

FORMER ROYAL SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND HARDMAN STREET LIVERPOOL

HERITAGE STATEMENT



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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The buildings on the corner of Hardman Street and Hope Street were built for the Royal School for the Blind. The main building, dating from 1849-51, is listed Grade II, and the site is within the Canning Street Conservation Area. The buildings are currently vacant and at risk of serious decay.
- 1.2 The property has changed hands a number of times in recent years, and is the subject of a planning application for change of use to a mixed use development. Government guidance relating to the historic environment set out in the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF) requires that proposed changes to the historic environment are based on a clear understanding of significance of the heritage asset affected and its setting, providing information so that the likely impact of proposals can be assessed.
- 1.3 This report carried out by Peter de Figueiredo provides an assessment of the building and site within its historic context, and an understanding of its development based on historical research and building recording. A statement of significance identifying the principal features of interest and the values they represent is included, together with a set of Development and Conservation Principles.
- 1.4 Following grant of consent for change of use, detailed proposals will be submitted for both planning and listed building consent, at which time an assessment will be provided of the potential impact on the significance of the heritage property in the context of the NPPF and local planning policy.

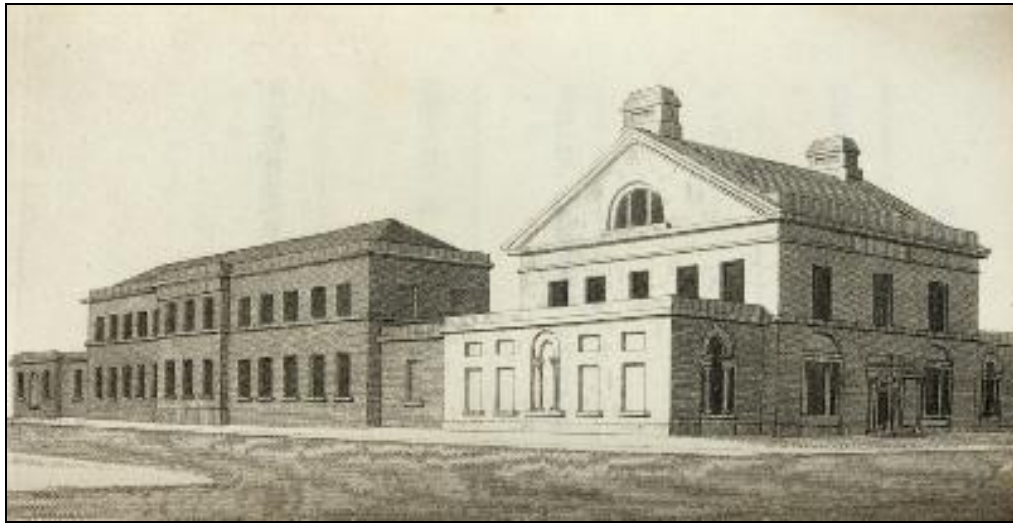
2 HISTORY OF THE BUILDING

- 2.1 Liverpool was a pioneer in providing facilities for the blind. The Asylum for the Indigent Blind, founded in 1791, was the first such institution in Britain.¹ It was formed on the initiative of Edward Rushton (1756-1814), poet, book seller and anti-slavery campaigner, who lost his sight early in life.² The first premises was on Commutation Row, but it soon proved inadequate, and a purpose-built school to the design of John Foster jnr. was erected in 1800 on the site of the recently demolished Odeon Cinema on London Road.
- 2.2 In 1806 during a visit to Liverpool, the Prince of Wales (later George IV) inspected the school, expressed 'sympathy and approbation' and provided 100 guineas for the benefit of the Institution. Thus the school secured its Royal Patronage which has continued to the present day. Such prestige was also a boost to fund raising, and between 1807-1812 a series of extensions were built stretching back to Great Nelson Street providing a refectory, dormitories, music rooms, work rooms and a ropery.

¹ *Pioneers and Perseverance: A History of the Royal School for the Blind 1791-1991*, Michael W Royden, 1991

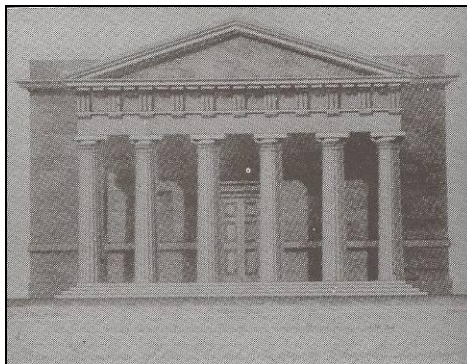
² *National Dictionary of Biography*

- 2.3 Foster also designed a School Chapel, which was erected in 1818-19 on an adjoining site. Foster had recently returned from travels in Greece with C R Cockerell (who was later to be engaged on completing St George's Hall), and his design for the chapel was based on the Temple of Zeus on the island of Aegina. The building, which was widely admired, enabled the school to capitalise on its strong musical tradition, and attracted patronage from the highest ranks of Liverpool society.



Original blind school right with extensions to left c.1812

- 2.4 While the school had by this time become well established, and enjoyed a national reputation, its buildings were soon to be threatened by an urban development that had not been foreseen. In 1830 the Liverpool to Manchester Railway opened, and in 1836 steep tunnels were bored through the sandstone ridge from Edge Hill down to Lime Street, where the terminus was built. The ensuing railway mania, backed up by Acts of Parliament which brought compulsory purchase powers, swept away any buildings that stood in the way of the new enterprise. The chapel lay within the land required for Lime Street Station, and the school was included in the expansion scheme, later to be used for a goods yard and for stabling of horses.

