Manchester is the fastest growing UK City outside of London achieving 17% population growth between 2004 and 2014. Increasing Greater Manchester’s housing supply is critical to meeting the demands of the growing workforce and population. Indeed, it has been forecast that an additional 60,000 new homes are expected to be required by 2027.

Against this context, the aim of Manchester Life Development Company is to set a new benchmark for residential property development in Manchester that will drive the sympathetic redevelopment and refurbishment of Ancoats and New Islington into vibrant and sustainable neighbourhoods. The Manchester Life initiative combines the best of public and private sector expertise to develop high-quality homes that will support the emergence of neighbourhoods of choice in east Manchester. Work has commenced on the first projects, which will deliver over 1,000 new homes for rent and sale.

Manchester Life Development Company has assembled a high calibre project team with local experience to design and deliver the proposals for New Little Mill that will return the Listed Building to active use and complete the repair and regeneration of the long vacant Murrays’ Mills complex. The proposals provide an opportunity to deliver more homes for the City’s expanding population, enhancing the quality of life and support Manchester’s Residential Growth Strategy. The proposals have been designed to meet the pressing need for new homes within Manchester City Centre. The proposals are consistent with the approved Ancoats and New Islington Neighbourhood Development Framework, and will complement the wider regeneration initiatives already delivered in this area in support of further planned investment and enhancements in Ancoats.
New Little Mill
Site Location & Context

Site Location
New Little Mill is located in the Ancoats Conservation Area on the north-eastern edge of Manchester City Centre, the principal economic driver for the City Region and a focus for employment, leisure, retail and cultural facilities.

Planning Context
This part of Ancoats is identified by the Ancoats and New Islington Neighbourhood Development Framework Update (2016) as the historic core of Ancoats. The area is generally mixed use and includes mill buildings converted for commercial and residential use, heritage assets, former industrial buildings, new build residential blocks with ground floor commercial floorspace and new public realm. Although there is significant variation in the scale and style of buildings in this area, the use of traditional Manchester brick construction, adherence to the street grid and consistent construction to the plot line creates a distinct identity for the district.

Key objectives for this part of Ancoats have been to build on the distinct character of the area through the restoration and re-use of historic buildings and the addition of new buildings on vacant or underutilised parcels. Development of the Ancoats Core is the critical next step in the eastward expansion of the city centre helping to close the gap between Great Ancoats Street and regeneration efforts in Holt Town and East Manchester.

Historic Context
During the late 18th to early 20th century Ancoats was a thriving industrial district of Manchester, until it suffered significant economic decline during the post-war years. Its proximity to the city centre and recognition of its heritage over recent years has resulted in the preservation and significant regeneration of the area.

The site is located within the Ancoats Conservation Area, which includes the highest density of Grade II and II* Listed Buildings in Manchester.

New Little Mill, formerly Dixon Mill, forms part of the Murrays’ Mills complex which at the turn of the 19th Century was one of the largest cotton spinning complexes in the world. Part of the significance of New Little Mill lies in its history as one of the first purpose-built electric-powered mills in the country; the earliest in Greater Manchester. However, in terms of architectural or aesthetic value, this is limited largely to the external appearance of the listed building, the interior having been cleared of any connection with its former use in the post-war years.

New Little Mill’s special architectural interest as a listed building lies principally in its original function and its relationship to the rest of the Murrays’ Mills complex. It was the last building to be built in the complex, and it was linked to Murrays’ Mills though tunnels below Bengal street. By bringing New Little Mill back into use Murrays’ Mills development will once again be complete.

Site History
‘Little Mill’ was built in c.1819 as part of the Murrays’ Mills complex. However, a catastrophic fire in 1908 resulted in its destruction. As a replacement, New Little Mill was built in 1909; this new mill was larger in footprint but smaller in height.

New Little Mill has seen several changes in use since the 1950s with a series of physical alterations including the addition of the new entrance and staircase on Jersey Street and the new fire escape block on the corner of Radium and Jersey Street.

By the 1990s New Little Mill had fallen into disrepair, with vandalism and arson threatening to destroy the building. A programme of safeguarding was carried out in 2008, which included roof repairs, removal of a cast iron staircase on the Radium Street elevation, repair of the parapet walls and installation of a temporary roof cover and translucent window sheets.
Existing Building

The existing structure comprises cast iron columns and primary steel beams with brick aggregate concrete and steel filler joist floors spanning to loadbearing masonry walls.

In the north east corner the roof has collapsed and there is a fractured column. Further corrosion and delamination to the existing metalwork is evident throughout. A comprehensive survey of the building took place to allow the project team to understand its condition and the scale of any interventions required.

The surveys identified that the condition and design of many of the structural beams and columns, and much of the floor would need intervention to allow the building to be brought back into use. Alternative building uses were considered such as commercial and storage however intervention in all scenarios would have been required. Based on these findings a range of options was considered.

1. Additional Loadbearing Structure Option

This would involve the removal of the floor, installation of a new floor, with new loadbearing columns and beams installed adjacent to the existing.

2. Removal and Repair Option

This would involve carefully taking down structure that required repair or strengthening, carrying out repair or replacement, then reinstalling.

3. Replacement of Internal Columns, Beams and Floors.

This option involves safely removing the beams, columns, floors and roof and replacing them with a new steel frame with associated floors and roof.

