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HSBC Rochdale
Project Reference: 101540

October 2013

Assessment of potential for statutory listing

English Heritage and Rochdale Borough Council are currently considering the HSBC Rochdale, 2 Yorkshire Street, Rochdale (NGR: 389633, 413397) for addition to the statutory *List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest*. The owners, HSBC, have therefore asked Wessex Archaeology to provide an assessment of whether, in our opinion, the building can be deemed to satisfy the criteria for designation.

Site location and history

The HSBC Rochdale building was purpose built between 1892-1895 as a branch of the Oldham Joint Stock Bank at the north end of Rochdale Bridge, now the junction of Yorkshire Street and The Butts. It opened on September 1895 but by 1899 had become a London City and Midland Bank. HSBC acquired Midland Bank in 1992 but the Midland Bank name continued in use until 1999 when the HSBC brand name was adopted throughout the company.

The Site's road junction has been modified several times. The river was covered over post-1909 to create a town square. The junction had a number of tramlines running through it; there was a tramway centre and shelter to the south-east of the Site until the trams stopped operating in 1932. Between 1932 and 1959, the junction was redeveloped into its current roundabout configuration. The 1910 and 1930 Ordnance Survey maps indicate the wings of the building were not originally part of the bank although part of the same structure. The 1959-60 OS shows the east wing has become part of the bank by this time but the west wing is still shown as a separate property.

The Oldham Joint Stock Bank was one of two banks (the other was the Lancashire and Yorkshire Bank, 1 Yorkshire Street) constructed at this junction in the 1890s. It replaced a flannel warehouse, one of several old buildings at this junction described as 'an eyesore' by a contemporary article in the Observer (Cole 1988). This area of Rochdale is a popular location for bank premises; by 1930, there were as many as seven different banks in operation around the junction and its neighbouring streets. These included the Union of Manchester bank (5 South Parade), Lloyds bank (17 Yorkshire Street) and Williams & Glyn's Bank (21 Butts Avenue) all of which are listed buildings.

Building description

The building's façade is constructed of Yorkshire Stone at upper levels and granite at basement level. Internal walls and the rear of the structure are brick built. It has a curving south-west to south facing front elevation that, excluding the basement, has a three storey central projection with two storey wings either side. Window and door openings divide the building façade into three bays on the west wing, four bays on the east wing and three bays on the central projection. Each floor has a different architectural treatment. The ground floor walls are rusticated with round arched window and door openings divided by flat pilasters. The first floor windows are rectangular with scrolled brackets and raised surrounds and the central projection second floor has round-arched windows each with three scrolled brackets connected to the moulded architrave above. The central projection has a balustrade at roof level and four giant order pilasters dividing the windows of the first and second floor. Each storey is divided by a pair of string courses with plain bands between. The highest string course on both the wings and central projection has a dental





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moulding on its soffit and forms a decorative cornice. The street level slopes down to the east and north which provides space for a series of low level windows and external access to the basement.

Photographs indicate the façade was altered at some point between 1909 and 1935. Although a Midland Bank by 1899, the bank retained its Oldham Joint Stock Bank signage for at least a decade (photograph dated 1909). The original façade had an off-centre main entrance in the western bay of the central projection. This would have been the nearest bay if approaching the bank from the south across Rochdale Bridge or from the west along The Orchard (now The Esplanade) road. The entrance had a porch with moulded cornice, Tuscan columns to either side, and 'Oldham Joint Stock Bank' was engraved on the band between ground and first floor. The central projection had nine windows in total: two at ground floor, three at first floor, three at second floor and one at basement level in the easternmost bay. The west wing had seven windows in total: two basement windows, two at ground floor and three at first floor level with an arched entrance in the westernmost bay. The east wing had two entrances, steps up to an arched entrance in the western bay at ground level and steps down to a low level entrance in the eastern bay. The ground floor entrance steps appear continue inside the building to first floor level. The two central bays had basement windows at low level, beneath arched windows at ground level and there were four windows at first floor level. An undated photograph (M851) shows this façade in detail (**Plate 1**).

The existing façade is unchanged at first and second floor level except for the addition of signage (formerly Midland, now HSBC). Conversely, the ground floor entrances and windows have been rearranged. The main entrance has been relocated to the middle bay of the central projection. It has semi-circular steps leading up to it and a disabled access ramp along the front of the west wing. The ramp and stairs have blocked the basement windows in these areas. The previous entrance has been replaced with an arched window to match others along the ground floor. The east wing has had its ground floor entrance removed, replaced by a round-arched ground floor and rectangular basement window to identical to the adjoining bays in this wing. The penultimate bay to the east in this wing has had its basement window blocked, replaced by a letterbox. An undated photograph shows the central projection's eastern bay at one time had a shortened ground floor window to accommodate a cash machine with its own separate set of steps (**Plate 2**) however, photographs dated 1968 show this ground floor window as full length. Planning permission for the central projection's wide semi-circular steps and disabled access ramp was granted in 1993 (application 93/D30053) (**Plate 3**). The exterior of the property is protected as part of the streetscape and setting of the Rochdale Town Centre Conservation Area.