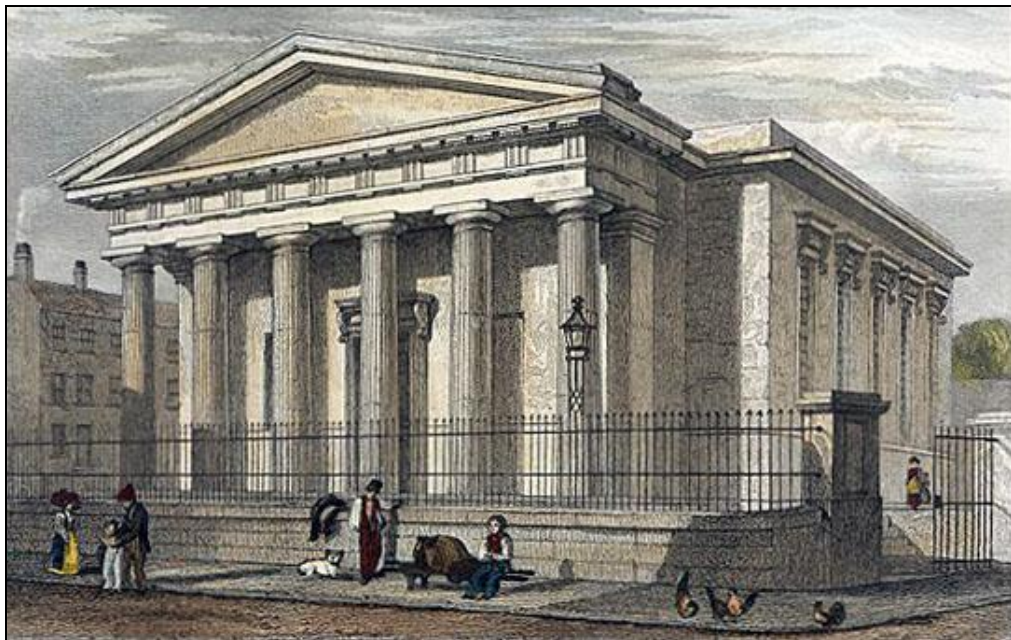


Foster's design for chapel



Interior of chapel

- 2.5 In exchange for the land and buildings, the London and North Western Railway Company provided land on Hardman Street and Hope Street and funds for the erection of new buildings, which was agreed in 1849. The committee's decision to take down and re-erect the chapel on the corner of Hardman Street and Hope Street was welcomed, though the sloping site and the lack of adequate space on Hardman Street meant that the steps and stylobate had to be foreshortened.
- 2.6 The new school, situated alongside the chapel on Hardman Street, was designed by Arthur Hill Holme and built in 1849-51. It was erected by his brother's construction company at a cost of £11,650.



Chapel on original site c.1830



Chapel as rebuilt on Hardman Street c.1920

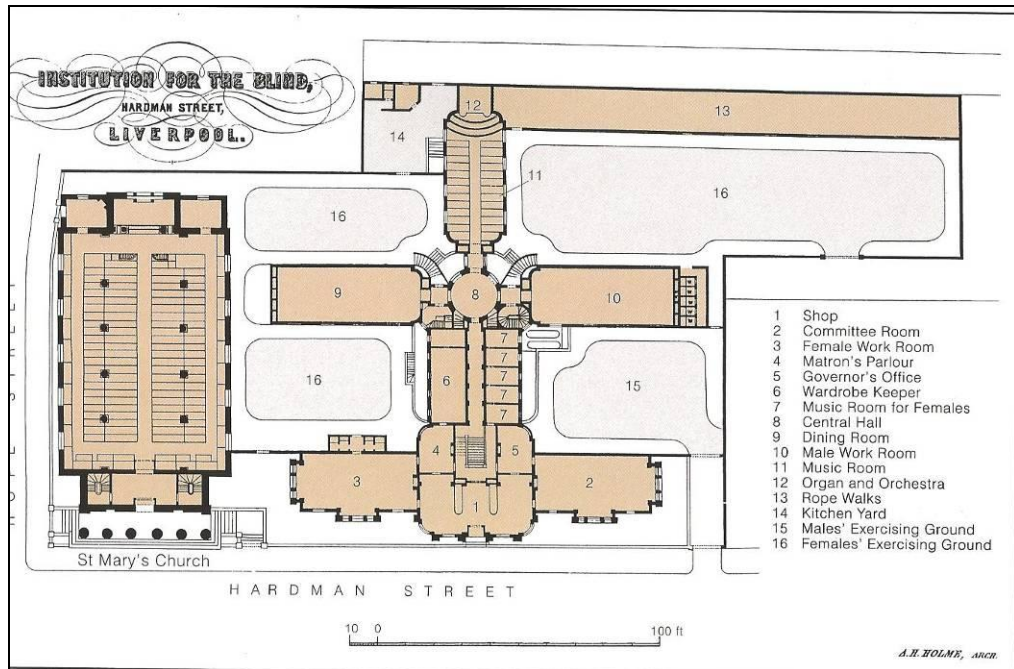
- 2.7 For the first 70 years or so of its existence, the educational role of the school was seen as providing technical training in a trade to a level that would enable a pupil to become independent and self-supporting. This included music, which was taught primarily to qualify pupils to secure work as church organists, piano tuners or music teachers. This principle dictated the layout of the new premises, which included (as at the previous site on London Road) work rooms, music rooms, dormitories, exercise grounds and rope walks. At the main entrance was a shop where items made by the pupils – mats, ropes, baskets – were available for purchase.
- 2.8 In the late 19th century, however, an increasing debate about educational provision for children, which culminated in the 1870 Education Act, was extended to the blind and deaf. This led to school inspections which raised standards in accommodation, education and equipment, which many established schools failed to meet. The Liverpool School was unable to make adequate provision for young children at Harman Street, and consequently erected a new junior school at Wavertree in 1898-99.
- 2.9 During the early 20th century, the running of the chapel became a financial burden, which had to be met from charity funds. The combination of the consecration of Liverpool Cathedral nearby, the fact that the chapel lacked its own parish and the depopulation of the Hardman Street area was that scarcely anyone outside the school attended services at the chapel. Pupils, it was felt, could easily attend St Luke's if the chapel were to be closed. Closure required an Act of Parliament, and in 1926, protracted negotiations were held with the Corporation and the Bishop, the latter of whom held jurisdiction over the final use for the land, which was consecrated ground. Following the grant of Royal Assent in 1927 the committee decided that the school required extra accommodation to fulfill its obligations. Work rooms, and space for physical education and dancing for girls was required for them to complete their training, and it was felt that the chapel could not be adapted for this purpose. The committee thus decided to demolish the building.
- 2.10 The architects for the replacement were Anthony Minoprio and Hugh Greville Spencely, two young graduates from Liverpool University School of Architecture. After a year spent obtaining consent from the Corporation, demolition and construction were carried out in 1930-32 at a cost of £27,768.
- 2.11 During World War II the school was evacuated to Rhyl, and the Hardman Street buildings were requisitioned by the RAF, with the Music Room and Boys' Lounge being rented to the Thames and Mersey Marine Insurance Company. While the school returned in 1946, it was to a changed climate, following the 1944 Education Act, which laid down the provisions that were to make special educational treatment part of the general duty of Local Education Authorities, rather than being a class apart.

