From: ADRIAN DOWD – PRINCIPAL PLANNING OFFICER
To: JOHN MACHOLC – HEAD OF PLANNING SERVICES
cc: 
Ref: AD/CMS
Ext: 4513
Date: 18 JANUARY 2016
Re: APPLICATION 3/2015/0943 (PA) AND 0944 (LBC)
HOLMES MILL, GREENACRE STREET, CLITHEROE

The Holmes Mill complex comprises a range of buildings relating to the textile manufacturing process and is a Grade II listed building within Clitheroe Conservation Area. The mill complex is within the setting of a number of other listed buildings (including Grade I Clitheroe Castle – also scheduled and Grade II 56-60 Moor Lane) and the Grade II Clitheroe Castle Historic Park and Garden.

Holmes Mill was listed on the 12 March 2013. The list description describes the Plan as: “the mill is sub-rectangular in plan with a yard along the east side of the complex and most buildings lying to the west of the yard. From south to north these buildings consist of the 1820s spinning block and size house, a 1910 boiler house with an earlier single-storey building and the mill chimney to its rear, a 1910 engine house, an 1830s beam engine house with the New Mill spinning block to its rear, and the partially rebuilt 1850s weaving shed. There is a single-storey gatehouse on the east side of the yard opposite the 1820s block”.

The list description identifies the following Reasons for Designation:

Architectural interest: Holmes Mill, with its three- and four-storey spinning blocks and warehouse, has architectural interest and makes a significant contribution to the local townscape;

Date threshold: much of the Holmes Mill complex is largely unaltered and is recognisably of pre-1840 date;

Intactness: despite the loss of the weaving shed roof Holmes Mill remains a relatively intact textile mill complex complete with an in-situ 1910-built engine;

Integrated site: the mill complex comprises a range of buildings relating to the textile manufacturing process. This includes spinning blocks and engine houses of differing dates that afford the opportunity to study the evolutionary development of these specific building types.

The list description Details identifies:
Weaving shed … retains its historic scale.
The designation listing selection guide ‘Industrial Structures’ (Historic England, 2011) identifies:
The wider industrial context - More than with many building types, industrial structures should be considered in their wider setting. Taking the example of the cotton industry of Greater Manchester, this might extend through all stages: … carding, spinning and weaving on integrated or separate sites; finishing, storing and packing goods; distributing them to the consumer … All play their part, and each building needs to be seen within this broader context.

Integrated sites - If the process to which a building is related involved numerous components, then the issue of completeness may become overriding … an exceptionally complete site (perhaps with water systems and field monuments as well as buildings) may provide such an exceptional context that it raises the importance of buildings that might otherwise not be listable.

Architecture and process - An industrial building should normally reflect in its design (plan form and appearance) the specific function it was intended to fulfil.

Machinery - The special interest of some sites lies in the machinery.

Technological innovation - Technological significance may also reside in the building itself rather than the industrial process it housed, for instance … virtuoso use of materials and so forth. The works of noteworthy millwrights or engineers will be of equal importance to major architects.

Rebuilding and repair - With industrial buildings, partial rebuilding and repair is often related to the industrial process and provides evidence for technological change that may in itself be significant enough to warrant protection: alteration can thus have a positive value.

The Guide also identifies:

Widespread introduction of powered looms in the second quarter of the century that created a novel type of building, the weaving shed with its distinctive saw-tooth roof with north-lights. In integrated mills these sheds surround the multi-storeyed mills sharing the same prime movers and are an integral part of the design … Designation should be highly selective with preference given to sheds surviving on sites that are both complete and significant.

Other components will be found on a textile factory site. Engine houses (to house steam engines to power the line shafting or rope drive) and boiler houses were usually internal in the first generation of mills (late eighteenth/early nineteenth century). It is their larger windows that distinguish them: single, tall and round-headed to house the first single-cylinder beam engines (from the 1820s), paired when accommodating the wider double-beamed engines from the mid-1830s. By the 1850s external engine houses become common and after the 1870s, with the widespread adoption of the compound engine with horizontal cylinders, they can be large and architecturally embellished … Warehouses were often important elements on integrated sites.

