



# **BRITANNIA MILL, MOSSLEY, GREATER MANCHESTER**

## **Heritage Assessment**



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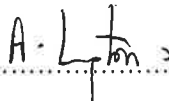
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**CONTENTS**

**SUMMARY .....2**

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....3**

**1. INTRODUCTION .....4**

1.1 Circumstances of the Project .....4

1.2 Location .....4

**2. METHODOLOGY .....5**

2.1 Objectives .....5

2.2 Planning Background and Legislative Framework.....5

2.3 Designated Sites.....6

2.4 Assessing the Setting of Heritage Assets.....6

2.5 Defining Significance .....9

2.6 Significance of Individual Features .....10

**3. BACKGROUND .....12**

3.1 Development of the Textile Industry in Mossley .....12

3.2 Development of Britannia Mill.....12

**4. SUMMARY DESCRIPTIONS .....16**

4.1 Introduction.....16

4.2 Description.....16

**5. ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE.....24**

5.1 Introduction.....24

5.2 Priority 1 Elements .....24

5.3 Priority 2 Elements .....24

5.4 Priority 3 Structures.....24

5.5 Priority 4 Structures.....25

5.6 Negative Elements .....25

**6. HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT .....27**

6.1 Introduction.....27

6.2 Proposed Development.....27

**BIBLIOGRAPHY .....29**

Primary Sources .....29

Secondary Sources .....29

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## SUMMARY

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In September 2015, Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) was commissioned by Nexus Planning Ltd to undertake an heritage assessment of Britannia Mill, which lies within the industrial town of Mossley, Greater Manchester (centred on NGR 39737 40216). The heritage assessment was required to inform and support a planning application to demolish the remaining structures of the mill as part of a regeneration of the site. Government policy set out in *the National Planning Policy Framework* requires that proposed changes to the historic environment are based on a clear understanding of significance of any heritage assets and their setting that are affected.

This report provides an assessment of the existing building within its historic context, and an understanding of the surrounding area based on historical research and a rapid archaeological survey of the mill. This has enabled the principal features of interest to be identified, together with an assessment of the potential impact of the proposed development.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) would like to thank Thomas Relph of Nexus Planning Ltd for commissioning and supporting the project.

The archaeological assessment of the building was carried out by Chris Wild, and the desk-based assessment was undertaken by Andy Phelps. The report was compiled by Chris Wild, and Ian Miller was responsible for project management.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PROJECT

1.1.1 In September 2015, Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) was commissioned by Nexus Planning Ltd to undertake a heritage assessment of Britannia Mill, Mossley, Greater Manchester. The heritage assessment was required to support a planning application for the demolition of the remaining mill buildings, as part of a redevelopment of the site.

1.1.2 This report provides an assessment of the existing building within its historic context, and an understanding of the surrounding area based on historical research and a rapid archaeological survey of the mill. This has enabled the principal features of interest to be identified, together with an assessment of the potential impact of the proposed development.

### 1.2 LOCATION

1.2.1 Britannia Mill (centred on NGR 39737 40216) lies within the town of Mossley, on the Pennine fringes of the Manchester conurbation. It comprises a three-storey spinning block, on the eastern side of Manchester Road, which forms the main route through the town, set on a terrace within the steeply-sloping valley above the River Tame. The mill also lies opposite the railway station on the main line from Manchester to the industrial towns of West Yorkshire to the east.



*Plate 1: Recent aerial view looking east across Britannia Mill*

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## 2. METHODOLOGY

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### 2.1 OBJECTIVES

- 2.1.1 The main objective of the heritage appraisal was to allow an informed decision to be taken with regard to the current proposals for the repair and conversion of the building for residential purposes. This was achieved by carrying out a rapid visual inspection survey of the building, which was carried out in September 2015.
- 2.1.2 The visual inspection survey was intended to provide the minimum of information needed to identify the building's age, type, broad chronological development, and, crucially, relative significance; it was not intended to provide a detailed archaeological survey of the building. It is anticipated that any development work carried out will be accompanied by an appropriate programme of further archaeological investigation.

### 2.2 PLANNING BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

- 2.2.1 **National Policy Framework:** national planning policies on the conservation of the historic environment are set out in National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which was published by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) in March 2012. Sites of archaeological or cultural heritage significance that are valued components of the historic environment and merit consideration in planning decisions are grouped as 'heritage assets'; 'heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource', the conservation of which can bring 'wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits...' (DCLG 2012, *Section 12.126*). The policy framework states that the 'significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting' should be understood in order to assess the potential impact (DCLG 2012, *Section 12.128*).
- 2.2.2 In accordance with paragraph 128 of the NPPF, Tameside Council planning authority requires planning applicants to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected by planning proposals and evaluate the impact on them, identifying appropriate design and other mitigation measures to ensure that they are not adversely affected. This heritage assessment is intended to fulfil this requirement.
- 2.2.3 In addition to NPPF, heritage assets and their settings are protected under the 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act. The impact of development on the setting of a listed building is a material consideration that local planning authorities have a duty to consider. Section 66(1) states: 'In considering whether to grant planning 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'.