- 2.12 In 1946 the Ministry of Education invited the school to submit proposals for a Technical School for the NW Region based at Hardman Street. The offer was conditional on continuance of the students' general education. The offer was quickly accepted. Vocational training was to consist of basket making, boot and shoe repairing, brush making and hand, flat and round machine knitting. A programme along these lines had been introduced at Hardman Street several decades earlier, and the main change was the introduction of compulsory general education, which was given in working hours. There were also improved opportunities to enter open industry.
- 2.13 Demand for training courses, however, declined, and by 1956, admissions to Hardman Street had become so low that it was decided to close the school, with all activity concentrated at Wavertree. In 1957 the premises were sold to Liverpool Corporation for £47,000, and were used as the city's Police Headquarters.
- 2.14 In 1983, after the police had moved to new premises at Canning Place, the Hardman Street buildings became the Merseyside Trade Union Community and Unemployed Resource Centre, whose facilities included conference and function rooms, the Flying Picket (a community music venue) and a basement recording studio. The Resource Centre closed in 2004, since when the buildings have been vacant.

3 ARCHITECTURAL ASSESSMENT

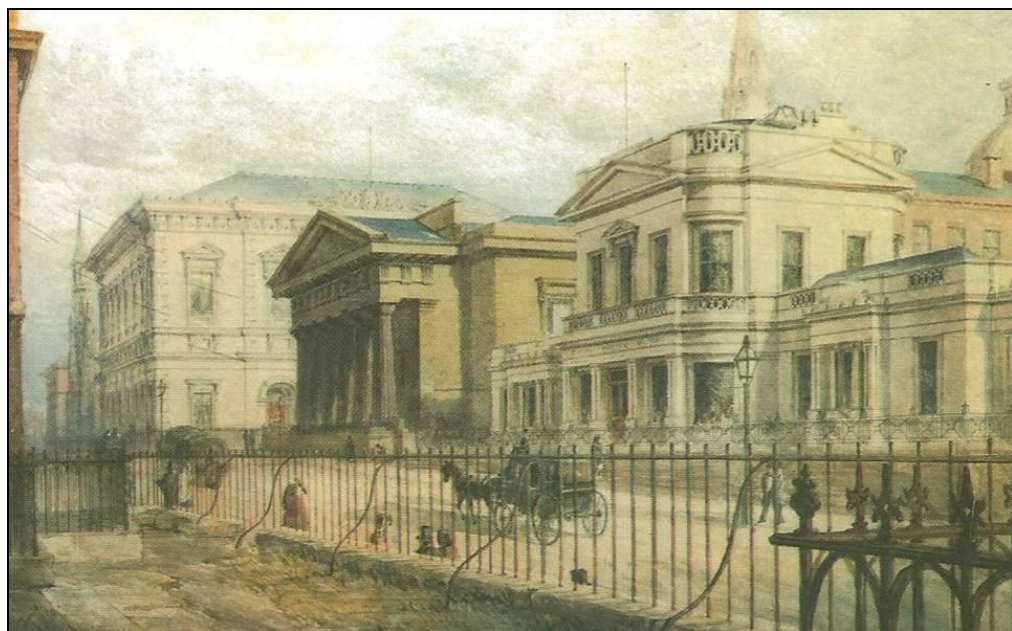
Plan and Exterior

- 3.1 The buildings stand on an area of high ground that was laid out with regular streets, developed as a favourable residential location from 1800. Along with terraced houses, a number of churches were erected, and towards the end of the 19th century, institutional buildings were developed, many associated with medicine and education.
- 3.2 The main school premises by A H Holme fronts Hardman Street, and the chapel brought from Lime Street was rebuilt alongside on the corner with Hope Street. The front of the school consists of a central two storey pavilion with a pediment and rounded inset corners. The matching side wings were originally single storey, but each was extended by a further pedimented bay and raised to two storeys shortly after completion.
- 3.3 At the entrance was the shop selling items made by the pupils, with the committee room in the right hand wing. The left hand wing contained the female work room. The central doorway leads to the staircase hall, beyond which are four wings radiating from a domed rotunda. At ground floor level were the room for performances by pupils, music rooms for females, the male work room, and the dining room. There were dormitories above. A longer wing at right angles at the rear of the complex was for rope-making. Between the wings were exercise grounds for male and female pupils.