The Holmes Mill Archaeological Building Investigation (OAN, 2014) Discussion (page 96 – 100) identifies:

The well-preserved remains of two multi-phase cotton spinning complexes, which were only latterly amalgamated into single ownership. Both mills have early-nineteenth century Georgian origins (4.1.1)

1823 three-storey spinning block … Few late Georgian mills survive within the county, and this structure is an excellent example of the local style of construction (4.2.1). The fluted columns used within the construction of Holmes Mill are very unusual (4.2.2). External dry-chute privy tower … extant timber board seat observed at second-floor level may be replicated on the floor below, and represents a rare survival of such a feature (4.2.3).
New Mill was constructed under different ownership c 1830, and was of similar construction to the earlier mill, and incorporating many similar design features within the spinning block, including fluted hollow cylindrical cast-iron columns (4.3.1).

The weaving shed and associated warehouse still provide physical evidence of an important development within the textile industry in the mid-nineteenth century. With the rise of the power loom after 1822, the ability to mechanise the weaving process into large-scale production made the integration of spinning and weaving within the same complex an attractive proposition ...

Few weaving sheds of this date survive within the county, and that at Holmes Mill has unique ventilation grills unseen elsewhere (4.4.3).

A two-storey, eight-bay warehouse block that was incorporated into its south-eastern corner. Both formed a contemporary build, in limestone rubble, similar to that of the earlier mill ... unusual triangular vents, formed of sandstone and replicating gothic tracery ... a similar vent survives at the northern end of the east wall (3.7.1).

The scar of the saw-toothed, multi-span roof remains visible in the (internal) eastern and western walls (3.7.2).

A man door, flanking its western side, is probably also an original external entrance into the warehouse. A similar-sized loading door in the south wall lies to the north of the eight bay warehouse ... door on its northern side does appear to form an original entrance directly into the weaving shed (3.7.3).

A probable bearing box in this position in the dividing wall between the mill and weaving shed is partially visible (3.7.6).

Clayton, Goodfellow & Company cross compound horizontal engine, which survives intact, and in its original condition. It is one of only five extant mill engines in Lancashire, the only remaining example of an engine by this important firm, and the only mill engine in the county that has not been restored, representing a unique feature. Not only is the engine completely intact, complete with its secondary motion shaft and rope drum, but many other features within the engine house also survive in a remarkable state of preservation, including valves, maker’s plate, and taps for the original gas lighting. The walls of the engine house were not decorated with glazed tiles, as were the great majority of Edwardian engine houses, but was instead finished with painted plaster, with a decorative dado frieze, the majority of which also survives in excellent condition (4.5.3).

Sections of the power transmission system associated with the early C20 power plant survives within New Mill. This includes the main bearing where it enters the mill from the engine house at ground-floor level, several lengths of in-situ line shaft and associated hanger brackets, and a top end bearing in the western gable at second-floor level. These were certainly incorporated into the remodelled power transmission system, but some elements, particularly the larger bearings probably represent earlier, possibly original features that were reused (4.5.6).

Clitheroe Conservation Area was extended to incorporate Holmes Mill on 3 April 2007. The associated Clitheroe Conservation Area Appraisal (The Conservation Studio consultants; adopted by the Borough Council following public consultation 3 April 2007) recommended:

“the conservation area boundary (be) extended to include nos. 42 to 60 (even) Moor Lane, Holme Cottage and the site of Holmes Mill between Woone Lane and Mearley Brook. The proposed extension has considerable historic interest and includes The Brown Cow (listed grade II), nos 48-52 (listed grade II) and nos. 56-60 listed (grade II). Holmes Mill is one of
Clitheroe's early mills, built as a size house and spinning mill around 1823. A second spinning mill was built around 1830 and a weaving shed was added in 1853. The original mill became the Technical School up to 1916 and the rest was extensively renovated in 1905-6 and 1910-11. It survives largely intact.

The Clitheroe Conservation Area Appraisal identifies the importance of local materials, Georgian architecture and the cotton industry to significance:

“The prevalent use of local building stone” (Summary of special interest)

“A trade directory of 1830 describes Clitheroe thus: “within the last twenty years the manufacture of cotton has been rising...and at this period, is carried on to a considerable extent; cotton spinning, power-loom manufactories, and print works, are of magnitude; and an immense body of machinery, in operation here, is turned by iron water wheels ... The construction of the first textile mills and the opening of new turnpike roads led to the first major expansion of the town and the construction of new streets, Moor Lane, York Street and King Street. By 1851 the population had risen to 7,000 and there were nine textile mills working in Clitheroe. Housing for the mill workers was located away the town centre beside the new mills” (Historic Development)