Internally, the original form of the banking hall remains largely intact. It contains a large stained glass skylight, previously covered by a suspended ceiling but restored in 2006 as part of a £1.33million refurbishment of the branch. The majority of modern fixtures and fittings such as cash machines, seating areas and office furniture is free standing, therefore the original fixtures and fittings they obscure are largely undisturbed (**Plates 4-5**). Areas of the ground floor have historic plasterwork and joinery such as moulded cornices, egg and dart pilaster capitals, moulded picture rails and skirting as well as various styles of dado panelling - one type with fielded panels and dental cornice that mimics the cornice above it and another with tongue and groove panelling and a moulded rail (**Plate 6**). The ground floor is partitioned by a chamfered arcade on plinths that match the skirting. Areas of the ground and the whole of the first floor have suspended ceilings; it is possible that features of special interest survive intact above them.

The basement also contains historic features such as a safe with iron-barred gates and door with patented Chatwood's Works lock, brass fittings and painted detailing (**Plate 7**). Samuel Chatwood called himself a banking engineer and his company specialised in bank safes and locks (Pascoe





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n.d.). The basement also has original joinery such as a deep-fielded panelled doorway into the toilets.

The second floor (within the central projection) is currently used for storage and some areas are in poor condition due to water ingress through the reinforced concrete roof above. This floor has historic features that include deep door reveals similar to the basement as well as several original fireplaces with iron grates. The timber fireplace surrounds have a moulded architrave, cornice and fielded central tablet with scrolled jambs either side (**Plate 8**). Due to the shape of the second floor, two identical fireplaces are set in an angled chimneybreast at the western end of the floor in order to heat the front and back of the west room. A second chimneystack above the east room indicates it may also contain a fireplace; however, the relevant wall was obscured from view.

Assessment

English Heritage has published a *Designation Listing Selection Guide: Commerce and Exchange Buildings* (EH, 2011). It states that the majority of commercial buildings in Britain are 19th century structures subject to a high degree of standardisation therefore '*selection for designation needs to be very discriminating*' (EH 2011, p13).

However, these commercial buildings transformed British townscapes in the 19th and 20th centuries and the English Heritage guidance suggests that '*where coherent commercial townscapes survive reasonably intact there will be a strong case for designating individual components comprehensively in recognition of their cumulative impact ...claims for listing may well be reinforced by group value of neighbouring listed premises.*' (EH 2011, 13-14). While the townscape contribution made by the HSBC and neighbouring banks and commercial buildings has already been recognised through their inclusion within the Town Hall Conservation Area, which provides a certain level of protection to the buildings, some are already listed in their own right. The listing of the HSBC would therefore be in accordance with the designation guidelines, in recognition of the cumulative group value of the commercial buildings in this part of the townscape.

In many cases, historic or recent alterations to commercial buildings have resulted in historic interiors being lost or only surviving in key areas. The guide states that although front elevations may be of sufficient interest to warrant listing buildings for their façade alone, the survival of historic interior spaces and features will enhance the special interest of the structure and increase its potential for designation. As noted above, the exterior of the HSBC bank is a fine, but relatively typical, example of neoclassical design, with its Giant Order set on a rusticated base, though no longer with its pillared entrance. However, unlike so many of its contemporaries, the Banking Hall survives relatively intact, despite the intrusion of modern banking installations. The outstanding coloured glass lay-light forms a highly decorative feature at the heart of the Banking Hall, and its restoration in 2006 has ensured its good condition. Being the singular most important interior space in the bank, the survival of the form and detail of the banking hall significantly enhances the heritage value of the building, and makes it more likely to be deemed to satisfy the criteria for listing.

Elsewhere in the building, original features such as wall panelling, fireplaces and cornices also survive and suggest that little comprehensive alteration has been carried out. As noted above, the majority of the modern banking fixtures have made little physical impact on the original fabric, and could be removed without damage. This is considered to further raise the heritage value of the building.

In view of the above description and assessment, we are therefore of the opinion that the building is likely to be deemed to satisfy the criteria for statutory listing.





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Project staff:

Grace Flood was the principal desk-based researcher and author of this assessment. Lucy Dawson undertook the Site visit and research at the local studies library. The project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Anne Upson, Built Heritage Team Leader.

