

History:

New Mills Marsden is a former cotton & woollen mill constructed around 1897 for the firm J E Crowther and Sons

Context:

The New Mills site on Brougham Road is identified as a character zone in the Marsden Conservation Area Appraisal. Its heritage significance arises from its tangible links to Marsden's industrial past. Its large scale and tight density buildings, situated in close proximity to former workers housing, the village centre and a collection of public/civic buildings resonant of a time when people lived and worked cheek by jowl. The site itself, an evocative reminder of its industrial legacy and strong links between the founding Crowther family, the growth of the textile industry and evolution of Marsden as a prosperous industrial village during the 19th century, a legacy which continued until the early 21st century.

The mill complex is clearly visible in a series of long-range views from several vantage points as you enter the valley. The larger storey east and west mill buildings and their respective towers are dominant landmark features and key focal points on the skyline of Marsden itself. Scale and massing are key character features of this site, as is the attractive architectural contribution made to the streetscape from the frontage of the West Mill (former mill wages office). It is considered that the two larger 4-6 storey mill buildings and their accompanying stair towers make a strong and valuable contribution to the local distinctiveness of Marsden and in particular the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Views & Vistas- There are a number of key views/vistas offering framed and focused views to and from within the site. Of particular interest, are those views captured through the split tunnel gantries leading the eye out towards the open landscape valley beyond providing a tangible and legible juxtaposition between the former industrial site in the heart of the town centre and nestled into its wider rural valley setting. It is considered that these views add interest and context, they are deemed significant and should be safeguarded as part of any future scheme.

As the heritage statement outlines,

New Mills is dominant in Marsden due to its scale and its location at the foot of the valley. The taller blocks, the imposing storeys, distinguished architectural features on some of the building facades and the expressed stair towers, are noteworthy. This level of detail provides a positive contribution to the conservation area, and its character is typical of 19th century mill architecture.

New Mills is one of the last remaining mills in Marsden with other mills such as Clough Lea Mills having previously been demolished. This strengthens its significance within the conservation area.

By virtue of its central location, its scale and visual dominance both in the streetscene and on the skyline, the mill complex makes a strong and positive contribution to the character and appearance of Marsden Conservation Area.

In considering the significance and contribution made by each building on the site, the Heritage Statement concludes

“In addition to the towers, there are two buildings on the site which are more decorative in terms of their architectural and artistic detailing. The small Engine House located to the north of the site running adjacent to the north south multistorey block, and the southern elevation of the afore mentioned multistorey mill. Both these buildings have an unusual amount of decorative detailing including arched windows with stone voussoirs and projecting key stones in addition to a large arched opening in the north elevation, and decorative carved cornice details. In general, these contribute a high level of significance to the non-designated heritage asset and a moderate to high level of significance to the Marsden Conservation Area.”

Assessment of proposals

General matters

Some of the documents/drawings contained within the submitted application pack (i.e. indicative elevations for East and West Mill, West Mill Phase 1 Gable Replacement & the Construction Phasing Plan) refer to elements of the scheme to be determined under future reserved matters application(s) - clarification is sought in this regard as this is not an outline application and so the relevant documents and drawings should be amended/updated accordingly and information requested for clarity to avoid any ambiguity about the scope of the permission being sought.

East Mill

A scheme to ensure that the east mill is made wind and weathertight is fully supported.

Can the temporary boarding to the windows house some imagery/marketing material to visually activate and engage the public rather than just a standard plain boarding? This could form part of a future marketing strategy under the phasing and will add interest to the site during demolition and construction phases.

Given the level of demolition and heritage loss proposed on the site, there is some concern from KC Conservation and Design regarding the phasing of the development and ensuring that this aspect of the scheme is brought forward and delivered in a timely manner. KC Conservation and Design would be keen to see adequate safeguards put in place by way of carefully worded conditions and/or legal agreement to ensure all reasonable steps are taken to ensure that the development is implemented as tabled.

West Mill

As described, the decorative southern block refers to the former wages/office block facing onto Brougham Road. It's clear that this building makes a strong and positive contribution to the architectural significance of the former industrial complex and therefore clear and convincing justification is required for its loss.

Conservation has been engaged in pre-application discussions with the applicant team for several months and particularly in relation to this aspect of the scheme. Various iterations of the scheme have been worked up and weighed against the overarching viability of the scheme, along with other potential constraints on the site such as highways.

