uses, then the choice of use is a decision for the owner, subject of course to obtaining any necessary consents.

Harmful development may sometimes be justified in the interests of realising the optimum viable use of an asset, notwithstanding the loss of significance caused, and provided the harm is minimised. The policy on addressing substantial and less than substantial harm is set out in paragraphs 199-203 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Paragraph 18: How can the possibility of harm to a heritage asset be assessed?

What matters in assessing whether a proposal might cause harm is the impact on the significance of the heritage asset. As the National Planning Policy Framework makes clear, significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.

Proposed development affecting a heritage asset may have no impact on its significance or may enhance its significance and therefore cause no harm to the heritage asset. Where potential harm to designated heritage assets is identified, it needs to be categorised as either less than substantial harm or substantial harm (which includes total loss) in order to identify which policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraphs 199-203) apply.

Within each category of harm (which category applies should be explicitly identified), the extent of the harm may vary and should be clearly articulated.

Whether a proposal causes substantial harm will be a judgment for the decision-maker, having regard to the circumstances of the case and the policy in the National Planning Policy Framework. In general terms, substantial harm is a high test, so it may not arise in many cases. For example, in determining whether works to a listed building constitute substantial harm, an important consideration would be whether the adverse impact seriously affects a key element of its special architectural or historic interest. It is the degree of harm to the asset's significance rather than the scale of the development that is to be assessed. The harm may arise from works to the asset or from development within its setting.

While the impact of total destruction is obvious, partial destruction is likely to have a considerable impact but, depending on the circumstances, it may still be less than substantial harm or conceivably not harmful at all, for example, when removing later additions to historic buildings where those additions are inappropriate and harm the buildings' significance. Similarly, works that are moderate or minor in scale are likely to cause less than substantial harm or no harm at all. However, even minor works have the potential to cause substantial harm, depending on the nature of their impact on the asset and its setting.

The National Planning Policy Framework confirms that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). It also makes clear that any harm to a designated heritage asset requires clear and convincing justification and sets out certain assets in respect of which harm should be exceptional/wholly exceptional (see National Planning Policy Framework, paragraph 200).

Paragraph 20: What is meant by the term public benefits?

The National Planning Policy Framework requires any harm to designated heritage assets to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

Public benefits may follow from many developments and could be anything that delivers economic, social or environmental objectives as described in the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 8). Public benefits should flow from the proposed development.

They should be of a nature or scale to be of benefit to the public at large and not just be a private benefit. However, benefits do not always have to be visible or accessible to the public in order to be genuine public benefits, for example, works to a listed private dwelling which secure its future as a designated heritage asset could be a public benefit.

Examples of heritage benefits may include:

- sustaining or enhancing the significance of a heritage asset and the contribution of 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

Other Relevant Policy Documents

Historic England: Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning (March 2015)

Historic England: Conservation Principles and Assessment (2008)

Donald Insall Associates