

Rochdale Town Hall

Celebrating the transformation to date

January 2024



The Mayor’s Reception Room

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Introduction

Rochdale Town Hall has long been recognised as one of the foremost Victorian buildings in the country and is much loved by the people of Rochdale. Designed by Crossland and opened in 1871 it is the heart of the town centre and local democratic traditions. It is a unique and unusual interpretation of high gothic with much that leans to the arts and crafts movement and with the most wonderful stained glass, painted plaster surfaces and joinery.

Sadly over the years it became difficult to maintain well and was unfit for the changing needs of Rochdale Borough Council. Beautiful rooms were subdivided, mezzanines added and the delicate interiors damaged by inappropriate maintenance. By early in the 21st century the council felt it was no longer fit for purpose and alternative offices were built that enabled most council functions to be moved out. The partially empty building then started to deteriorate rapidly, many fine but empty rooms used as storage, failing infrastructure and low expectations. A culture of poor treatment of the building developed, which coupled with virtually no maintenance funding put this marvellous building in a downward spiral of decline that was irreversible without major capital input.

It is to the council leadership's credit that this was recognised in the late 2010's and with the support of the RDA, a series of approaches to the NLHF were made. Given the needs of the building the funding required was always going to be substantial and securing major match funding from the Lottery is not easy. The first approach was too early and was rejected but the feedback gained was very useful. The second attempt was much more focused but size and scale became an issue. A much more tactical third attempt was made which phased the restoration works and this was successful in early 2018, which can be regarded as the start of the development of this project.

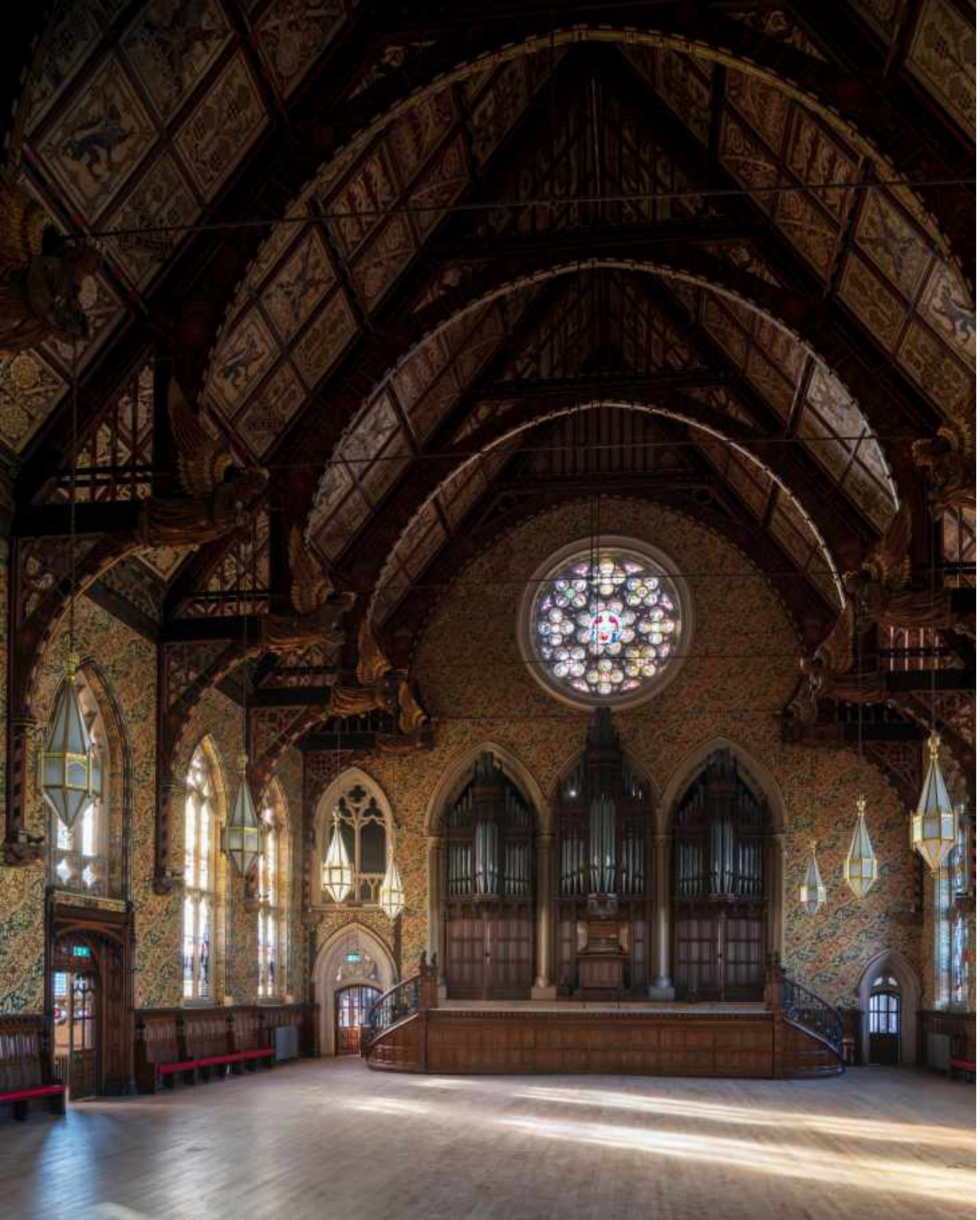
Securing NLHF funding does many things; it provides a much needed capital contribution but more importantly it sets the standards for the project in terms of conservation and added value and it gives the applicant confidence that the project has real merit and is worth undertaking.

The setting of the Town Hall has been highly compromised for a long time. This fine building was surrounded by a mass of car parking and bounded by a large road. The council were visionary and ambitious in planning the closure of two town centre roads and car parking. At first this was controversial, a significant change to the town centre. Over time, as this vision has been implemented the immense value of creating a first class setting for the Town Hall, of pedestrianising the town centre and greening it, has become clear. The restored Town Hall now sits proudly in the largest town square in the country.









Rochdale Development Agency

Donald Insall Associates
Chartered Architects and Historic Building Consultants

fwp

MAX FORDHAM

PRICE & MYERS

Redman Design

Gillespies

BURO HAPPOLD

H.H. SMITH
& SONS CO LTD

TALBOT & DAUGHTERS
RESTORATION AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT
COMPANY LIMITED

University of Salford
MANCHESTER

Purpose of this report

The purpose of this report is to record key project information and achievements at the end of the NLHF Phase 2 capital works. This is not a full evaluation report and contains no financial information. It is an accurate summary of the project and forms a baseline of information that can be used for many purposes. It can be used by all those involved with the project as an approved document for learning and training, public sharing, for the basis of award submissions and for the securing of further opportunities. It contains no information that is either confidential or sensitive.

This report is compiled by the full Town Hall team who have been working together for several years and represents a summary at the end of the NLHF phase of the project. The building is not yet fully restored and work is ongoing. The team are:

Rochdale Development Agency	Technical and Client Side Project Managers
Donald Insall Associates	Lead Consultant and Conservation Architect
Frank Whittle Partnership	Cost Managers
Max Fordham	MEP Engineers
Price and Myers	Structural and Civil Engineers
Gillespes	Landscape Architects
Buro Happold	Public Realm Structural Engineers
Redman Design	Exhibition Designers
H. H. Smith & Sons	Main Contractor

The restoration of the Town Hall was funded by:

ROCHDALE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Made possible with Heritage Fund

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Executive Summary

The transformation of the town centre of Rochdale is now well underway with the completion of the major part of the Town Hall and the new Town Hall Square. The Town Hall will become pivotal in the council's vision of heritage regeneration of the borough rooting itself as a place of community pride and ownership, used by diverse community groups, visited by people from many places and backgrounds, and helping to establish Rochdale as a quality visitor destination.

Rochdale Borough Council understands how significant their Grade 1 listed Town Hall is for the borough and its communities and how much work was needed to give it a meaningful future. Planning of the major restoration project started in 2016 and following a successful NLHF major batch grant, the building closed in late 2020. One of the UK's most important 19th-century buildings has been transformed through careful repair, enhancement and intervention allowing the building to work as a 21st century civic building.

The Great Hall and civic rooms are once again wonders to behold. The new lift and staircase in the clocktower are a triumph physically and aesthetically. The internal circulation has been rationalised and clarity has been restored. The new terracing allows access for all while blending seamlessly with the new public realm. The glazed Porte Cochère provides a focal point and entices visitors inside. Externally, the repaired envelope topped by the restored fleche stand as a symbol of civic pride for the community. The restoration secures the building's future and once again makes it relevant to the people of Rochdale, who are already enjoying their reborn town hall.

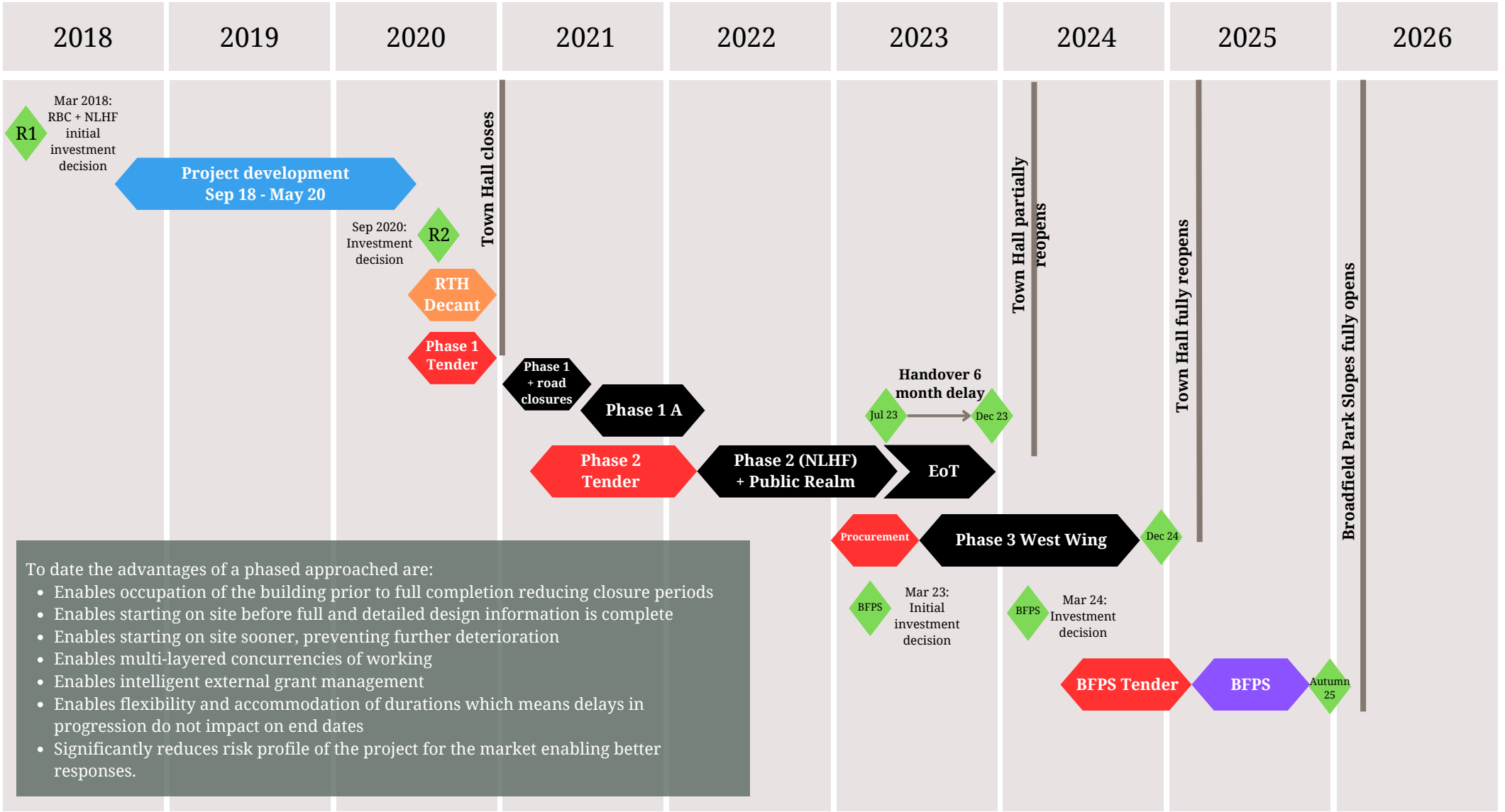
The project has faced many external challenges; Covid-19, war in Europe, Brexit, inflation and a difficult market. The project team has overcome these challenges with focus, teamwork and innovation. Risks have been turned into opportunities and impacts significantly reduced.