The loss of the wages office would result in less than substantial harm (acknowledging that a significant part of the site would be lost). On this basis clear and convincing justification is required for this loss and the public benefits arising from the scheme should sufficiently outweigh the identified harm. The associated viability information will be independently assessed and KC Conservation and Design will comment further on this aspect once this response is made available to officers.

The indicative elevations for West Mill indicate shop frontages/glazing to the ground floor. Given that this is not a reserved matters application full details of the proposed glazing is required or to be controlled via condition.

KC Conservation and Design is supportive of the proposal to consolidate the southern gable of west mill adopting a largely contemporary glazed approach which is considered an honest and appropriate approach in this context. Again, the success of this will largely be down to the finer detailing and materiality all of which should be controlled via the imposition of suitably worded conditions.

Whilst the proposal to make the west mill wind and weathertight is supported, it would appear to make more sense to tackle the full repair/conversion of the West Mill at the same time if the ground floor is intended to be brought into use for retail during an earlier phase of the scheme. The mills are not nationally listed and so the internal refurbishment works are not a concern for KC Conservation and Design, however, external changes have the potential to impact upon the character and appearance of the conservation area and so the parameters and extent of these alterations should be agreed at this stage with final details of external alterations/finishes such as M & E, external materials and detailing to be controlled via the imposition of separate conditions.

Split Gantries

Conservation would welcome the retention or reinstatement/reinterpretation of the existing split gantries which are considered to make a strong and positive contribution in their existing form. The current gantries frame glimpsed views of the landscape beyond rising up out of the valley. In recognition of the fact that the condition of the current

gantries may possibly be beyond repair, inspiration could perhaps be taken from other mill re-development schemes such as Neptune Mills, Piccadilly South, Manchester where gantries have been successfully integrated/incorporated in a contemporary manner.



Neptune Mills, Piccadilly South, Manchester

Gateway Plaza

The NPPF requires that where demolition is proposed which would impact a heritage asset, local planning authorities should not permit the loss of the whole or part of a heritage asset without taking all reasonable steps to ensure the new development will proceed after the loss has occurred. The proposed demolition of the southern section of the West Mill is regrettable but may potentially be justified and so in order to fully satisfy the requirements of national heritage policy under NPPF paragraph 217 every effort should be made to ensure that a suitable replacement building or space of either architectural/landscape merit is secured. Whilst KC Conservation and Design understands the rationale for the retention of some of the façade of the former wages office, having liaised with the council's highways department it would appear that in reality very little of this structure could in fact be retained for highway safety reasons and thus its overall architectural/historic legibility would be lost, diluting the design intent. As such, it is considered that this is not the most appropriate solution/design for this space and KC Conservation and Design would welcome further dialogue with the applicant team and landscape architects to discuss alternative options.

From a conservation and design perspective, it is considered necessary to reinforce the strong and uniform building line along Brougham Road, as is the urban grain and legibility of space between Derby Terrace and the West Mill. In this instance, it is considered that some form of structure or boundary treatment along Brougham Road is critical.

Phasing:

It's recognised that a site as complex as this requires a phased approach to de-risk and open-up the site ready for re-development and this principle is broadly supported by KC Conservation and Design. However, there is some concern from a heritage perspective that leaving some aspects of the mills' redevelopment to future separate planning applications is a potential risk to overall deliverability and where demolition and loss of heritage assets are being considered and weighed in the planning balance as one under the current application, in line with paragraph 217 of the NPPF it is important that the council (as LPA) does all it can to ensure that the development proceeds as outlined. As such, KC Conservation and Design would welcome further discussions in this regard and the imposition of suitably worded conditions/legal agreement securing the assemblage of all aspects of the development proposals within a reasonable timeframe (TBA with client team). It is understood that some demolition and opening-up of the site is required to kick start the development and a substantial amount of demolition to the lesser significant buildings on the site is readily accepted and indeed welcomed by KC Conservation and Design. Concern remains regarding the future security and deliverability of the east mill in particular and so some agreement with the applicant in relation to the delivery of this building within a reasonable timeframe should be considered and agreed.

Landscaping:

KC Conservation and Design welcomes the retention of the old mill pond wall.

The proposed landscaping scheme should consist of a balance between predominantly hard landscaping reflecting the former industrial nature of the site and the opportunity to introduce some planting elements throughout the scheme. The use of carefully sited tree planting is supported.

Full details of hard and soft landscaping materials and finishes including walling and paving should be controlled via imposition of conditions.