“The conservation area is most notable for buildings from the late 18\textsuperscript{th} century and 19\textsuperscript{th} century ... the 18\textsuperscript{th} century marked a movement away from traditional vernacular building to a more consciously designed ‘polite’ form of architecture. Buildings from this period are influenced by a sense of proportion and incorporate sliding sash windows and elements of classical detailing ... As the town’s economy expanded in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, based on the cotton industry, its population grew and many town-centre civic, commercial and religious buildings were built ... On the periphery of the conservation area are several streets of characteristic late 19\textsuperscript{th} century artisans’ terraced houses. They are all two storeys in height and typically present a strong rhythm of regularly spaced doors, windows and chimney stacks” (Architectural and Historic Character).

“Stone is the most prevalent walling material, used for the construction of prestigious banks and chapels as well as modest cottages ... so uncommon that large brick buildings such as the former Post Office in King Street and former Court House in Lowergate appear as a startling intrusion into a streetscene that is mostly dominated by local stone ... a large number of buildings have either by design or at a later date been rendered with a smooth or roughcast coat of plaster which conceals the walling material” (Building Materials and Local Details).

“Clitheroe Castle Grounds ... once used as the grounds of a private residence, with garden terraces laid out in the early 19\textsuperscript{th} century, the mound and adjacent land being developed for use as a public park in the 1920s ... The area is now a well used open space ” (Landscape and Trees).

“The use of local stone for boundary and retaining walls helps to give the area its distinct identity” (Local Details).

“Loss of architectural detail (original windows, doors etc); Insensitive alteration of historic buildings, including some modern shopfronts; Garish commercial signs and advertising; Twentieth century development that fails to preserve the historic character and appearance of the conservation area” (Character Area 1: Historic Core – Principle negative features).

The Clitheroe Conservation Area Management Guidance (The Conservation Studio
consultants; subject to public consultation) key principles identifies that new development will be expected to:

Complement the human scale, height and massing of historic development in the immediate streetscape and the wider conservation area;

Reflect the proportion of solid to void found in the elevations of traditional buildings;

Respect the historic hierarchy of development and detailing between principal and secondary street frontages and within plots between frontage and rear elevations;

Reinforce local identity by the use of the traditional materials used in the conservation area;

Re-use traditional buildings which contribute to townscape quality.

**Northern Lights: Finding a Future for the Weaving Sheds of Pennine Lancashire** (HE, Regenerate, LCC, HTNW) identifies:

“Weaving sheds are a distinctive element in the landscape and intrinsic to its character, yet of all the region’s important historic buildings, they are especially vulnerable to demolition … with imagination and ingenuity these fine buildings can be brought back into viable new uses … no windows in the external elevations … aligned so that the rooflights faced predominantly north, giving excellent levels of natural light … external walls were built of local stone”

**Proposals**

Pre-application advice has not been sought, extensive unauthorised work has been undertaken and the application is limited in the assessment of significance and justification for harmful work to the designated heritage assets (NPPF 128, 132 and 134; verbal advice to agent 5 August 2015 at meeting to discuss unauthorised work; letter requesting information at time of validation 25 November 2015). It is therefore difficult to undertake the Borough Council’s statutory duties at s16, 66 and 72 of the Act and consider whether the proposals represent the optimum viable use (NPPG). Whilst some loss of significance is inevitable and to be expected I am particularly concerned in respect to the following:

**Weaving shed and warehouse**

The loss of the north-light roof has reduced the significance of the weaving shed (and therefore the significance of the integrated site as a whole). However, this is an opportunity for enhancement [NPPF 131; s72 P(LBs&Cas)Act1990]. The extant structure “still provide(s) physical evidence of an important development within the textile industry … integration of spinning and weaving within the same complex … Few weaving sheds of this date survive within the county, and that at Holmes Mill has unique ventilation grills unseen elsewhere” (OAN) and “retains its historic scale” (List Description).

The list description Reasons for Designation identifies the building complex’s Intactness (the reference to the weaving shed relates only to its roof) and Integrated nature to be intrinsic to special architectural and historic interest. HE ‘Industrial Buildings’ also identifies that “an exceptionally complete site … may provide such an exceptional context that it raises the importance of buildings that might otherwise not be listable”; “In integrated mills these sheds surround the multi-storeyed mills sharing the same prime movers and are an integral part of the design”; “Warehouses were often important elements on integrated sites” and in respect to
enhancement opportunities/redevelopment "an industrial building should normally reflect in its design (plan form and appearance) the specific function it was intended to fulfil".

