

PROPOSED CHANGE OF USE AT UNITS 30 AND 31 SPOTLAND BRIDGE MILL

METROPOLITAN BOROUGH OF ROCHDALE



HERITAGE ASSESSMENT

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GARRY MILLER HERITAGE CONSULTANCY

Garry Miller is a heritage consultant, architectural historian and published author who has spent more than 40 years studying and working with buildings of town and countryside, in particular those of North West England. His career as a consultant began in the mid-1980s with the Preston-based Nigel Morgan Historic Building Consultancy, of which he became a partner in 1992 upon its rebranding as Datestone. In 1997 he was commissioned by the Heritage Trust for the North West, a buildings preservation trust based at Barrowford, Lancashire, to produce an in-depth regional study of vernacular houses in southwest Lancashire: the result, *Historic Houses in Lancashire: The Douglas Valley, 1300-1770* was published in 2002. The book was described as ‘scholarship as its best’ by *Country Life* (June 2003), and ‘well analysed and presented’ in *Transactions of the Ancient Monuments Society* (Vol 48, 2004); and was widely cited in the 2006 *Buildings of England* volume on Liverpool and Southwest Lancashire. Extensive research on the houses of Georgian and Regency Liverpool has also been undertaken, with a view to future publication. Following the success of his Douglas Valley book, Garry Miller established his own consultancy, producing analytical and interpretive reports on historic buildings, in particular the heritage assessments required to support planning applications affecting the historic environment. His area of operation encompasses the North West, Midlands, North Wales and parts of Cumbria and North and West Yorkshire. Several local authorities have cited his assessments as examples of best practice, and reports on more than 150 buildings or sites are produced annually.

THIS REPORT

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1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report supports proposed works at part of Spotland Bridge Mill, Spotland, in the Metropolitan Borough of Rochdale, Greater Manchester. The property is a large former cotton mill of the early 19th and early 20th century, now converted to separate industrial units, which is listed at Grade II. It also stands within Spotland Bridge Conservation Area.

Proposals have been submitted to Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council for change of use of Unit 30 of the mill to a distillery/gin experience and tasting room, with a storage/light kitchen facility in Unit 31. The heritage issues arising are the impact upon the significance (heritage interest and value) of the listed building, and (in relation to external works only) that of the conservation area. The scope and purpose of this report is to identify this significance and assess how the proposal will affect it.

The mill comprises two principal buildings, the first, to the west, dating from around 1833, the second, to the east, from the early 20th century, existing by 1908. The application unit is located on the ground floor of the northwest corner of the latter.

The Grade II designation of the listed building denotes it is of national importance for its special architectural and historic interest. Its significance essentially derives from this special interest, which is that of a large 19th century cotton mill, extended in the early 20th century, that is symbolic of the development of the Lancashire textile industry during this time, with the two elements reflecting the periods in which they were built. The original 1830s building is a good example of a non-fireproof steam-powered mill of this period, its scale reflecting the need to accommodate larger and improved machinery, while the early 20th century block is of fireproof steel and concrete construction and was powered by mains electricity. This significance is primarily embodied in the external envelope of the listed building, and any internal features where they survive, such as cast iron columns and concrete ceilings within the application units. Its external envelope and streetscene presence is also the basis of its positive contribution to the significance (i.e. its character and appearance) of the conservation area.

The proposal will put the units to an active and sustainable use and the associated works are entirely favourable. Externally, existing window openings will have new aluminium-framed double glazed units installed to match the existing framing pattern. These will be identical to approved replacement windows on the circa 1833 block of the mill. An existing roller-shutter door will be replaced by timber doors with surrounding glazing in timber frames, in matching style to already-approved items at the mill. The external appearance of the unit will therefore be enhanced. Internally, the basic existing layout will be retained, with minor subdivision to accommodate the new functions, with no alteration to original crosswalls and the columns/ceiling structure. The internal works will therefore have no harmful effect and will preserve the significance of the interior.