Ground floor plan

- 3.4 On Hardman Street the building is faced in Bath stone, and decorated in the Italianate style. In contrast, the wings behind are brick and utilitarian in character. A number of alterations have been made to the wings, including an extension to the south east wing in the 1930s after the chapel was demolished, the addition of lavatory accommodation, and the replacement of windows. A plastic water tank and service equipment are visible above the main roof. The dome and lantern above the rotunda, which are not visible from Hardman Street, are faced in concrete and may have been rebuilt in the post war period.



School and chapel on Hardman Street c.1855 before the wings were enlarged



Hardman Street frontage as existing

- 3.5 The 1930s wing by Minoprio and Spencely on the corner of Hardman Street and Hope Street is in stripped classical style and faced in Portland stone. It is expressed as a two storey structure with an attic, its fluted pilasters echoing the Greek Doric columns of Foster's chapel. Minoprio also studied in Rome where he met the sculptors John Skeaping (1901-1980) and James Woodford (1893-1976).³ Skeaping carved the relief panels showing activities at the school: (left to right on Hardman Street) brush making, reading Braille, basket weaving, piano tuning, and brush making again, (and on the stepped corner with Hope Street) knitting. Woodford made a set of bronze doors which were taken to the school's Wavertree premises when they left Hardman Street.



1930s extension at corner of Hope Street and Hardman Street

³ John Skeaping, *Drawn from Life: An Autobiography*, 1977; Jonathan Blackwood, *The Sculpture of John Skeaping*, 2011; for James Woodford see nationalarchives.gov.uk

- 3.6 A large part of the complex is not visible from the surrounding streets, and can only be viewed from the courtyards, which originally served as exercising grounds. The courtyard elevations are of brick laid in a Flemish bond with regular bands of windows with red sandstone sills and lintels. The style is plain and severe in the manner of a workhouse or hospital.



Views of rear courtyards

- 3.7 A number of changes have been made to the courtyard elevations over time. These include the addition of flues and external chimney stacks, ducts, metal fire exit stairs, small extensions, and the replacement of windows. When the 1930s building was erected in place of the church, the north east courtyard was enlarged by extending the enclosing wing. The extension was built in a matching style.



Rear of front block showing alterations

North east courtyard showing extension



View of rear wing from Back Hope Place

View of rear wing showing alterations

- 3.8 The original plan for the Blind School, which is illustrated above, shows the rear wing on the north side of Back Hope Place as a rope walk. This, however, may never have been built, for the existing wing differs in appearance from the rest of the original complex, and appears to be a later extension. The bricks are laid in a garden wall bond rather than the Flemish bond used for all the other brickwork, and the lugged stone sills and lintels, and the corbelled eaves detail are late 19th forms of construction. During the period from 1983-2004 that the property was used as the Merseyside Trade Union Community and Unemployed Resource Centre, the rear wing was converted to a music venue, and known as 'The Flying Picket'. Major unsympathetic external and internal changes were made at this time. For example an unsightly plastic water tank was placed on the roof of the main central block at this time.



Water tank on roof of main block seen from Hardman Street

Interior

- 3.9 The interiors of special interest are those at ground floor level within the frontage pavilion and side wings, the staircase hall and central corridor, and the rotunda with its galleries and spiral staircases. These interiors are described below. All other interior spaces are utilitarian in character, or have been unsympathetically altered.
- 3.10 The main entrance hall, which originally served as the shop, is the most impressive internal space, and remains largely unaltered, apart from the insertion of a timber draught lobby. The walls and ceiling have good plasterwork in the Grecian style, including pilasters with capitals, pedimented door cases, a frieze and modillion cornice, and decorative ceiling panels with rosettes. The former Governor's Parlour and Matron's Office, which occupy the two rear corners of the central pavilion, have been reduced in size by the insertion of a corridor leading into the wings. They have also lost their fireplaces, but retain the original curved sash windows cornice and skirtings.



Main Entrance Hall



Details of Main Entrance Hall

- 3.11 The ground floor rooms in the side wings have been subdivided internally, but still retain original features of interest, including window linings with shutter boxes, skirtings, cornices and fireplaces. The first floor rooms that were added soon after completion of the original building, and the extension at each end are plainer in character, but retain original skirtings, simple cornices and some remnants of fireplaces.
- 3.12 From the main entrance hall a doorway leads to a grand flight of stairs, which rises up to a corridor and on to the rotunda that connects with the three wings beyond. The stairs are constructed of stone with bottle-shaped balusters, all now painted. A cantilever staircase with decorative cast iron balusters and mahogany handrail continues to the first and attic floors. The floor of the staircase hall is tiled.