The Clitheroe Conservation Area Appraisal identifies the prevalent use of local building stone (and very limited use of other materials), including use in traditional boundary and retaining walls, to be intrinsic to character and appearance and to give the area its distinct identity.

In my opinion, demolition of the important weaving shed and warehouse east elevation and substantial alteration/loss of integrity and scale (including the awkward break to the distinct trefoil detailing) to the west elevation is harmful. Furthermore, replacement with a largely glazed wavy roof building is intrusive, dominating, incongruous and lacks consideration to historic context (north-light weaving shed in integrated and otherwise intact mill complex; stone built and proportioned Georgian architecture; historic public park and grounds of former prestigious residence).

1823 Spinning mill

Consideration to the OAN report and conservation area appraisal suggests the following proposals are particularly harmful and require ‘clear and convincing justification’ (NPPF paragraph 132):

(i)  Adverts and building naming– prominent (high level), over intensive and intrusive (Georgian details and proportions); unnecessary if character of the site is retained;

(ii) Privy Tower – loss of character and fabric in proposed use for kitchen flue (OAN page 25 and 96 refer to ‘rare survival’; ‘late nineteenth century … technical school … sealed the privy tower, preserving the extant fittings’ (OAN 4.5.1);

(iii) Hoist Tower – loss of character and fabric. Drawings show doors and hoist beam to be removed (OAN Plate 36 identifies ‘double-door in hoist tower, with original mechanism intact’; discussed at 3.2.20);

(iv) Hoist Tower – loss of character and fabric. Loss of stair and new fire stair introduced to this early addition to the mill. (Structural report suggests in poor state of repair; discussed at OAN 3.2.19);

(v) Ground floor walling adjoining former engine house - loss of character and fabric i.e. concentration of ‘good evidence for the power transmission system’ (OAN 3.2.23; 4.2.6). Proposed new opening in this location – details/impact? ;

(vi) Columns - loss of character and fabric i.e. ‘very unusual’ and ‘possibly unique’ fluted original columns doubled at ground floor and central rows of columns at first (oldest on floor) and second floors (OAN Summary; 4.2.2; 3.2.11; 3.2.12) to be lost to provide, respectively, attic accommodation and hotel use at upper floors. Compounds harm from loss of characteristic open planform at first, second and attic floors and loss of ceilings/dry-lining of all walls /attic insulation and introduction of prominent roof lights from proposed use;

(vii) New lift and stairs. Impact of lift lessoned by location in former engine house – however, existing lift and a number of stairs and opening in floor for conveyor not to be re-used. Former office and technical school planform and fittings to be removed – OAN suggests significance.

1830 Spinning Mill ‘New Mill’, Engine House, Boiler House

Consideration to the OAN report and conservation area appraisal suggests the following proposals are particularly harmful and require ‘clear and convincing justification’ (NPPF paragraph 132):

● Page 6
(i) Columns and flooring - loss of character and fabric (including some examples of fluted columns; OAN 3.3.6). Compounds harm from substantial loss of characteristic open planform at ground and first floors (loss of historic flooring and double-height space) and second floor (small room divisions) and loss to evidence for power transmission system (bolt holes and scars on timber beams denoting position of line shaft). “8” wide planked boards on the floors above possibly also original, given their substantial width, which is typical of the Georgian period’ OAN 3.3.7;

(ii) Power transmission system - substantial loss to important elements e.g. to accommodate double-height space (OAN Plate 59 and 60) e.g. at second floor to accommodate a corridor (OAN Plate 69-71). See OAN Fig 4-6 ‘power feature’ and 3.3.10 to 3.3.16.

Site wide issues

(i) Adverts and building naming– prominent (high level), over intensive and intrusive (Georgian details and proportions). However, alterations to mill gates follow character. The list description suggests building naming/dating to be unnecessary “Date threshold: much of the Holmes Mill complex is largely unaltered and is recognisably of pre-1840 date”;

(ii) Fenestration – unauthorised insertion of double glazed windows of relatively recent and unsympathetic style – enhancement opportunity from reinstallation of Georgian small-paned windows (double-glazed versions available). Surviving fenestration (or non-fenestration) is characteristic/indicative of former use e.g. former beam engine house and boiler house at east elevation – scheme as a whole and weaving shed in particular has an uncharacteristic degree of glazing;

