Donald Insall Associates
Chartered Architects and Historic Building Consultants

Rochdale Town Hall

Heritage, Design and Access Statement

For Rochdale Development Agency

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1.0 Summary of Heritage, Design and Access Statement

1.1 Introduction

Donald Insall Associates were appointed in November 2024 to continue providing lead consultant and conservation architect services for Rochdale Borough Council (RBC) at Rochdale Town Hall. This report has been drafted to accompany an application for minor alterations for the Men's Washroom at the Basement level.

This assessment has been prepared in accordance with the requirement of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024), paragraph 207, which asks that applicants 'describe the significance of any heritage assets affected' by proposals for change. This assessment takes account of the guidance provided by Historic England in 'Statements of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets. Historic England Advice Note 12' (2019); IEMA, IHBC and CIfA: 'Principles of Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment in the UK' (2021); and Historic England's 'Understanding Place. Historic Area Assessments' (2017).

The investigation is based on the historic analysis provide in the Conservation Management Plan undertaken in 2020 and subsequent Heritage Impact Assessment undertaken during the course of the major NHLF funded works. Site survey findings are in Section 2. The investigation has established the significance of the area of proposed works, which is set out in Section 3 and summarised below.

The specific constraints for this site are outlined below. This report has been drafted to inform the design of the proposals for the Men's Washroom (outlined in detail in Section 4) and Section 5 provides a justification of the scheme according to the relevant legislation, planning policy and guidance.

1.2 The Building, its Legal Status and Policy Context

Rochdale Town Hall is a Grade I listed building located in the Rochdale Town Centre Conservation Area (designated in 1980 and extended in 2011) in the Metropolitan Borough of Rochdale. It is in the setting of a number of nationally significant designated heritage assets. Directly opposite the Town Hall lies the Cenotaph (Grade I) and the old Post Office (Grade II); to the rear, St Chads Church (Grade II*) sits at the top of the hill with Broadfield Park and Slopes (Grade II Registered Park and Garden) extending between. The Rochdale Bridge (Grade II) forms part of the NLHF funded 'Revealing the Roch' scheme. The site also lies within the Historic England designated 'Heritage Action Zone' – a 5 year programme of heritage-led regeneration.

Alterations to a listed building generally require listed building consent. The statutory list description of the building is included in Appendix I of this report; full relevant extracts of relevant law, policy and guidance for change in the historic environment are contained in Appendix II and summarised below.

1.2.1 The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 is the legislative basis for decision-making on applications that relate to the historic environment. Section 66 of the Act impose a statutory duty upon local authorities to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting, or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

1.2.2 The Local Plan

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The development plan applicable to the Site comprises the Core Strategy adopted on 19 October 2016 which sets out the requirements to conserve, enhance and promote key heritage assets.

1.2.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (2024)

The courts have held that following the approach set out in the policies on the historic environment in the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) will effectively result in a decision-maker complying with its statutory duties. The Framework forms a material consideration for the purposes of section 38(6). At the heart of the Framework is *'a presumption in favour of sustainable development'* and there are also specific policies relating to the historic environment.

The Framework requires that proposals for change give 'great weight' to the conservation of heritage assets (paragraph 212), that harm to the significance of heritage assets requires 'clear and convincing justification' (213), and that such harm is outweighed by public benefits. Harm is to be categorised as substantial (214) or less than substantial (215).

1.3 Summary Assessment of Significance

A detailed assessment of significance with guidance on the relative significance of elements of setting, fabric and plan form and the extent to which these elements are sensitive to alteration is included in Section 3 of this report and summarised below.
Rochdale Town Hall is a Grade I listed Victorian town hall designed by William Crossland. It was completed in 1871 and is celebrated for its stunning neo-Gothic design, which combines architectural grandeur with historic and cultural significance. The building is noted for its intricate stonework, clock tower, and grand interiors, including fine woodwork and stained glass. It is celebrated as one of the finest examples of Victorian civic architecture in England, symbolizing the town's prosperity during the Industrial Revolution.
The Basement level Men's Washroom is of high significance within the building. It was created or refurbished in the 1930s retaining original stairs, toilet partitions and terrazzo floor and modern sinks, urinals, lavatories and lighting.

1.4 Summary of Proposals and Justification with Respect to Design, Access and Heritage

- It is proposed to undertake works to the existing Basement level Men's Washroom including:Deep cleaning of all the elements to be retained as per the Schedule of Works and Drawing 2000.
- All existing sanitaryware to be overhauled to full working order.
- Installation of new fittings including toilet roll holders, hand dryers and mirrors.
- Repair works to cracked cubicle panes.
- Failing tiling to be re-adhered and regrouted.
- Filling in of any residual holes associated with removal of FF&E.
- Replacing existing window to lightwell with new to match existing.
- Replacing cracked panes of glass to leaded light with new to match existing.