Looking back on the work undertaken to date it is clear it has been very successful because:

- Very well chosen team with high degree of expertise and relevant experience
- FT client side and technical PM function
- Effective governance and culture
- Intelligent procurement and contract management
- Integrated public realm works
- Mature approach to risk management
- Bespoke management and reporting tools
- High degree of autonomy and delegated decision making
- Meaningful relationships with our diverse local communities
- Strategic financial planning
- Robust understanding of contractual mechanisms
- Detailed analysis of rates and base costs
- Innovative cost management
- Flexible reporting systems
- Constant value engineering
- Bespoke tender documentation (no SV TOMs or EPS)

ROCHDALE DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Rochdale Town Hall Summary Programme



To date the advantages of a phased approached are:

- Enables occupation of the building prior to full completion reducing closure periods
- Enables starting on site before full and detailed design information is complete
- Enables starting on site sooner, preventing further deterioration
- Enables multi-layered concurrencies of working
- Enables intelligent external grant management
- Enables flexibility and accommodation of durations which means delays in progression do not impact on end dates
- Significantly reduces risk profile of the project for the market enabling better responses.

Symbol Key

- Gateway
- Closure/ opening

Colour Key

- Development period
- Decant
- Procurement +Tender
- Town Hall Construction
- Broadfield Park Slopes (BFPS) Construction

Programme

Programming the restoration of a large Grade 1 listed building and major public realm works requires a high degree of planning.

The initial restoration programme was set out in late 2017 and proposed a 3 phased sequencing of works. The logic of this approach came from the need to reconcile many conflicting drivers including:

- The need to urgently stabilise the building's condition which was rapidly deteriorating. Works needed to start on site far sooner than the prescribed NLHF process allowed
- The risk profile of the project needed de-risking as undertaking the entire restoration in one contract was regarded by the funders and the market as too high risk
- The NLHF were not prepared to fund the entire restoration as it included areas of lesser significance.
- The NLHF application needed to be optimised and asking the funder to only fund an element of the works reduced the funding request as well as enabling the works on site to start without funding being fully in place.
- Initially a public realm project had been conceived and procured by the council as a completely separate project. To mitigate the interface and logistic risks and to enable the optimal setting for the town hall the team combined the projects and programmed them as one.

Initial client assumptions of durations needed to be reviewed and reset. Expectation management of programme is essential and needed to be recalibrated. Funders frequently require certainty on programme at RIBA Stage 1 which is always challenging.

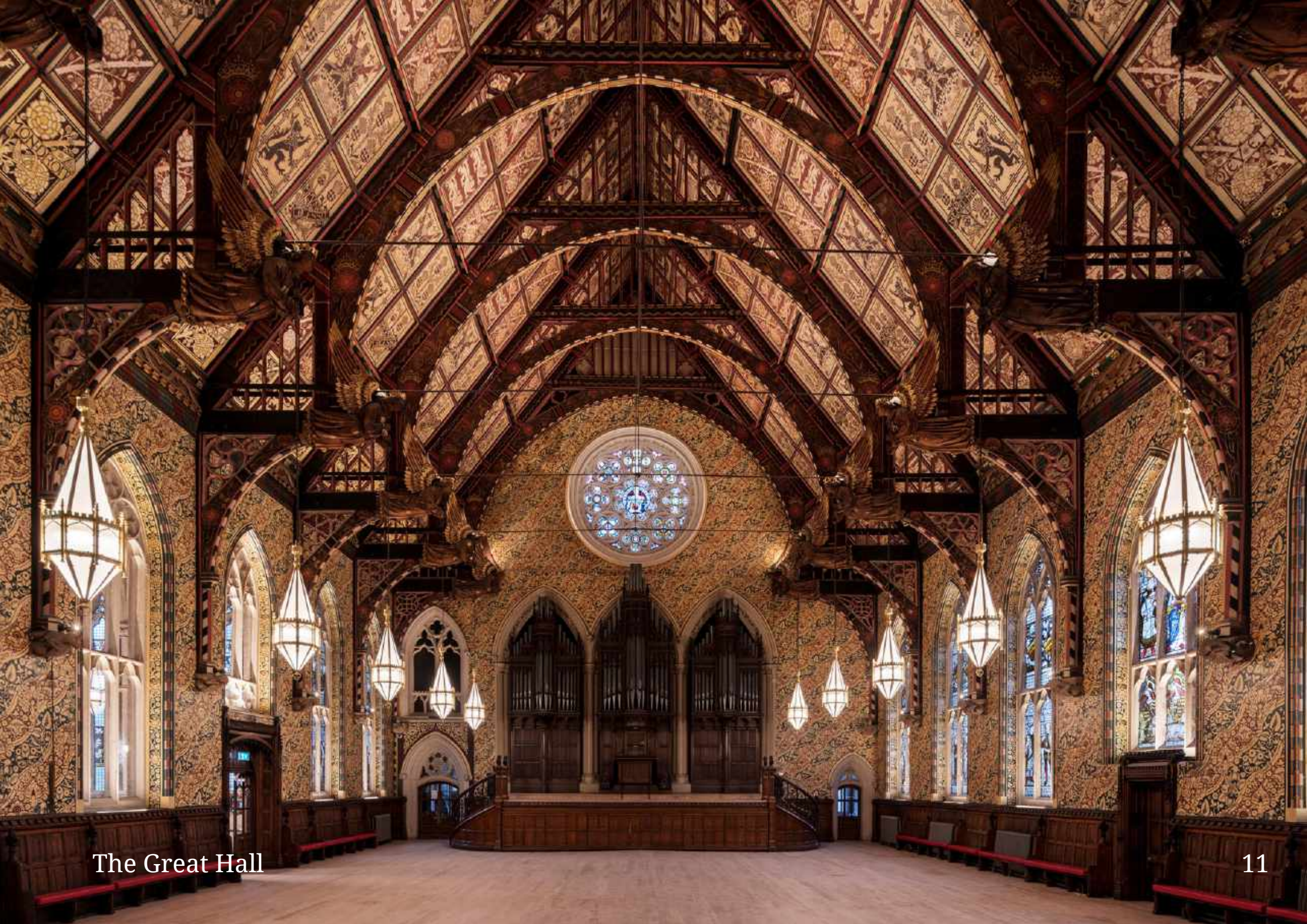
The 3 main planned phases of work were:

1. Enabling Works: Early 2021. Strip out, protection, demolition and making safe including fire safety. This high-risk work was undertaken to stabilise and make safe the building allowing more accurate scope and costs to be developed and the risk profile of the rest of the project to be reduced, in particular the NLHF grant application.

2. NLHF funded restoration of the central and east wing and major public realm works: These areas are of the highest historical significance. Date for starting on site in July 2021 was held despite these being set in 2017. This phase of works was due to complete late summer 2023 but due to the condition of the plaster panels in the Great Hall ceiling being so poor, an extension of time took the completion date to the end of 2023.
3. West Wing and car park: full end use not yet developed so only parts of the area to be restored including the new Council Chamber and Mayor's Parlour.

Once the programme had been established and agreed, every effort was made to hold to the published dates. The NLHF Round 2 submission was submitted one day early and in the first Covid-19 lockdown, much to the lottery's surprise. The full closure and decant of the building was completed on time for the end of 2020. Phase 1 started on time in the first week in January 2021. While undertaking this phase we tendered the main NLHF funded project. The market did not respond favourably to our tender and we had to change our strategy and this meant we could not meet our start on site deadline of July 2021 in the intended way. To mitigate this challenge and give the team time to undertake a full market appraisal and 2 stage tender process we decided to extend the Phase 1 contract to accommodate the works that were programme to take place during the 9 months a 2 stage tender process. This meant the August NLHF start on site was met.

During the delivery of Phase 2, negotiations on Phase 3 commenced and legal and contractual mechanisms were explored. After substantial debate the council agreed that to extend the existing contract optimised financial and programme issues and reduced the procurement risk profile. Phase 2 was delayed on site due to an extension of time of 22 weeks caused by the unexpectedly poor condition of the Great Hall ceiling panels. Extending the existing contract substantially mitigated the impact of this extension of time as we incorporated the work within the new Phase 3 contract.



An innovative approach to restoration

Overview

The Conservation Architect and Lead Consultant led the design interventions that unlocked Rochdale Town Hall for 21st century public use – chiefly by improving the intellectual and physical accessibility of the Grade I-listed building of national significance. The project achieved highest quality delivery whilst maximising the scope of works possible for the available budget, transforming a tired civic building into one that imbues pride within the local community and visitors.

Completed external works include new roofs, the restored fleche, masonry and window repairs, improved maintenance access, screened servicing provision and accessible terracing which secures the building's future and makes it one the local community and the project team can be very proud of.

Internally, works included installation of a new lift and staircase within the clocktower, careful conservation of the highly significant Mayor's suite of rooms, the decorative ceilings in the Great Hall, the reinstatement of the Bright Hall as a single restored volume by removing a modern mezzanine, the reconfigured and new circulation spaces and new accessible washroom facilities. The changes have achieved an internal transformation that unlocks access for all to this treasured building.

A collaborative design process

The design proposals were informed by an in-depth understanding of the building's significance and condition, alongside a thorough engagement process.

The team led a series of workshops with user groups to understand their needs and operational requirements, to inform design proposals for the transformation of Rochdale Town Hall into a cultural venue rooted in community cohesion. Further workshops enabled user groups to feedback into the emerging design proposals.

Rochdale Town Hall is a complicated building with many areas of high significance: every significant room is different with its own unique character comprised of bespoke decoration and joinery. Each room was a project in its own right. Close collaboration between members of the design team and specialist conservators was essential to plan the works and bring out the best in all the significant rooms.

Obtaining statutory consents

Obtaining consent for new interventions in a Grade I-listed building can pose a number of challenges. At Rochdale our strategy was to thoroughly understand the building, its issues and the relative significance of its constituent parts, then identify opportunities for improvement. Understanding the intention of the original architect, William Henry Crossland, and considering what he may have done had he been set some of the current challenges, helped inform our thought process. Bold interventions were proposed in areas of low significance, whilst areas of high significance were sacrosanct and subjected only to careful conservation.

The team engaged early with the Conservation Officer, Historic England and statutory consultees to share ideas and steer design development. Most importantly we worked with the building, not fighting it, so that the proposed interventions sat comfortably as a new layer within the Victorian composition. Design quality had to match the excellence found in the existing building. Poor quality 20th century interventions were proposed for removal to restore the clarity of the original design. The team then proactively managed the approvals process with the Council, and this included talks and presentations to interested parties to ensure proposals were fully understood. The design team has made a real difference to the outcome through the design of high-quality conservation works coupled with high quality new interventions.

Risk mitigation

The design process was managed to minimise risk and keep the project to budget and programme. Examples include:

- Gaining early statutory consents to reduce programme risk.
- A thorough programme of opening up works as part of a package of enabling works enhanced understanding of the building and its issues, reducing the likelihood of unforeseen issues arising during the main construction phase;
- Early collaboration with specialist conservators and the commissioning of a comprehensive range of specialist surveys from the outset of the project has been fundamental;
- Careful programming to allow for highly specialised works and training opportunities, which involved managing these specialist packages early in the procurement process. This enabled a straightforward delivery of work packages with the added value of delivering skills training as part of the project objectives.



Resolving external access

The ground floor of the Town Hall sits above the external ground level, and over the years a number of individual ramps had been installed around the perimeter of the building, detracting from its setting. Our solution was a new terrace to the rear and sides of the building, integrated with the new landscape and providing areas for outdoor seating on the south side. The terrace discreetly gives level access to the external entrances, and epitomises the concept of 'access for all'. Beautifully designed, the external face of the terrace is in tooled stone to represent the displaced plinth of the building, and the junction with the building has been carefully designed to provide an air gap and be reversible. Our thought is that had Crossland been faced with an 'access for all' brief back in 1870, his solution would have been similar.

