

Heritage Statement



Whitefield Weaving Shed,
St Mary's Street,
Nelson,
Lancashire.
BB9 7BA

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For Matts Sheet Metal Ltd.

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Introduction

The need for this Heritage statement is as follows:

- Due to the Conservation Area status of Whitefield Nelson, it is necessary for us to create a heritage statement to discuss the significance of the Whitefield Mill Weaving Shed following the proposal for alterations to be made internally.
- Although the Weaving Shed is not Listed, it is treated as an important feature of the Conservations Area because of the position of the mill and the historic values it holds including the architectural significance of the North Lights of the Weaving Shed.

The aim of this heritage statement is to understand the historical significance of the Whitefield Weaving Shed and the heritage it holds for the town of Nelson and its residents. This statement will then provide justification of the proposed changes to be made, in order to re-instate the use of the building and bring life back to this industrial area of Pendle. This in turn will create a more sustainable future for the regeneration of Whitefield Conservation Area.



Proposal

The currently degrading weaving shed is to be repaired back to its former glory, as its current state shows neglect of maintenance and significant architectural features of the mill have been deemed irreparable.

Currently empty, the weaving shed will undertake full repairs to get it back to a usable building for the future proposal as a storage space for the expansion of Matts Sheet Metal Ltd, that are currently established in Whitefield Mill next door. This will include restoring the external appearance of the building, upgrading the drainage of the site, repairing the North Lights where possible, and installing a reclaimed steel building internally to house the materials for the business. Not only will the proposed changes enable the mill to be used again, it will also provide the local community with another heritage gem they can be proud of that will be part of Whitefield's regeneration scheme.



Whitefield Mill Weaving Shed is proposed to become the storage unit for the materials used at Matts Sheet Metal Ltd. It will also become space for delivery drop-offs and pick-ups as currently this is done on the road which can sometimes negatively affect Highways. There will be spaces inside to park work vehicles and an office space to be used as a security base. This will produce more jobs in this area and bring the Mill back into an industrial mill.

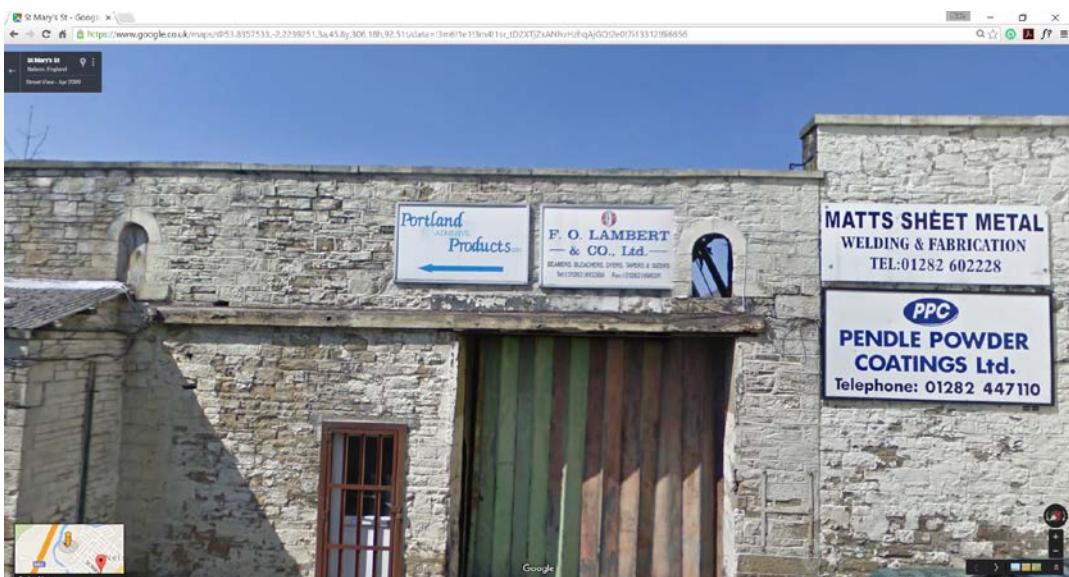
History

The square stone rubble built Whitefield Mill Weaving Shed was constructed in the late 1880's. It was one of the results in the Whitefield and Lomeshaye area from the birth of Nelson's cotton industry. Used as a textile mill that provided employment and industry for the area, it housed the weaving machinery for Whitefield Mill on Craven Street to weave cotton powered by an engine house, boiler house and chimney that have long been demolished. The close connection to the Leeds and Liverpool Canal and the land conditions made this the perfect site to produce cotton and is key to Nelson's growth in the Victorian era. It also sparked the build of the church and houses in this area that all make up the Whitefield Conservation Area.