The proposals have been sensitively designed following a heritage-led process which seeks to preserve the special interest of this part of the Basement level. Indeed reversing previous poor repairs and sensitively upgrading the space to bring it back into meaningful use as part of the overall revitalisation of the Town Hall for public use would present an enhancement. As such, it is considered that the statutory duties within the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 would be met and the scheme would meet the requirements of the Local Plan and National Planning Policy Framework insofar as they relate to the historic environment.

2.0 Site Survey

2.1 The Building Externally

The following site survey is derived from the CMP (2020).

2.1.1 The Exterior

The building's exterior reflects its function through its architectural forms, following a Gothic Revival style. The separate roofs and blocks serve as visual cues to distinguish the different functions within the building. This is a notable feature of the Gothic Revival approach, which often used architectural elements to express the building's purpose and hierarchy. The design uses a hierarchy in the richness of its architecture and decoration to signify the importance of different rooms. The more important spaces are given greater architectural richness and embellishment, while less important areas are simpler.

The layout is loosely symmetrical along the long principal frontage, with a central Hall flanked by lower cross wings. This creates a balanced yet subtly asymmetrical appearance, with the steep roof of the Hall topped with a central flèche emphasizing its centrality.

The design of Rochdale Town Hall draws inspiration from other Gothic Revival town halls, such as Chester, which also showcase similar structural and stylistic elements. **[Plate 2.1]**

2.1

2.1.2 The Interior

The interior of Rochdale Town Hall is renowned for its elaborate pictorial and heraldic decoration, marking it as one of the most significant examples of such decorative work in Victorian town halls. The interior's decoration is of exceptional quality, executed by some of the most prominent firms of the Victorian era. The work includes intricate carving, stained glass, and wall paintings, all of which were highly regarded at the time for their artistry and craftsmanship. Firms including Heaton, Butler and Bayne; J.G. Crace; Clayton and Bell; Campbell and Smith; and Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co. known for their expertise in producing exceptional decorative interiors, particularly in stained glass and wall paintings. Their work contributed to the overall magnificence of the building's interior and set it apart as a key example of Victorian design excellence **[Plate 2.1.2]**.

2.1.2

2.1.3 East Wing

The East Wing was designed by Crossland to house offices, including the Borough Treasurer's office on the ground floor. While the east wing elevations are less ornate than the north frontage, they still retain a considerable level of architectural integrity, remaining largely unaltered over time. This suggests that the east wing, although simpler in design compared to other parts of the building, still plays an important role in preserving the overall architectural character of the town hall. **[Plate 2.1.3.1]**.

The basement originally followed the footprint of the superstructure above and has been used primarily for storage. Over time, it has been altered for various uses such as stores, showers, and lavatories. These modifications reflect the practical nature of the basement's function. **[Plate 2.1.3.2 and 2.1.3.3]**.

The toilets in the basement, created or refurbished in the 1930s, have retained their original stairs, toilet partitions, and terrazzo floors. However, modern additions such as sinks, urinals, lavatories, and lighting have been installed, which are considered of low significance. The entrance to this area was originally a cloakroom, and the toilets themselves are accessible through a vaulted-ceiling corridor with stained glass windows—features that contribute to the high significance of this section. The head of the stairs is located within a vaulted compartment, which is considered to have high significance, due to its architectural design and historical importance. This compartment, with its distinctive vaulted ceiling, is a key feature of the basement, contributing to the overall historic value of the space. The basement's jack-arch ceilings are original and still intact, contributing to the significance of the space. These ceilings are characteristic of Victorian construction, offering both structural support and aesthetic appeal. **[Plate 2.1.3.4 and 2.1.3.5]**.

While much of the basement has been altered for modern use, key features such as the original stairs, vaulted ceiling, terrazzo flooring, and certain historic architectural elements retain a significant place in the building's history and architectural integrity. The east wing elevations, although simpler, also maintain a strong historical presence.