2.2.4 The NPPF also states that ‘proposals that preserve those elements of setting that make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of the asset should be treated favourably’ (paragraph 137). A key principle within the NPPF is that any harm to heritage assets should be weighed against the public benefits (paragraphs 133 and 134).

### 2.3 DESIGNATED SITES

2.3.1 Britannia Mill does not have any statutory designation, but does lie within close proximity of two listed buildings, both afforded statutory designation as Grade II listed building status (Table 1).

EH ID No	Description	Grade	NGR
212588	Former Mossley Town Hall. Originally constructed as a town house for George Mayall in 1862, now disused	II	397280, 402049
212589	War memorial, c1920, in front of former town hall	II	397300, 402050

Table 1: Summary of Listed Buildings within close proximity of the study area

### 2.4 ASSESSING THE SETTING OF HERITAGE ASSETS

2.4.1 The definition of setting used here is taken from the NPPF (2012): ‘setting is surroundings in which an asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surrounding evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral’. Furthermore, the English Heritage document *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance* (2008) states that setting also relates to the asset’s local context, embracing present and past relationships to the adjacent landscape. More recently, English Heritage (2011) considers that the significance of a heritage asset derives not only from its physical presence and historic fabric, but also from its setting – the surrounding within which it is experienced.

2.4.2 English Heritage in their guidance document, *The Setting of Heritage Assets* (2011), has provided a stepped approach to the assessment of significance of setting to heritage assets. Following the initial identification of the heritage asset(s) and associated setting the following steps comprise:

- assessing whether, how and to what degree the settings make a contribution to the significance of the heritage assets;
- assessing the effect of the proposed development on the setting, and the resulting implications for the significance of the heritage asset(s);
- maximising enhancement and minimising harm (mitigation).

2.4.3 In assessing whether, how and to what degree the settings make a contribution to the significance of the heritage assets, several potential attributes of a setting may help in determining its significance (Table 2). Having assessed the



contribution of the setting to the significance of the heritage asset, the effect of any proposed development on the setting can be determined by consideration of the potential attributes of the development affecting setting. This will enable a decision to be formulated as to whether any harm to the setting of a heritage asset is outweighed by the benefits afforded by development.

- 2.4.4 If the significance of a place is to be retained and its historic value sympathetically managed, further change will inevitably be needed. Development need not devalue the significance of the place, both its tangible values, such as historic fabric, or its associational values, such as its place within the landscape, provided the work is done with understanding.
- 2.4.5 English Heritage's *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance* (2008) also states that new work or alteration to a significant place should normally be acceptable if:
- there is sufficient information comprehensively to understand the impacts of the proposal on the significance of the place;
  - the proposal would not materially harm the values of the place, which, where appropriate, would be reinforced or further revealed;
  - the proposals aspire to a quality of design and execution which may be valued now and in the future.

<b>Physical Surroundings of the Heritage Asset</b>
<p>Topography;</p> <p>Other heritage assets (archaeological remains, buildings, structures, landscapes, areas or archaeological remains);</p> <p>Definition, scale and ‘grain’ of surrounding streetscape, landscape and spaces;</p> <p>Historic materials and surfaces;</p> <p>Land use;</p> <p>Openness, enclosure and boundaries; functional relationships and communications;</p> <p>Green spaces, trees and vegetation;</p> <p>History and degree of change over time;</p> <p>Integrity;</p> <p>Issues, such as soil chemistry and hydrology</p>
<b>Experience of the Heritage Asset</b>
<p>Surrounding landscape and town character;</p> <p>Views from, towards, through and across, including the asset;</p> <p>Visual dominance, prominence or role as focal point;</p> <p>Intentional intervisibility with other historic and natural features;</p> <p>Noise, vibration and other pollutants and nuisances;</p> <p>Tranquillity, remoteness, ‘wildness’;</p> <p>Sense of enclosure, seclusion, intimacy or privacy;</p> <p>Dynamism and activity;</p> <p>Accessibility, permeability and patterns of movement;</p> <p>Degree of interpretation or promotion to the public;</p> <p>The rarity of comparable survivals of setting</p>
<b>Associative Attributes</b>
<p>Associative relationships between heritage assets;</p> <p>Cultural associations;</p> <p>Celebrated artistic representations;</p> <p>Traditions</p>

