

= London Road Fire Station , Manchester =

London Road Fire Station is a former fire station in Manchester , England . It was opened in 1906 , on a site bounded by London Road , Whitworth Street , Minshull Street South and Fairfield Street . Designed in the Edwardian Baroque style by Woodhouse , Willoughby and Langham in red brick and terracotta , it cost £ 142 @, @ 000 to build . It has been a Grade II * listed building since 1974 .

In addition to a fire station , the building housed a police station , an ambulance station , a bank , a coroner 's court , and a gas @-@ meter testing station . The fire station operated for eighty years , housing the firemen , their families , and the horse @-@ drawn appliances that were replaced by motorised vehicles a few years after its opening . It was visited by royalty in 1942 , in recognition of the brigade 's wartime efforts . After the war it became a training centre and in 1952 became the first centre equipped to record emergency calls . However , the fire station became expensive to maintain and after council reorganisation decline set in .

The building was the headquarters of the Manchester Fire Brigade until the brigade was replaced by the Greater Manchester Fire Service in 1974 . The fire station closed in 1986 , since when it has been largely unused despite several redevelopment proposals . It was placed on English Heritage 's Buildings at Risk Register in 2001 and in 2010 Manchester City Council served a compulsory purchase order on the fire station 's owner , Britannia Hotels . Britannia announced in 2015 their intention to sell the building opening up the possibility of redevelopment after nearly 30 years of dereliction .

= = Construction = =

In 1897 the Manchester Watch Committee was considering a replacement for its fire station on Jackson 's Row . A five @-@ man sub @-@ committee was set up and recommended a site on Newton Street . In 1899 , George William Parker who had designed fire stations in Bootle and Belfast , and been referred to as the " architect of the world 's fire service " was appointed Chief of the Manchester Fire Brigade and asked his opinion on the proposal . Parker reported that the site on Newton Street was unsuitable and submitted plans for a fire station on a site bounded by London Road , Whitworth Street , Minshull Street South and Fairfield Street .

Parker 's proposal was for a 7 @-@ bay fire station on a site more than double the size of the one proposed on Newton Street . The choice of London Road was influenced by its proximity to a development of warehouses on Whitworth Street and Princess Street . Parker convinced the city council to choose his proposals rather than those on Newton Street .

A competition , with prizes of £ 300 , £ 200 and £ 100 (equivalent to £ 29 @, @ 000 , £ 19 @, @ 000 and £ 10 @, @ 000 in 2016) was organised to design the new fire station . The competition drew interest from across the country , attracting 25 entries . The winning entry was by John Henry Woodhouse , George Harry Willoughby and John Langham , a team of local architects . Their design was based closely on Parker 's initial plans . The fire station was described by Fire Call magazine as " the finest fire station in this round world " before construction started .

The fire station was built between 1904 and 1906 at a cost of £ 142 @, @ 000 (equivalent to £ 13 @. @ 8 million in 2016) . The building 's substructure and foundations were built by C. H. Normanton of Manchester . The superstructure was built by Gerrard 's of Swinton at a cost of £ 75 @, @ 360 . It was faced with red brick and terracotta by Burmantofts , a common choice for early 20th @-@ century buildings in Manchester as it was cleanable and resisted the pollution and acid rain caused by local industry . Other notable Manchester buildings from this era making use of terracotta include the Midland Hotel , the Refuge Assurance Building , the University 's The Sackville Street Building (formerly known as UMIST main building) and the Victoria Baths . The building 's exterior featured sculptural models by John Jarvis Millson representing the functions of the building such as justice , fire and water .

The building had stained glass windows and the interior was decorated with glazed bricks , similar to other public buildings of this era in the city , such as the Victoria Baths . The similarities suggest the influence and adoption of a standard design by Henry Price 's newly created City Architect 's

Department .

= = Operation = =

The building was opened on 27 September 1906 by the Lord Mayor of Manchester James Herbert Thewlis . In addition to the fire station , the building housed a police station on Whitworth Street , an ambulance station on Minshull Street South , a branch of Williams Deacon 's Bank at the corner of London Road and Fairfield Street , < a coroner 's court , and a gas @-@ meter testing station on London Road . The coroner 's court and gas @-@ meter testing station replaced the proposed public library and gym .

The fire station contained flats for 32 firemen and their families and 6 single firemen . Facilities included a laundry , gym , billiards room and children 's play @-@ areas . The complex contained stables for the horses that pulled the fire appliances , and a blacksmith 's workshop . There were electric bells and lights to alert firemen to an alarm , poles to expedite the firemen 's response , suspended harnesses to allow the horses to be harnessed quickly , and electric doors . The fire station was also designed with foresight ; the appliance bays were made wide enough to take motorised fire appliances . The station 's first motorised fire appliance arrived in 1911 , five years after it opened .

The building featured a 130 @-@ foot (40 m) hose tower and a ventilation system designed by Musgrave and Company to prevent the odour from the horses ' stalls entering the firemen 's living quarters . Fresh air was drawn in through the top of the fire station 's tower , purified and circulated around the building . When the air reached the end of the circuit , in the stalls , it was extracted from the building . The system meant that the air in the building was replaced every 10 minutes .

During the Second World War the basement was converted into an air @-@ raid shelter and an extension built in the yard to provide more space in the control room . The fire services were nationalised in 1941 , and London Road became the headquarters of Division C. In recognition of the fire fighters ' efforts King George VI and Queen Elizabeth visited the fire station in 1942 .

After the war the Manchester Fire Brigade was again municipalised , and reorganised . London Road Fire Station was restored as the headquarters of the brigade and became the only fire station serving the city centre . A fire service training centre was established in 1948 . At about the same time , the ambulance station closed and was converted into the fire brigade 's workshops . The control room was modernised in 1952 , becoming the first in the country with equipment to record emergency calls .