2.1.3.1

2.1.3.2

2.1.3.3

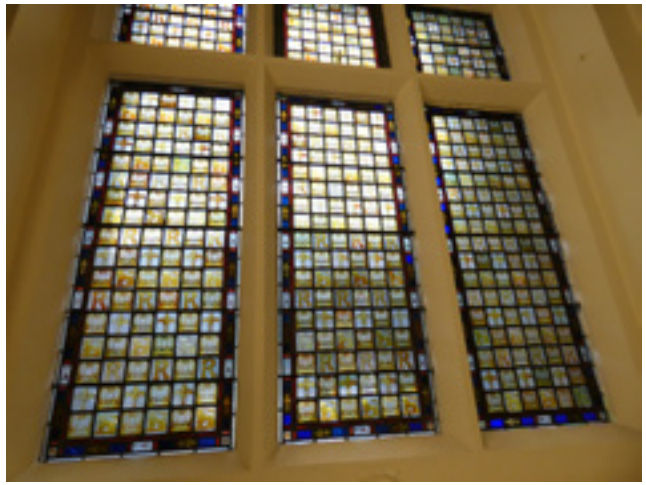
2.1.3.4

2.1.3.5

2.2 The Area of Proposed Works

The Basement level Men's Washroom follows the same design language of the neo-Gothic town hall featuring decorative ceramic tiles, arched openings, vaulted ceiling, glazed timber panelling to the WC cabinets and metal fixings **[Plate 2.2.1-2.2.3]**. As this part of the building is not in use, its current condition is very poor and in need of urgent repair works. There is evidence of plaster falling off of the ceiling, modern fittings that need to be replaced with fittings that match those within the functional Basement level Women's Washroom. Broken window panes and broken glass to the timber partitions are also present. There is also an opening at the wall at the point where some of the pipes pass through which needs urgent attention and evidence of modern lighting and infill materials that detract from the quality of the space. **[Plate 2.2.4-2.2.6]**

2.2.1



2.2.2

2.2.3

2.2.4

2.2.5

2.2.6

3.0 Assessment of Significance

Rochdale Town Hall is a Grade I listed building of exceptional interest, its dramatic Gothic exterior and jewel-like interior are in harmony and together they exemplify not only the apex of High Victorian design and suggest the beginning of the Aesthetic movement, but also represent Rochdale's specific position on trade and politics and the building is a symbol of civic pride and as such is of national significance.

The Town Hall was designed by William Crossland, a prominent Victorian architect, and is of the highest significance in terms of its historic value as one of the finest examples of a Victorian town hall nationally. As well as being an outstanding example of the Gothic Revival, it also includes early examples of Aesthetic Movement design, then a very new movement in art. Internally the surviving rooms with intact schemes are probably unmatched as examples of Victorian polychrome decorated interiors, with one of the most elaborate examples of pictorial and heraldic decoration of this era. The building has been in continuous public use for over 140 years and has a high evidential value founded in several major phases of alteration undertaken to reflect the changing aspirations and priorities of the Council; the layers of paint and other finishes in the decorative scheme hold evidence for the original appearance and composition of paint colours and are part of the building's significance.

The Basement level Men's Washroom is of high significance. It was created or refurbished in the 1930s retaining original stairs, toilet partitions and terrazzo floor and modern sinks, urinals, lavatories and lighting. The entrance is from an area originally a cloakroom and entrances to toilets with vaulted ceiling and stained glass windows. The relative significance of the fabric and features within the space is as follows:

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

- Decorative floor tiles.
- The original metal fittings
- The original timber panelling and partitions including the glazing.
- Vaulted ceiling.

Of **moderate significance** and therefore broadly adaptable are:

- Ceramic dado tiles.
- Arched openings.
- Timber windows into the lightwell.
- The original plan form.

Of **neutral significance**, neither contributing to or detracting from the significance of the whole and therefore highly adaptable are:

- Modern infill.
- Modern light fixtures.
- Modern plumbing.

Factors which detract from the building's significance and should therefore, wherever possible, be removed are:

- Modern plaster works that is falling out.
- Broken window panes and glass.
- Moderns pipes that have caused breaks into the masonry.
- Damp at the floor level.Modern fittings.

4.0 Client Brief and Design Development

4.1 Overview

It is proposed to undertake works of repair to the internal fabric at the Basement level Men's Washroom as follows:

- Deep cleaning of all the elements to be retained as per the Schedule of Works and Drawing 2000.
- All existing sanitaryware to be overhauled to full working order.
- Installation of new fittings including toilet roll holders, hand dryers and mirrors.
- Repair works to cracked cubicle panes.
- Failing tiling to be re-adhered and regrouted.
- Filling in of any residual holes associated with removal of FF&E.
- Replacing existing window to light well with new to match existing.
- Replacing cracked panes of glass to leaded light with new to match existing.

The proposed works have been informed by a detailed schedule of repairs and seek to secure the long-term conservation of the historic fabric, centred on the repair and reworking of the fittings, tiles, historic partitions and glazing.