*Table 2: Potential Attributes of the Setting*

## 2.5 DEFINING SIGNIFICANCE

2.5.1 When applied to an historic building, the term ‘significance’ can be taken to have several definitions. The first is importance, suggesting that there is something about the site that is valuable, has status and should not be ignored. A site may be important because it is a rare survival, perhaps the only one in the world, or the earliest known example of its type. It may represent a benchmark in terms of the application of technological development, or be a typical example of such sites. The level to which a site has remained intact is also an important factor in determining its value. The next is the idea of conveying meaning, implying that the site is a source of knowledge. Finally, there is the concept of a sign, that the building is symbolic, and acts as a pointer to something beyond itself. The significance of any site is to a large extent embodied in its surviving fabric, which can incorporate evidence for how the site was built, how it worked, and how it was adapted to new technology over time.

2.5.2 It is necessary to define what it is that gives significance to a building and therefore warrants protection. Britannia Mill encompasses layers of archaeological and historical development, which include several different functional components. These may be valued for different reasons by different people, all of which should be taken into account in determining the overall significance of a place. In their *Conservation Principles Policies and Guidance*, English Heritage have identified four areas of heritage values, which will be considered in determining the overall significance of the component sites within the study area (English Heritage 2008):

- **Evidential:** this derives from the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity. This includes physical remains as the primary source of evidence and the people and cultures that made them. Significantly, where there is a lack of written records the importance of the material record increases;
- **Historical:** this originates from the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present. This may include illustrative value, such as its connection to an important development, such as technology, or associative value, such as the connection to an important event or person;
- **Aesthetic:** this is derived from the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place or building. These may be related to the design of a place for example through defensive reasons, or the informal development over time, such as the relationship of structures to their setting;
- **Communal:** this derives from the meaning of a place for the people who relate to it, this includes commemorative, symbolic, social and spiritual value. For example, some places may be important for reminding us of uncomfortable events in national history.

## 2.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF INDIVIDUAL FEATURES

2.6.1 Whilst no detailed guidelines for the retention of historic fabric have been produced by either English Heritage or the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA), standard English Heritage site attributes are appropriate for the present study. In particular, the criteria listed in the *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage 1991, 28) may be of relevance. These include:

- Survival/condition;
- Period;
- Rarity;
- Fragility/vulnerability;
- Documentation;
- Group value;
- Potential.

2.6.2 Whilst these were intended for use to identify archaeological sites of importance, the criteria may also be usefully applied within an individual site. Their usage in this document is italicised for clarity and, in order to avoid confusion, a numerical system has been adopted, with Priority 1 being of the highest value, and Priority 5 the lowest, although this is not intended as a crude marking system; just because a feature is not in the highest category does not mean that it is dispensable. Some buildings may have two values, as individual items and as components of a group. The categories may be defined as follows:

- ***Outstanding (Priority 1)***: buildings or other surviving fabric of national or international importance. The earliest and most intact elements of the site, including rare or unique features. It is envisaged that removal or compromise of such features would have a substantial negative effect on the historical character of the area, and would reduce the site's potential as a future archaeological resource. The removal of such features should not be considered as an option in any future development scheme;
- ***Great significance (Priority 2)***: intact buildings or fabric of regional or national significance. Early but damaged parts of the site, which would usually have a high *Group* value and probably *Rarity* and *Period* value. The removal of such features should not be considered as an option in any future development scheme;
- ***Some significance (Priority 3)***: intact buildings or fabric of county or borough significance. May include fabric that now forms an integral part of an early building, or early but severely damaged parts of the site. These features may be significant to the development of an individual site or the local area, but are not of high *Rarity* value. Adequate archaeological recording of such features is likely to be required prior to any removal, and further recording may be necessary during or after removal;

- ***Lesser significance (Priority 4):*** buildings or fabric of local interest. Badly damaged remains of features that would have been of greater significance had they survived. Later features of little intrinsic value, but which form part of a more important building. Adequate archaeological recording is likely to be required prior to any removal;
- ***Negative elements (Priority 5):*** features of little or no intrinsic interest that damage or obscure buildings or features of significance. Adequate archaeological recording is likely to be required prior to any removal.