To conclude, the proposal will have an entirely positive effect upon the listed building, whose external appearance, in which its significance is primarily embodied, will be enhanced. It will have a similarly positive effect upon the conservation area, as the mill's contribution to its character and appearance will also be visually enhanced. The works are therefore entirely in accordance with national guidance and the local development plan, and hence merit approval without delay.

2: THE SITE

The application property is Spotland Bridge Mill, located in the Spotland district of Rochdale, Greater Manchester, around kilometre northwest of the town centre. The property is a large former cotton mill now converted to industrial units, situated at the junction of the A580 Spotland Road with Bridgeford Road. The site consists of two principal buildings, the original mill of the 1830s to the west and an extension of the early 20th century to the east. The proposal units, numbered 30 and 31, are located within the latter.



Map 1. Location of the mill complex



1. Public view of Spotland Bridge Mill from Spotland Road, looking north, with early 20th century block on right



Map 2. Site plan showing the original 1830s west mill (1) and 20th century east mill (2)

3: THE PROPOSAL/SCOPE OF THIS REPORT

3.1 Proposed development

Proposals have been submitted to Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council for change of use of the application units to a distillery/gin experience and tasting room in Unit 30, and storage/light kitchen facility in Unit 31.

3.2 Designation

Spotland Bridge Mill is listed at Grade II, having been first designated in 1996. It also stands within Spotland Bridge Conservation Area.

3.3 Heritage impact

The heritage issues arising are the impact upon the significance (heritage interest and value) of the listed building, and (in relation to external works only) that of the conservation area.

3.4 Scope and purpose of this report

Paragraph 194 of Chapter 16 (*Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment*) the National Planning Policy Framework (as revised, July 2021) states that in determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the particular significance of the affected heritage asset, including the contribution made by their setting. The scope and purpose of this report is therefore to identify the significance of the listed building, and to assess how this will be affected by the proposal. In accordance with paragraph 194, the level of detail is considered proportionate to the importance of the heritage asset, and no more than necessary to understand the impact of the proposal. The report is to be read in conjunction with other documentation submitted in support of the application.

3.5 Report structure

This is as follows:

1. A concise, proportionate description of Spotland Bridge Mill and the application units (Section 4)
2. A summary of its heritage significance (Section 5)
3. A summary of the planning policy context in which the application will be determined (Section 6)
4. Evaluation within this context of the impact of the proposal upon the significance of the listed building (Section 7).

4: THE LISTED BUILDING

4.1 Historical context

Textile production at Spotland Bridge had begun in the early 17th century when five fulling mills were established along the River Spodden. The western element of the present mill dates represents a more intensive era of industrialisation that began in the early 19th century. It was built around 1833 for cotton spinners Joseph Butterworth and Company and originally named *Spotland Bridge New Mill*. This building is of five storeys, and was extended by the 1870s. The mill, which then operated 17,424 spindles, was acquired in 1888 by Charles Whittaker Ltd. The four-storey eastern block represents a further expansion at the height of the Lancashire textile industry, and had been built by 1908 (Map 3, below).



Map 3. The mill, with its then-new eastern block, as depicted by the 25-inch OS map surveyed 1908

4.2 List description

The National Heritage List for England description of the mill, dating from the time of its designation, reads:

Cotton spinning mill, now industrial centre. c1833, early C20 extension. Built for the firm of Joseph Butterworth and Co. Ltd. EXTERIOR: original mill of five storeys and attic, thirteen bays. Red/brown brick, slate roof, gable copings. Square fireproof external stair attached to N end, privy tower and fire escape doors (same size as windows) with cast-iron railed platforms on W side. Blocking course and corner pilasters.