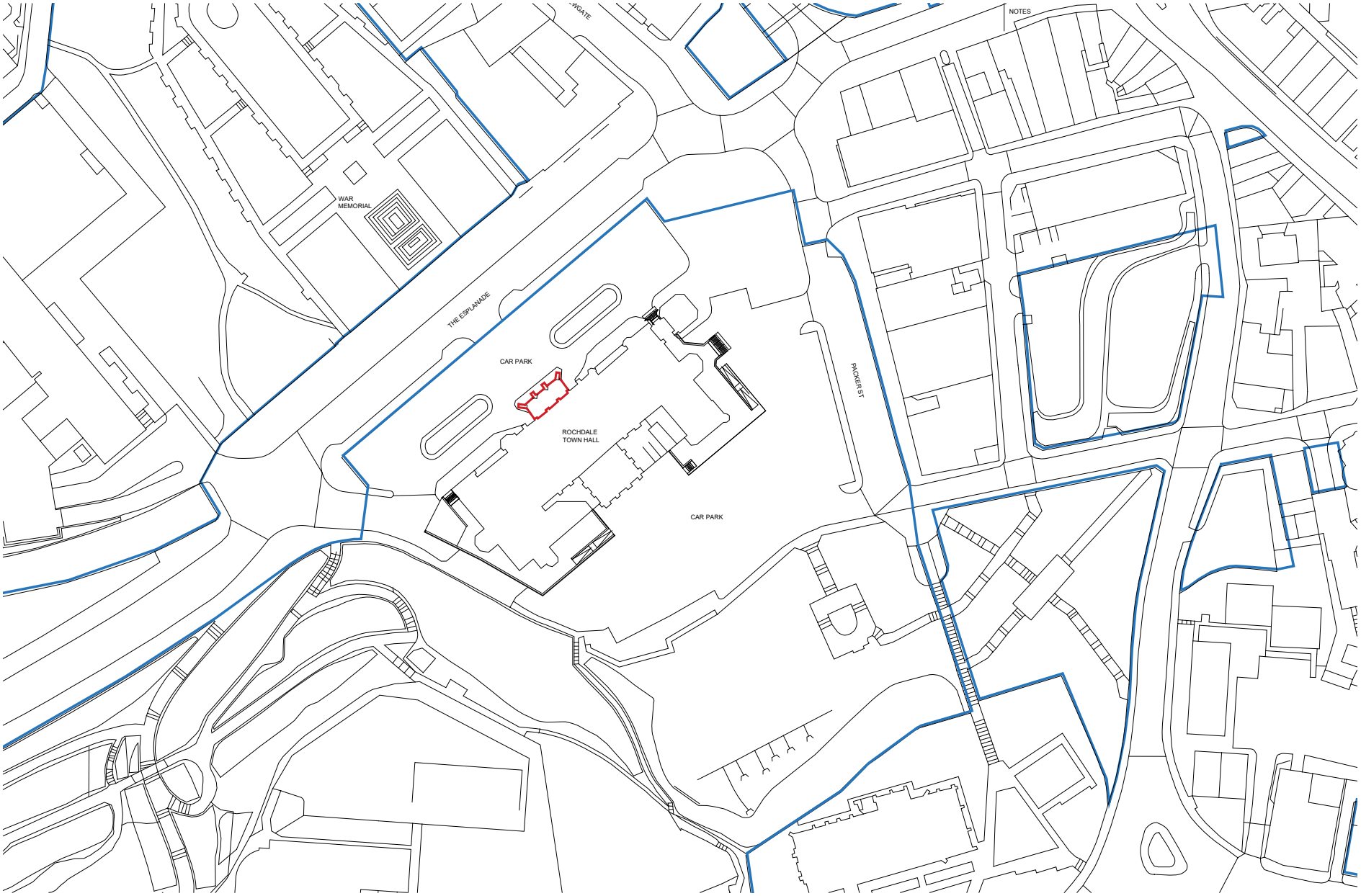
4.2 Design Development and Description of the Proposals

The works to repair the internal masonry include rubbing down and redecorating previous painted walls and the ceiling, including allowance to re-grout and re-adhere failing tiling to match existing where existing tiles cannot be salvaged. Damp and damaged plaster is to be removed and replastered with appropriate mix of lime. The proposal includes the construction of studwork to window alcoves to provide a surface for MEP pipework to run across. The internal timber partitions are also included in the proposal to be deep cleaned and the cracked panes to cubicles to be replaced. Sample panes of glass for all works are to be provided for approval before undertaking repairs.

The existing windows to the lightwells are also included in the scope of works. New ironmongery to match historic is proposed, including the replacement of cracked panes of glass to leaded light to the basement lightwell window. There is also a proposal to replace one of the existing windows to the lightwells with new to match the historic architectural language.