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### 3. BACKGROUND

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#### 3.1 DEVELOPMENT OF THE TEXTILE INDUSTRY IN MOSSLEY

- 3.1.1 The cottage-based wool industry formed an important part of the economy of the hamlet of Mossley in the mid-eighteenth century and numerous purpose-built, handloom-weaving cottages survive in the town from this period. Wool production traditionally dominated the area until the latter half of the eighteenth century, when advancements in the application of technology to engineering precipitated a gradual shift towards the factory-based system. The River Tame, with its swift waters, proved well-suited as a location for numerous water-powered mills, the first of which was erected in 1765.
- 3.1.2 In 1795 Mossley was described as '*A considerable village, with upwards of 100 houses, many of them large and well built, chiefly of stone*' (Aikin 1795) suggesting considerable growth and a measure of prosperity. Woollen cloth was gradually superseded as the dominant textile industry by cotton in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, accompanied by replacement of the water wheel with the steam engine. Mossley's cotton industry saw a rapid expansion during this period in the hands of a small number of spinning firms (Williams & Farnie, 1992), one of which was John and George Mayall.
- 3.1.3 The Mayall brothers commenced cotton spinning in Mossley in the 1830s when they took a lease on Bottom's Old Mill, an antiquated water-powered mill, which they modernised and later purchased. Their success in the production of low counts of yarn suitable for the weaving of clothing for export to markets in India (Haynes 1996) led them to the acquisition of Queen Street, Victoria and Scout Mills. Despite their continued success the brothers dissolved their partnership in 1846, amicably dividing their assets between them. John acquired Bottom's Old Mill and Scout Mill while George took possession of Queen Street and Victoria Mills.

#### 3.2 DEVELOPMENT OF BRITANNIA MILL

- 3.2.1 In 1849 John Mayall sold a parcel of land to the London & North Western Railway company, who were in the process of constructing a line through Mossley between Manchester and Huddersfield. A train station was then built on this land, and Mayall saw the opportunity to erect a mill adjacent to the station, giving him unrivalled access to this rapidly developing transport system. Work began in October 1849 upon a portion of land to the west of the river and north of what would become Queen Street. Britannia Mill was opened two years later, as a six-storey spinning block, with a three-storey block to the west (Plate 2). Initially housing 64,800 mule spindles, output was doubled shortly afterwards reaching a maximum 119,008 spindles which produced 60,000 lbs of cotton yarn every week. The mill was powered by two 50hp compound steam engines and was a substantial complex, reportedly being the largest cotton mill ever built by one man at one time (Haynes 1996, 49). A tunnel excavated beneath Manchester Road connected the mill directly

to the railway sidings. By 1856 it employed 528 men, women and children and must have had a dramatic effect on the prosperity of the town (*ibid*).

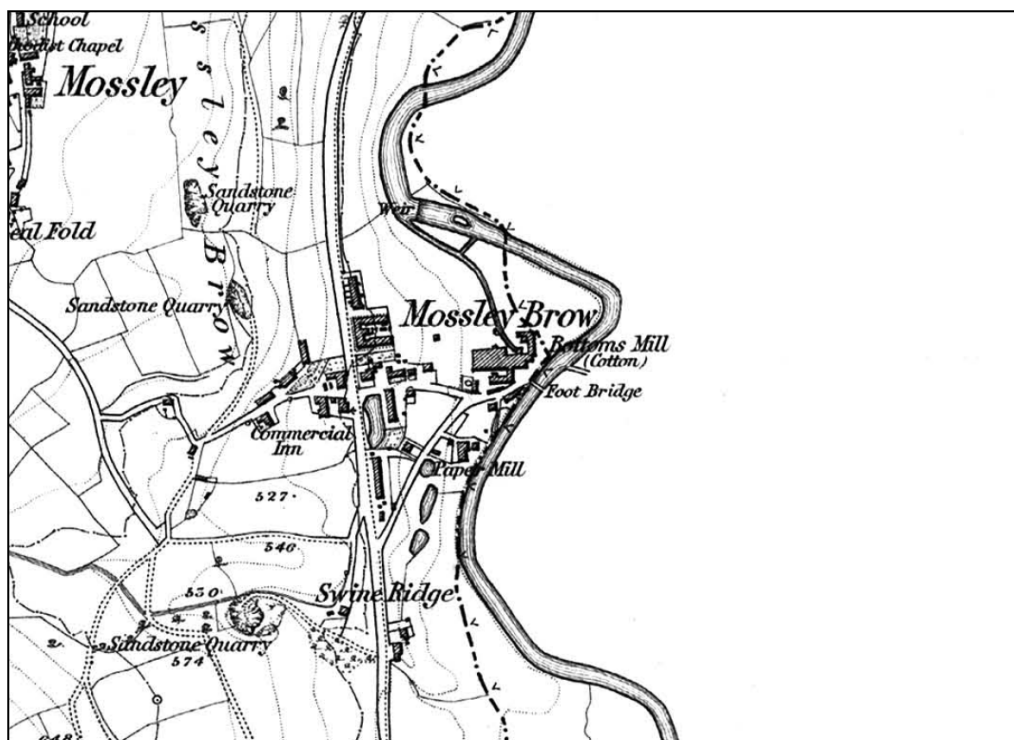


Plate 2: Extract from the Ordnance Survey 6": 1 mile map of 1848 (surveyed 1844-45), prior to the erection of Britannia Mill