References:

- Booker, J. (1990) *Temples of Mammon: The Architecture of Banking*
- Cole, J. (1988) *Rochdale Revisited: a town and its people*
- English Heritage (2011, April) *Designation Listing Selection Guide: Commerce and Exchange Buildings*
- Pascoe, Philip J. (n.d.) 'Chatwood-Milner Ltd. History – 1956-1971'
<http://chubbarchive.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/page13.html> accessed 08/10/2013



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Plate 1: Undated photograph (pre-1935) showing the original Oldham Joint Stock Bank façade



Plate 2: Undated photograph (pre-1968) showing the Midland Bank façade





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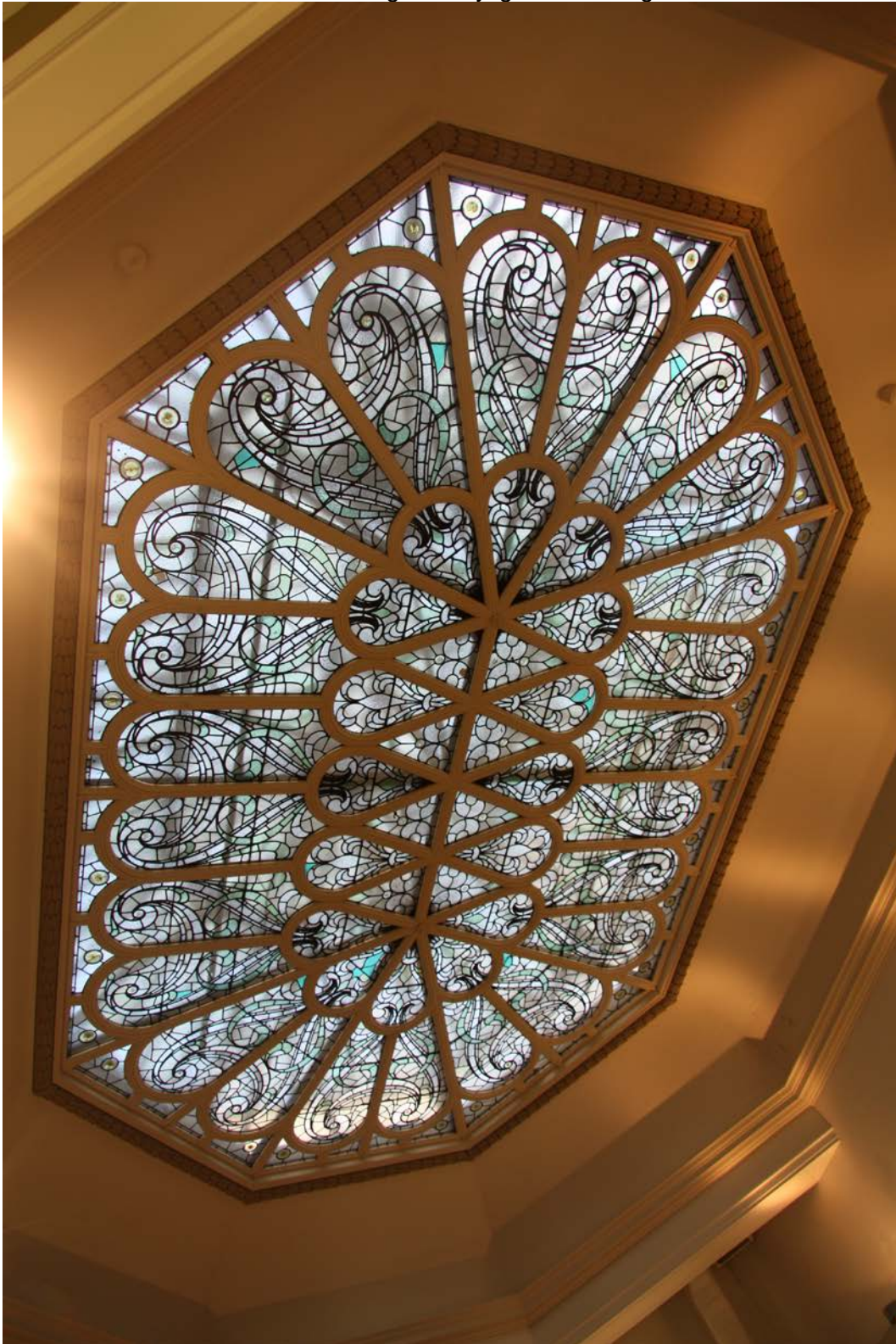
Plate 3: HSBC Bank façade October 2013





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Plate 4: Stained glass skylight in banking hall





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Plate 5: Banking hall with moulded cornices and pilasters decorative plasterwork





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Plate 6: Ground floor dado panelling in the banking hall



Plate 7: Chatwood's safe door in the basement





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Plate 8: Fireplace at west end of the second floor