The proposal include the repair and replacement of all washroom fixings including tap head, mirrors, urinals, wash basins etc. In the case where the fittings are in poor condition, they are to be replaced with new to match existing.

[Plate 4.2.1-4.2.4].



Site Boundary

Client Ownership Boundary

Notes

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Rev	Date	Dwn	Auth	Revision
0	25-03-25	ELE	RZM	LBC Issue

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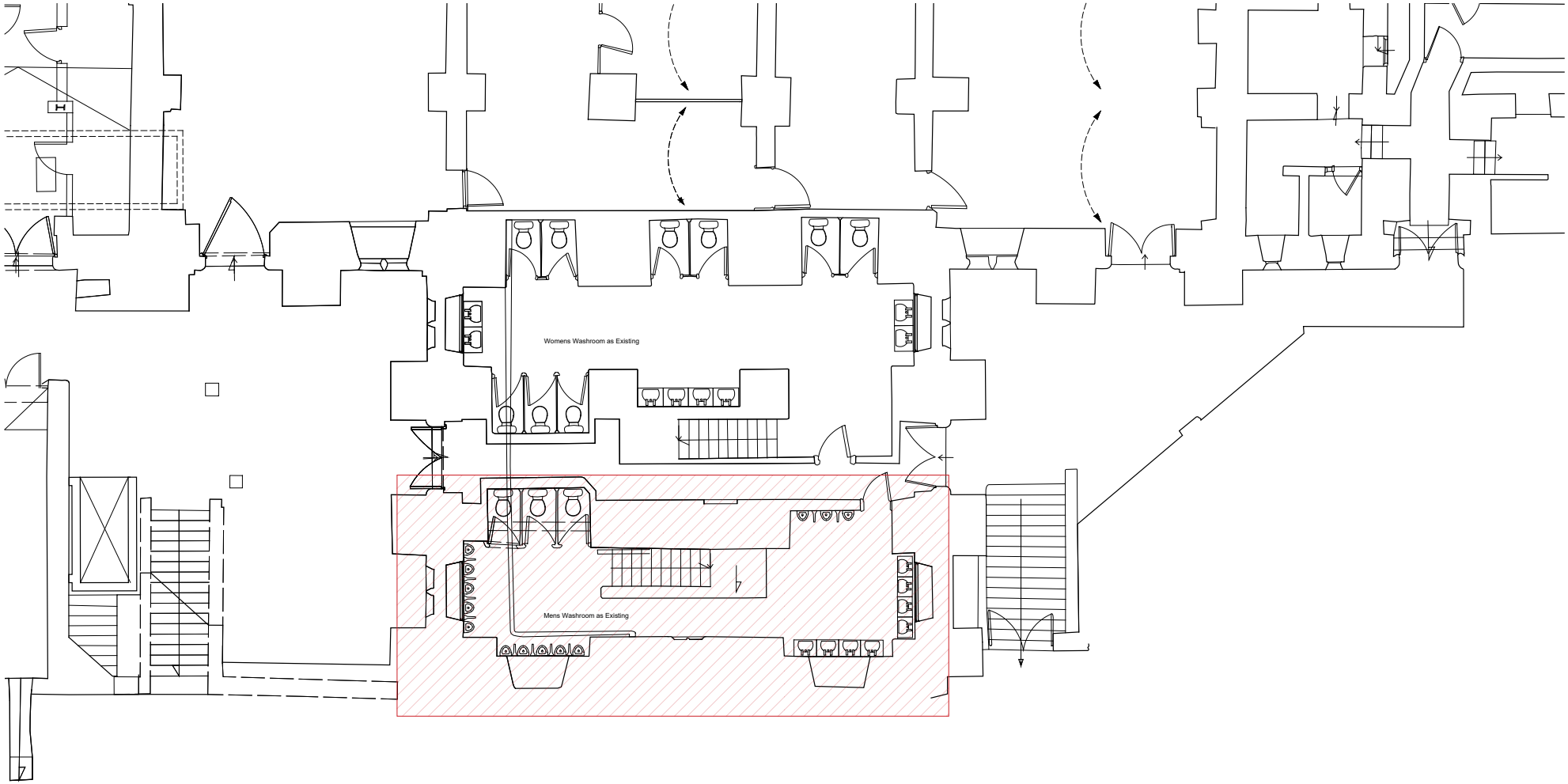
Rochdale Town Hall