- 3.2.2 Opinions vary as to the philanthropy of John Mayall, but he was apparently a man of some religious conviction, as during the 1850s he agreed that Britannia mill could be used to hold congregational services while Abney Congregational Church was erected (Lock 1983). He was also responsible for the erection of 400 houses in the town, although he undoubtedly benefited from the rental income they provided and ready access to a labour force.
- 3.2.3 In June 1860 the mill was almost completely destroyed by a massive fire which tore through the building reducing it to rubble in just a matter of hours. It was obviously a significant event in the town and additional trains were laid on for people in the surrounding areas to come and look at the smouldering remains (Haynes 1996). The mill was rebuilt almost immediately using fireproof construction methods, retaining its original engines and by 1871 housed 111,360 spindles (Plate 3). John Mayall retired in 1872, passing the running of the business on to his sons, but the company continued to prosper in the short term and by 1876 the company was the largest privately-owned cotton spinning firm in the world. In 1891 John Mayall and Sons is noted as occupying four mills in Mossley with a combined spindle count of 420,000, increasing to a maximum of 444,000 spindles in 1893-96 (Williams & Farnie, 27). The OS map of 1894 shows the mill at probably its maximum extent, with a large east/west aligned spinning block facing south onto Queens Street and additional structures to the north and west (Plate 4).



Plate 3: Plan of 1863 showing a number of John Mayall's cotton mills, including Britannia Mill shortly after rebuilding following the fire of 1860



Plate 4: Extract from the Ordnance Survey 1: 25000 map of 1894 (surveyed 1890-91)



- 3.2.4 The Mayalls sold Britannia mill in 1902 to Britannia Spinning Co Ltd. Following a refit, the mill re-opened in 1903, housing 175,000 mule spindles, and spinning both American and Egyptian cottons. The company folded during the great depression of the 1930s and the buildings were stripped of equipment. Between 1933 and 1938 the majority of the buildings occupying the eastern end of the site were demolished, leaving the Roadside Mill and those buildings immediately to its east (Plates 5 & 6). E & E Bottomley, a firm of tyre fabric makers and cotton doublers took over Britannia Roadside mill in 1937.
- 3.2.5 The 1955 OS map (not shown) depicts Britannia Mill as being still in use as a cotton mill but the adjoining structures had been demolished and a large single storey structure labelled as Britannia New Mill had been erected on the land to the east. The layout remains much the same on the 1975 OS map (not shown) but the mill is no longer labelled as ‘cotton’, probably indicating the end of production at the mill.

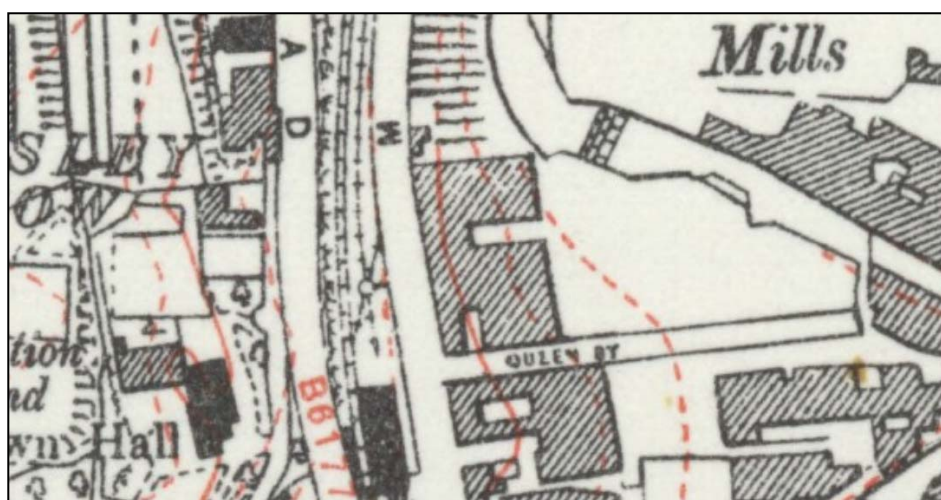


Plate 5: OS 6":1 mile, 1937 (revised 1938), note the buildings to the east have been demolished (NLS maps)