Steps from entrance hall

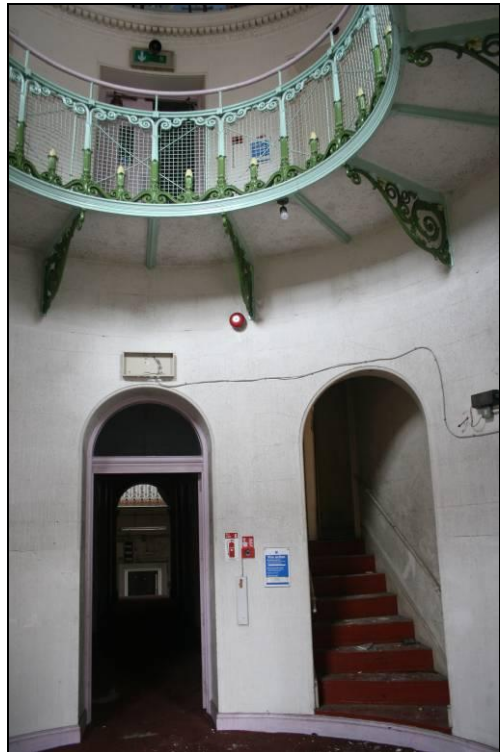


Main staircase to upper floors

- 3.13 The corridor that leads to the rotunda is plastered with recessed panels, but there are no openings into the spaces to each side which are at different levels. These are reached independently from the two ends. The corridor was originally intended to provide an impressive approach to the music room, which was situated at the rear of the building.
- 3.14 The floor levels within the rear wings are inconsistent with the frontage block, and the rotunda acts as a vertical circulation point connecting to the various levels. Curved sets of stone stairs are concealed at each corner of the structure, and external stairs lead down to the exercise yards.



Rotunda and gallery



Rotunda showing curved steps

- 3.15 The rotunda has a circular opening at second floor level with a stone floor and cast iron balustrade. The dome is painted with a fresco by Mike Jones dating from the late 1980s when the building was in use as the Trade Union Resource Centre. It depicts marching Liverpool workers against a background of scenes of the overhead railway, the demolition of the Tate and Lyle

factory, the docks, the Halewood car factory, Council housing, football and music. A companion painting by Jones in similar Socialist Realist style, titled *Unemployment on Merseyside – Campaigning for the Right to Work* is displayed in the *People's Republic Gallery* at the Museum of Liverpool and was formerly in the People's Centre at 50-54 Mount Pleasant.

- 3.16 Beyond the rotunda, the former Music Room has been subdivided and the original stage end has been altered by the insertion of a lift and staircase. The rear wing, used latterly as a music venue has been significantly altered internally, and contains no features of interest.
- 3.17 At basement level, below the central corridor there are features such as a recess for a cooking stove, suggesting that this was the kitchen area. The area, however, retains little of value, and is badly affected by dry rot.

4. BUILDING CONDITION

- 4.1 The surface of the stonework to the Hardman Street and Hope Street elevations has been affected visually by weathering, pollution, and at low levels by graffiti. Serious erosion has taken place to the sandstone of the original Blind School building, affecting the arises of cornices, columns and decorative mouldings. There is also evidence of cracking associated with expansion of ferrous fixings. The brickwork is generally in sound condition, though patch pointing will be required in many areas.
- 4.2 The iron railings to Hardman Street are partly missing and some copings are damaged.
- 4.3 Windows generally remain in sound condition, though a number have been replaced on the courtyard elevations, and glass has been broken. Many of those in the rear wing have been bricked up. Upper level windows have suffered from decay in some locations due to water ingress and lack of maintenance.
- 4.4 Roofs are in poor condition with various sections having been overpainted with sealant. Slipped slates, defective and blocked eaves gutters and downpipes have led to serious problems of water ingress and associated timber decay. Dry rot is extensive within the basement of the central wing, and has affected joinery work, timber floors and ceilings.
- 4.5 There has been some theft of internal features such as fireplaces and fire grates, and some damage from vandalism.

5. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

5.1 Statutory Designation

5.1.1 The Former Trade Union Building is a Grade II listed building, and is situated within the Canning Street Conservation Area. The 1930s building is specifically excluded from the listing, but can be regarded as a curtilage structure because it is physically attached and was subsidiary in terms of usage when the building was listed in 1975.

5.1.2 The list description is as follows:

SJ 3589 NE HARDMAN STREET LI 57/578 No. 24 Merseyside Trade Union Community and Unemployed Resource Centre 14.3.75 (formerly listed as Police HQ) G.V. II Community resource centre, formerly School for the Blind. 1850. A. H. Holme, with additions of 1930's. Ashlar, 2 storeys. 15 bays; projecting 5-bay centre with curving end bays, 3rd and 11th bays also project. Moulded plinth, entablatures over both floors and pediments to end bays and 5-bay centre. Centre has architraved windows and central entrance. All windows are sashed with glazing bars, except for 2 ground floor centre windows. 1st floor has pierced balcony and consoled pediment to central window. End bays have paired windows, 3rd and 5th bays have tripartite windows, behind Ionic colonnettes flanked by paired flat pilasters. Other bays have architraved windows. Extension of 1931 to left, not included in this item. Interior has entrance hall with paired pilasters, dentilled cornice and coffered ceiling with rosettes. Open wall stair to rear has iron balusters.

5.2 Identification of Cultural Significance

5.2.1 Following the methodology for assessing cultural significance set out in the English Heritage *Conservation Principles*, the following heritage values are identified:

Evidential Value:

5.2.2 The former Royal School for the Blind was erected in 1849-51 and extended shortly after. A ground floor plan exists which gives the original uses.

