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THE FLAXWORKS | CLEATOR MILL | WEST CUMBRIA

DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

PREPARED BY MANNING ELLIOTT PARTNERSHIP  
CHARTERED ARCHITECTS & DESIGNERS  
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01

**Intro**

## Intro

Manning Elliott Partnership have been commissioned by Genr8north, to develop a proposal for a full refurbishment and change of use to offices on the site of Cleator Mills in West Cumbria which has undergone other refurbishment and regeneration work.



MANNINGELLIOTT  
PARTNERSHIP

## Brief

The proposal generally comprises:

- Full refurbishment including new windows and doors of the building to include change of use to offices Class E along with ancillary external works to service the building.
- 70 car parking spaces (including 4 disabled spaces, and 4 electric vehicle spaces)
- Bike spaces (internally and externally)
- An attractive hard and soft landscaping proposal.

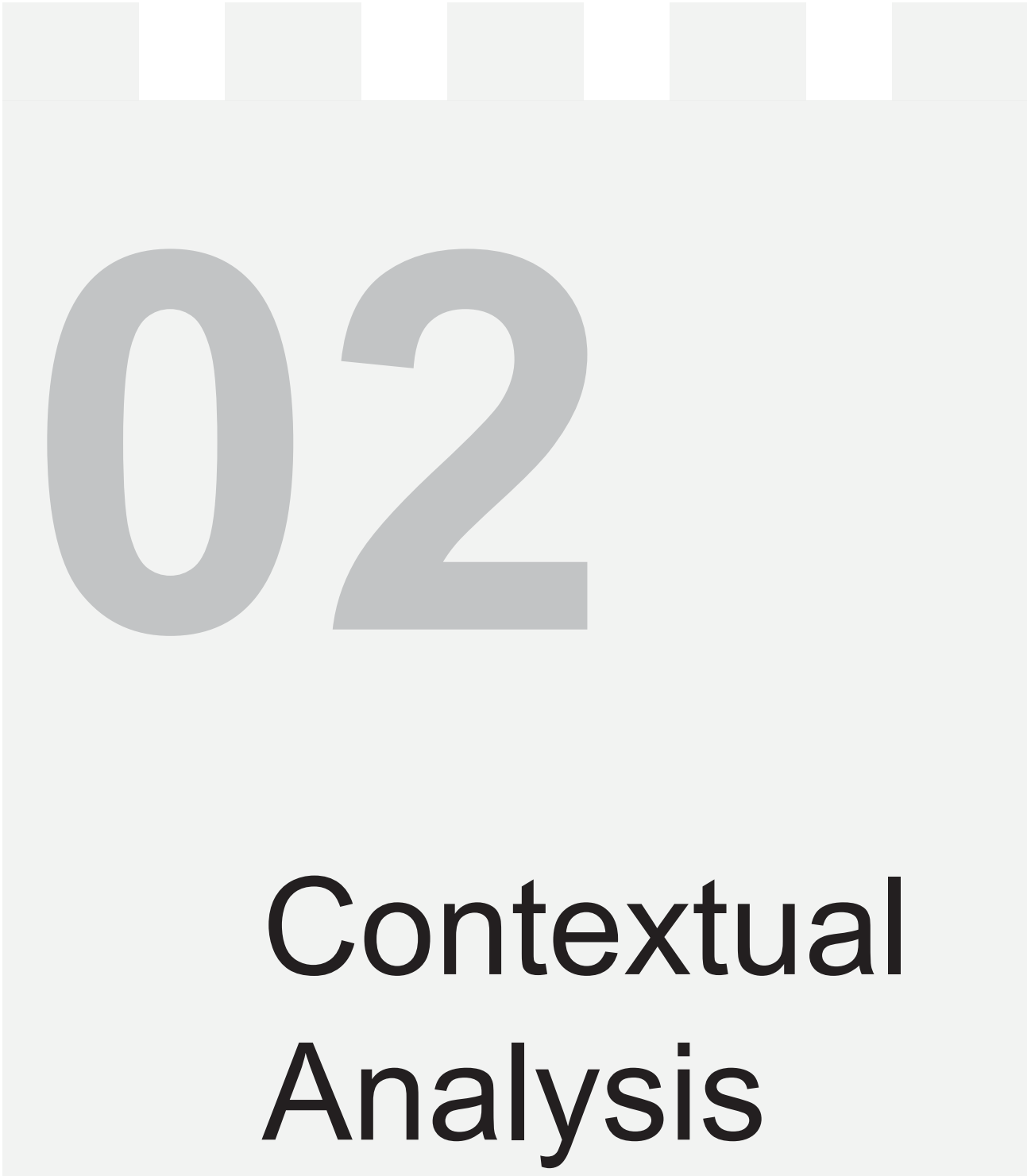


Existing



Proposal





02

# Contextual Analysis

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## Location

**Location and address:** Old Kangol Road, Cleator, UK

**OS Grid Reference: OS Grid:** NY01961366

**Other historical names the site is known by:** The Flax Mill, Mill 2

The site lies on the outskirts of Cleator, just off the A5086 linking Egremont & Cockermouth in West Cumbria.