Site Plan

Project	No
RTH.09	1010

Scale (A1)	Status	Revision
1:500	3P	0



Basement Floor Plan as Existing
1:50 @ A1

Notes

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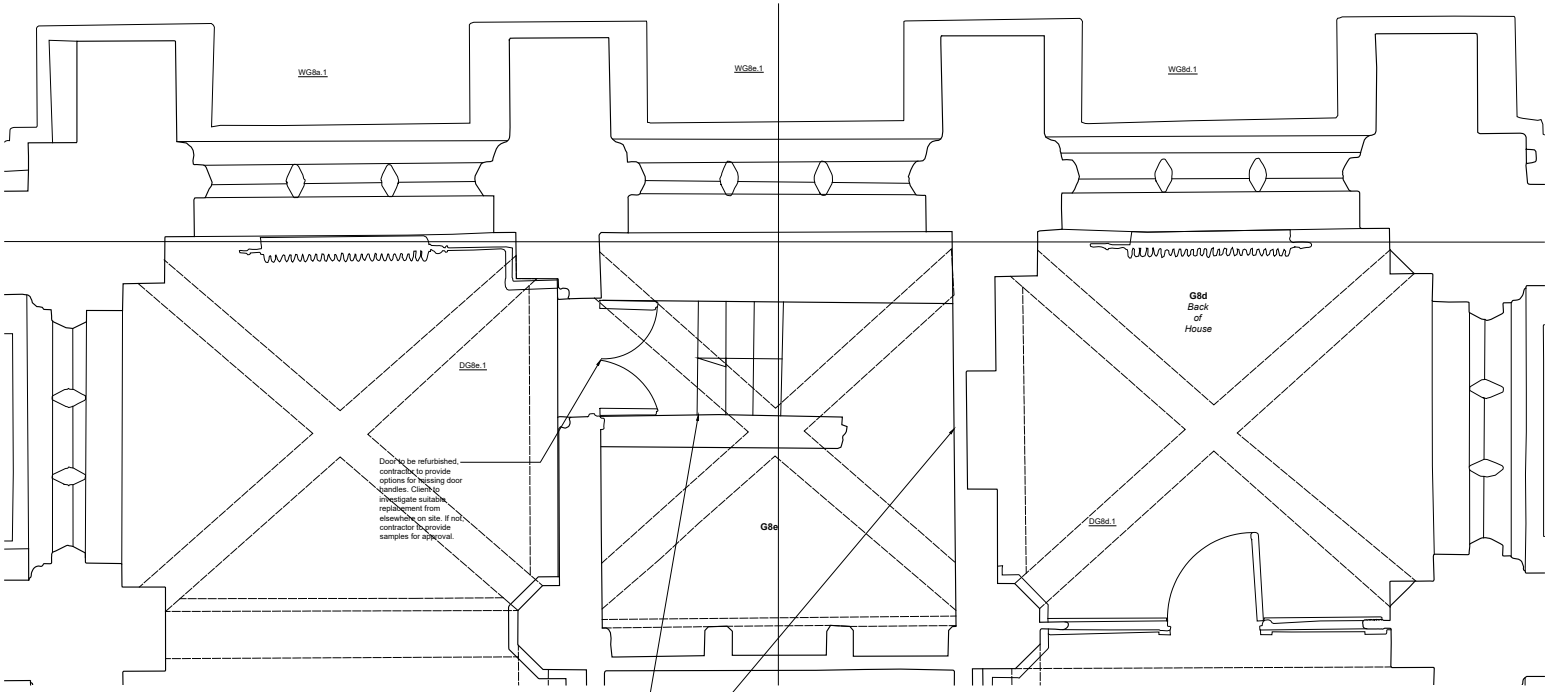
Rochdale Town Hall

Male WC
Basement as Existing

Project	No
RTH.09	1000
Scale (A1)	Status / Revision
1:20	3P / 0



Plan - at Ground Level
1:20 @ A1

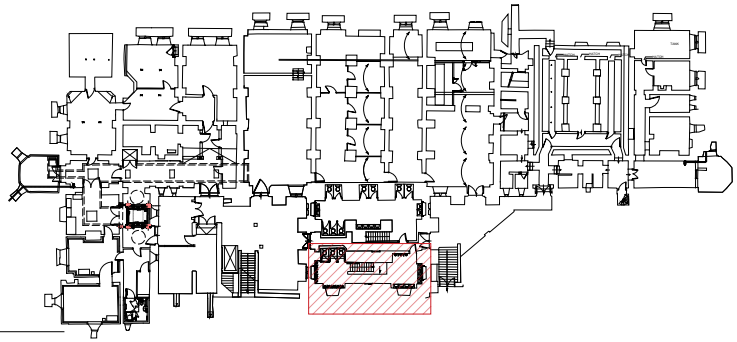
Allow to repaint metal balustrade to match existing.