Enhancing the entrance

The engagement process revealed that the local community perceived Rochdale Town Hall as unwelcoming. The team therefore proposed to glaze the external Port Cochère which sits in front of the main doors, to bring the reception area 'out' of the building as a visible and welcoming entrance. Incorporating structural glazing within the arched openings of the Porte Cochère, surrounded by delicate stonework, proved challenging and was closely scrutinised by Historic England. The final design featured a reversible intervention: structural glass that floats in the openings with minimal contact with the stonework. Use of low-reflectivity glass minimises the visual change to the building, allowing the Porte Cochère to continue to read as a covered external space.

New circulation in clocktower

The key to unlocking the potential of the building was addressing poor horizontal and vertical circulation as well as unsatisfactory fire escape. These issues compromised the way in which the building could be used, and restricted occupancy and meant circulation was a warren. A new lift and staircase within the clocktower was proposed, which allowed the east end of the building to be accessed separately from the main entrance, opening up this side of the building for out-of-hours community use. It also allowed dual use of the Town Hall for two separate events at the same time, helping to increase the revenue-earning potential of the building.

Analysis showed that the significance of the clocktower by Alfred Waterhouse related to its external appearance; the interior was a series of unused rooms which presented an opportunity for development. A successful planning application was made for a major intervention into the listed structure including a glass lift shaft wrapped with a floating steel and oak staircase. Entering the building via the clocktower is an event in itself, designed to delight visitors before they experience the beautiful, restored interiors. New public routes were created internally to allow visitors to see previously unseen areas of the building.

Improving thermal performance

The project presented an excellent opportunity to upgrade the thermal performance of the building fabric wherever possible, without impacting on the visual appearance of the building – this addressed heat loss from high ceilings, single glazing and a roof without insulation. Innovative solutions using modern compatible materials were used to insulate the pitched roofs without raising the roof profile or impacting the delicate decorative ceiling panels in the Great Hall below. Previously the roofs were largely uninsulated, but now their performance approaches that of modern buildings.

All existing windows were carefully studied to identify suitable candidates for upgrades. Metal casements in windows on elevations of lower significance, without stained glass, were replaced with new powder coated stainless steel casements with slimline double-glazed units that are designed to match the traditional appearance of the existing casements. This strategy allowed the incorporation of double glazing in parts of a Grade I listed building without impacting historic character.

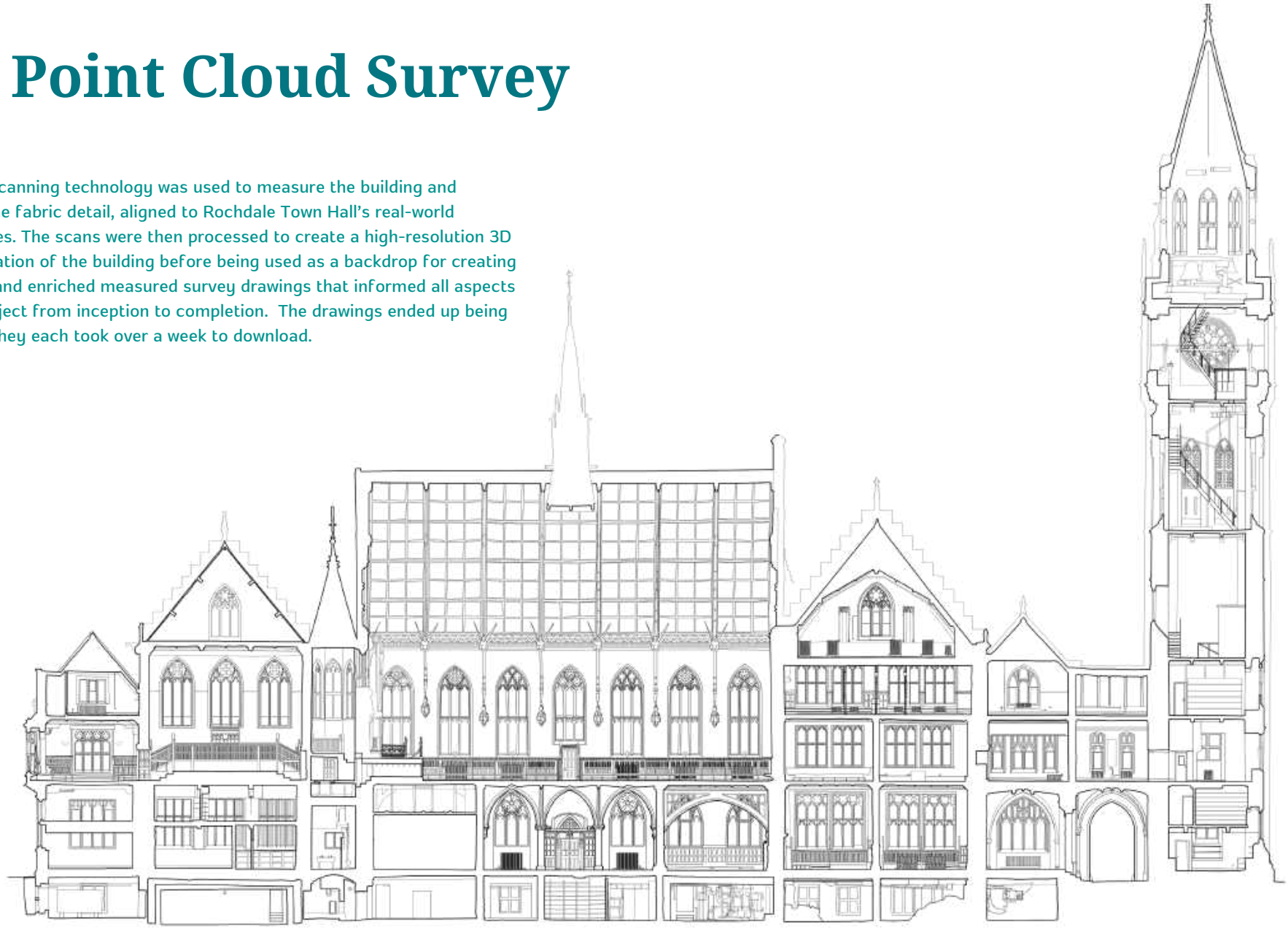
Exhibition design and artist collaboration

The proposals included new exhibition areas (both permanent and flexible) with interpretation set to tell the story of Rochdale's people and history. The team worked closely with the exhibition designers to create engaging spaces that let the building's culturally significant interiors shine through. Working with community artists, new graphics for the ceiling panels in the Bright Hall were created, adding a layer of 21st-century decoration to complement the rich 19th-century decoration elsewhere.



3D Point Cloud Survey

3D laser scanning technology was used to measure the building and capture the fabric detail, aligned to Rochdale Town Hall's real-world coordinates. The scans were then processed to create a high-resolution 3D representation of the building before being used as a backdrop for creating accurate and enriched measured survey drawings that informed all aspects of the project from inception to completion. The drawings ended up being so large, they each took over a week to download.





The Old Council Chamber

Restoring the historic interior

The NLHF-funded repair and restoration of Rochdale Town Hall has been a transformative project for the local community, who have been engaged at all stages from inception of the project objectives through to delivery of the works.

The Great Hall is arguably the most important room in the Town Hall. The rich internal decoration scheme comprises walls made up of painted stencil work with Henry Holiday's mural of 1870 depicting King John signing the Magna Carta to the east gable, and the much-admired Binns organ to the west. 16 timber hammer beams, rich with painted decoration, form the main roof structure; the beams are supported between the wings of intricately carved timber angels. 330 painted lath and plaster panels form the ceiling between these beams.

Under the protection of a temporary roof and following extensive specialist conservator-led trials, recommendations were made to consolidate and stabilise plaster panels to enable restoration of the decorative interior scheme. Specialist cleaning trials established an effective methodology that would remove up to a total of seven layers of impervious varnish applied over the lifetime of the Town Hall. Years of dirt build-up to both the plaster panels and the timber beams were also cleaned, once again revealing their full beauty.

While the decoration to the plaster panels was known to the team, the decorative scheme to the beams was found to be much more extensive than originally assumed – the varnish had darkened to such an extent that the details of the stencilling beneath were all but obscured. Paint analysis found that the painted decoration on the timber to be original. A trial removal of the varnish revealed intricate painted and gilded designs such as the red rose of Lancashire and budding, leafy trails, sat alongside a variety of other patterning.

The design team saw an opportunity to bring the beams back to their full former glory, and sought additional funding from the Council to thoroughly clean the beams and, more importantly, to recruit local people onto paid work placements to support the conservators. This approach allowed the team to reduce costs whilst providing additional training and jobs in the local area. Through existing relationships with the local college, the team were able to recruit eight art and design students for approximately 16 weeks to work alongside the conservators. From this initial period, four of the volunteers were recruited to continue to work with the conservators until the end of the project and one student became permanently employed.



Ensuring future maintenance: Heritage Conservation Skills Studio

Restoration of a building of this size would never be fully completed within the time restraints of a lottery funded project. It was always envisaged that a programme of conservation in-situ would continue beyond the life of the project. Due to a lack of understanding of how the building should be cared for, the Town Hall had never been correctly maintained. The restoration project has sought to rectify past mistakes and maintain the building correctly for the future.

In response to suggestions made by NLHF Board Members at the mid-point review, the team decided to create a heritage skills studio in the basement of the Town Hall. This is similar to a model used in cathedrals and not often seen in Town Halls. However it's important that future maintenance of the building takes into account its heritage, understands the specialist care needed to maintain it and tries to halt any further deterioration. This ambitious project would not only provide a dedicated space for the maintenance team to use once the building was opened but volunteer training and workshops could be held here. This in part was provided as part of the contractors social value offer and the conservators delivering the training provided lists of equipment, which were bought as part of the training programme and part funded by the contractor.

Recruitment of three permanent conservator posts, a stained glass conservator, painted surfaces conservator and a furniture restorer, were also built into the business model. This was to ensure the maintenance team included staff with the specialist skills needed to care for the building going forward, allowing an ongoing programme of restoration to take place.

There is an ambition to be able to offer the specialist services of the conservators to other heritage buildings in the borough. This would not only help to bring in revenue to the Town Hall but reduce the need to appoint external conservators. The team could help to retain the conservation skills in-house, creating a resource of local knowledge that will be a long term legacy of the project.





The topping out ceremony for the fleche

Construction in a heritage building

Phase 1 (P1)
The main contractor had carved a niche in the heritage construction sector and had really enjoyed the projects that they had completed. Although recognised at the time that it would be their largest project to date, they relished the opportunity to take on a project of this size and stature. Although as a T2 Main Contractor their turnover was far lower than T1 competitors, they were able to convince the client and design team that they were big enough to deliver, but small enough to care.

The main contractor was able to demonstrate a wide variety of similar, smaller, specialist heritage restoration projects and had the utmost faith that their team had the knowledge, skills and experience to deliver on a larger scale. While undertaking these projects they had built up a robust, tried and tested supply chain of specialist sub-contractors and suppliers so they were in a strong position to hit the ground running in Rochdale. The phased aspect of the project also appealed to them, as if the works had been tendered as one large project it undoubtedly would have been too big for them to apply for.

Phase 1 (P1) commenced in January 2021 and enabled H. H. Smith to fully familiarise themselves with the building, client and design team – something that has benefitted the project from the outset. Early works included strip out and demolition, however the first challenging element of works was the CDP (Contractor Design Portion) Historic Fabric Protection package.

H. H. Smith was tasked with overseeing the design and installation of a wide variety of temporary measures to protect the existing floors, walls, fireplaces and timber panelling, all of which had to be sufficiently robust to withstand 3 years of construction works, while being fully fire-resistant. The main challenge was that all protections must be free-standing / self-supporting as fixing into the existing building fabric was strictly prohibited. This presented the biggest challenge when it came to protecting the irreplaceable, circa 6m tall, stained-glass windows in the Great Hall. Through a variety of prototypes, and after some ingenious engineering from their site team and in-house specialist joiners a 'friction fitted' structure was developed that was able to support itself for the duration of the project whilst also providing easy access to the glazing for the upcoming conservation works.