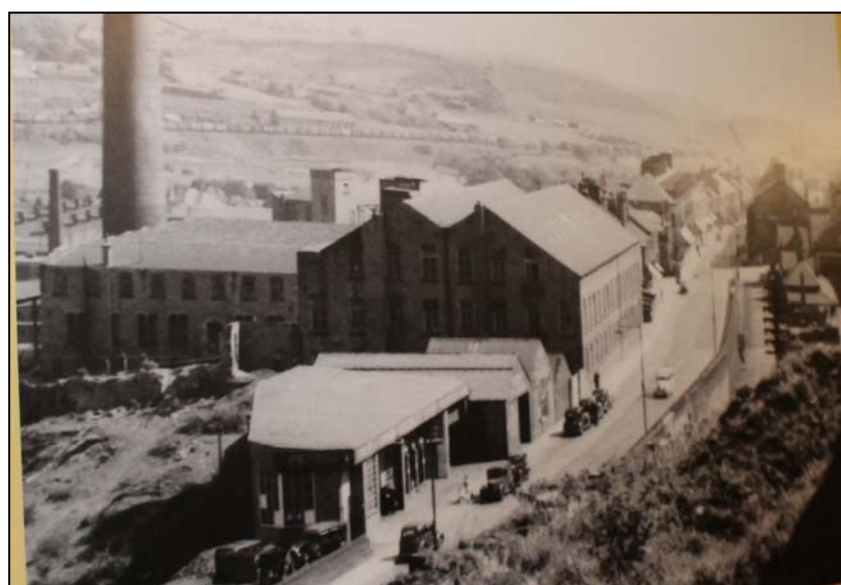


Plate 6: Early twentieth century photograph of Britannia Mill from the north

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## 4. SUMMARY DESCRIPTIONS

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### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

- 4.1.1 The following section provides a brief description of the mill based on a rapid inspection of the surviving fabric. This information is intended solely to provide a basis to assess the relative significance of the various component elements.
- 4.1.2 The Britannia Mill complex has been reduced from its greatest extent, with the demolition of both the weaving shed and power plant. This current assessment comprises the extant spinning block adjacent to Manchester Road, which has been disused for several years.

### 4.2 DESCRIPTION

- 4.2.1 The extant structure comprises a rectangular three-storey spinning block, erected in weathershot coursed local sandstone, and is of 14 bays length, below a double-span roof (Plate 7). A brick stair tower has been added to the south-east corner (Plate 8), and forms the principal access between floors, housing a concrete stair carried on decorative cast iron rails (Plate 9). A brick-built loading tower also projects from the south wall, with a trap door above the open-fronted lower ground-floor level (Plate 10). This has an access passage leading beneath the adjacent road to the railway line (Plates 11 and 12), representing an important feature relating to the relationship between the textile industry and the emerging transport network of the second half of the nineteenth century.