The Whitefield Conservation Area was designated in 2004 as an overall designation to include the former Lomeshaye Hamlet Conservation Area and St Mary's Conservation Area. The Whitefield area is seen to be the main reason for Nelson's growth during the industrial revolution, giving the town its heritage status it has today as one of the most successful cotton producing regions in Lancashire.

The demise of cotton production in the UK lead to the Weaving Shed becoming redundant. Its engine house, boiler house and chimney have been demolished and all that remains are the stone walls and the famous North Lights that are a significant nod to the typical style of weaving sheds from this era.

The weaving shed is currently vacant which through lack of maintenance and a history of bad weather has lead to a vast amount of disrepair to the North Lights. The last known use was industrial dyers the sign of the company of which can be still be seen from Google Street View dated April 2009, however it is not known when this ceased. Other previous uses include warehousing and storage.



View of Weaving Shed from Google Street View, dated April 2009.

In 2006 there was a planning application granted permission to change the mill into separate workshop and storage units. In the ten years that have followed, drastic deterioration began to affect the weaving shed as work for the previous proposal never started. The partial collapse of the roof has deemed a vast majority of the North Lights irreparable, with some being completely ripped down with the heavy rain of Winter 2015. The future of the mill is now at risk with the stability of the structure in question.

The Weaving Shed is still currently in ownership of the original applicants for the planning application 13/06/0138P: Heritage Trust for the North West, Pendle Heritage Centre. The applicants for the new proposal, Matts Sheet Metal Ltd, have organised with the owners grants to bring the mill back into use; planning permission pending.



Significances

The Whitefield Mill Weaving Shed makes up part of the Whitefield Conservations Area for Nelson for its special architectural and historical interest. The excerpt from English Heritage is as follows:

"Whitefield was a planned settlement that provided for the employment, accommodation, education and spiritual needs of its community. All of the buildings that fulfilled these needs remain and, with this in mind, an 'Enquiry by Design' Master planning exercise carried out in conjunction with The Prince's Foundation for the Built Environment determined that a wider Whitefield Conservation Area should be designated.

The Whitefield Conservation Area was designated in 2004 and is bounded by the canal, Carr Road, Manchester Road and Kensington Street.

The area incorporates a traditional grid pattern of mill town terrace streets, the Grade II listed St Marys church, former cotton mills, and Grade II listed bridges over the Leeds-Liverpool canal which, before the advent of steam power provided transportation for textiles, roofing slate and other materials."

Whitefield Conservation Area Appraisal, Pendle Borough Council

Using the 'Conservation Principles Policies and Guidance' provided by English Heritage, we have listed the significances of the building which will enable us to justify the new proposal for the Weaving Shed.

Who values the place and why?

The local people of Nelson and the residents of this part of Pendle value this Weaving Shed as part of the Whitefield and Lomeshaye Mill complex, as they do with many of the mills of Pendle, and it is seen as a symbol of their heritage and how the town grew into what it is now. However, not many people are aware of the finer details of its history and why it has played a vital role in the heritage of the area, with few residents confirming they were not even aware the mill was previously a Weaving Shed which housed the famous North Lights.

But it can be said that the majority thought it was a huge shame that quite a lot of local mills had suffered damage and had been left in such disrepair. This also sparks hope in that given that the weaving shed undergoes the adequate repairs, it will attract the appreciation from residents for it to be in use again.

How do these values relate to the fabric of the place?

The origins of Nelson as one of Lancashire's most successful textile towns, was heavily influenced by the creation of the surrounding mills and in



turn the Weaving Sheds. The location of Whitefield Weaving Shed alongside the Leeds and Liverpool canal repeats the origins of the industrial revolution of the Victorian era where the canal itself played a vital role as the main form of transport.

The relative importance of these values.

The 19th century and earlier built structures of Nelson as well as the Leeds and Liverpool canal are considered to have historical importance because they were built as planned settlements and routes connecting trades and towns to each other, sparking the success of Britain as a powerful nation during these times with our advances in technology and manufacturing progresses.

The presence of these Victorian mills and weaving sheds, together with the Leeds and Liverpool Canal gives a sense of being transported back to when Nelson was a thriving textile town manufacturing cotton and growing into the town we know today.

Do associated objects contribute to them?

Here we can consider the Leeds and Liverpool canal as well as the neighbouring Whitefield and Lomeshaye mills as important features that are associated with the Weaving Shed, and are also key contributions to the Whitefield Conservation Area.

The canal, although not a part of the Whitefield Conservation Area, was one of the main modes of transporting goods from the mills to ports for exporting Worldwide. Whitefield Mill Weaving Shed lies directly on the side of the canal making the transfer of materials easier to manoeuvre. It also frames the canal against the backdrop of the mills when travelling down the canal in this region as the single storey weaving shed continues the neighbouring mill walls but at a lower level as to not overshadow the canal scenery and dominate the views. Used now for recreational boating, walking and cycling, the Leeds and Liverpool Canal has been described as a "major leisure resource" in the Whitefield Conservation Area Appraisal. The Whitefield Weaving Shed plays an important role in the scenery along the canal as a beacon of Nelson's heritage.