INTERIOR: Two rows of cast-iron columns, with flat bolting faces for line shafting, support massive timber cross-beams and joisted timber floors; roof structure of queen-strut trusses to attic storey lit by roof lights and gable windows. Lower engine house with paired narrow round-arched windows indicating housing for a double-beam engine at S end. Attached to this is the low contemporary boiler house, 2-storey storeroom to rear; tapering octagonal chimney close by. Later additions include a 2-storey office block with 4-pane sash to right of doorway and a sash window with margin lights above, added by the 1870s. 4-storey, 9 x 8 bay added mill to the east: Accrington brick, flat roof, segmental-arched 9-pane..windows. Structure of steel beams with cast iron columns and concrete floors with sprinkler tower. Powered by mains electricity. Access from the Edenfield Road is through a gateway with wide wrought-iron gates; the original cobbled road surface survives, as does the revetment wall of massive stone slabs on the west side. Also on the site, facing the road junction, is the mill owner/manager's house: coursed gritstone, stone surrounds to doors and windows, slate roof, no stacks. Two storeys, Two rooms deep, single-storey attached outbuilding at rear. Central recessed half-glazed door with overlight, flanking full-height canted bay windows. Doorway and tall stair window to left of centre, rear. Low retaining wall to forecourt.

HISTORY: the mill was built for spinning course counts of cotton twist. By 1888 it was powered 17,424 spindles, when the business was taken over by Chas. Whittaker Ltd. Listed as a good example of an early C19 non-fireproof mill, which, with its early C20 addition, shows a typical expansion of the business (Gurr, Duncan, and Hunt: The Cotton Mills of Oldham: Oldham. 1989) development pattern for an early site. The c1833 mill is an example of the increasing width (18m) of buildings as construction methods improved and larger machines became available during the middle years of the century. In this example the width is spanned by- timber beams for a non-fireproof construction which remained usual through the mid C19. The roof structure and roof lights indicate the Use of powered machinery rather than storage on this floor. The double beam engine had 2 cylinders side-by-side working a single flywheel; in this mill one line shaft powered each of 2 rows of spinning throstles on the wide spinning floors, (Williams, 1992). (Williams, M and Farnie, DA: Cotton Mills in Greater Manchester: 1992-: 74,82,83,89)

4.3 The application units

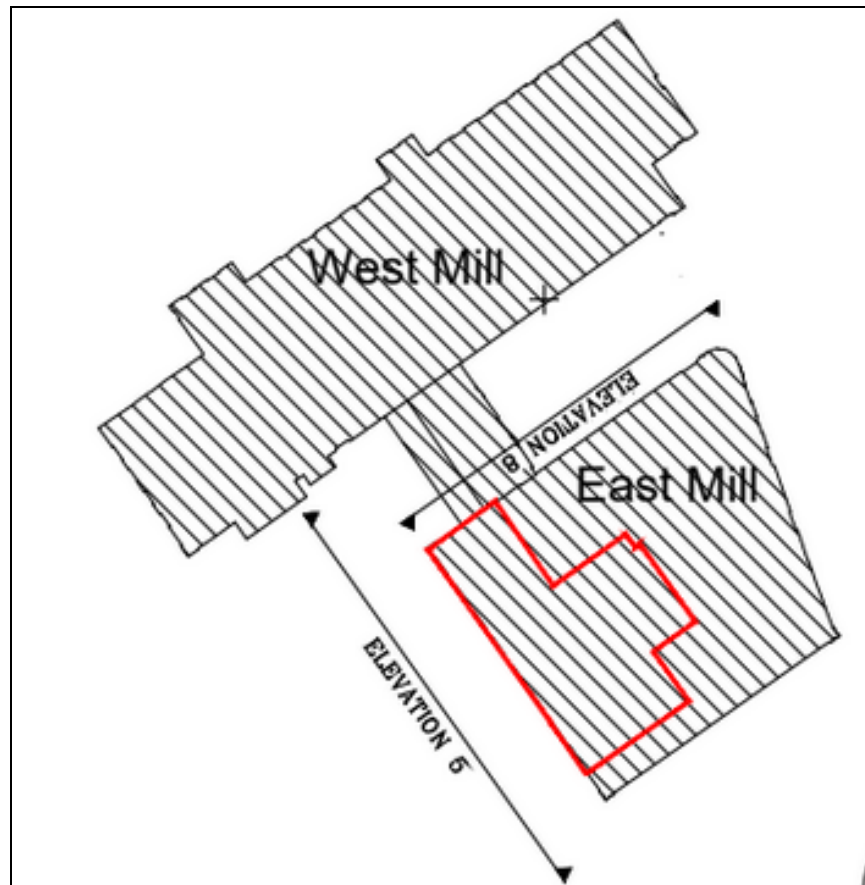
Units 30 and 31 are located on the ground floor of southeast side of the early 20th century east block. Externally, Unit 30 comprises a loading bay on the southwest elevation, with roller-shutter door, and extends along six window bays on the southeastern elevation. Unit 31 occupies the remaining two bays on this side. Internally, Unit 30 is L-shaped, adjoining a shared staircase/lift/lobby area adjoining the loading bay and is the larger of the two spaces. Unit 31 is also L-shaped, wrapping around a separate internal substation in its southeast corner. The chief visible internal features of both units are cast iron columns supporting the steel beams and concrete floor above.