*Plate 7: View of Britannia Mill from the north-west*



*Plate 8: View of Britannia Mill from the south-east*



*Plate 9: Decorative cast-iron risers in stair tower*



*Plate 10: Loading bay added to southern elevation of Britannia Mill*



*Plate 11: Access tunnel beneath Manchester Road*

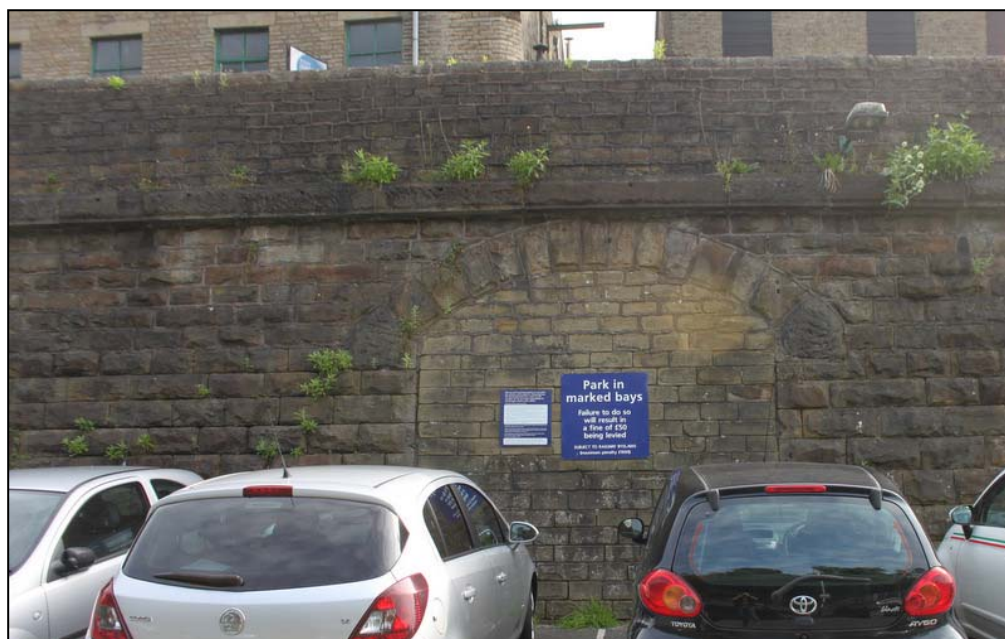


Plate 12: Blocked entry into access passage within railway car park

- 4.2.2 A narrow projecting tower in the eastern bay of the north wall possibly represents an original privy tower (Plate 7). A fire escape was also added to the north wall (Plate 7).
- 4.2.3 Each bay has a vertical rectangular window on the western facade, which comprised only two floors, and with the present entrance in the northern bay (Plate 13). The majority of bays have replaced window frames of between three and six lights, with those of the ground floor being externally boarded (Plate 14), but retaining several original windows frames of unusual asymmetrical four-over-two-light frames. The gable walls have two similar windows to each bay, except the attic, which has only a single example within each bay, to accommodate the pitched roof (Plate 7). The western bay retains the original principal access at ground floor level, in the south wall, with offset loading doors to each floor above (Plate 14). The east wall also has windows to each bay at ground and first floor level, except the northern bay which is without windows, and the sixth bay from the north end at ground floor level, which has two smaller, offset apertures, relating to power transfer (Plate 15). At lower ground floor level, the east wall has only two narrow windows, with a further tall window adjacent to an inserted opening, next to a late hoist tower (Plate 15).



Plate 13: View of Britannia Mill from the west



Plate 14: Southern gable of Britannia Mill with adjacent Britannia Inn public house



*Plate 15: View of Britannia Mill from the east*

4.2.4 Internally, the structure is of transverse brick arch construction, with the I-section cast-iron beams carried on slender hollow cylindrical columns (Plate 16). Those of the lower ground floor have fluted capitals (Plate 17), with plain variants on the upper floors, and within the open attic. A mezzanine floor inserted at the southern end of the ground floor is carried on shorter columns, and the southern column of the eastern of the three internal rows has been replaced on each floor.



*Plate 16: First floor of Britannia Mill, showing fireproof construction*



*Plate 17: Decorative fluted column capitals at lower ground floor level*

4.2.5 The double-span roof is of timber construction, mainly concealed below a lath and plaster ceiling at collar level (Plate 18). Additional height for the upper floor was afforded by the increased height of the outer walls at this level, with the base of the trusses carried on raised cast-iron feet (Plate 19). Either end of the collar, which is continuous across the entire roof, is carried on tall slender cast-iron columns, with a further central row supporting the junction of the two trusses (Plate 18).



*Plate 18: Wide, open attic space in Britannia Mill*





*Plate 19: Column and cast-iron raised foot carrying principal rafter of roof truss*

- 4.2.6 Evidence for power transfer survives at first floor level, with the cast-iron housing for the upright drive shaft placed in the eastern wall (Plate 20).



*Plate 20: Cast-iron bearing for upright shaft in east internal elevation*

- 4.2.7 Internal partitions at lower ground floor level appear to relate to original provision for loading from the railway, rather than marking the position of an original internal power plant.

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## 5. ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

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### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

5.1.1 This assessment of significance is not intended to be a definitive report on the historic building within the study area, and has been based on a rapid inspection, undertaken broadly to English Heritage Level I-type survey standards (English Heritage 2006). Further study of the building would undoubtedly furnish a greater understanding of the significance of the heritage asset and its component elements.

5.1.2 Britannia Mill can be defined as being of *Some Significance*, incorporating elements of differing *Rarity* and *Survival*, with high *Group and Aesthetic Values*, given its prominent position within the landscape. The building represents a relatively well-preserved example of a spinning block, typical of the period and region, but with the very rare inclusion of a passage beneath the road, linking the mill directly to the railway.

### 5.2 PRIORITY 1 ELEMENTS

5.2.1 No elements of the study area are considered to be of *Outstanding Significance*.

### 5.3 PRIORITY 2 ELEMENTS

5.3.1 Component elements of the main mill considered to be of *Great Significance* are:

- **Passageway between the spinning block and the railway.** This feature represents an unusual solution to the problem of effective transport links to a textile mill, and was probably key in the citing of the complex, and thus retain a high *rarity value*, *evidential value*, and *aesthetic value*;

### 5.4 PRIORITY 3 STRUCTURES

5.4.1 Component elements of the mill considered to be of *Some Significance* are:

- **External Elevations.** These provide the important visual representation of the size and layout of the Britannia Mill complex. These elements have a very high *evidential value*, providing important physical evidence for the development of a mid-nineteenth-century cotton spinning mill that survives largely intact. The mill also has a strong *aesthetic value*, as it provides a powerful reminder that Mossley was once an important centre for the textile industry. Similarly, the mill has a high *communal value*, as it was one of a series of mills that were fundamental to the growth and development of the town during the nineteenth century, providing employment for a large proportion of the local population. The dominant edifice of the spinning block dominates the view across the valley from both the railway and the two Listed Buildings higher up the valley.