During Phase 1 the main contractor also significantly enhanced the building's fire protection measures, installing an 'L1' Fire Alarm system consisting of wireless detectors and sounders and a discreet 'aspirating system' in the rooms of highest significance. The installation of the fire detection measures, along with providing 2 new dry risers that pass vertically and horizontally through 5 floors gave them a taste of the challenges they would face in the later phases whilst seamlessly routing the MEP services around the building and through the 150+ year old fabric.

Phase 1a
Due to the extended tender process for the Phase 2 (P2) works they had completed their Phase 1 package of works and were still in the midst of tendering for Phase 2. The Client was keen that critical works should continue wherever possible, and that the building was not left unoccupied during H. H. Smith finishing P1 and the successful Contractor commencement of P2. They were instructed to undertake a series of additional work packages that started in July 2021 and ran until early the following year.

During this interim phase, H. H. Smith was first acquainted with the project's two 'named specialist sub-contractors' – York Glaziers Trust (YGT) and Lancashire Conservation Studios (LCS).

Phase 2 (P2)
H. H. Smith's approach, strategy and methodology for the Phase 2 project was to continue the solid foundations and relationships they had developed with the Client and design team throughout Phase 1 and Phase 1A. While they acknowledged that Phase 2 would be a significant increase in the scale of projects they were used to, they were confident that their involvement in the first two Phases, along with their intimate knowledge of the building and the many challenges it presented would be invaluable to the successful delivery of Phase 2. The procurement route, and manner in which the works were priced and agreed were also new to H. H. Smith. Most heritage projects undertaken are produced via a traditional single-phase tender, however Phase 2 was to be procured via a 2-stage tender process complete with a PCA period. This was the first time they had experienced working so closely with the design team pre-Contract and is where they learned that due to budget constraints the scheme was to be heavily Value-Engineered.



The birdcage scaffolding in the Great Hall

Great Hall Scaffolding

One of the first challenges the team faced was ensuring that suitable scaffold access was in place in time for the stained-glass window conservators 'YGT' to commence their works in the Great Hall. Through July, August and early September H. H. Smith and the Temporary Works Engineers worked tirelessly to design and erect several complex access scaffolds both internally and externally.

Due to the building's constraints the scaffold had to be carefully designed as to not overload the existing structure. The central portion of the floor lies directly above the stone vaults of the Exchange, so is therefore capable of withstanding greater loads than the two suspended timber floors at the East and West end. Subsequently these floors had to be 'back-propped' under the floor below and down to Basement level, so works had to be carefully planned around the propping.

Once the design was finalised, all materials used to install the birdcage had to be carefully transported through a single door above the Porte Cochere roof, before being lifted into place over an 8-week period. As the Organ and Magna Carta mural were already protected within an enclosure before the main scaffold was installed, the birdcage had to be meticulously incorporated at both ends of the Hall to provide full access to the ceiling and eaves, and constructed in such a way that the birdcage can be removed while the protections remain in place.

Great Hall Ceiling Panels

Throughout the course of the project numerous construction challenges were faced, however the most unusual, and programme sensitive, was dealing with the Great Hall ceiling panels. This was an issue that was first uncovered as the Great Hall was stripped of its roof coverings.

Once the temporary roof was erected over the Great Hall and the slates were removed the team was able to fully assess the condition of the plaster ceiling from above. Despite initial investigations from below suggesting the panels were in reasonable condition, in many areas the plaster nibs that held the ceiling panels to the roof structure were missing when viewed from above, and where the plaster nibs remained, they were exceptionally friable, turning to dust when touched.

Each plaster ceiling panel weighed around 70kg, and the team knew they had to fully mitigate any risk of failure in order to reopen the building and obtain insurance cover.

Developing a methodology that had never before been used in this way, specialist conservators chemically stabilised existing plaster nibs where possible. In areas that were missing nibs 2000 structural pads were added that tied the back of the panel to roof structure.

Although risk of panel failure had been reduced, the team still had to mitigate the residual risk of impact of any future failure, therefore the team explored internal support options such as discrete metal angles and netting with Historic England.

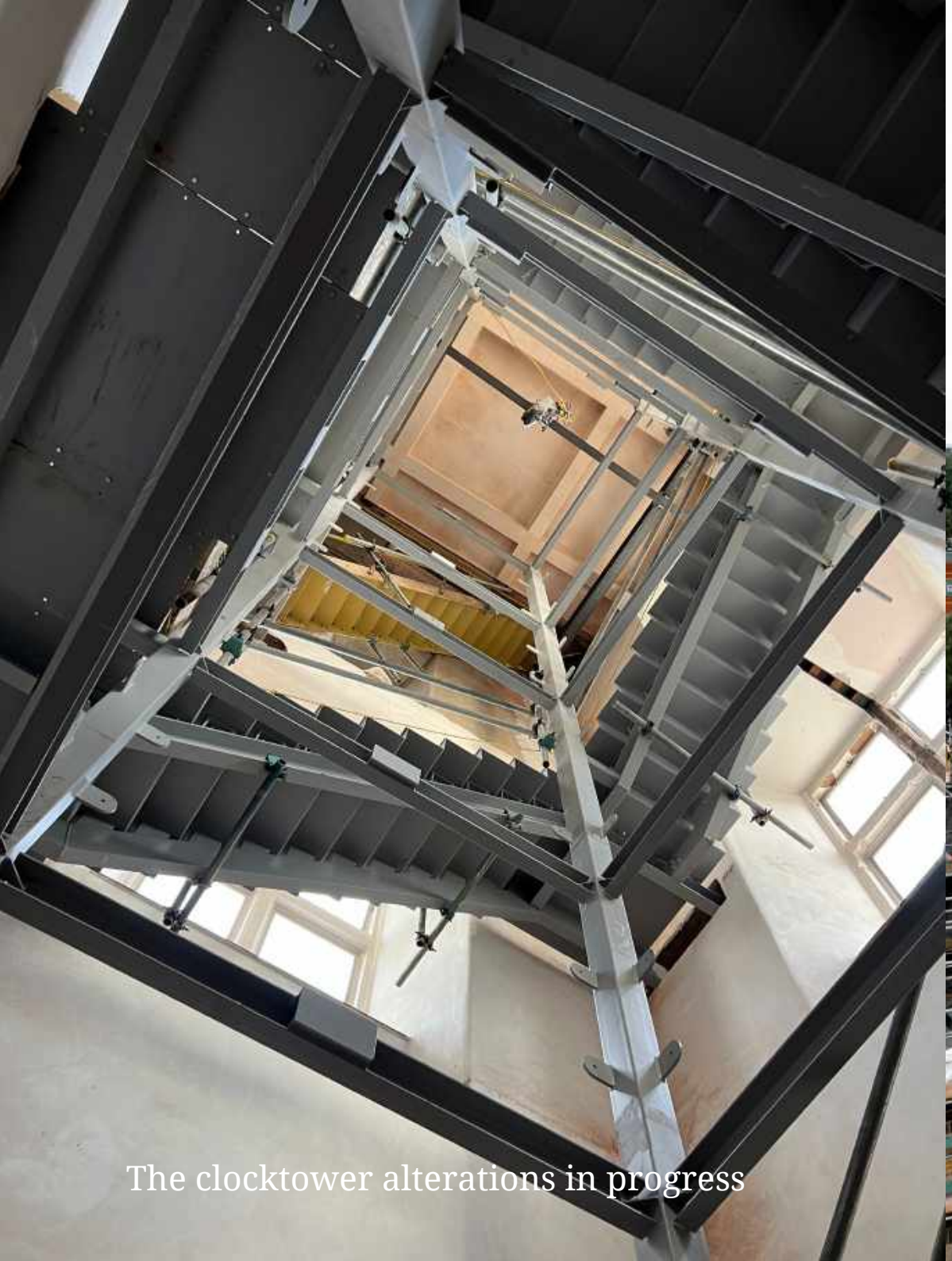
As engineering calculations to prove the integrity of the netting were too complex to undertake, H. H. Smith designed and constructed a 1:1 scale test rig replicating the exact dimensions and weight of a single ceiling panel and with supervision by the structural engineer tested the integrity of the netting when full panel failure was simulated. The tests were a success, and a type of netting was installed that is nearly invisible when viewed from the ground.

Works to the Roof & Fleche

At an early stage of the project, the team identified that the works at the highest level of the building, the package of repairs and redecorations to the Fleche, posed significant programme risks and therefore should be completed as early as possible. It was also fundamental to complete the works to the Fleche in order that the scaffolding used to access it could be dismantled, thus facilitating a more robust junction with the Great Hall temporary roof. The works to the Fleche were carefully planned, starting with a complex scaffold design and installation, where access was created via a series of 'saddles' constructed on top of the South elevation of the Great Hall roof with a slender walkway along the ridge.

Works to what should have been a 10-week programme commenced with the existing paint finishes stripped away and the original leadwork removed. The true extent of deterioration and decay became more evident as the stripping works progressed. The removal of flashings and cover moulds / plinths uncovered significant loss of structure of corner posts, pinnacles, and buttresses.

A collaborative team approach was required in order to agree the most appropriate methodology for the restoration. Specialist input was sought via timber decay experts, working alongside the project design team and specialist sub-contractors.



The clocktower alterations in progress

Erecting the temporary roof

Various options were considered ranging from local in-situ repairs to unconventional suggestions such as removing the Fleche in its entirety and lifting it to ground so that the works could be undertaken on site but in factory conditions. After much consideration a hybrid approach was undertaken with key structural elements repaired in-situ whist other sections were de-constructed and taken to the workshop for repair / replication.

To enable load-bearing structural elements to be repaired in-situ an engineered propping design was developed which redistributed the loads down to the surrounding access scaffolding. Initially a Temporary Works check was undertaken to estimate the weight of the Fleche – which was understood to be in the region of 9-10 Tonnes. To avoid overloading the scaffolding and Fleche itself, works were undertaken in 4 stages with one quarter supported at a time. During the repair works, every opportunity was taken to improve the construction detailing wherever possible. Through minor amendments to the design, all of which were undertaken with good conservation principles in mind and avoiding visible changes, the team were able to improve the octagonal gutter arrangement and reduce the likelihood of future water ingress – which had adverse affected the Fleche over the last 100 years.

On completion of the timber repairs, the beautiful leadwork was re-instated exactly as per the original installation and the timberwork was redecorated in the original much brighter and vibrant colour scheme. H. H. Smith was delighted with the finished results, which we believe were a testament to the skills and craft of the tradespeople who carried out the works, many of whom battled the elements through a very hostile winter.

Clock Tower – New Structural Opening and Steel Glazed Core and Lift

The most technically challenging interventions on the project was the construction of the new glazed lift and stair core within the clock tower. One of the first challenges to overcome before works could commence was to ensure the safe rehousing of the tower's favourite inhabitants – the Peregrine Falcons. Working in conjunction with the Project Ecologist and Greater Manchester's Raptor Group, early construction works were carefully scheduled to avoid excessive noise and vibration to the tower walls, until the falcons chicks had fledged the nest. Specialist high access technicians were then brought in, who abseiled out of the tower windows (some 50m + above ground) to install a netting barrier – temporarily preventing the falcons from re-nesting. A new nest was also installed on top of an adjacent building to house the falcons for the duration of the construction works.

The new 3.1m wide x 4.7m tall structural opening was then formed through the 1400mm thick tower wall. The design and construction teams worked collaboratively through various VE processes, and settled on a complex and carefully detailed reinforced concrete solution that could be installed in a staged way with minimal temporary works.

The new door opening, a major structural intervention, was formed by cutting 3no 'slots' through the existing masonry before casting the intricate R.C structure and connecting bolt arrangement. The installation consisted of a series of complex mini phases with numerous 'stop points' where temporary woks and load distribution were revised before progressing to the next stage. Once the concrete had cured sufficiently the frame was hydraulically 'jacked' by a specialist sub-contractor so that the wall loads were slowly and carefully redistributed through the new frame. Upon completion of the opening, a new stone facing was installed to match the adjacent door.

The erection of the new steel lift core and stairs posed many logistical challenges, not least because all materials, access and lifting equipment had to be transported into the tower by hand via the new 1.3m wide x 2.2m tall door opening.