The proposed riverside walk and connecting bridge (indicated for delivery in future phases) are welcome additions fully supported by KC Conservation and Design and would make a positive enhancement to the scheme and the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Given the extent of change/demolition proposed it would be considered appropriate to provide some heritage interpretation within the site outlining the history of the site, its industrial evolution and significance and its gradual decline before securing a new future.

KC Conservation and Design is supportive of the softworks strategy and in particular the focus on naturalistic planting given the de-culverting of the river and creation of a riverside walk in the future. and will create a subtle and softer side to the otherwise industrial character of the site. This approach is also beneficial from a biodiversity perspective.

General Conditions:

Block B

1. Prior to commencement of works to Building B full details of new timber windows and doors (including RAL number) required shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA. The details shall include an elevation at 1:20 and a section 1:5 of each style of window and door.
2. Full details of aluminium warehouse doors (including RAL number) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA.
3. Notwithstanding submitted information, full details of the proposed rainwater goods including materials and colour finish shall be submitted to and approved in writing. UPVC rainwater goods will not be permitted.
4. Prior to commencement of works to Building B full details of the proposed heritage rooflights shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA.
5. Full details including a sample of any new/reclaimed roof slates required to patch up the existing roof shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA.

Building C

1. Prior to commencement of works to Building C full details of the standing seam cladding (including RAL number) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA.
2. Prior to the commencement of works to Building C full details of the proposed aluminium windows and doors (including RAL number) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA. The details shall include an elevation at 1:20 and a section 1:5 of each style of window/door.

West Mill

1. Prior to commencement of works to refurbish the West Mill, full details of windows, doors and shopfronts including proposed materials, joinery details of frame, glazing bars and glazing details and colour finish(es) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA.
2. Full details of glazed projecting bays to be submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA.
3. Structural assessment (East and West Mills) outlining extent of dismantling and rebuilding of tower and methodology for repair/reinstatement.
4. Materials – Standing seam cladding sample (West Mill gable) to be submitted to and approved by LPA.

5. Full details of all external materials to be used for repairs including mortar, stone or stone slate, rainwater goods and temporary boarding to windows shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA.
6. A scheme for the repair/retention or replacement of split gantries shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA.

East Mill

1. Full details of all external materials to be used for repairs including mortar, stone or stone slate, rainwater goods and temporary boarding to windows shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA.
2. Prior to commencement of works to refurbish East Mill, full details of window, door and shopfronts including proposed materials, joinery details of frame, glazing bars and glazing details and colour finish(es) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA.

Landscaping Conditions:

1. Concerns regarding appearance of fencing on top of wall to rear of Peel Street and former mill pond. This boundary treatment should be sympathetic both in material and style. Full details of any railing or fencing shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA.
2. New walling stone for steps/boundary walls to match existing, a sample shall be provided and approved in writing by the LPA.
3. Full details of hard and soft landscaping materials and finishes shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA.
4. Notwithstanding the current information, full details of a proposed heritage interpretation scheme to be located within the site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA.

Suggested Phasing conditions/S106- Required to ensure the deliverability of the scheme within a reasonable timeframe

1. Development shall not commence on the construction of Building C until works to ensure the East and West Mills are fully weathertight and secure are completed in line with the Phase 1 works.
2. Building C shall not be occupied until Buildings A and B are converted and made ready for occupation.
3. Building C shall not be occupied until the public realm to replace the wages office is completed in accordance with the approved scheme/scheme to be submitted.
4. Section 106 to include structural works to ensure buildings are capable of conversion
5. Insist on wording in the Section 106 which requires regular inspection, monitoring and remedial works in the event that upper floors of West Mill or the scheme for the East Mill does not come forward within a reasonable timeframe (to be specified/agreed).

Recommendations

1. KC Conservation and Design requests to see the independent viability assessment to complete the process of the applicant team providing clear and convincing justification for the level of demolition proposed in line with heritage policy.
2. Further discussion required with landscape architects re potential re-design of the Gateway Plaza.
3. Discussion with agent required regarding conditions / securing reasonable timeframes / expectations for delivery of later phases

Overall, KC Conservation and Design remains supportive of the scheme in principle and considers the evolution of the proposals to have come a long way since the first iteration which saw significantly more heritage loss/harm to the character and appearance of the conservation area. This is subject to the LPA obtaining the required justification for demolition and in line with the above recommendations whilst also seeking to secure the delivery of future phases as best as reasonably possible.