- **Privy tower.** Although re-furnished with water closets, the privy tower is a good example of such a feature, giving a good visual representation of their typically small size;
- **Upright shaft bearing.** The large cast-iron bearing projecting from the first floor wall provides high *evidential value* of the power transfer system within the mill, not only denoting the inclusion and position of vertical power supply between floors, but also suggesting the possible position of the engine house relative to the mill.
- **Ceiling construction.** Timber ceiling beams represent the earliest form of mill floor construction, being replaced eventually by iron beams carrying brick arches from the early nineteenth to early twentieth century. Although, by 1862, the technology of fireproof brick-arched construction was well-established, its increased cost of implementation, compared to that of simple timber beam construction, meant that it was not commonly used in mills of this size by this date. Thus the structure has a high *evidential value* and *historic value*;
- **Roof structure.** The upper floor is placed entirely within the roof space, a feat only made possible by the use of an advancement of roof truss technology within the nineteenth century. Where previously king post or queen post trusses would have been used, creating obstacles within the roof space, the use of increased wall height incorporating raised cast-iron feet, and a double-span truss carried on slender cast-iron columns allowed a large, high attic to be a fully operational space within the mill. Thus the structure has a high *evidential value*.

## 5.5 PRIORITY 4 STRUCTURES

5.5.1 Those components of the study are that may be considered to be of *Lesser Significance* are:

- **Floorboards.** Original floorboards survive in several areas within the mill, representing an increasingly rare survival of such features;
- **Loading Bay Extension.** The small extension to the southern side of the mill block is a secondary addition, demonstrating an improvement of the supply of materials into the structure;

## 5.6 NEGATIVE ELEMENTS

5.6.1 All structural fabric, fixtures and fittings within the building forms an intrinsic part of the history of its development, use and decay, and are thus of value to the researcher. However, a few elements detract from the features that make the site as a whole of *Some Significance*. Some mask earlier features, hindering their understanding, or obscuring their significance. The Negative Elements may be considered to be of such modest significance that their demolition/removal would not be unreasonable, providing an appropriate archaeological record is compiled in advance. Those components of the mill that may be considered to be *Negative Elements* are:

- **External dust tower.** Although the dust tower provides a visual reminder of improvements within working conditions within the mill, and advances in technology, its external cladding clearly detracts from the visual impact of the complex, to which it represents a relatively late addition;
- **Internal partitions.** The upper floors of the mill are open-plan, and give a much greater impression of the scale of the mill, compared with the heavily partitioned lower floors. The inserted modern partitions and ceilings almost exclusively date to post-textile production, and thus detract from the building.
- **External render.** Recent external render on the east wall of the mill not only hides potentially significant information pertaining to the position of the power plant, but its poor condition also detracts from the visual impact of the structure.

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## 6. HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

- 6.1.1 Paragraph 128 of the NPPF states that in determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution to their setting. Paragraph 129 requires that local planning authorities should also take any assessment of significance into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.
- 6.1.2 An analysis of the significance of Britannia Mill and the surrounding heritage assets is set out in this report. It demonstrates that the mill building is of only local importance, with the surviving block representing a good example of a mid-nineteenth century spinning mill, incorporating many of the technological advances in mill building construction that were introduced at this time. It should also be noted that the mill is a physical reminder of this former important industry, although is currently under-used, and represents an incomplete complex, crucially having lost its power plant and chimney.

### 6.2 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 6.2.1 The development proposals allow for the demolition of the remains of Britannia Mill, and thus the complete removal of all historic fabric. The mill is visible from the main road approaches to Mossley, and also from the main railway line between Manchester and West Yorkshire. The townscape and landmark value of the town will be somewhat diminished by the proposed demolition of the mill. The southern, and western approaches provide a sense of the historic industrial character of the locale (Plate 21), with the nineteenth-century railway station buildings and the adjacent stone-built public house, and terraced housing creating a fairly built-up corridor along Manchester Road (Plate 21). However, beyond the mill there has been complete redevelopment of the street frontage, with the addition of modern housing along Manchester Road (Plate 7), thus reducing the visual impact of the mill from the northern approach.
- 6.2.2 In summary, the design proposals will impact on the historic environment of the town of Mossley. However, the structure is of only local significance, and is incomplete in its survival. It also survives as a relatively isolated remnant of the textile industry within this part of the town, and is in structurally poor condition. Its loss could be mitigated by further archaeological recording prior to demolition.



*Plate 21: Britannia Mill from the War Memorial, looking north-east across the Tame Valley*

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