As can be expected in a building of its age, the internal walls of the tower were also significantly out of square and far outside the verticality tolerances of modern construction. As all components of the frame, stairs, glazing and lift etc were to remain on show the tolerances were millimetre-critical.

As part of the design process a 3D Point Cloud Survey was undertaken to fully understand the constraints and tolerances at each floor level – this was vital as the new lift and stair core also tied into the existing floor thresholds. In a bid to improve efficiency and reduce installation time, H. H. Smith developed a 'shared' lifting arrangement which was utilised by multiple sub-contractors. A sacrificial crucifix lifting frame was installed at the head of the steel lift core for use by both the steel installer and the structural glazier, which was capable of safely lifting 6m long steel columns as well as the 2.5 x 2.2m panes of glazing.



Looking down at the Public Realm

Transformation of the Public Realm

The Council has always been committed to the redevelopment of Town Hall Square even before the building received NLHF funding. They pledged money to create a better setting for the Town Hall and even when costs increased, RBC remained committed to the scheme and the final vision.

Gillespies' concept design for the Town Hall Square transforms the setting of the historic Town Hall and provides a multi-functional civic space at the heart of Rochdale. A special place where people can get together and enjoy being outdoors in a high-quality setting. The design of the Square was completed alongside the new vision and restoration of the Town Hall creating an inspiring place which celebrates history and provides a new civic focus for Rochdale.

The Town Hall was surrounded by car parking which was not a fitting setting for the Grade I listed building. With approval from the Council to close the car parks and surrounding roads, a once in a lifetime opportunity was presented to create a people-focused public realm sensitive to the historic environment and to enhance the setting of the Town Hall. Gillespies responded to this by creating a bold new vision for the space that provides two distinct areas: the Esplanade and Great Lawns and Town Hall Square.

The Esplanade and Great Lawns are located to the north of the Town Hall. The Esplanade connects Manchester Road to the east, with the town centre to the west. It is constructed over the Culverted River Roch which presented a challenge to proposed levels and drainage. No new drainage connections were possible, so all the existing gully locations were reused, and levels were designed to suit. The intent was to close the road to the majority of vehicular traffic, creating a pedestrianised boulevard which can also act as an events and market space. This was enhanced with new tree planting in ornamental borders and is lit at night with new lower-level light columns to create a welcoming ambience after dark. The historic lighting columns were refurbished and relocated around the Town Hall and positioned on stone plinths for extra gravitas.

The carpet of natural stone paving incorporates artworks inspired from the Town Hall interior celebrating Rochdale history and is framed by a "warp and weft" of stone to allude to the importance of the textile industry. The Rochdale Carpet is flanked by two large formal lawns with planted borders which act as an extension of the existing lawns that flank the Cenotaph. This helps to visually integrate the existing Cenotaph into the new public realm. The raised granite stone edges to the lawns provide informal seating along The Esplanade, encouraging users to pause and enjoy the new space. The Great Lawns can be used for informal events and performances, creating a new green heart for Rochdale as a counterpoint.

The historic Town Hall Square is located to the east of the Town Hall, defined by Packer Street with the Gracie Fields statue as its focus. Packer Street was closed to vehicular traffic creating one large civic square with plenty of "spill out" space for adjacent businesses. It was a challenge to provide access for the Town Hall Square event space whilst restricting day to day traffic. This was resolved by protecting the space with fixed bollards and including droppable bollards at key locations to allow access for event traffic. Electrical power was also included at various points around Town Hall Square to facilitate future events.

This large, paved space contrasts with the adjacent Great Lawns and helps to connect the wider landscape of Broadfield slopes and Packer Spout fountain with the town centre. The Gracie Fields statue was retained to form a well- loved focal point in the space and moveable planters frame views towards Packer Spout. Large trees were introduced into the paving to create the impression that the slopes are merging with the new square.

Unique artist designed seating around each tree helps to define the space and protect the trees. These Global Benches are inspired from fabric patterns from each continent and provide a colourful contrast to the subtle colours of the surrounding paving.



A close view of the engraving on the Rochdale Carpet



A bird’s eye view of the Rochdale Carpet as the artwork is installed

On a day-to-day basis users will be able to visit the Town Hall café, sit out on the new stone terrace overlooking the Square or meet friends at the Gracie Fields statue. On event days, the moveable planters will be relocated to provide space for market stalls, a concert stage or marquee.

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Tendering and procurement

Phase 1 Enabling Works RBC funded
It was agreed that tendering should be single stage based on RIBA Stage 4 design information and fully quantified Bills of Quantities (BQ's), due to the bespoke nature of the works and time constraints. The design and cost risk would remain client side making tendering easier and more attractive for Contractors to price. It also meant that in terms of tender evaluation we would be comparing apples with apples, and post contract we would have a set of BQ rates to agree variations. JCT ICD with Contractors design was the form of contract.

Phase 2 Restoration Work NLHF & RBC funded
Single stage tender approach: On receipt of NLHF R2 approval, the team proceeded to prepare tender documents for the Phase 2 works using the single stage format for the Phase 1 tender documents as a basis. The proposed contract was to commence 19/7/21 (following completion of Phase 1) and complete 16/6/23. Only 2 financially acceptable SSQ returns were received in December 2020, and they were deemed not of sufficient standing to satisfy the requirements outlined by NLHF.

Following the disappointing SSQ process, the team was tasked with testing the contracting market to understand the difficulties we were having in securing appropriate expressions of interest.

2-stage tender approach
A Webinar was held by the team in February 2021, attended by c 20 small to large size building contractors. The feedback gleaned from the large building contractors was that a framework using a 2-stage tender approach would be preferred for them to consider submitting tenders. This would reduce their risk profile on the proposed large, complex project.

The use of existing frameworks was researched but on closer scrutiny, for the value of project works for Phase 2, the project would not necessarily secure lots with sufficient numbers of contractors with the relevant heritage experience. The RDA and team wanted to maintain control of the tender process, to maximise chances to receive the most appropriate contractor for the project and to give a wider range of contractors a chance to tender.

A bespoke 2 stage tender process was developed and managed by the team. This change of approach also created significant programme impact, which was reviewed and updated to accommodate the revised Phase 2 tender process, to mitigate impact on the overall programme.

SSQ2 returns were received April 2021 and the proposed revised contract dates for Phase 2, to accommodate the 2-stage process to be adopted, was contract commencement of 1/3/22 and completion 11/7/23. Again, challenging market conditions meant SSQ submissions were limited with only 2 financially acceptable returns, but each return was considered of high enough quality to proceed with the 2-stage tender process. A rigorous stage 1 tender process ensued based on cost, quality and social value scoring, and HHS Ltd were appointed to proceed with stage 2 of the tender process under a JCT preconstruction agreement.

Phase 1A
Due to the delay on the Phase 2 tender exercise caused by the switch from single stage to 2 stage tendering, the team agreed to bridge the gap between contract completion of Phase 1 in July 2021 to the proposed start of Phase 2 in March 2022 with a negotiated 'Phase 1A' extension to the Phase 1 contract. This would enable NLHF eligible works to start on site on time thus maintaining overall programme, and also, the RDA would be able to commence the associated drawdown of the NLHF grant on programme. Initial packages of Phase 2 works that had been designed and agreed were pulled forward and undertaken in advance of the Phase 2 start date. Costs for Phase 1A were agreed using tendered rates from the Phase 1.



The co-created artwork featured in the Bright Hall

Phase 2 Stage 2 of the tender process

Concurrently with the Phase 1A construction works on site, stage 2 of the Phase 2 tender process continued. Packages of work were issued out to tender by the main contractor based on design information to RIBA 4 and Bills of Quantities. Many subcontractors requested extensions of time to the proposed tender return dates due to workload and the number of other tenders they were pricing. The naming process outlined within the JCT Standard Form was adopted to appoint specialist glazing and heritage decorative restorers in advance of Contract agreement with the main contractor. However to spread workload the restoration of the decorative finishes to the Great Hall in particular, was included in the Main Contract tender process.

Multiple workshops were arranged with different subcontractors which proved very useful. Proposals were proving difficult to price and in some instances specialist subcontractors had their own interpretation of requirements which further skewed submissions and costs. It became apparent that tender figures were going to exceed the stage 1 cost plan allowances significantly. Generally, tenders were being affected by:

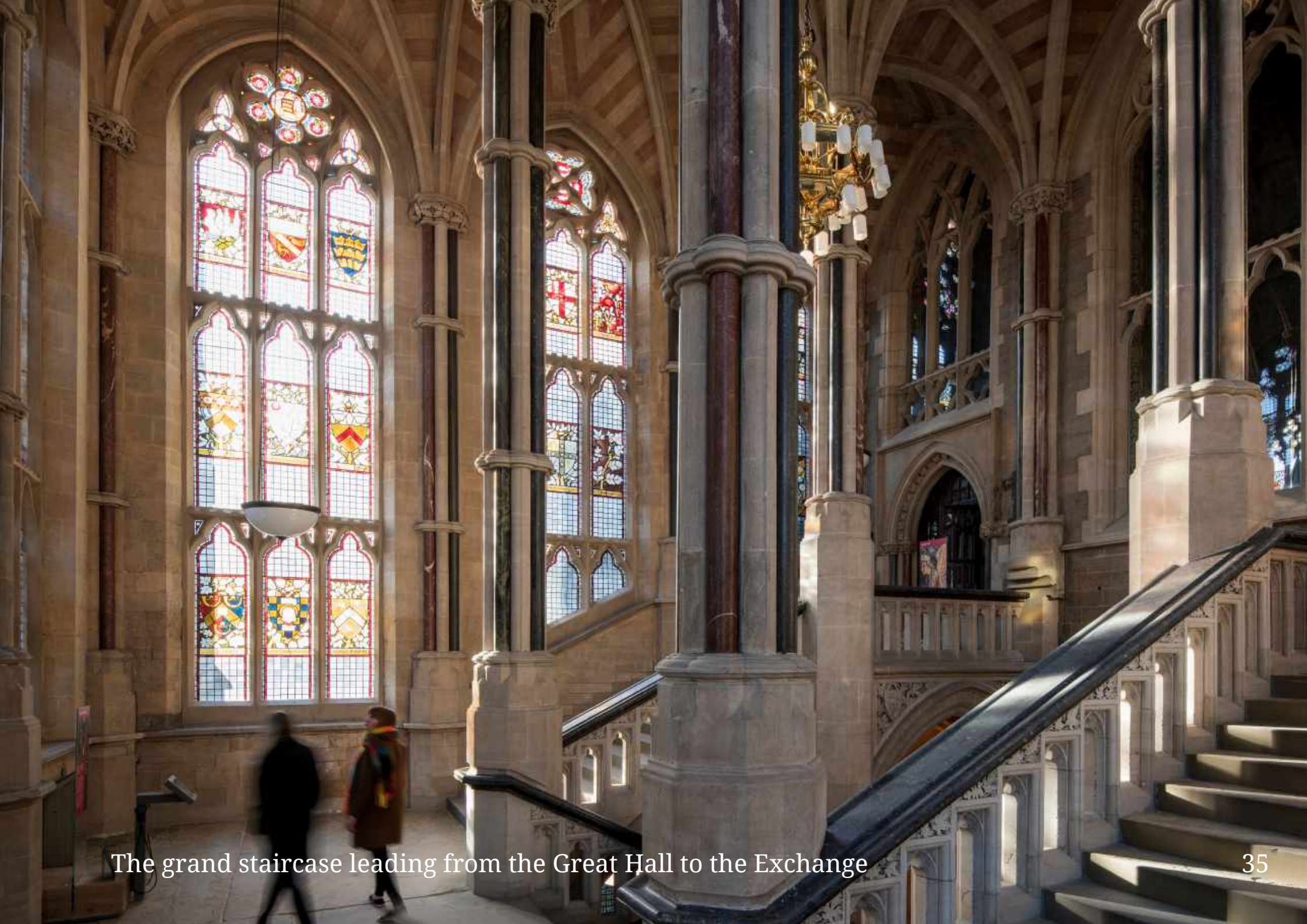
- Current market conditions including labour and material shortages
- Associated inflationary pressures
- Complex works package requirements and associated specifications
- Sub-contractors being inundated with work enquiries and choosing easier works to tender for
- Scope creep

In order to maintain a programmed start on site by March 2022, it was agreed that packages of work to be undertaken early on in the programme should be value engineered (VE'd) and agreed as soon as possible pre contract. Packages such as doors, partitions finishes and decorations would be included within the Contract on a provisional basis to include target VE. These packages would be dealt with post contract in line with an Information Release Schedule (IRS) to be included as a contract amendment.