The mill is located approximately 1 mile south of Cleator Moor and 6 miles south east of Whitehaven

The site was previously used for textile production, comprising of several large buildings used for production and storage, until the mill's closure in 2009. Remaining buildings left over from the former works were in a state of disrepair and have been demolished.

Due to previous regeneration work, the site provide workshops for llocal businesses, as well as a park & ride scheme for Sellafield Ltd.

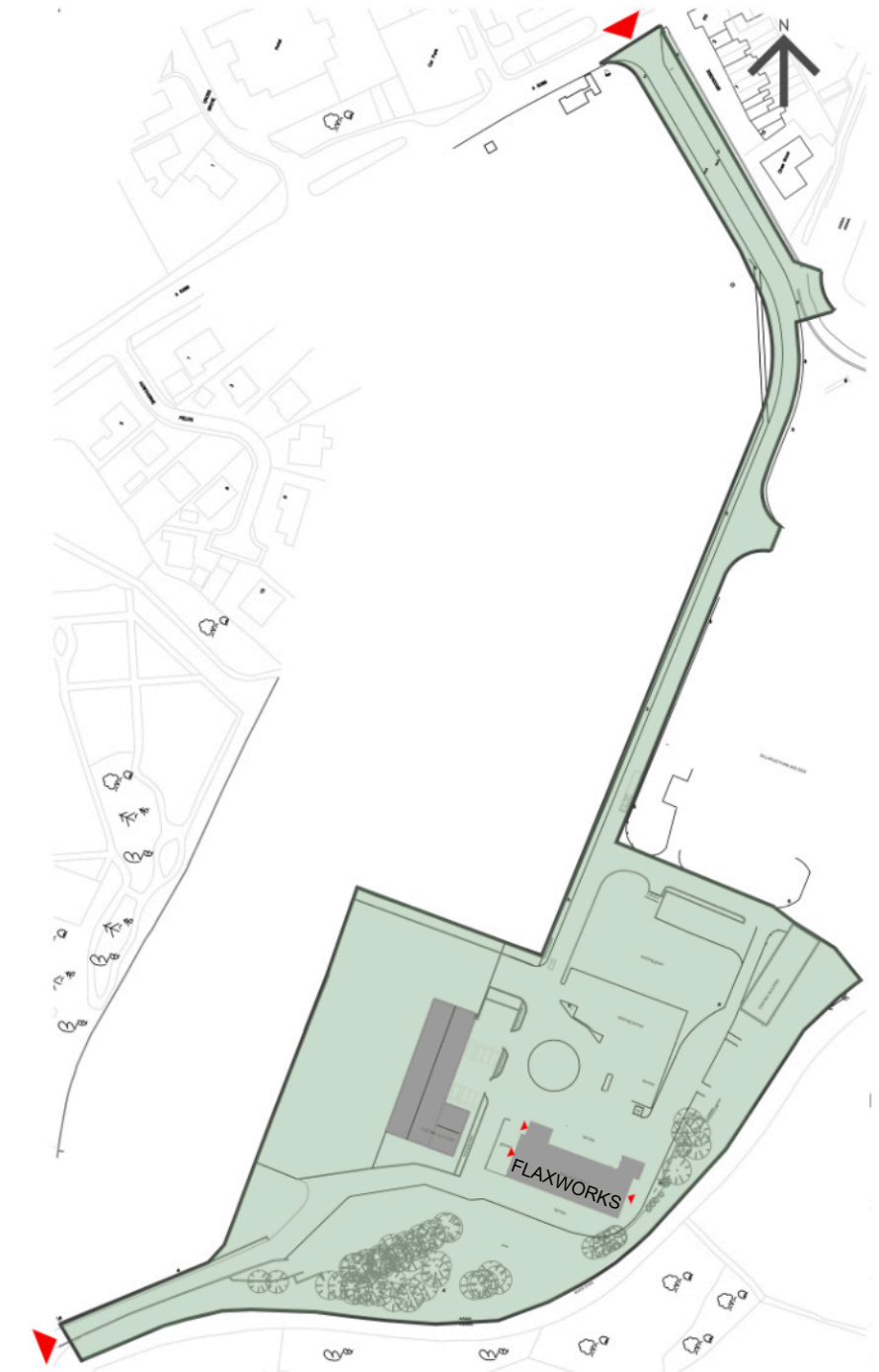


Photo of the mill facing north.