The options were reviewed and discussed with the heritage consultant, Manchester Council Planning Department and Historic England. Option 3 is proposed as it is the safest and most deliverable option for New Little Mill. The facade is proposed to be retained and restored.

Later interventions are proposed to be removed returning the building back to its original condition. These include the 1960s stair core, entrance stairs from Jersey Street together with UPVC soil pipes. External boarding and bricked up windows will be replaced with windows that are based on both historical records and site surveys.
New Little Mill
Design Principles

Site Opportunities and Constraints

The design has been influenced by both the surrounding context and the existing features of New Little Mill. Primary considerations have been:

- Any alterations to New Little Mill must respond to its historical context and location within the Ancoats Conservation Area.
- Any alterations must respond to nearby Listed buildings, especially those classified as Grade II*.
- New Little Mill’s party wall connection to Waulk Mill and the associated limited access from their car park.
- The yard area that provides valuable external space for an off-street pedestrian entrance and car park.
- The loss in the historic aesthetic value resulting from the addition of a modern external staircase on Jersey Street, currently the main entrance to the building, and a 1960’s escape stair on Jersey Street.
- The low height (1.7m clear) of the original entrance to the building, on Bengal Street. The intent is to reinstate this door as part of the escape strategy.
- The current lowest floor is below ground level with only high level windows onto Jersey and Bengal Street. This has an impact on the size and type of apartment that can be accommodated in the area, but does not create uninhabitable spaces.
- The existing window pattern and building footprint influence the layout and proportion of dwellings.
- Longer views towards the Rochdale Canal can be achieved to the south.

Massing

New Little Mill is located in a corner of an area of Ancoats that is surrounded by buildings that are typically taller in their massing and sit at 6 to 7 storeys. The original Little Mill constructed in 1819 was 9 storeys high however when it was re-built in 1908 it was only constructed to 5 storeys.

Vertical Extension

The design team have reviewed structure, use, layout and height of the existing building to determine how it can be viably brought back in to use.

All information has been carefully considered in a number of cost reports and structural appraisals. A façade retention scheme with a two storey vertical extension is recognised as the most appropriate solution for the retention of New Little Mill.

The addition of two storeys to the building looks to complete and respond to the massing of this corner of the Ancoats Conservation Area. The new façade is set back from the existing building by a minimum of two metres to reduce the visual impact from street level.

Existing Footprint and Windows

The external window pattern has influenced the size of apartments and their internal configuration. A primary consideration during the design process was for the new internal layout to respond honestly to the existing building, with party and internal walls meeting the existing masonry piers rather than the window frames.

New Little Mill has a deep plan floor plate at approximately 28 metres which lends itself to perimeter single aspect apartments. The most appropriate access arrangement has therefore been to incorporate a central courtyard space which is top lit to allow light to fill the space.
The proposals for New Little Mill look to deliver a maximum of 68 dwellings arranged around a central courtyard. All dwellings meet or exceed the National Described Space Standards. The courtyard will be covered by a glazed roof to allow natural light to fill the space and provide residents with a covered approach from the main entrance to their dwellings.

**Use and Quantum of Development**
- 7 storeys comprising the 5 storey existing building with a 2 storey vertical extension.
- A maximum of 68 apartments for sale.
- A mix of 1 and 2 bed apartments on levels G-4.
- A mix of 2 and 3 bed duplex apartments within the vertical extension.

**Entrance level:**
- 1 Bed apartment
- 2 Bed apartment
- Covered courtyard
- Entrance
- Water tank room
- Secure cycle store
- Resident refuse/recycling store
- Staff WC
- Staff brew/post room
- Staff office
- Plant room

**Access and Servicing**
- The main entrance to the building is proposed to be from Radium Street through the car park area.
- Vehicle and pedestrian gates provide access to the car park area from Radium Street.
- 19 car parking spaces including 1 accessible space are provided within the car park area.
- A single central core with a lift and stairs serves all upper floors.
- The refuse/recycling store is located adjacent to the building entrance with residents access from the central courtyard space.
- Access for refuse/recycling collection is through externally located doors via the car park area.

**Boundary Treatments**
- New boundary wall treatment on Radium Street which will include vehicular and pedestrian gates.
- The existing railings to Jersey Street will remain and be repaired or replaced as required.
- The later addition entrance and staircase on Jersey Street and the 1960s fire escape block on the corner of Radium and Jersey Street will be removed. The original brickwork will be repaired/replaced as required.
- Service functions are located internally behind the ground floor openings onto Waulk Mill to reduce overlooking.
Vertical Extension Façades

- A number of material options for the vertical extension façades have been considered.
- Metal has been developed as the most appropriate option as it not only echoes the material used in other extensions and top floors in the area but it is typical of a lightweight top floor.
- A bronze palette has been chosen which complements the existing brickwork.
- The extension facade arrangement has been developed by analysing the fenestration pattern of the existing façades of New Little Mill and the surrounding mill buildings.
- String course features on the existing façades together with the stone window sills create a horizontality to the building and appear to reduce the vertical scale.
Vertical Extension Façades

- A modular grid pattern is typical across the existing façades. Through a series of studies we have developed an arrangement for the extension that proportionally matches the elevation below.
- Horizontal fins have been applied to the extension facade to reduce the apparent scale and provide a relationship to the string course and window sill features on the existing façades.

Proposed vertical extension bays share proportions with the existing facade.