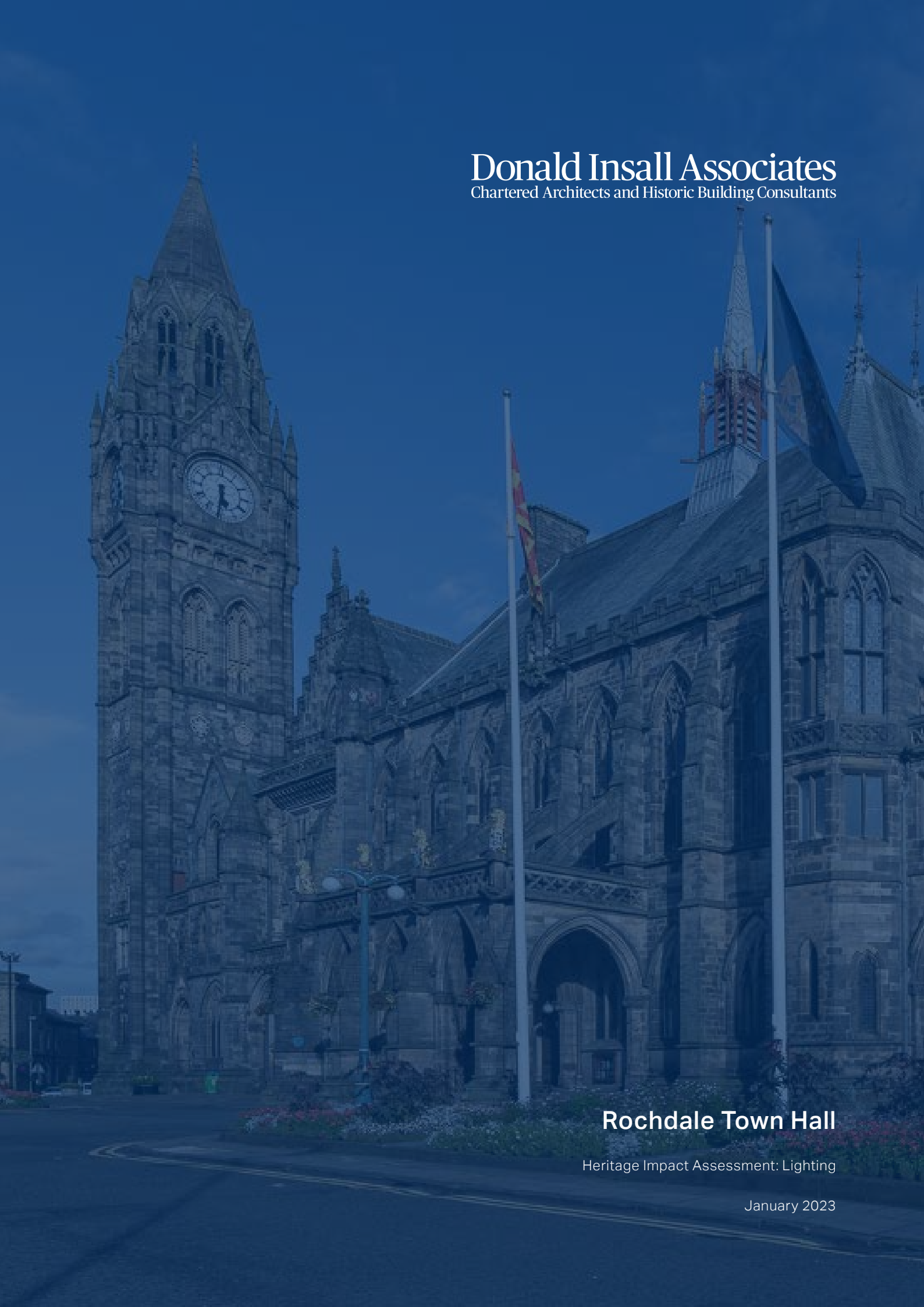




Donald Insall Associates

Chartered Architects and Historic Building Consultants

Rochdale Town Hall

Heritage Impact Assessment: Lighting

January 2023

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1. Introduction

Donald Insall Associates having been working alongside Rochdale Development Agency on the scheme for the major restoration of Rochdale Town Hall (Grade I) since 2019. The proposals include the re-landscaping the town hall public realm to create a better setting for the town hall building and to restore original features wherever possible – these works include the restoration the historic lights at the front of town hall.

2. Background

During the course of works the Contractor was instructed to remove the lighting columns so they could be restored off site. They removed the first column in a careful and safe manner but unfortunately it was damaged in the process. Before removing any further lampposts the contractor engaged with two different specialists for advice on how to remove them. Both specialists said they would refuse to remove the lampposts due to the “brittle nature” of their construction.

Local historic lighting restoration company MetCraft attended site to review the broken lamppost and offer advice on the remaining ones. They said it was not advisable to move them from their current position as they wouldn't be able to offer any guarantees that the lampposts were structurally sound. Reviewing the broken one, and the existing ones, the representative commented on the visible cracks at high level, and the thickness of the cast iron to the lighting arm, which in places is “much thinner than would be expected”. They believed the lampposts were a “cheap modern recreation”, mainly due to the casting thickness and the fact that the two halves to the upper section had been cast separately and stuck together using resin and a grub screw - estimating that they were approx. 50 years old.

The Contractor and MetCraft have undertaken joint visual inspections from the ground and noted several defects. One of the main issues with the remaining columns is the split to the light arm. The arm itself has a thin section of cast iron, which in MetCraft's opinion could fracture at any time. Hairline fractures to the column may also be hidden behind the several layers of paintwork.