(iii) Unauthorised works – full and very detailed information needs to be submitted before RVBC can consider the duties at s16, 66 and 72 – principal concern is the early C20 engine house and engine where asbestos removal works are understood to have been undertaken late 2015. OAN states:

“The New Mill power plant was replaced in 1910, with the addition of a cross compound horizontal engine, supplied by Clayton, Goodfellow & Company, of Blackburn, and placed within a new engine house, with a boiler house erected on its southern side to accommodate Lancashire boilers. The engine survives intact, in its original condition, complete with a rope drum on a secondary motion shaft, and associated drive and line shafts within New Mill. Many original features of the engine house, including gas-light fittings and decoratively painted wall plaster are also well preserved … The extant power plant retains one of only five in-situ steam engines in Lancashire, and the last surviving engine by the renowned firm of Clayton, Goodfellow & Company. Whereas the other engines at Oak Mount Mill in Burnley, Queen Street Mill in Harle Syke, Bancroft Mill in Barnoldswick, and Grane Mill in Haslingden, have all been fully or partially restored, that at Holmes Mill survives in its original condition. The associated decoratively painted plasterwork of the engine house is again possibly unique, the fashion for the period generally tending towards the use of glazed brick for ornamentation of Edwardian engine houses. Many aspects of the associated power transmission system all survive in-situ, including sections of line shafting for two hoists and bevel bear and top end bearings for the primary and upright drive shafts” (Summary).

Discussion and Conclusions

It is inevitable that some loss of fabric and compromise to historic and architectural special interest will result from the re-use of this site. However, legislation, policy and guidance requires this harm to be minimised and clearly and convincingly justified. NPPF (paragraph 134) and
NPPG refer to the Optimum Viable Use (if there are a range of alternative ways in which an asset could viably be used, the optimum use is the one that causes the least harm to the significance of the asset) being of public benefit. The applicant has not sought pre-application advice in this regard and the application submission does not ‘clearly and convincingly’ (NPPF paragraph 132) justify proposals (the cross-referencing of each proposed alteration to significance in the OAN report together with an explanation as to why less damaging/intrusive works and uses have been discounted would have been helpful - see letter to agent 25 November 2015).

In my opinion, the proposals result in harm to key elements of listed building significance identified in the Holmes Mill list description and the designation listing selection guide ‘Industrial Structures’:

Architectural interest: “significant contribution to the local townscape” harmed by loss of weaving shed and warehouse walling, the prominence and incongruity of the glazed, wavy roof replacement building and site signage;

Intactness: “despite the loss of the weaving shed roof Holmes Mill remains a relatively intact textile mill complex” and Integrated site: “the mill complex comprises a range of buildings relating to the textile manufacturing process” identifies further loss to the significance of the weaving shed to be harmful;

Architecture and process: “An industrial building should normally reflect in its design (plan form and appearance) the specific function it was intended to fulfil” and Machinery – “The special interest of some sites lies in the machinery” identifies weaving shed replacement, loss of open and single storey planform, alteration and loss to surviving elements of the power transmission system, wholesale reconfiguration of the roof support systems (columns – some of which also integrate power transmission system evidence) and loss of original hoist doorways with beam and historic privies to be harmful. Furthermore, there is a need for close scrutiny of the works undertaken to the engine house and the engine.

A response has not been received in respect to the following initial questions (25 November 2015):

How necessary is the loss of flooring in the ‘New Mill’ to accommodate new taller brewery equipment – could the existing brewery equipment (c. 2m high) in the weaving shed be relocated to ‘New Mill’ and any necessary increase in brewery capacity be accommodated in the weaving shed? Is the steam engine and engine house the centrepiece of this element of the development?

Mindful of historic character and context, what is the justification for the design of the weaving shed roof?

The NPPG states “In general terms, substantial harm is a high test, so it may not arise in many cases. For example, in determining whether works to a listed building constitute substantial harm, an important consideration would be whether the adverse impact seriously affects a key element of its special architectural or historic interest”. In my opinion and based upon available information, the proposals are of ‘less than substantial harm’ in respect to Clitheroe Conservation Area, the setting of 56-60 Moor Lane, the setting of Clitheroe Castle listed buildings, the setting of Clitheroe Castle Historic Park and Garden and the special architectural and historic interest of Holmes Mill. However, in respect to the latter consideration, harm is approaching ‘substantial’.
The following article and report are of interest in respect to the Borough Council’s decision making duties and the ‘planning balance’.