As well as an agreed extensive VE process to help to bring costs back to original allowances, RDA applied to RBC for additional funding to support the Phase 2 project, which was approved.



A glimpse into the Great Hall from the Bright Hall



The grand staircase leading from the Great Hall to the Exchange

Risk and contingency management

The size and complexities of the town hall project did mean the team had to start the project with a high level of unknowns and very high overall risk profile. To mitigate the impact of this, the team phased the project enabling learning from the early phases of work to be applied to the later phases. Phasing the project supported a very active risk management strategy with a different contingency approach on each phase.

- Phase 1 enabling works undertook the high risk works reducing the risk profile of the rest of the works and carrying high levels of contingency fully funded by the Council who as the building owner could carry this level of risk.

- External funders require a level of risk and associated contingency which is not always commensurate with the needs of the project and Phase 1 was also needed to get to a stage where external funders were prepared to commit to the restoration.

- Soft market testing was undertaken to understand roof, scaffolding and window replacement costs for the later phases. This was carefully managed and contractors were paid to produce cost plans, programmes and methodologies. It must be said that the information gathered in this manner had very limited use as it was not in any way consistent with the approach taken by contractors during tendering.

- Specialist works to the stained-glass windows and conservation work to the historic decorated surfaces was pre-agreed and included in tender documents as 'named' sub-contractors to move risk from the contractor to the council. This significantly helped encourage contractors to tender the work. The team planned this approach early to develop partnerships in key conservation areas so that cost and programme could be agreed. Contractually it is a mechanism that is rarely used and in fact professionals are discouraged from using it. However on this project it was highly successful.

- An assessment of the potential impact of Covid-19 in early 2020 was prepared. As construction was scheduled for 2021 it was agreed that we would expect tendering contractors to outline their approach to Covid-19 within the Supplier Selection Questionnaire (SSQ) and the tender process.
- Inflation at cost planning stage was volatile and in order to mitigate the risk of inflationary pressures on the Project, RBC confirmed they would underwrite any potential overspend due to inflation.

Almost certainly the most critical risk for the project team to manage was the risk that programme slippage became too great to mitigate. Complexities with funders, uncontrollable third party challenges such as legal and statutory requirements put huge pressures on the programme. The benefit of phasing the project really became evident as the team could move work streams between phases, extend and contract phases and in so doing mitigate the impact of delays in particular areas of work. In a large part this strategy worked.

The team structured the contingency allocations in relation to the risk profile of the phases but were limited by overall budget constraints. Before utilising contingency the team considered all options to value engineer or use alternative methodologies. Omissions and reductions to the scope of works to mitigate cost pressures were also widely utilised as frequently additional costs came with additional time pressures and could not be accommodated. This strategy is controversial as it leaves the building not as finished as it could be in some areas. In Rochdale the creation of the Heritage Conservation Skills Studio with 3 full time conservators who will continue the work the team has started has significantly supported the impact risk and contingency strategy.



The Mayor’s Entrance, looking towards the clocktower

Structural engineering solutions

Getting to know the building

The challenge for the structural engineer on projects of this type is to quickly gain an understanding of the hidden fabric behind the precious decorative finishes and guide the other designers to carry out alterations and insertions that work with – rather than against - the form and materials of the original.

Early detective work uses published articles about the building and its site, as well as record drawings sourced from a variety of locations including – in this case – the drawing collection of the V&A Museum in London. There follows a process of collating the information and reviewing the form of the building as it is seen today, along with the known alterations, and the significant events in the story of the structure. Once all the visual or desk study resources have been collected, the team start to surgically carry out physical investigations. In this case that included geotechnical boreholes, and sampling and laboratory testing of brick, mortar, and timber. Trained sniffer dogs were used to try to root out areas of possible timber decay. Accessing the inaccessible places included a programme of lifting floorboards and digging trial pits, as well as some trips out on the roof in cherry-pickers, and on a hair-raising scaffold tower 20 metres up inside the Great Hall. This last action offered a face-to-face encounter with the carved angels on the hammerbeam roof, and helped the team understand how the light fittings could be returned to their hands.

Built on marshy reclaimed ground on the banks of the River Roch, the Town Hall's foundations had moved in the past, and a catastrophic fire only 12 years after completion sent the original clocktower crashing down onto parts of the remaining building. Past strengthening and repair works from this trauma remain visible in the basement areas. Alfred Waterhouse's replacement tower was 'fireproof' - built of stone and brick on piled foundations and set away from the original building.

In other areas the outward thrusts of the hammerbeam and scissor truss roofs, and the deflections of timber roofs and floors had all taken a toll – along with several insensitive and poorly detailed alterations and additions over the years. The team spent time in the early stages carefully understanding this whole background story of the building, before considering what changes might be made.

Repairs

While beautifully crafted from a decorative point of view – not quite the same level of quality ran through the structural trades and materials, and this – along with the distortions and long-term movements in the structure, and general deterioration over time - have meant that some repairs have been necessary across the building.

In the Bright Hall, the 1970's lift shaft had cut straight through a main truss end and its carved stone corbel. Through careful sequencing temporary supports were designed to allow the shaft to be demolished and to hold up the roof while a new carved haunch and corbel could be reinstated.

While the original building might not comply with modern requirements, the team had to be careful not to attempt to 'improve' things too much and a pragmatic approach was needed to leave as much of the fabric in its original form as possible. This is particularly the case with floor loadings. All the existing capacities were checked and the team agreed to undertake limited strengthening in certain key areas where existing capacities were low and new uses brought extra load. In some cases, this strengthening has needed intricacy and lateral thinking to remain invisible while working around the decorative ceilings, carved timber beams, and services routes.

Incorporating new services

Apart from repairs, the project has brought the significant challenge of weaving a whole new infrastructure of modern heating, lighting, plumbing and wiring invisibly through the historic structure.

This vital but unglamorous and largely invisible process comes out of a collaborative effort between the whole team – grounded in the detailed knowledge that has been gained about the existing structure. This allowed for the suggestion of vertical and horizontal routes through the building that create the minimum amount of impact – for example in this case reusing part of a 1970's lift shaft as a main riser, or the careful direction of services in the floor to run parallel to joists or notch them only in carefully controlled locations.



The interior of the Porte Cochère

New interventions

The big structural alterations in this project have been about creating better access to the main spaces in the building. Many of the new interventions are deliberately discreet – fitting seamlessly into the historic fabric as if they had always been there - while others are unashamedly modern and show clearly where good modern design has been added to the story of the building.

By the end of the project a total of four new lifts will have been added along with several services riser shafts, formed in locations carefully selected to minimise damage to original fabric.

Reclaiming the Bright Hall has meant needing to form a new entrance and access for it, and this is achieved by using the lower stories of Waterhouse's rebuilt clocktower as a new stair and lift shaft. This required the formation of one of the most difficult door openings the team has ever had to design. Cutting through the 1.4m thick walls at the base of the 53m high brick and stone tower – on the only intact side of the square – required some intense analysis. A finite element model of the entire tower was built so that vertical and wind loads on the whole structure could be modelled, using material properties derived from the earlier testing.

After some discussion of options, it was agreed that the original instinct for a reinforced concrete frame to surround the new opening was the best option. The frame is laterally stiff and able to carry the huge dead weight of masonry above, transmit it around the opening, and get it back to the original footing below, without overstressing the brickwork around it. The frame was designed such that it could be installed in stages avoiding temporary propping works.

Analysis was carried out not only in the existing and completed state, but also in several temporary cases during the staged construction and hydraulic jacking process, and careful movement monitoring was carried out during the process to make sure things went as planned. Within the tower a carefully detailed new glass and steel lift shaft wrapped with a steel and oak stair gives a new main access up to the Bright Hall.

Other visible interventions include the minimal glass enclosures that have been added to enclose the Porte Cochère at the main front door and enclosing the link and access to the Bright Hall stair and lift. These new enclosures use large panels of specialist glass and metal framing designed specifically to limit impact on the surrounding stone, and to be as transparent as possible.



The new entrance with its reinforced concrete frame can be seen behind the new lift shaft



The pendant lights held by the angels in the Great Hall

Environmental sustainability

The mechanical and electrical services in the building were performing poorly due to their age and condition, and were not considerately installed with regard to the beautiful interiors of the building.

A fully new heating system has been installed throughout the building, with new pipework concealed in voids after extensive research and opening up to find fully concealed routes. Historic radiators were refurbished and reused, and a complete new control system allows heating to be zoned to improve comfort, reduce energy consumption and provide fabric protection. Temperature compensation (allowing the heating temperature to reduce as it gets warmer outside) allows low flow temperatures for higher efficiency... but also for the connection of a [Salix funded] heat pump in the next phase. The heat pump will reduce carbon emission by approximately 90 tonnes per year by working in tandem with the existing boilers. A new substation was provided as part of the Salix funding, which futureproofs the building for a complete switch to heat pump based heating when the boilers reach the end of their life.

To keep the heat in, the roofs were insulated, including the Great Hall which was provided with foil insulation due to the shallow void. The [Salix funded] roof insulation will reduce carbon emissions by approximately 100 tonnes per year. In summer, this will also help to reduce temperature peaks during the hottest days protecting the occupants from high internal temperature for the hotter future due to climate change impacts.

Where the historic and visual impact was low, external windows were replaced with double glazed units. More openable windows were provided to improve natural ventilation through the heavily occupied spaces. These allow for better air quality but also a means of providing cooling to accommodate a future warmer climate.

The entire building has been fully rewired to meet current regulations for the safety and efficiency of the building. Again, wiring routes were concealed to hide them from view.

All lighting to the building is now LED, which all have the same warm colour temperature to suit a building of this age. A large proportion of the lighting was recovered from the building. The beautiful Great Hall pendants, for example were fully restored and rehung from the hands of the angels (the original location of the first gas lamps). Other fittings were taken down and refurbished/relamped and repositioned in front-of-house areas.

The fittings in the newly glazed Port Cochère and clocktower Entrance were sourced from an architectural salvage organisation and restored.
The lighting system now has more control. A switch at the door allows all fittings to be switched off by the last person out, so no lights are left on. Side corridors, WC's and offices are provided with occupancy detection so they automatically switch off when not in use. The Great Hall, Bright Hall and the Exchange all have special lighting control with scene setting for the variety of events that might take place in these areas.

A complete new wireless fire alarm system protects the building and its occupants, but also reduce the damage to the building caused by extensive wiring.

Reusing old radiators and light fittings are important for the history of the building, but also as a means of reducing the embodied carbon by not buying new equipment.

This has been an amazing project to be involved with, being able to improve the visual appearance with respect to the heritage internally and externally was a priority. But developing the new M&E services strategy also means that comfort and fabric protection are improved, and energy consumption and carbon emissions are significantly reduced. The building is futureproofed for the changing climate, and for electrification to move fully away from gas to minimise its impact on the environment.



In the Mayor's Entrance during the hard hat site tours held by H. H. Smith

Summary of social value and in-kind contributions generated

Due to the specific requirements set out by NLHF the approach was taken to define exactly what social value (SV) outputs we would like the contractor to deliver that were real, meaningful and quantifiable. This not only helped to achieve NLHF objectives but targets activity where it was most needed and had the greatest impact.

Consultant Offer
The consultants were asked to outline how they could contribute to the SV outputs. In the main they supported the Design Engineer Construct programme and the RDA apprentice.
Donald Insall and Price & Myers both employed junior / apprentice staff who worked on the project and these staff have stayed working on the project for the duration. This has meant they have gained a real understanding of the project, understood the risks and opportunities and made a valuable contribution to the day to day running.

Donald Insall produced a video about the project, which focused on the different roles within the team. Team members were asked to describe their role, how they got into it and what they enjoyed about their role. This video was shared with various local schools and colleges. The feedback was positive and helped students understand the different roles available.