5.2.3 A number of later alterations were made as recorded on OS maps, and evident from analysis of the building fabric. The most significant change was the demolition of the chapel, which had been moved from its original site for the extension of Lime Street Station, and its replacement by the Hope Street wing in 1930-32.

Historic and Architectural Value:

5.2.4 Liverpool was a pioneer in providing facilities for the blind, and the original 'Asylum for the Indigent Blind', founded in 1791, was the first such building in the country, and only the second such school in the world after Paris. It outgrew its first two premises, and its first purpose-built school, constructed in 1800, was demolished when Lime Street was extended. The Hardman Street building of 1949-51 contained dormitories, work rooms, music rooms,

sick rooms and exercise grounds. It also had a shop where items made by the inmates, such as mats, baskets and ropes, could be purchased.

5.2.5 The building was designed by A H Holme, who was a prominent Liverpool architect in the mid-19th century, and whose buildings include LIPA, the former Mechanics Institute of 1835-37, and St Mary, Aigburth Road, Grassendale, 1852-53.

5.2.6 It has an impressive pedimented facade to Hardman Street, screening a utilitarian complex of wings laid out on the workhouse model, and is one of a significant group of institutional buildings in the Hope Street/Mount Pleasant area.

Aesthetic Value:

5.2.7 The aesthetic value of the 1851 building relates principally to the main frontage block, with its stone clad elevation to Hardman Street. The ground floor interiors, the staircase and the rotunda are also distinctive and contain good decorative plasterwork, fittings, ironwork and joinery.

5.2.8 The 1930s extension also has some value in the streetscape, and provides a counterpoint to the Philharmonic Hall on the opposite corner of Hope Street. In its classical simplicity, it has echoes of the colonnade of the former chapel. The junction of Hope Street and Hardman Street is unresolved, however, and the upper floor of the 1930s building has a sense of being truncated or uncompleted. Level access to this building from Hope Street is impossible.

5.2.9 There has been some loss of historic fabric due to alterations in the 20th century, to vandalism and water penetration, but apart from the frontage and the principal interiors, the building has always been functional in character and thus capable of adaptation.

Communal Value:

5.2.10 The building has played an important role in the social and institutional life of Liverpool since its erection over 150 years ago. As the Blind School, it performed a crucial role in medical, social and economic provision for disadvantaged people.

5.2.12 The chief features of significance are thus:

- History as the home of the Royal Institute for the Blind, which is of national importance
- Association with notable local architects
- Plan form which derives from the workhouse and prison tradition
- Impressive architectural composition to Hardman Street in classical style, using high quality materials and construction
- Good quality Interiors on the ground floor of the frontage block, incorporating plaster mouldings to walls, doorcases and ceilings;

joinery work to windows, shutter boxes, doors and skirtings; fireplaces and floor tiling

- Other internal features are the main staircase with ground floor flight in stone, and upper flights with iron balustrades; the rotunda with a cantilevered stone gallery with iron balustrade and curved staircases, and connecting corridor with plaster mouldings

5.2.12 Features of lesser significance are:

- The 1930s extension, which lacks conviction in the streetscape (although the sculptural panels by John Skeaping and James Woodford are significant art works and aspects of the history of the Blind School)
- The upper floor interiors of frontage block to Hardman Street
- The dome over the rotunda

5.2.13 The rear wing that contained the *Flying Picket* music venue is a neutral building, which has been considerably altered and lost its significance.

5.2.14 Negative features include the water tank on the main central roof, and the various extensions and alterations made within the rear courtyards, as well as internal partitions.

6 HERITAGE PLANNING CONTEXT

6.1 National Planning Policy and Guidance

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

6.1.1 Statutory protection for built heritage is principally provided by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Sections 16 and 66 of the Act require authorities to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the setting of any listed building that may be affected by the grant of planning permission.

National Planning Policy Framework

PPS5 Planning for the Historic Environment: Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide

6.1.2 Historic Environment Policies included in the National Planning Framework (March 2012) replace Planning Policy Statement 5 (PPS 5). The Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide, which accompanied PPS5, remains in place as national guidance until it is replaced, though it should be read in the light of the NPPF, and does not comprise policy.

6.1.3 The NPPF states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The Government sees three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental,

and these roles should be regarded as mutually dependent. Economic growth can secure higher social and environmental standards, and well-designed buildings and places can improve the lives of people and communities. The planning system is therefore expected to play an active role in guiding development to sustainable solutions. Policies 126-141 are related to conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

- 6.1.4 The NPPF defines the significance of a heritage asset as its value *‘to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting.’* As with PPS5, the NPPF provides a unified approach to the historic environment and removes the previous distinctions between historic buildings, archaeology and designed landscapes. It defines the historic environment in terms of *“heritage assets.”* This term embraces all manner of features, including: buildings, parks and gardens, standing, buried and submerged remains, areas, sites and landscapes, whether designated or not and whether capable of designation or not.
- 6.1.5 Policies 128 and 129 of the NPPF require planning applicants and local planning authorities to assess the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be appropriate to the assets’ importance and no more than sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. Local planning authorities should take this assessment into account when the potential impact of proposed development to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset’s conservation and any aspect of the proposal.
- 6.1.6 Policy 131 states that local planning authorities should take account of the desirability of new development sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets; the positive contribution that heritage assets can make to sustainable communities; and the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.
- 6.1.7 Policy 132 sets out policy principles guiding the consideration of impact of development on the significance of a designated heritage asset. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be given to the asset’s conservation. Any harm to or loss should require clear or convincing justification. Policy 133 provides a series of tests which should be applied in cases where substantial harm to or total loss of significance will be caused. In the case of development proposals which will lead to less than substantial harm, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.
- 6.1.8 Policy 134 states that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a heritage asset, this harm should be

weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.