The neighbouring mills, Whitefield and Lomeshaye, stand beside the Weaving shed helping to tell the story of their origins. Taller than the single storey weaving shed, they dominate the scenic route along the canal. It is important to note that the proposed warehouse to be installed in the weaving shed will, at its highest point, be taller than the parapet existing walls, however it will not stand higher than the two mills at either side.

Both mills are currently in use, with the applicant using the Whitefield Mill for metal works, and the Lomeshaye Mill undergoing successful regeneration in the past few years to bring it back to life.



What contribution is made by the setting and the context of the place?

The Whitefield Conservation Area that surrounds the weaving shed has a number of listed buildings, including St Mary's Church, and mills and houses that are all reminiscent of the historical beginnings of Nelson as a town. The original houses that were built as part of a planned settlement still remain, and the mills that provided work and employment for the residents help to describe the life and times of when Nelson was at its prime.

Since 1994 surrounding structures and important places have been designated as areas for conservation due to their historical merit. All of these have now been put together to form the wider scope that is now Whitefield Conservation Area. People still live in the houses and use the nearby shops, there is still life in the mills too which still provide employment for local residents. This is proof of the success of Whitefield, as it still continues to thrive over 150 years later, as its value remains.

How the place compares with others sharing similar values?

Through this understanding of the significance of Whitfield Weaving Shed, the values it holds can be seen as:

- **Communal**; sharing both commemorative and symbolic values
- **Aesthetic**; providing an architectural style, significant to the local area and time of build
- **Historical**; steeped with historical evidence and providing a story of the growth of the area

Other places that could share similar values as such of the weaving shed in question would be other weaving sheds in the area of Nelson, that also hold similar status. Many of the weaving sheds that still stand have been successfully re-used, of the existing weaving sheds in Nelson, there are a few that may fit similar values:

Vale Street Shed

Vale Street, Nelson

A surviving mill and weaving shed, now used as a window and door manufacturing unit.



Pendle Street Shed/ Reedyford Mill

Pendle Street, Nelson

Unfortunately this vast mill and its huge weaving shed no longer exist since its total demolition in 2013 to make way for a housing development.



Valley Mills

Southfield Street, Nelson

Divided up into multiple uses, some new warehouses have also been erected on site to house new industrial businesses.



Vulcan Mill

Bradley Hall Road, Nelson

Some parts are currently up for rent which could mean the mill and its shed are in good condition. Last known use was wine and beer manufacturing.



Waidhouse Mill

Townsley Street, Nelson

Currently used as a packaging manufacturer, with the current company in administration, although the company's future is uncertain, the building is in good condition.



Of all the weaving sheds in Nelson, Pendle Street Shed was the only one that shared the Leeds and Liverpool canal as one of its boundaries- this would have been a perfect example to compare due to the similarities in location and context that made up the values both weaving sheds hold. Unfortunately due to its demolition, Pendle Street Shed cannot be used as a suitable comparison.

However, all other weaving sheds that have been considered continue to be in some sort of industrial use which echoes the proposed use for Whitefield Weaving Shed as an industrial warehouse for the expansion of the sheet metal business next door at Whitefield Mill.

With variations of the amount of changes these mills and weaving sheds have been through, it would be safe to suggest that the continual use of them shows that their up-keep is at a much better state than that of the Whitefield Weaving shed. The lack of maintenance has been detrimental to the structure of the shed which has meant that a lot of the North Lights, an iconic architectural element of the weaving sheds, have been destroyed or are in an irreparable state. The other weaving sheds such as the weaving shed of Valley Mills, have been greatly restored and the North Lights stand proudly over the manufacturing processes occurring below.

Other additions to some of the mills and weaving sheds include corrugated metal cladding to the exterior to create new opening for large vehicle entrances like Vale Street Shed, and some even include new warehouse structures within their vicinities to appeal to a wider range of uses. However, none of the other weaving sheds are part of a conservation area, which heightens the significance of Whitefield Weaving Shed and the necessity to bring it back into use.

The significance of the architecture of the weaving shed.....

Weaving sheds were typically built as one-storey expansive structures with stone rubble external walls and iconic North Lights for the roof. These were saw-toothed canopies, glazed roof-lights to face the North with slate roof covering to the South facing side. They were held up with cast iron columns and had 6m gutter beams for the rainwater run off to hold them in place.

Whitefield Weaving Shed follows these same principles, however due to neglect many of its North Lights will not survive. It is proposed to save as many as possible with those unaffected in the Western side of the shed to be upgraded and reinstated to their former glory. This will ensure the historical values of the weaving shed remain as the surviving North Lights will continue to tell the story of the shed's origins.



