

Engines of Prosperity: new uses for old mills

North West

Executive Summary



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Textile mills are fundamental to the history and culture of much of the North West. They were the powerhouses behind the industrial revolution, triggering technological innovation, stimulating new trade and transforming the transport network. They shaped the landscape, with cotton, woollen and silk complexes creating evocative skylines in the towns and cities of Pennine Lancashire, Greater Manchester and Cheshire.

According to a YouGov poll, 90% of people believe that mills are an important part of England's heritage, story and character

Mill buildings can once again be powerhouses for growth in the 21st century. Evidence demonstrates their capacity to accommodate new and exciting uses, attracting investment in area-wide regeneration, creating jobs and accommodating the homes and business of the future. They can also play a positive role in forging local community identity, providing inspiring places in which people can live, work and relax.

Cushman & Wakefield and Lathams Architects have been appointed by Historic England to outline best practice in repurposing vacant and underused textile mill buildings across the North West. This commission accompanies the *Engines of Prosperity: new uses for old mills* report produced by Cushman & Wakefield for Yorkshire in 2016.

The publication showcases successfully repurposed textile mills alongside other potential mill conversion opportunities. There is evidence that mill redevelopment projects need assistance to overcome market failures created by high abnormal costs and restrictions in the developer/funder sector. This report shares best practice in overcoming these challenges and makes recommendations for action by public and private sector partners to drive forward the repurposing agenda.

Since 1988, Greater Manchester alone has lost almost half of its mill buildings through fire, demolition or neglect



Above and front cover: Holmes Mill, Clitheroe has been transformed to create a unique leisure destination

Right: Tower Mill, Dukinfield showcases the return of high quality cotton manufacture



Growth delivered through mills

- Vacant and underused mills are at risk of being lost forever. Repurposing them for modern day use is an effective means of securing their long term sustainability and reinforcing local identity.
- Nationally, there are fine examples of how our unique heritage assets are contributing to job creation and the delivery of housing. In the North West, historic mills have considerable reuse potential.

Total number of textile mills in Greater Manchester and Lancashire



540

Lancashire mills

542

Greater Manchester mills

- Growth is at the heart of local, regional and national policy. *Powerhouse 2050: The North's Routemap for Productivity (2017)* recognises the importance of repurposing existing buildings for creating new homes and jobs.
- The Housing White Paper, *Fixing our broken housing market (2017)* highlights the need to build more than 275,000 homes per annum to keep up with population growth and to address the current undersupply of housing. Repurposed textile mills can play an important role in delivering this target and help minimise release of Greenbelt land.
- Creating additional commercial floor space for new and growing businesses is at the heart of the Strategic Economic Plans for Greater Manchester and Lancashire. The 1,996,597 sq m of vacant mill floor space provides an excellent opportunity to meet this need.
- Repurposed mills can generate substantial tax receipts for local authorities as a result of business rate additionality, Council Tax and New Homes Bonus revenues.

Scale of the opportunity

Applying standard office floor space densities to the total amount of net vacant floor space in Greater Manchester and Lancashire's textile mills illustrates the potential to generate **133,000 new net additional jobs** (equivalent to £6bn of Gross Value Added per annum) or **25,000 new homes**. This shows that mills can be an important means of accommodating the North West's growth needs.

Greater Manchester and Lancashire textile mill gross floor space (sq m)



6,058,510

Occupied floor space

1,996,597

Vacant floor space

Ingredients for successful mill reuse

Planning

- Recognition of viability challenges facing owners in securing occupiers.
- Application of *Conservation Principles* to identify relative heritage values within sites.
- Use of flexible approach to adaptation by all stakeholders, as outlined in Historic England's *Constructive Conservation* case studies.
- A proactive strategy to identify historic mills at risk and to develop reuse schemes.
- Promotion of Heritage Investment Strategies and Mill Action Plans at local authority level.
- Guidance and support to mill owners who have limited technical knowledge or experience in delivering regeneration projects.

The reuse case studies illustrate that mills offer quality spaces that attract commercial, residential and leisure occupiers, leading to successful business investments

Funding solutions and public sector facilitation

- Establishment of mill investment programmes coordinated at Combined Authority level, drawing in resources from Local Enterprise Partnership Funding / Local Growth Fund, Historic England, European Structural Fund and Investment Fund and Homes and Communities Agency.
- Local authority intervention through acquisition of assets, prudential borrowing, joint venture partnerships and direct funding and delivery.
- Maximisation of opportunities for Homes and Communities Agency Homes Building Fund to be secured for mill re-purposing projects.
- Tax increment financing to address financial deficits on priority assets.

Collaborative approach to delivery

- Creation of high quality spaces where people will want to live, work and shop to stimulate wider regeneration.
- Recognition of long-term investment potential of historic mills through bespoke funds to target high rent / capital growth locations.
- Identification of long term opportunities in areas that align with regeneration strategies.

Recommended next steps

- Identification of priority mills with repurposing potential at local authority or combined authority level.
- Production of investment and delivery plans for selected mills, in collaboration with owners, developers and other stakeholders.
- Partnership working between mill owners, local authorities, Historic England, the Greater Manchester and Lancashire Local Enterprise Partnerships and Homes and Communities Agency to secure delivery.

Iconic buildings, passion, vision, determination, collaboration, flexibility and creativity are amongst the ingredients of successful mill conversion schemes



Above: Pendle Village Mill, Brierfield now operates as a successful retail hub

Top right: The Cotton Works, Bolton illustrates how former textile mills can be adapted for residential use

Bottom right: Lomeshaye Bridge Mill, Nelson is an example of community involvement and third sector occupancy of commercial floor space



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