- 6.1.9 Policy 135 sets out the policy principle guiding the consideration of applications for consent relating to undesignated assets. It states that the effect of an application on non-designated heritage assets or their setting will require a balanced judgement having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.
- 6.1.10 Policy 137 states that local authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of the asset should be treated favourably.
- 6.1.11 Policy 141 states that local planning authorities should make information about the significance of the historic environment gathered as part of the development process publicly accessible, and should require developers to record and advance understanding of the heritage asset before it is lost.
- 6.1.12 Section 5 of the Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide provides generic guidance on decision making for changes that affect the historic environment. Paragraphs 55-57 state that understanding both the *nature of the significance* and the *level of importance* are fundamental to decision making, and set out the most common steps that a planning applicant may be expected to carry out assessing significance.
- 6.1.13 Paragraphs 76-78 give guidance to local authorities on weighing up proposals for development. These should take account of potential heritage benefits and any other material planning considerations that would arise as a result of development proceeding.
- 6.1.14 Paragraph 80 stresses the need to assess the extent to which the design of new development contributes positively to the character, distinctiveness and significance of the historic environment.

Conservation Principles: Policy and Guidance (English Heritage) 2008

- 6.1.15 The English Heritage document *Conservation Principles: Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment* is intended to guide conservation thinking and practice in England. It defines conservation as managing change in ways that will sustain the significance of places, for change in the historic environment is inevitable, whether caused by natural processes, through use or by people responding to social, economic and technological advances.

- 6.1.16 If the significance of a place is to be retained and its historic value sympathetically managed, further change will inevitably be needed. Development need not devalue the significance of the place, both its tangible values, such as historic fabric, or its associational values, such as its place within the landscape, provided the work is done with understanding.
- 6.1.17 The English Heritage *Principles* state that retaining the authenticity of a place is not always achieved by retaining as much of the existing fabric as is technically possible (paragraph 93). Where deliberate changes are made, however, the alteration should in some way be discernable. Integrity likewise depends on an understanding of the values of the heritage asset.
- 6.1.18 The *Principles* state that new work or alteration to a significant place should normally be acceptable if:
- There is sufficient information comprehensively to understand the impacts of the proposal on the significance of the place;
 - The proposal would not materially harm the values of the place, which, where appropriate, would be reinforced or further revealed;
 - The proposals aspire to a quality of design and execution which may be valued now and in the future;
 - The long-term consequences of the proposals can, from experience, be demonstrated to be benign, or the proposals are designed not to prejudice alternative solutions in the future.
- 6.1.19 The *Principles* state that there are no simple rules for achieving quality of design in new work, which could involve either working in a traditional or contemporary manner. The important factor is to respect the values established through an assessment of the significance of the building and its setting.
- 6.1.20 It is also suggested that features of lesser significance offer opportunities to create heritage values of tomorrow, which can be achieved if the quality of the new work is of a high standard of design, materials, detailing and execution.

6.2 Local Policy and Guidance

Liverpool Unitary Development Plan Saved Policies

Policy HD3: Demolition of Listed Buildings

- 6.2.1 The policy states that:
1. *There will be a presumption in favour of the preservation of listed buildings. Consent for demolition will not be granted other than in the most exceptional circumstances, and in any case, not unless the Council is satisfied that every possible effort has been made to continue the present use or find a suitable alternative use.*

2. Applications for demolition must contain full justification for their proposals and provide all the information necessary to judge the application against the following criteria; including fully detailed plans for any redevelopment. Applications for demolition will be assessed against the following criteria:

- i. the importance of the building, its intrinsic architectural and historic interest and its contribution to the local scene;*
- ii. the condition of the building and the cost of repairing and maintaining it in relation to its importance;*
- iii. the adequacy of efforts made to retain the building in use; and*
- iv. the merits of alternative proposals for the site.*

Policy HD4: Alterations to Listed Buildings:

6.2.2 The policy states that consent will not be granted for:

- i. extensions, external or internal alterations to, or change of use of, or any other works to a listed building that would adversely affect its architectural or historic character;*
- ii. applications for extensions, alterations to, or the change of use of a listed building that are not accompanied by the full information necessary to assess the impact of the proposals on the building;*
- iii. any works which are not to a high standard of design in terms of form, scale, detailing and materials.*

Where the adaptive reuse of a listed building will be used by visiting members of the public, the needs of disabled people should be provided for in a manner which preserves the special architectural or historic interest of a building.

Policy HD8: Preservation and Enhancement of Conservation Areas

6.2.3 The policy states that:

The City Council will take positive action to secure the preservation or enhancement of conservation areas and will:

- i. seek support and funding from all available sources for the repair of buildings and environmental improvements;*
- ii. prepare action plans for priority areas;*
- iii. use its available powers to secure the removal of features which significantly detract from the character of the area; and*
- iv. provide planning guidance and advice to owners and developers.*

Policy HD9: Demolition of Buildings in Conservation Areas

6.2.4 The policy states that:

- 1. There will be a presumption in favour of the preservation of any building, part of a building or structure in a conservation area which makes a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area.*
- 2. The City Council will consider proposals for the demolition of any building or structure which makes a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area against the following criteria:*
 - i. the importance of the building, its intrinsic architectural and historic interest and its contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area;*
 - ii. the condition of the building and the cost of repairing or maintaining it;*

iii. the adequacy of the efforts made to retain the building in use; and
iv. the contribution of any new proposal to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

3. Applications must be accompanied by all the information necessary to judge the application against the above criteria, including fully detailed plans for the redevelopment.