2. Southeast elevation of the mill, with units 30 (first six bays) and 31 (remaining three bays) on the ground floor



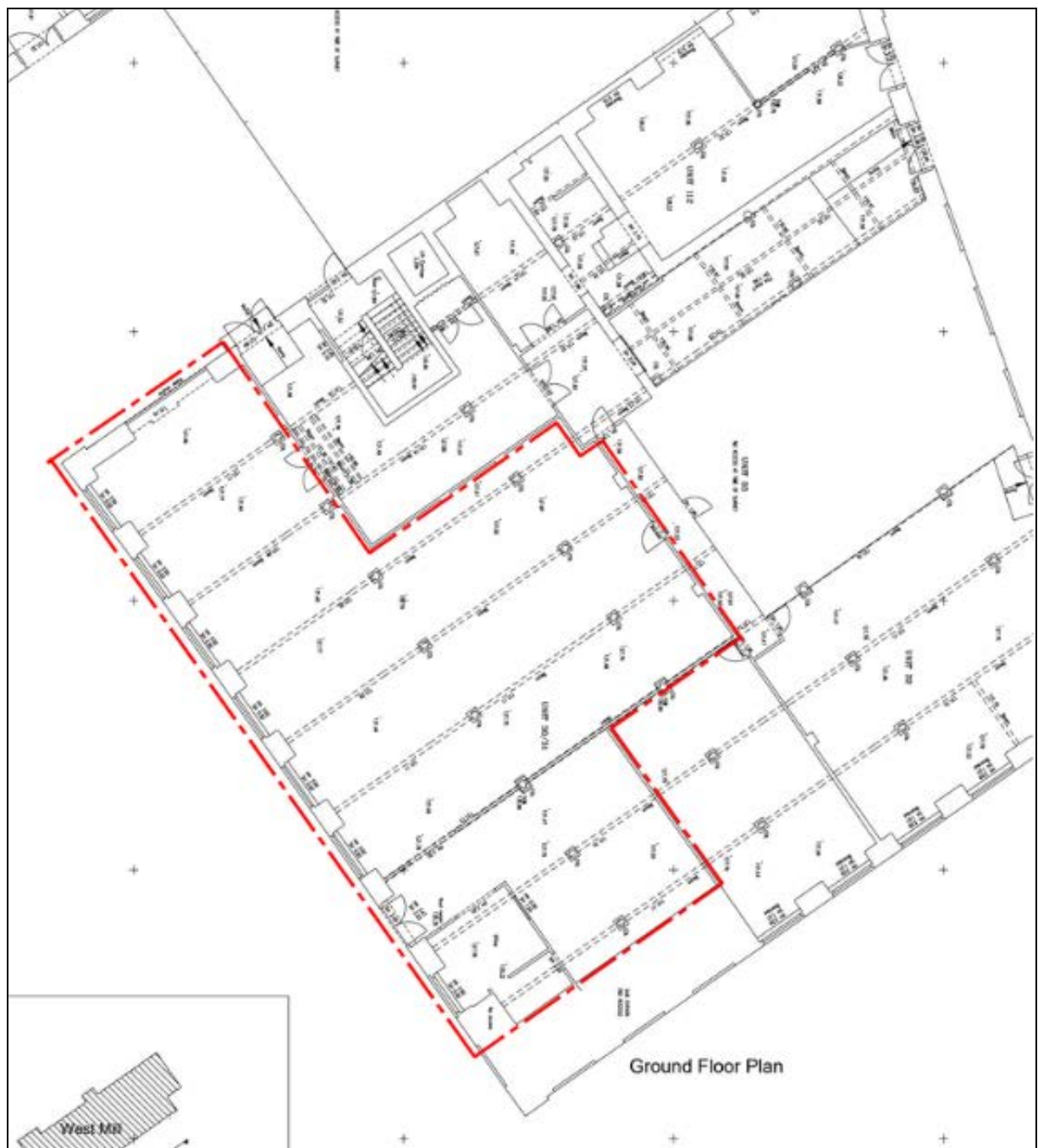
3. Roller-shutter doorway in southwest end of Unit 30