Re-paint and re-decorate walls. Colour TBC.

NOTES

To be read in conjunction with:

- RTH09-HeritageDesignandAccessStatement
- RTH09-SH-6000-4T-ScheduleOfWorksExistingMaleBasementToilets



Key Plan
1:nts @ A1

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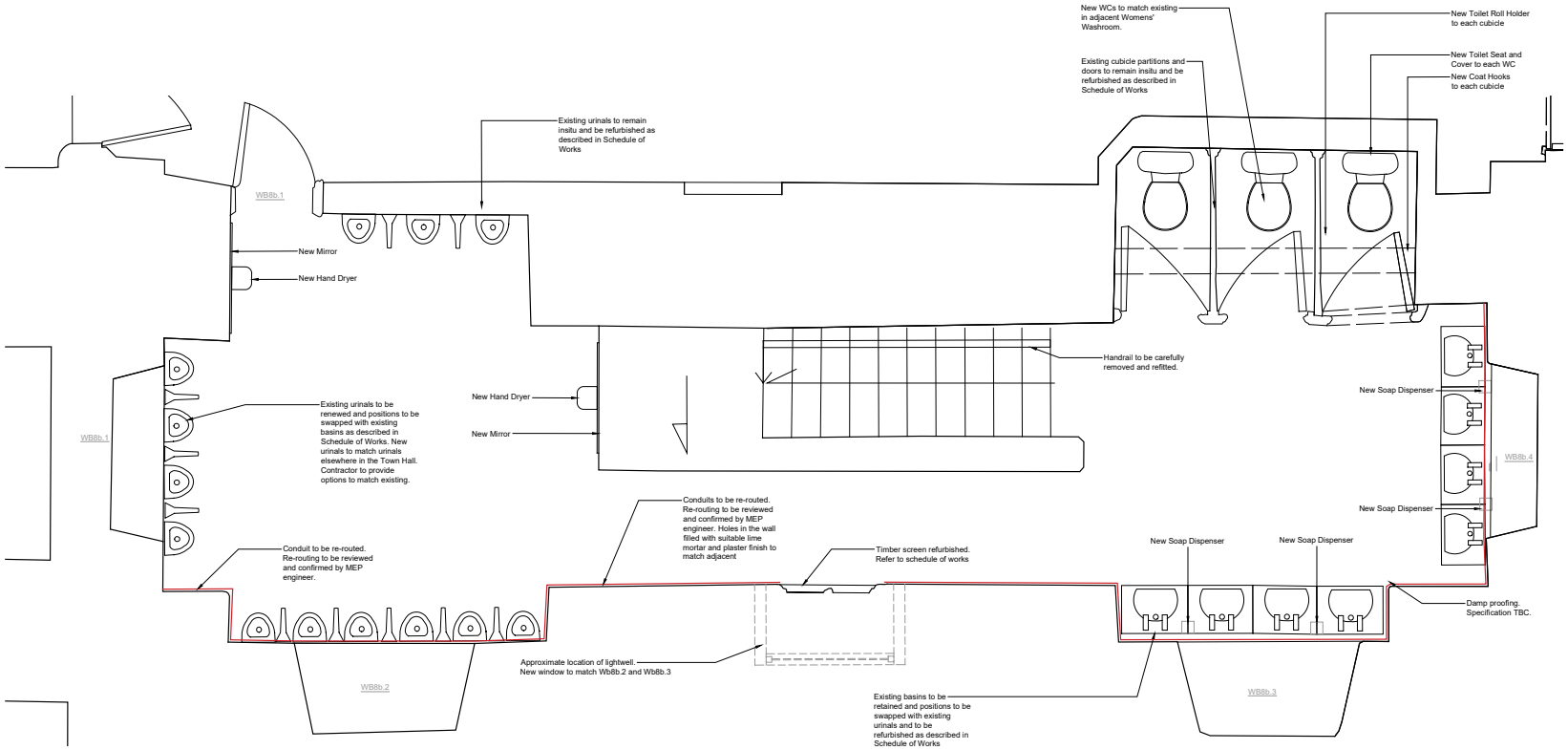
Rochdale Town Hall