4. Where a building makes little or no contribution to the character of the conservation area, proposals for demolition will be considered in the light of the alternative proposals for the site and the contribution made to preserving or enhancing the character of the conservation area.

5. Where appropriate, the City Council will not grant consent for demolition unless there are approved detailed plans and evidence that a contract has been let for the full implementation of the development scheme.

7 THE PROPOSAL

7.1 It is proposed to refurbish the listed building and convert it for a mix of uses. The planning application at this stage relates only to change of use of the existing premises, and separate applications will follow for refurbishment and alterations.

7.2 The range of uses proposed for the building are compatible with the significance and sensitivity of the respective spaces and interiors, and approval of the planning application will not prejudice the preparation of an appropriate detailed application.

7.3 A number of principles for development and conservation are set out below which will inform the subsequent application proposals.

8 PRINCIPLES FOR DEVELOPMENT AND CONSERVATION

8.1 Exterior

8.1.1 The original Hope Street facade of the Blind School should be retained and conserved. The unsightly roof top water tank should be removed.

8.1.2 The facades to the courtyards are of lesser significance, and have been substantially altered. In these areas there will be opportunities for further adaptation and alteration. Some poorly constructed extensions should preferably be removed.

8.1.3 The rear wing, which was used as the *Flying Picket* is later than the original building, and has been altered. Demolition and replacement could lead to an enhancement of significance, and should be considered as an option.

8.1.4 The principle of increasing the height of the Hope Street and Hardman Street facades of the 1930s extension was discussed with the Council in January

2012, and it was informally agreed that this may be acceptable subject to the provision of a high quality design that respects the scale and proportions of the adjoining buildings. It was also agreed that the removal of the infill block to Hardman Street between the original school and the 1930s extension should be acceptable as a way of achieving a new ground level entrance to the building. This would have the merit of expressing the different phases of the building in a more readable way.

8.2 Interior

8.2.1 Entrance Hall

- The entrance hall has particular interest, and should not be subdivided. The original plaster decoration and joinery work should be restored where economically practicable, and alterations should be minimised.
- The existing entrance lobby is not original and should preferably be replaced.

8.2.2 Ground and first floor wings

- The wings to each side of the entrance hall retain some features of interest, which should be retained. Alterations to the spaces and surfaces, however, should be acceptable provided that the original form of the building remains understandable.
- Original doors and doorcases should if possible be retained, together with architraves, skirtings and other joinery work within the circulation areas.

8.2.3 Staircase and Central Corridor

- The main staircase, both the stone-built flight from ground level to the central corridor, and the flights above with decorative iron balustrading, are of interest and should be retained. So too should the tiled floor to the ground floor staircase hall.
- Treatment of the central corridor will depend on how the rooms to each side are to be used. At present the floor levels to each side do not correspond with the corridor, and consideration may be given to adjustment of levels so as to create greater flexibility.

8.2.4 Rotunda

- The rotunda is of special interest and should be retained in its present form, along with the subsidiary staircases that provide links with upper and lower floors.

8.3 Conservation Work

- 8.3.1 Any damage or serious spalling to stone surfaces should be repaired using stone indent and plastic repairs. If required, the stonework should be cleaned

in accordance with best practice and in consultation with the Council's Conservation Officer.

- 8.3.2 Windows should be repaired and refurbished as necessary, including the insertion of seals, and the addition of secondary glazing to reduce noise and improve thermal insulation as required.
- 8.3.3 External metalwork should be refurbished and finished as appropriate.
- 8.3.4 Where fireplaces have been removed, these should either be replaced in matching design, or panelled over.
- 8.3.5 All original joinery work of special interest within the ground and first floors of the main frontage block including shutter boxes, window linings, doors, door cases, architraves and skirtings should be retained and repaired where economically practicable.
- 8.3.6 The main staircase should be retained and repaired in its original form.
- 8.3.7 The ornamental plaster ceilings to the ground floor rooms in the main building should be repaired where damaged and where economically practicable.
- 8.3.8 The extent and methods of building fabric repair and reinstatement should be agreed with relevant officers of the City Council on site and in accordance with planning conditions at the appropriate time.

9 CONCLUSIONS

- 9.1 The original Blind School main building dates from 1849-51 and is an important institutional building in Liverpool. It is listed Grade II. The building has been allowed to deteriorate over the past 30 years.
- 9.2 The 1930s extension is specifically excluded from the listing, but is a curtilage structure, and a building of some interest within the townscape.
- 9.3 The heritage significance of the property is based on its historical associations, architectural quality and contribution to the character of the conservation area. In spite of vacancy, vandalism and decay, it retains most of its original historic fabric and architectural character. It also benefits from extensive archive information, including an architect's drawing of the intended layout which aids understanding of its original form.
- 9.4 The planning application seeks consent for a change of use to a mix of new uses. At this stage no proposals have been drawn up for the detailed conversion, but to inform that process, and dependent on the change of use, a set of development and conservation principles are set out in the report.

- 9.5 The statement of significance provided in this report is in accordance with the historic environment policies in the NPPF and local planning policy, and will aid the assessment of the planning application. A separate assessment of impact on significance will be provided at the time of submission of planning and listed building consent applications for the detailed proposals.