The interior of the building was refurbished in 1955 . The exterior had been cleaned every year since the fire station opened , and as a result was still in pristine condition when the building celebrated its Golden Jubilee on 6 October 1956 .

= = Decline = =

By the end of the 1960s maintenance was becoming increasingly expensive , and the building 's design ill @-@ suited to modern fire appliances . Plans to replace the fire station were put on hold pending the formation of the Greater Manchester Fire Service .

The building has been Grade II * listed since 1974 , the same year that the replacement of the Manchester Fire Brigade by the Greater Manchester Fire Service precipitated the relocation of the brigade 's headquarters to a new facility in Swinton . As part of the reorganisation , London Road became the headquarters of the brigade 's " E Division " , with the station 's control room responsible for two divisions covering the City of Manchester , the Metropolitan Borough of Stockport and Tameside .

The reorganisation meant the number of appliances was reduced , until only three remained at the station . The control room at London Road closed in 1979 , replaced by a single computerised control room at brigade headquarters in Swinton .

In the same year , following the establishment of Greater Manchester Police and a reorganisation of policing in the city , the police station in the building also closed . The closure left the ground floor on

the Whitworth Street side empty . The last tenants of the bank section , a firm of solicitors , and the fire brigade 's workshops , also vacated the building at about the same time .

In 1984 construction work began on a £ 2 @. @ 4 million , 4 @. @ 5 @- @ acre (1 @. @ 8 ha) replacement in Thompson Street and in 1985 the old London Road Fire Station was brought within the Whitworth Street Conservation Area . In 1986 the fire service left London Road for its new fire station , London Road Fire Station closed and the building was sold .

= = Dereliction and redevelopment = =

After the sale the building was mainly used for storage whilst planning applications to convert it into a hotel were made in 1986 , 1993 , and 2001 , with varying degrees of success . The coroner 's court was the last to vacate the premises , in 1998 . In 2001 , the building was placed on English Heritage 's Buildings at Risk Register . By 2004 it was in steep decline , and momentum was building for the fire station 's owner , Britannia Hotels , to act .

In February 2006 , Argent , developers proposed leasing the building from Britannia Hotels to transform it into a music and arts venue . Manchester City Council backed the plans and refused to rule out a compulsory purchase order (CPO) if the owner did not act to redevelop the building . Britannia Hotels branded Argent 's plans " unworkable " and proposed turning the building into a company headquarters , 200 @- @ bed hotel , and fire station museum . A planning application was promised by March 2006 , but by May none had been made . Work was carried out by February 2007 to make the building watertight and in autumn 2007 a proposal was made by Britannia to convert the building into a hotel .

Britannia Hotels appointed Purcell Miller Tritton to draw up plans to convert the building into a hotel in 2008 but none were produced by May 2009 and the city council lost faith in Britannia Hotels ' commitment to its redevelopment . The city council was concerned that the state of the fire station was limiting regeneration in the area , including a proposed government complex on the former Mayfield Railway Station site . The city council set a deadline of July 2009 for progress on redevelopment . Britannia Hotels ' proposal in July 2009 was to convert the fire station into a hotel with a 15 @- @ storey tower in its courtyard and promised a planning application by October 2009 , but none was made and the city council 's Chief Executive recommended issuing a CPO . A meeting of the city council in January 2010 approved a request for up to £ 5 @. @ 25 million to cover the costs associated with the fire station 's acquisition . Britannia Hotels responded by pledging to make a new proposal by February 2010 , rendering the CPO unnecessary .

Britannia submitted an application to turn the fire station into a 227 @- @ bed 4 @- @ star hotel in June 2010 . The Victorian Society praised the proposed conversion . Manchester City Council decided to continue with the CPO . The city council issued a CPO on 5 August 2010 . Despite the plans being approved 16 September 2010 , the council continued to pursue a CPO and solicited bids for a development partner in January 2011 . Britannia 's objection to the CPO led to a public inquiry in April 2011 . On 29 November 2011 , the Department for Communities and Local Government confirmed the CPO had been rejected . Despite Britannia 's guarantee at the inquiry to proceed with the development it reconsidered its plans . In a letter to English Heritage , Britannia said the proposed scheme was unsustainable for the foreseeable future . Britannia wanted to return to the rejected tower plan . English Heritage and the city council expressed disappointment . The city council offered to buy the building at market value .

In February 2013 after a public meeting the Friends of London Road Fire Station (FoLRFS) was formed to pressurise Britannia Hotels and persuade the council to attempt a second CPO . The group organised an online petition , fundraising events , public meetings , an online survey to discover locals ' views , an art exhibition and public engagement with its history , and published the outcome of a Freedom of Information Act request on what the council had done regarding surveying the building and issuing urgent @- @ works notices . In November 2013 , Britannia applied to extend the 2010 planning permissions but despite objections the applications were approved on technical grounds in December 2013 . The council considered applying for a CPO for the second time in September 2014 and confirmed its intention to do so in December 2014 and meet with FoLRFS in

early 2015 . FoLRFS received a grant from Locality 's Community Assets in Difficult Ownership (CADO) programme to pay for public outreach work . On 30 April 2015 , FoLRFS met Pat Bartoli , head of the council 's urban regeneration team and Howard Bernstein who praised their campaign . It was announced immediately after the meeting that Britannia Hotels had decided to sell the building .

London Road Fire Station was put on the market on 1 May 2015 and expected offers of around £ 10 million while restoration is expected to cost £ 20 ? 30 million . Allied London acquired the firestation on 16 November 2015 .