Male WC
Basement Lobby

Project	No	
RTH.09	2001	
Scale (A1)	Status	Revision
1:20	3P	0

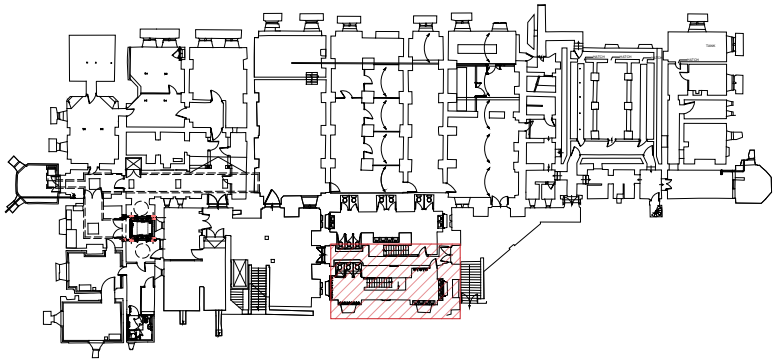


Plan - at Basement Level
1:20 @ A1

NOTES

To be read in conjunction with:

- RTH09-HeritageDesignandAccessStatement
- RTH09-SH-6000-4T-ScheduleOfWorksExistingMaleBasementToilets



Key Plan
1:nts @ A1

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Rochdale Town Hall

Male WC
Basement

Project	No
RTH.09	2000

Scale (A1)	Status	Revision
1:20	3P	0

5.0 Policy Commentary on the Proposals

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 a statutory duty upon local planning authorities to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses, and to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area. The proposals have been sensitively designed following a heritage-led process which seeks to preserve the special interest of this part of the Basement level. Indeed reversing previous poor repairs and sensitively upgrading the space to bring it back into meaningful use as part of the overall revitalisation of the Town Hall for public use would present an enhancement. As such, it is considered that the statutory duties within the Act would be met.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2024) has crystallised previous policy approaches to the historic environment. At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development and it sets out that heritage assets would be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance (Paragraph 208, NPPF). The understanding of significance contained within this report and the detailed schedule of repairs undertaken have underpinned the development of the proposals to ensure no harm is caused to the significance of the listed building. Ultimately, the proposed works are necessary to bring the space back into a meaningful use which would ensure its maintenance and upkeep in the long term. As such they would meet the tests for sustainable development insofar as they relate to the historic environment, meeting the requirements of the NPPF alongside the requirements of the Local Plan (UDP).

Appendix I - Statutory List Description

ROCHDALE TOWN HALL

Grade: I

Date of most recent amendment: 12th February 1985

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.

Listing NGR: SD8958413253

Appendix II - Planning Law, 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. Section 16 of the Act impose a statutory duty upon local planning authorities as follows: [...] 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

Local Policy
Rochdale Core Strategy

The Core Strategy for the Rochdale Borough Local Plan was adopted on 19 October 2016 and sets out the strategies for the borough through to 2028. The following policy relates to the borough's heritage:

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;

        iii. The heritage of the Co-operative movement, the Rochdale Pioneers and the Labour movement;

        iv. The Edgar Wood and J. H. Sellers cultural heritage;

        v. The heritage of the seventeenth and eighteenth century vernacular tradition; and

        vi. The engineering heritage, including mills, canals and railways.

    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.

National Planning Policy Framework (2024)

Any proposals for consent relating to heritage assets are subject to the policies of the NPPF (December 2024). This sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. With regard to 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment', the framework requires proposals relating to heritage assets to be justified and an explanation of their effect on the heritage asset's significance provided.

Paragraph 7 of the Framework states that the purpose of the planning system is to 'contribute to the achievement of sustainable development' and that, at a very high level, 'the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'.

At paragraph 8, the document expands on this as follows:

Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives:

a) an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;
b) a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and
c) an environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

and notes at paragraph 10:

10. So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 11).

With regard to the significance of a heritage asset, the framework contains the following policies:

208. Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

In determining applications local planning authorities are required to take account of significance, viability, sustainability and local character and distinctiveness. Paragraph 210 of the NPPF identifies the following criteria in relation to this:

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

With regard to potential 'harm' to the significance designated heritage asset, in paragraph 212 the framework states the following:

... great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

Paragraph 211 relates to proposals to remove or alter a historic plaque, statue, memorial or monument:

211. In considering any applications to remove or alter a historic statue, plaque, memorial or monument (whether listed or not), local planning authorities should have regard to the importance of their retention in situ and, where appropriate, of explaining their historic and social context rather than removal.

The Framework goes on to state at paragraph 213 that:

Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of:

grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional;
assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, registered battlefields, grade I and II listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional.*

Where a proposed development will lead to 'substantial harm' to or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset paragraph 214 of the NPPF states that:

...local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:

the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and
no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and
conservation by grant-funding or some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and
the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.

With regard to 'less than substantial harm' to the significance of a designated heritage asset, paragraph 215 of the NPPF states the following;

Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

Other Relevant Policy Documents

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

Historic England: Conservation Principles and Assessment (2008)

National planning Policy Guidance (2024)

Donald Insall Associates