The team have also been informed that the lighting columns have been condemned by E.On and they have been disconnected.

It is therefore proposed for the columns to be removed and replaced with new. It is the advice of Rochdale Borough Council that the lighting columns form part of the curtilage of the Grade I listed Town Hall and therefore listed building consent is required for their removal and replacement.

3. Impact

The existing columns are stylistically early-mid 20th century and they are not part of Crossland's original design - nor are they seeking to be **[Plates 1 - 3]**.

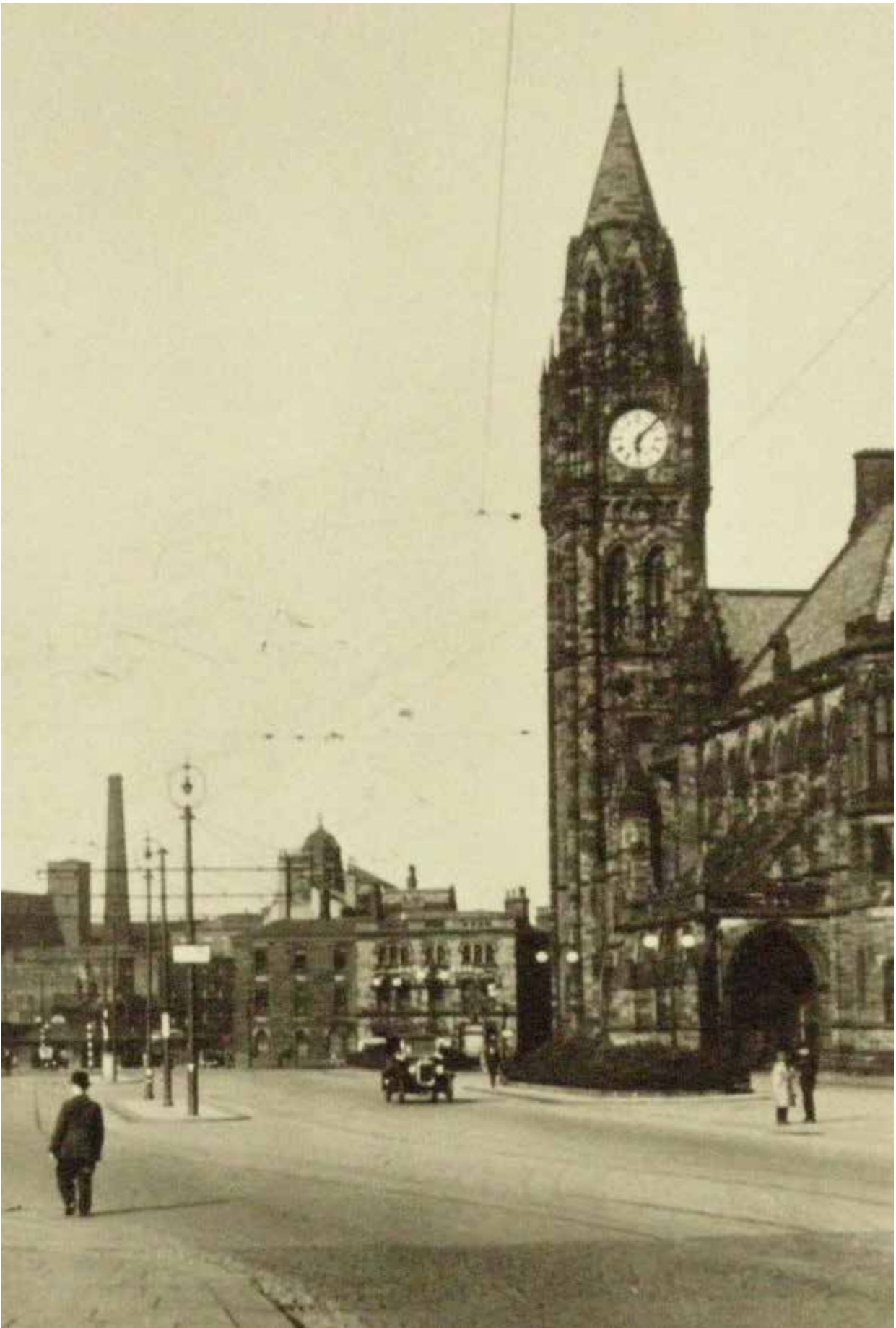


1 Lighting columns to be replaced



R. 1300 Town Hall.

2 Historic lanterns in place at time of tower construction (1880s)



3 Image of Esplanade with lighting columns replaced (approx 1920 - 1932)

As such their replacement would cause no harm to the setting of the Grade I listed building. Furthermore, the proposed design, with a 'goldfish bowl' style lantern, would follow the established character to the Mayoral lights and lights around the Cenotaph with a column reflective of their position closer to the town hall. The columns would also be repositioned on the same line as part of the wider public realm proposals.

The replacement and repositioning of the lighting columns to coordinate with others located in its setting would have a beneficial impact on the Gothic façade of the highest significance. As a consequence, the proposals would be wholly beneficial in heritage terms.

4. Justification

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 is the legislative basis for decision making on applications that relate to the historic environment. Section 16 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*'. The proposed replacement of the early-20th century style lighting columns to coordinate with others located in its setting would have an entirely beneficial impact and therefore the statutory duties are met.

The reinstatement of the lighting columns would conserve the setting of the Grade I listed building in a manner very much consistent with its high significance and therefore the proposals would also meet the tests for sustainable development in the National Planning Policy Framework and the requirements of the Local Plan insofar as they relate to the historic environment.