Map 4. Location of the application units within the mill complex



4. Elevations (southwest top, southeast below) showing the location of the units



5. Existing internal layout of the units



6. View through unit 30 showing cast iron columns principal space of the unit, looking northwest



7. Unit 31, looking northeast



8. Looking southeast through same unit, showing columns

5: SIGNIFICANCE OF THE LISTED BUILDING

5.1 Rationale

Paragraph 195 of the National Planning Policy Framework states local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of a heritage asset, including its setting, and take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal in order to avoid or minimize conflict between the asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal. Significance is defined in the NPPF Glossary as:

The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.

5.2 Summary

The Grade II designation of the listed building denotes it is of national importance for its special architectural and historic interest. Its significance essentially derives from this special interest, which is that of a large 19th century cotton mill, extended in the early 20th century, that is symbolic of development of the Lancashire textile industry during this period, with the two elements reflecting the periods in which they were built. The original 1830s building is a good example of a non-fireproof steam-powered mill of this period, its scale demonstrating the need to accommodate larger and improved machinery, while the early 20th century block demonstrates fireproof construction in steel and concrete and powered by mains electricity. This significance is primarily embodied in the external envelope of the listed building, and any internal features where they survive, such as the cast iron columns and concrete ceilings of the application units. Its external envelope and streetscene presence is also the basis of its positive contribution to the significance (i.e. its character and appearance) of the conservation area.

6: PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

6.1 Statutory duty

Section 66 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires local planning authorities to give special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest. Section 72 (1) requires local planning authorities to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character of a conservation area.

6.2 Relevant policies

Chapter 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework provides the guidance on how the statutory duty is to be put into practice. Paragraph 197 states that in determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- *The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation*
- *The positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality, and*
- *The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness*

Regarding designated heritage assets, paragraph 199 states that ‘*great weight*’ should be given to their conservation and the more important the asset, the greater that weight should be.

Locally, Policy P2a (Protecting and Enhancing Character, Landscape and Heritage) of the Rochdale Core Strategy, formally adopted on October 19, 2016, states that key heritage assets, both statutory and non-statutory, will be conserved, enhanced and promoted, including consideration of their wider settings.