Significance of use.....

Currently disused, the weaving shed is in a dire state of disrepair. With nearly all of its significant North Lights either destroyed or irreparable, the structure has been deemed unsafe. Work to save the building will mean many of the North Lights will need to be removed in order for the external walls to remain and be repaired if needed and make the building safe for re-use. With the large span of floor space, there are many different uses that the shed could benefit from, however by looking at its previous uses (all industrial) and the evidence from looking at the other weaving sheds in the area, it is clear an industrial use would be more suitable. This would also enhance the heritage of the shed giving it a similar use as to what it was originally built for.

Solutions

The proposed changes to Whitefield Weaving Shed will put the vacant shed back into an industrial use that is determined to go ahead as the expansion of the business next door. The changes to the structure are necessary to make the building safe to use, and solutions to ensure the shed is suitable for its proposed use have been sympathetic to the weaving sheds historical character and iconic appearance.

Previous Uses

Proof of industrial uses being successful for weaving sheds have been considered earlier in this heritage statement, and the fact that the weaving sheds were originally built for industrial and manufacturing processes and uses.

The previous planning application for this building was to change the use of the building into multiple units and workshops for a mixture of uses, however this proposal never commenced, and may be seen as a sign that it would not work as a viable solution for the weaving shed.

Uneconomical

The current state of the weaving shed means that a lot of work is needed in order to make the structure safe. Demolition of the damaged roof will mean that they would need to be rebuilt from scratch in order to be reinstated. This would be uneconomical as the original roof lights would not be used and new materials to mimic them would be very costly.

Instead the plans are to install a reclaimed steel structure, as a warehouse within the shed. This would not only retain the building and its external appearance, but would meet the need for sustainable building options in this area of regeneration.

Aesthetics

As it stands the weaving shed does not give the appearance of any special architectural value, with stone rubble walls whose parapets hide any sign of the iconic North Lights that are associated with typical weaving shed construction. The only views of the building can be seen from St Mary's Street in Nelson and along the Leeds and Liverpool Canal. Only part of Whitefield Weaving Shed can be seen from St Mary's Street, and the canal-side elevation is currently hidden by overgrowth of shrubs and trees on the small plinth between the canal water and the rear wall of the shed.



The introduction of the reclaimed steel structure internally will be seen from these views as it stands taller than the external walls- however it will not dominate the views by use of grey coloured metal sheeting to blend in with the sky and perspective from the onlooker will mean it will only be seen from a far distance, giving clue to the evolution of the weaving shed as an industrial space.



Sustainability

As well as bringing a currently empty space back into use, the use of reclaimed materials will help towards the sustainability of Whitefield Weaving Shed and its surrounding regeneration. These include the repairs to the external walls and lean to roof recycling old materials, the retained North Lights to the West of the building, the Portacabin office installation and the reclaimed steel warehouse.

The new use will help to employ around another 8-12 people in the area helping the local economy, as well as enabling the existing business to expand where it is currently situated means that established successful business Matts Sheet Metal will not need to relocate to a larger premises elsewhere which could mean it wouldn't remain in Nelson or Pendle.

Decision

The most drastic change to Whitefield Weaving Shed will be the removal of the iconic North Lights that weaving sheds are typically known for, and is considered the most significant part of the shed that makes up part of Whitefield Conservation Area. The justification for this has been noted through the current irreparable state of the shed's roof due to the lack of maintenance and recent bad weather and also the uneconomical reasons for replacing them.

We believe that our decision for the majority removal of the North Lights compliments the following Conservation Principles Policies and Guidance of English Heritage:

"126 – Restoration: Heritage values of elements that would be restored decisively outweigh the values of those that would be lost."

The North Lights will not completely be removed, as those that can be retained will be, so the significance is not totally lost.

"149 – Integration/ Public Interest: Changes are demonstrably necessary either to make the place sustainable, or to meet an overriding public policy objective.

It has been demonstrated that the predicted public benefit decisively outweighs the harm to the values of the place, considering its comparative significance, the impact of that significance, and the benefits to the place itself and/or the wider community or society as a whole."

The removal of the North Lights enables a large reclaimed steel structure to be installed internally- this means that a larger part of the space can be used as intended, and a larger space to manage means more employment opportunities. Not only are the materials used in the proposal sustainable, but the employment factor benefits the public by enhancing the local economy. This outweighs the value of retaining an internal architectural feature of the weaving shed that can only be viewed from the inside.

"157 – Enabling Development: Enabling development that would secure the future of a significant place."

The proposal would bring the weaving shed back into use with regular maintenance to secure the future of the weaving shed as an industrial building key to Nelson's growth, as it was when first built.