“Any harm is to be given ‘great weight’ whether it is serious, substantial, moderate, minor or less than substantial. Whatever adjective you choose to describe it and however the harm is caused – directly or through an impact on the setting – every decision should acknowledge the general priority afforded to heritage conservation in comparison to other planning objectives or public benefits”.


“The effect of sections 66 and 72 is to give special statutory status to heritage assets. These sections contrast with section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 which entitle a decision-maker to give whatever weight he thinks fit, or no weight at all, to a material planning consideration. If he is dealing with a heritage asset, he has not that breadth of discretion” (paragraph 5).

The proposal has a harmful impact upon the special architectural and historic interest of Holmes Mill, the character and appearance of Clitheroe Conservation Area and the setting of 56-60 Moor lane (listed Grade II) and Clitheroe Castle Historic Park and Garden (listed Grade II). This is because of: the loss or alteration of important historic fabric and planform intrinsic to the significance and understanding of the integrated mill complex, its functioning and evolution; the prominent and incongruent design of the new ‘weaving sheds’ building and the prominence and intrusion of advertisements.

A Dowd
BSc (Hons) MA (URP) MA (Arch Cons) RTPI IHBC
18 January 2016
Appendices

Sections 16, 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

NPPF
paragraph 60 (‘proper to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness’)
paragraph 61 (‘integration of new development into the … built and historic environment)
paragraph 67 (‘advertisements … appreciable impact on a building or on their surroundings …
interests of amenity … taking account of cumulative impacts’)
paragraph 131 (‘sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them
to viable uses consistent with their conservation’; ‘positive contribution that conservation of
heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic viability’; ‘new
development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness’)
paragraph 132 and 134 (see above)
paragraph 137 (new development within conservation areas … and within the setting of heritage
assets to enhance or better reveal their significance)

NPPG
http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/guidance/conserving-and-enhancing-the-
historic-environment/why-is-significance-important-in-decision-taking/

http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/guidance/design/

‘Principles of Selection for Listed Buildings’ (Historic England, 2010) identifies:

“our understanding of the historic environment now encompasses a much wider range of
features, and in particular stresses the relationship between individual buildings, and also the
value of historic townscape and landscape as a whole” (paragraph 2).

“There is growing appreciation not just of the architectural set pieces, but of many more
structures, especially industrial, agricultural and other vernacular buildings that, although
sometimes individually unassuming, collectively reflect some of the most distinctive and creative
aspects of English history”.

‘Cotton Mills in Greater Manchester’ (Mike Williams with D.A. Farnie, GMAU and RCHME,
1992) identifies:

“The Development of Mill Building – Mills are essentially functional and utilitarian buildings and
thus their form is dictated primarily by the processes which they were intended to contain …
salient forces – mechanisation, methods of construction and power systems” (Page 11-12).

‘Industrial Archaeology: A Handbook’ (Marilyn Palmer, Michael Nevell and Mark Sissons,
CBA, AIA, HE, 2012) identifies:

“The textile factory, often referred to as a mill, is one of the iconic images of industrialisation.
Such sites comprised a number of buildings that might include spinning blocks, weaving sheds”.

“Architectural Details – Throughout most of its functional life the textile mill subordinated style to
function and form, and until the arrival of the railway such structures usually reflected the
vernacular style of the locality in their use of building materials.
"Adaptive Reuse of Industrial Buildings – Despite their age and frequently run-down condition, many of these buildings are soundly built and employ traditional constructional methods which render them eminently suitable for conversion and reuse … any conversion of a building will almost certainly require alterations and it is critical that these are of such a nature as to preserve its original character and any distinctive features related to the original use of the building. The use of careful techniques for conservation and restoration can bring even apparently seriously derelict buildings back to a useful life.

"However, on occasions, the scale of alteration renders the existing building unrecognisable and destroys the original form. Excessive rebuilding, the removal of many original features and the insertion of inappropriate new features can contribute to an unsatisfactory conversion, whereas in a successful conversion the original form and use of the building is still clearly apparent. It is also important to consider the context of a building conversion; if it is located in an area in which other buildings have architectural merit, this may increase the appeal of the building. Conversely inappropriate conversion of the building may detract from the architectural integrity and character of adjacent buildings and the area”.