The team have also been trying to arrange for the DEC students to visit site. However this has proved difficult. Getting the necessary permissions for the students to leave the school has been problematic but it is hoped that a visit can be arranged this new academic year for the Year 11 students completing their final part of the course.

Contractor Offer
The contractor has delivered a number of SV outputs including apprentices and work placements (discussed separately in this report).
They were also tasked with delivering construction tours during the contract. These were delivered on the last Friday of the month and from the outset, they were booked up with a list of people waiting to attend. The target was to deliver 36 tours but 41 were delivered as individual tours were given to various community groups and people working on the project.

Feedback for the tours was extremely positive and visitors enjoyed seeing the work behind the scenes. The contractor has also supplied kit, equipment and training free of charge to all trainees working on site. They have also supplied designs for the hoardings at their own expense.

RDA Training / Job opportunities:
The project team appointed a Project Management Apprentice to work directly with the team during the construction phase. The apprentice also attended project management training.

From the beginning, they were given a prominent role in the project to support the team and the work. This has led to them being taken on as a permanent Project Officer within the RDA.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In-kind Contributions

Through the project we also recorded the amount of in-kind support we received which is listed below:

Measures	*Contribution*
Equipping the HCSS	The contractor contributed to equipment, which will be used by the new Heritage Conservation Skills Studio. The contractor also paid for fleece and boots for all trainees working on site.
Support for Hirst Volunteers	Supply of boots and equipment.
Construction Apprentices	The main contractor covered the apprentice's salaries for 5 x apprentices. Three sub-contractors appointed 7 x apprentices.
Design Engineer Construct	The consultants dedicated their own time to deliver bespoke workshops.
Archaeological Dig	Support the first dig, which took place at the beginning of Phase 2.
Volunteer Cleaning	Participants of the LCS training volunteered their time to cleaning so they could put the skills they had learnt into practice.
Site Tours	The Contractor delivered the tours with 4 x members of staff. They also paid for drone videos, which were posted on social media.
Overall Total Value	**£434,305.40**






H.H. SMITH





Training and education

Design Engineer Construct

One of the local high schools was keen to participate and offer the Design, Engineer and Construct (DEC) qualification to their students. However, they needed a funding partner to enable them to deliver the DEC programme. Through the project, we were able to offer this financial support while giving them access to the different consultants working on the project.

The biggest challenge was that the scheme started during Covid-19 and so most workshops had to be delivered online. The preference would have been to deliver more workshops in person. The team is still trying to organise a site visit for the students, however due to Covid-19 initially and difficulty in obtaining permissions it has proved difficult thus far.

It was the first time the school had delivered the qualification and so the tutor had to spend time understanding what was required and how the course should be delivered. The amount of workshops and content was dictated by the tutor with some suggestions by the team. The funding supplied by the project covered tutor training which enabled the team to support two cohorts of students rather than just one as initially specified.

What has worked well is that many of the consultants are younger and have come straight out of education. The students could identify with them and their pathways into the different career roles were more relevant. The consultants not only used the Town Hall project as an example for their work but also other projects they were working on that the students were familiar with.

All of the consultants said they enjoyed delivering the sessions and stated that the questions posed to them by the students were intelligent, well thought out and showed a level of understanding they were not anticipating.

Initially the tutor was extremely enthusiastic and was excited to deliver the course. However he found the amount of coursework onerous to assess. This was further compounded by a member of the faculty leaving the school and the tutor having to cover their lessons. The tutor is currently unsure if they want to continue delivering the course but the team is working with Class of Your Own (COYO) to devise a plan to encourage the school to continue to deliver the qualification.

Through the project, the team were able to facilitate a relationship between COYO and the Hopwood College, which has resulted in the college now offering levels 2 and 3 of the DEC qualification. This gives the students a pathway into higher education.

Heritage Skills Training

The restoration of the stained glass, decorative surfaces and wooden furniture and panelling provided a once in a generation opportunity for the project to recruit and train people in these specialist areas of work and embed heritage skills training into the project under the control of qualified and ICON accredited conservators. The team saw this as an opportunity to offer local people a chance to engage with heritage in a meaningful way whilst working on one of the most prestigious projects in the country.

This training aimed to tackle challenges of low aspirations by introducing local people to training and career opportunities they may never have considered as an option. It was also aimed at those who were interested in the heritage sector but were struggling to find a route in.

The team carried out soft market testing in the early stages of the project and it became clear that many conservation companies were reluctant to offer training to volunteers as part of their offer due to insurances and resources. Initially we thought the training plan might not have been able to go ahead.



Restoring the stained glass in the Great Hall

Following further research, the team was able to secure the support of some of the most renowned specialists in the country with a wealth of experience and a dedicated ethos to training and development. These specialists were also appointed to work on the building and this resulted in the participants gaining real life experience and being able to put the skills they learned into practice.

The training over 12 weeks was delivered twice and both times the number of participants exceeded the numbers originally proposed. Participants ranged from age 17 – mid-60's and came from a variety of backgrounds and with a range of skills and experience.

As the training was delivered at the beginning of the construction phase, participants were able to then volunteer their time to work alongside the conservators in the building for the remainder of the project. Not only have they developed new skills but they have been able to put these into practice and contribute to the restoration in a meaningful way.

The feedback from all participants has been positive with some even saying it has been life changing. Some participants were experiencing mental health issues and the training has given them a reason to leave the house, given them a purpose to their day as well as making new friends. One of the younger participants was enrolled at Hopwood Hall College and this training provided work experience in a sector they were interested in pursuing.

The project also recruited a stained glass trainee who worked alongside the conservators for the duration of the two year project. The role received 70 applications including some international applications. The selected trainee was local and quickly became competent and experienced enough to work on her own and was given a series of areas to clean independently.



"I became a volunteer at Rochdale Town Hall in April 2022 when I joined the 12-week heritage skills training programme with Lancashire Conservation Studios. This was during my first year of A levels when I began to consider a career in conservation. It was an amazing opportunity to learn more about conservation and discover a passion which confirmed my decision to pursue a degree in it.

- Hannah, volunteer






TouchNTuff
VISITOR

Apprentices and job opportunities

Contractor recruitment of apprentices

Due to the specific requirements set out by NLHF the approach was taken to define exactly what social value outputs we would like the contractor to deliver that were real, meaningful and quantifiable. This not only helped to achieve NLHF objectives but targets activity where it was most needed and had the greatest impact.

The project included the standard requirement for the contractor to recruit apprentices for the duration of the contract as well as offer work experience opportunities. The team initially specified four apprentices should be recruited but this was exceeded with the main contractor recruiting five apprentices and four sub-contractors recruiting seven apprentices. Many were recruited through Hopwood Hall College and this also gave students work experience opportunities as well as the chance to work in a heritage setting, which they would not get on a traditional construction project. The main contractor also offered five work placements, two at 10 weeks and three at 2 weeks. From this cohort one of the joinery work placements was taken on as an apprentice and then taken on permanently by the main contractor.

The RDA also recruited two apprentices, one as Project Management Apprentice and one as a Stained Glass Trainee. The Project Management Apprentice was given the autonomy to work on a new project that was just being developed by the RDA and from the outset they showed real competency and maturity. This has led to them being appointed as a permanent Project Officer with the RDA. The Stained Glass Trainee was appointed to work alongside the conservators during the construction phase and beat 69 other applicants to get the post. They were local and had a real love for the building. During their time they gained valuable skills and grew in confidence and this resulted in them working independently on cleaning windows which were outside the original scope of works.

The Conservation Architects appointed a junior member of staff at the beginning of the project and this individual has worked on the project for the duration of the construction phase. The structural and civil engineers also took on a Junior member of staff who originally worked in the London office but was relocated to set up a new Manchester office and worked on the project for the majority of the Phase 2 works.






H.H. SMITH
VISITOR





Volunteering

Volunteers have played a significant role in the restoration of Rochdale Town Hall, contributing to the project at all stages. The passion displayed not just by Rochdalians but by those living outside of the borough in engaging with heritage has been evident, as since July 2021 538 volunteers and 595 volunteer participants have made in-kind contributions to the Town Hall project to the value of £204,486.54. The ways in which volunteers contributed to the project include:

- Conservation: A large portion of volunteers assisted in the conservation of highly significant areas of the Town Hall, such as assisting Hirst Conservation in the Great Hall by removing over a centuries worth of dust, debris, stains and old varnish from the painted ceiling panels, angels, and beams; conducting furniture restoration under the guidance of specialists; in addition to cleaning the fireplaces, walls, and wood panelling of the ground floor historic rooms under the supervision of Lancashire Conservation Studio.

- Documentation and cataloguing: A dedicated group of volunteers lent their time to the task of documenting and cataloguing the items stored within the Town Hall. This included a number of donations that were generously bestowed by local residents. With their depth of knowledge regarding the objects that were available, they helped to create the new exhibition in the Welcome Gallery to tell the story of the Town Hall and the collective heritage of the borough.

- Research: A research group embarked on a journey to unveil the layers of history previously forgotten. Through the in depth exploration of the Town Hall's artefacts, combined with those found in the Local Studies Centre at Touchstones, the group were able to unearth a more complete picture of the Town Hall's role within the local community. This will be translated into the exhibition in the Welcome Gallery, which they helped co-create.

- Archaeology: With the commencement of the works in the Public Realm a public archaeology dig took place under the supervision of Salford Archaeology. This was extremely well attended and demonstrated the demand for increased interaction with heritage. A number of artefacts were discovered as a result of the volunteer's efforts, a selection of which will be on display in the Welcome Gallery's exhibition.

- Tour guides: Embracing a collaborative spirit, the Town Hall is set to welcome a diverse group of volunteer tour guides who will assist visitors by sharing their love for Rochdale and the Town Hall. They will help bring the building to life, providing an engaging and informative experience to visitors of all backgrounds.

As the Town Hall moves towards its operational model, volunteers are now taking place in training such as Health & Safety, Fire Wardens, First Aid and more! Over the coming months volunteers will be preparing for the grand opening on Sunday 3rd March. 50 Tour Guide and Visitor Welcome Volunteers were successfully recruited to help welcome visitors into the building like never before.












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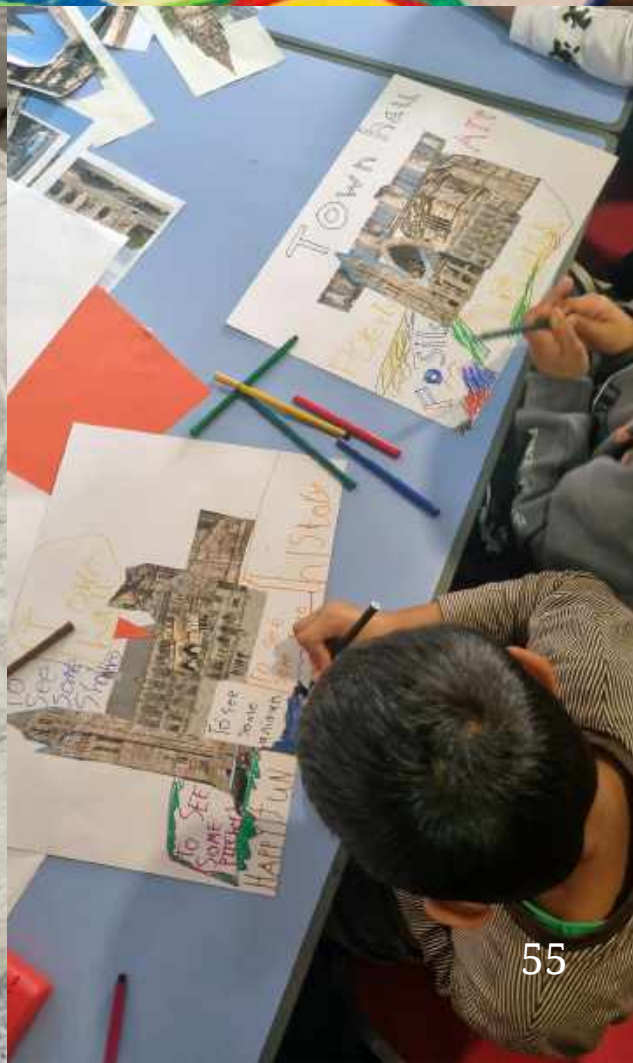

TOWN HALL

Heritage engagement

With funding from NLHF, the project strategically enhanced heritage engagement by appointing a dedicated manager who started in post just as the world was starting to find its feet following the Covid-19 pandemic in 2021. Their priority was managing the implementation of activities outlined in the Activity Plan, ensuring they could still be delivered even if another lockdown were to take place. This was challenging for an Activity Plan that has the face to face engagement of people at its heart.