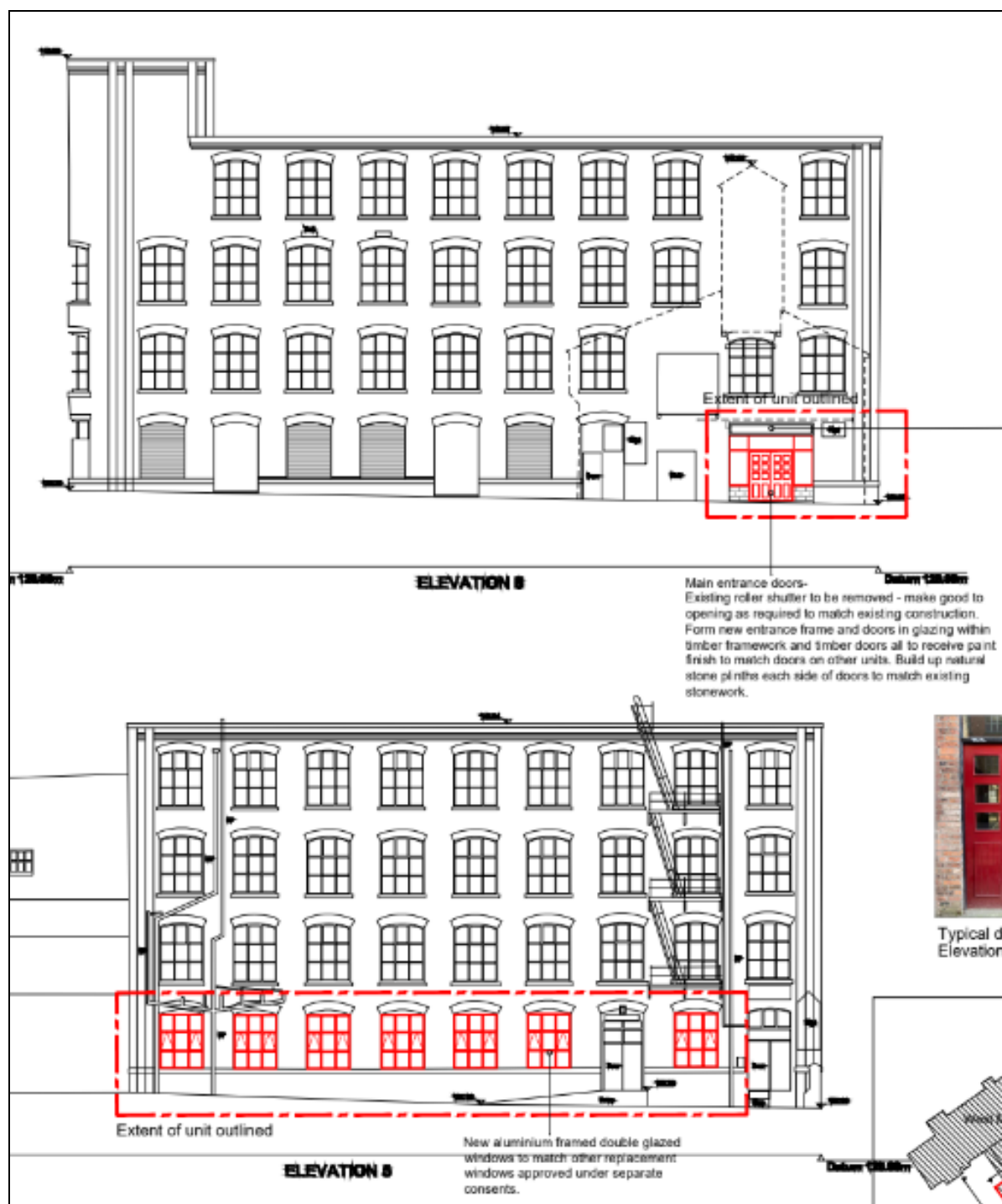
7: IMPACT OF THE PROPOSAL

7.1 Summary of the scheme

To recap, proposals have been submitted to Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council for change of use of the application units to a distillery/gin experience and tasting room in Unit 30 and storage/light kitchen facility in Unit 31.

7.2 Its effect

The proposal will put the units to active, sustainable use and the associated works are entirely favourable. Externally, existing window openings will have new aluminium framed double- glazed units (with obscured glazing in a proposed WC area) installed to match the existing framing pattern. These will be identical to approved replacement windows on the western block of the mill. The existing rollers shutter door will be replaced by new timber doors with surrounding glazing in timber framing, in matching style to approved items at the western mill. The external appearance of the units will therefore be enhanced. Internally, the basic existing layout will be retained, with minor subdivision to accommodate the new functions, with no alteration to the original walls and the columns/ceiling structure. The internal works will therefore have no harmful effect and will preserve the significance of the interior.



9. Proposed external elevations