"the conversion of industrial buildings and adaptive reuse goes back very nearly as long as the factory building itself … Many traditional industrial buildings were over-built, in the sense that they used constructional techniques and materials of greater strength”.

“Proposals for Adaptive Reuse:

Retention of Original Features – The principal question is whether the conversion maintains the character of the building and key features of the building’s past. Changes that alter fenestration significantly, both in terms of location and the type of windows and framing used, should be avoided. Changes to the location of doorways and principal means of access to a building can frequently make the historical usage of the building harder to understand and thereby compromise the reasons for conserving the building. Conversions that change roof lines or add extra storeys can similarly change the building out of all recognition. The addition of inappropriate roof lights and dormer windows to roofs needs to be considered carefully. Removal of external features such as ironmongery and hoists can dilute the integrity of the converted buildings.

Internal Alterations – The internal conversion of a building should respect surviving traditional features and be in keeping with key elements of the original purpose. The inappropriate insertion of partition walls and ceilings can obscure and/or destroy the original spatial qualities of the building. Thus conversion of a building for residential use which requires relatively small internal rooms to conform to the demands of modern living can be more damaging to the internal character of a building than a commercial use which permits bigger internal spaces. The resiting of staircases and insertion of new staircases, lift shafts and service ducting all need careful consideration. Wherever possible original surfaces should be retained”.

“Conclusions: Evolution and Adaption: Our understanding of industrial buildings increases as we see them in broader contexts. It is easy to be impressed by a building of architectural merit, but such a building may be only one element in a complex, which may have accumulated over time. In order to explain the original purpose or the function over time of the outstanding building, it is essential to understand its relationship with other component buildings, to see it in the architectural context of its region, and to compare it with buildings elsewhere designed to accommodate the same technology”.

“England’s industrial heritage belongs not just to its own people and the present generation – it belongs to the world. Its primacy, as the cradle of global industrialisation, is internationally recognised but it is a legacy that is fragile and very much at risk … England’s industrial heritage is also a steadily diminishing resource … The response over the past 50 years has been more ad hoc than strategic” (Keith Falconer, Head of Industrial Archaeology, English Heritage Shane Gould, Project Manager, Industrial Heritage at Risk, English Heritage).

“Adaptive re-use has been the salvation for many redundant industrial buildings, provided that it is underpinned by a proper historical understanding of the site and its contribution to the overall character of its surroundings”. (Industrial Heritage at Risk: Shane Gould Industrial Heritage at Risk Project Officer, English Heritage).

‘Listing our Industrial Heritage’ (Michael Munt, Historic England, IHBC Context 112: November 2009) identifies:

‘the adaptability of many listed industrial buildings and their potential contribution to place-making. They frequently exhibit many of the heritage values identified in English Heritage’s Conservation Principles. They have evidential value of past activities, and their siting can tell us much about the evolution of a settlement and local landforms. They contributed fundamentally to the local economy. They have illustrative historical value, especially when machinery, internal spaces and external details survive.

Their associations with local families or craftsmen have resonance. Their aesthetic value can range from the adaptation of vernacular building techniques, to polite architecture in brick, iron or glass. Architects were involved in some of the best examples. They can have communal value, having once provided social cohesion – a place of work with associated leisure, educational and housing facilities close by.

Frequently their size, scale and form add much … They remind us that, until quite recently, people worked as well as lived in these places that are now dormitory settlements”.

‘Industrial England’ (Michael Stratton and Barrie Trinder, Batsford, English Heritage, 1997) identifies:

“Strength, Span and Security: Factories fulfil several basic functions, so their structure is of critical importance. Each building has to provide an unbroken workspace of a particular area depending on the process and product involved

Function or Fashion? … In almost every factory complex there are buildings of different date, status and style. No building or structure can be designed or erected in a vacuum, divorced from contemporary building traditions, whether local or national.

… another potentially useful concept is that of the vernacular … Watermills and lock-keeper’s houses that blend in with their surroundings by using stone from the nearest quarry or brick from an estate yard are universally lauded. It is apparent from a cursory look at almost any industrial town that the vernacular link between local geology, building materials and building forms persisted into the twentieth century … function and fashion interweave, pulling in opposite directions, or complimenting each other … the elevations of many industrial buildings follow the architectural idioms of the period when, and of the region where, they were built.

… Heavy section beams and posts have proved more durable than more modern materials in many circumstances and could be readily cut, re-erected or extended as buildings were adapted to new uses”.

● Page 12