The only noticeable effect was with the first public event of the plan - The Big Dig, an archaeological dig in the new Town Hall Square. Due to Covid-19, the activity had to be managed at a social distance, and therefore numbers and tickets were less than originally anticipated. New waves of Covid-19 during the summer of 2021 also meant that many people who had signed up for the Dig were not able to make it. Some staff also fell ill, causing capacity issues in managing the event.

The original Activity Plan suggested that one artist, or artist collective, could be employed to deliver all of the artist commission elements of the Activity Plan. Whilst this has worked on other projects, given the diversity of Rochdale's communities, we took the decision to divide the commission up and advertise it to a range of artists and artist collectives who could apply for a total of 3 Lots. These lots were divided up into: The Bright Hall Commission; Permanent Stained Glass Installations; and 'What Rochdale Means to Rochdalians' & 7 temporary installations.

This strategy worked well and we created a framework for a range of artists, specialising in a range of creative disciplines, including ceramics, film, photography, glass art and textiles.

In total, 10 specially commissioned pieces of artwork have been produced. We are very pleased with the quality of all the works, and especially pleased that all of them have been co-created with people of all ages and abilities across the borough of Rochdale. They really do the job of allowing people to see themselves represented in the fabric of Rochdale Town Hall.

Engagement achievements

- Excellent relationships with a variety of community champions, including local voluntary sector groups, primary schools, secondary schools, youth groups and non-for-profit organisations. These relationships have been nurtured and sustained since the start of the engagement progamme.
- Over 280 local people involved in the co-creation of artworks for Rochdale Town Hall.
- Excluding volunteers, the Activity Plan has engaged over 3120 individuals between July 2021- December 2023.
- Ensuring that local voices have been weaved into all public content. This includes the following:
  - Co-created exhibition content for the Welcome Gallery
  - Community-led selection process for the objects and stories that are presented in the Welcome Gallery
  - Co-created Content for the 'Did You Knows?' in the main visitor rooms with pupils from Falinge Park High School
  - 10 bespoke, specially commissioned pieces of artwork that are housed in Rochdale Town Hall. These exclude the artwork created for the Rochdale carpet in Town Hall Square.
  - Consultation with community panels relating to the creation of a new logo for Rochdale Town Hall
  - Community conservation in action with local people involved in the care and conservation of objects on display and in store
  - Community curators programme, helping to document and catalogue all of the objects in the town hall's collections, allowing accessibility to these previously invisible items.



Costume



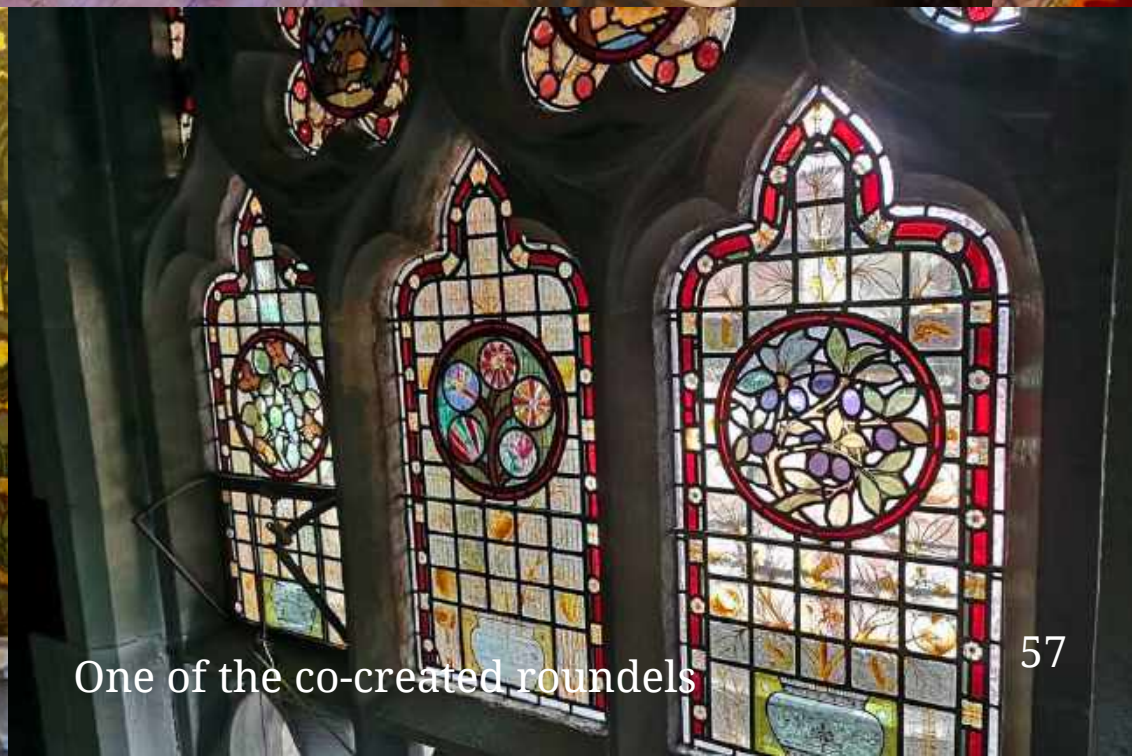
Outside Inside



Journeys



Temporary



One of the co-created roundels

Co-created artwork

A Bright Sky
The Bright Hall
Don't forget to look up in the Bright Hall and you will see our co-created community commission with artist May Wild Studio. Taking inspiration from participants artworks and stories, the 8 panels represent each of the local communities involved.

Two Dragons & We are all the same
The Small Exchange
Now on display are two intricate textile pieces produced by artist Alison Greyer. One has an emphasis on nature, community and remembrance, made in collaboration with the Middleton Arts & Crafts group and another takes inspiration from students at St Mary's Primary School.

Journeys
The Grand Staircase
'Life is a journey' or so the saying goes! This glass artwork, inspired by the recent restoration journey was made by artist Louise Watson in collaboration with Beggars Belief and local community groups.

The Fabric of Rochdale
The Exchange
Breaking Barriers 'The Fabric of Rochdale' is a celebratory, binaural sound piece, co-created with the diverse communities of four of the townships of Rochdale. It encompasses the spirit of the cooperative, exploring the hopes, dreams and lives of the people that call Rochdale their home.

Temporary
Mayor's Reception Room
May Wild Studio produced this piece. Inspiration for the repeated ceramic form came from a participant at Burnside Community Centre who cupped a piece of clay in her hand and created a delicate flower form. Her message - 'Temporary' - is a reflection on our natural world and how we need to preserve it for the future.

Room Roundels
Mayor's Reception Room
Two new stained glass roundels celebrate the restoration of the Town Hall. Glass artist Louise Watson drew inspiration from local children who produced bright, bold, coloured drawings, which have informed the design of the stained glass roundels you can see in here today.

Costume
The Old Council Chamber
Discover a textile artwork by Salford Slow Fashion, co-created with the BASA Community Group and cared for children group, run by Rochdale Youth Service. Inspired by clothing traditionally worn by communities who worked in the Lancashire Mills, it speaks for the people who would not have always been represented in Rochdale Town Hall.

Outside Inside
The Mayor's Parlour
Artist Sally Gilford worked with Rochdale Women's Welfare Association and Heywood Youth Club to co-create a large woollen rug, which runs along the historic sideboard and cascades onto the floor. Inspired by depictions of nature, the bold, colourful creation brings the 'outside inside' which in itself is an extension of the decor of the room.

Community Groups Involved

Lamet Habayeb
Veterans in Communities
Caldershaw Primary School
St Peter's R.C. Primary School, Middleton
Hopwood C P School
St Mary's Primary School, Littleborough
Middleton Arts & Crafts
Burnside Community Centre
Vibe Young Person
Caring and Sharing
All Saints Brigade
Rochdale Women's Welfare Association
Heywood Youth Group
Basa Community Group
Rochdale Youth Service



The new exhibition space in the Welcome Gallery

Establishing new interpretation

Rochdale Town Hall is one of the very finest examples of civic architecture in the country and is a communal asset to the people of Rochdale of the highest significance. However, the very nature of its imposing Victorian Gothic design rendered it inaccessible both physically and – in some cases – culturally to people within the local community, this project has sought to address the accessibility and interpretation of the Town Hall by placing the community at its heart.

The restoration of Rochdale Town Hall has been conceived as a project that would engage with the communities of Rochdale and incorporate volunteer outputs. The interpretative plan was fashioned with co-production in mind and coordinated with the activity plan to create opportunities for co-creation of content by volunteers and community partners that could be effectively incorporated into the interpretation within the Town Hall.

Local community consultation and engagement played a key role in guiding the interpretive plan, with consultation events identifying areas of interest to audiences. As the project has progressed, exhibits have been trialled and prototypes constructed to test ideas with people in the borough and generate feedback. The outcomes of this process have fed into the development of the design and interpretation.

Volunteers have been involved in hands-on restoration, identifying stories, research, text writing and image selection. They were provided with advice and training and their outputs supervised, collated, and coordinated by the content producer. Local artists and craftspeople have created new works to help re-interpret the original building and welcome new visitors. In this process the local community's engagement with their heritage has increased and many have learned new, transferrable, skills.

The outcome is that many of the volunteers want to continue their engagement with the Town Hall and with Rochdale's heritage.

The new interpretation is responsive to the historic environment. The building's period interiors have been respected through a sensitive use of high-quality finishes, environmentally benign materials, and sympathetic low energy lighting. Working in partnership with the architectural team has ensured that the conservation needs, and technical capacity of the building are reflected in the developed interpretation design.

The interpretation of Rochdale Town Hall represents a bold and innovative step in returning an intimidating Victorian edifice back into the heart of the community. A new Welcome Gallery will set the tone, breaking down barriers and inviting people to explore their Town Hall, beginning with a display that gives voice to the people of Rochdale as they explain what their Town Hall means to them. As a place that symbolises celebration, civic pride and industrial might, the Town Hall has many stories to tell about the people and town of Rochdale, and a new generation of Rochdalians will have the opportunity to claim it as their town hall.

Key themes of the new interpretation:

- Creation and restoration
- Place for the people
- Rochdale: People and communities
- Rochdale town and borough
- The Town Hall at work
- Campaigns and causes: making a difference



Evaluation

The team at Rochdale Town Hall are committed to ensuring that investment reaches and benefits the people of Rochdale, and that it secures the future of the Town Hall for future Rochdalians. The team are working with an external evaluator who is measuring what the project is achieving and for who, what is working, and how the team can continually improve what they do. The evaluator has consulted with a wide range of people – including project staff, volunteers, building contractors, artist-facilitators, community group leaders and school teachers. They have invited written feedback from nearly 400 individual people – including nearly 200 schoolchildren, 150 people who have visited RTH on a hard hat tour, community groups, work placements and volunteers. All of this feedback is analysed and fed back to the team in regular reporting. The evaluation helps plan how the building will be used in the future.

To date, the evaluation has focused on the range of different programmes that has engaged people with the site while it was closed for restoration, and what those people got out of their engagement. These have included projects with local schools and community groups, work placements in restoration, and behind the scene tours for the general public. The evaluation has looked at how bringing in artists from a range of disciplines has enabled people to produce artworks which will be on display when the Town Hall opens, and which tell stories of Rochdale's community heritage from a range of different perspective.

When the building reopens, we will want to know what people think. We celebrate what has gone well, and reflect on areas that can be improved. There will be a variety of ways of letting us know what the restored Town Hall means to you, and what you think of the restoration and how the building is used – so please look out for postcard feedback forms and digital surveys, and please use our social media platforms to start a conversation.

> **As external evaluators, we have been impressed at the work the team has put into involving local people, families and schoolchildren in the project wherever they have been able to – including the conservation programme, new artworks and a new volunteering programme.**
>
> **--Anna Cullum,**
> **Anna Cullum Associates**