Aerial map of the mill area

Coordinates: NY01961366



Location Plan with access points and building entrances.



Site Photographs & Building Photos



01 North building elevation also showing the redundant chimney



Photograph locations key



02 East elevation. View facing towards the river Ehen



03 View facing towards the site entrance next to the roundabout and the new industrial and commercial unit to the west of the building.



04 Rear access road facing Mill Street



05 Main access from Old Kangol Road



\*\* Site Photographs & Building Photos



06 North building elevation



07 Internal view of a typical window



08 Internal view. Room with vaulted brick ceilings



09 West building elevation

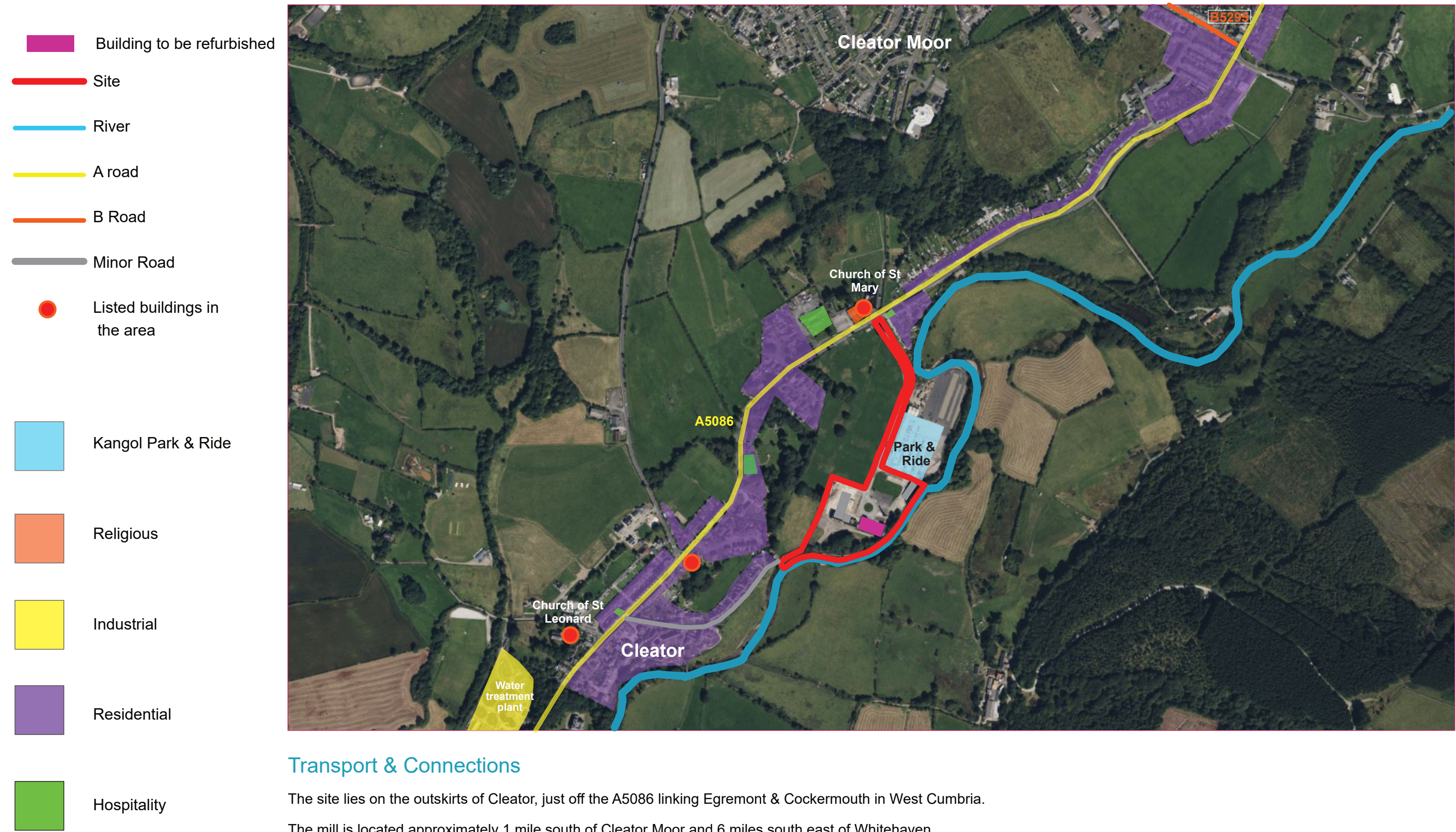


10 East building elevation



11 South building elevation





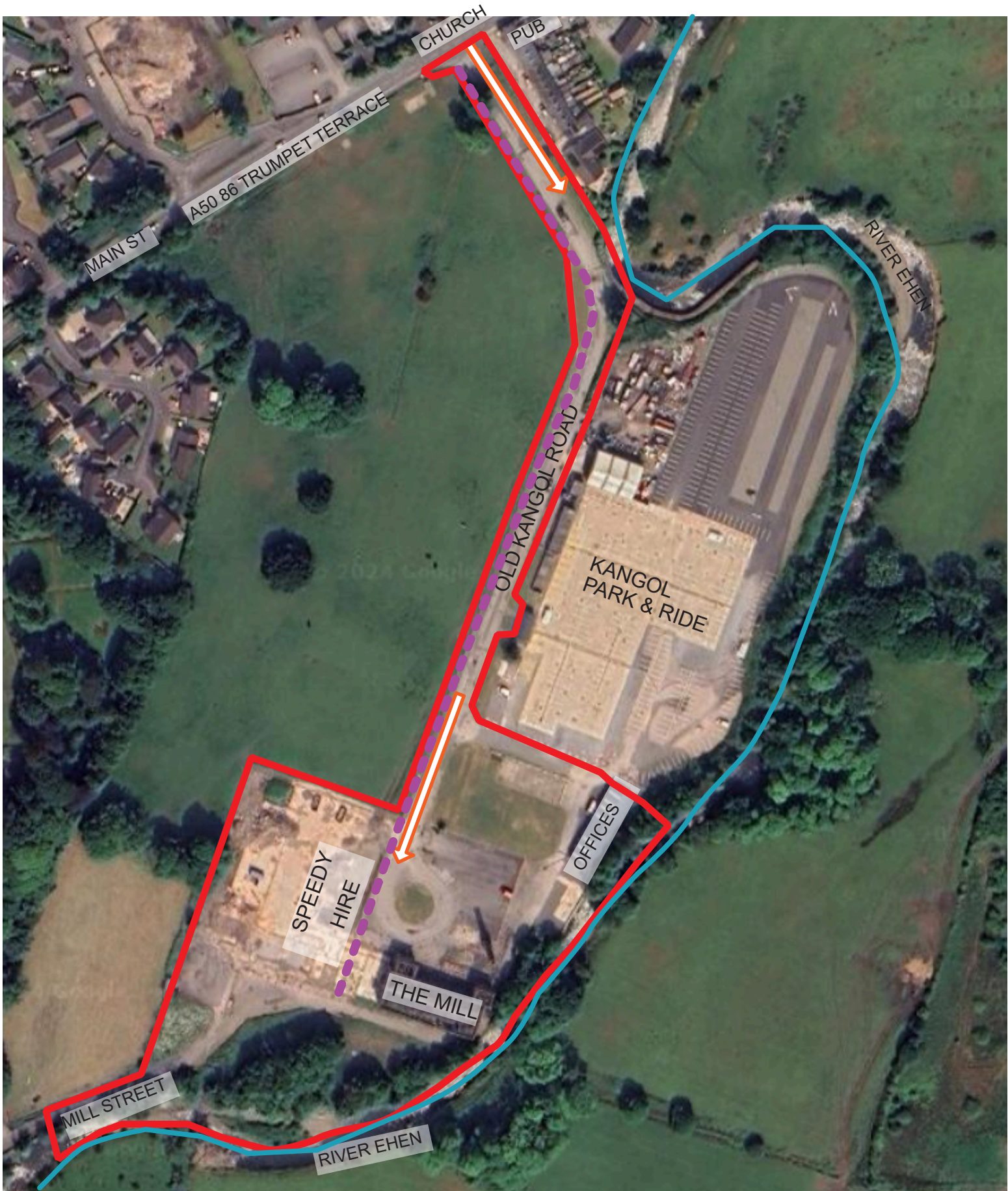
Transport & Connections

The site lies on the outskirts of Cleator, just off the A5086 linking Egremont & Cockermouth in West Cumbria.

The mill is located approximately 1 mile south of Cleator Moor and 6 miles south east of Whitehaven



Site Analysis - The Site



- SITE
- VEHICULAR ACCESS
- PEDESTRIAN ACCESS
- RIVER EHEN

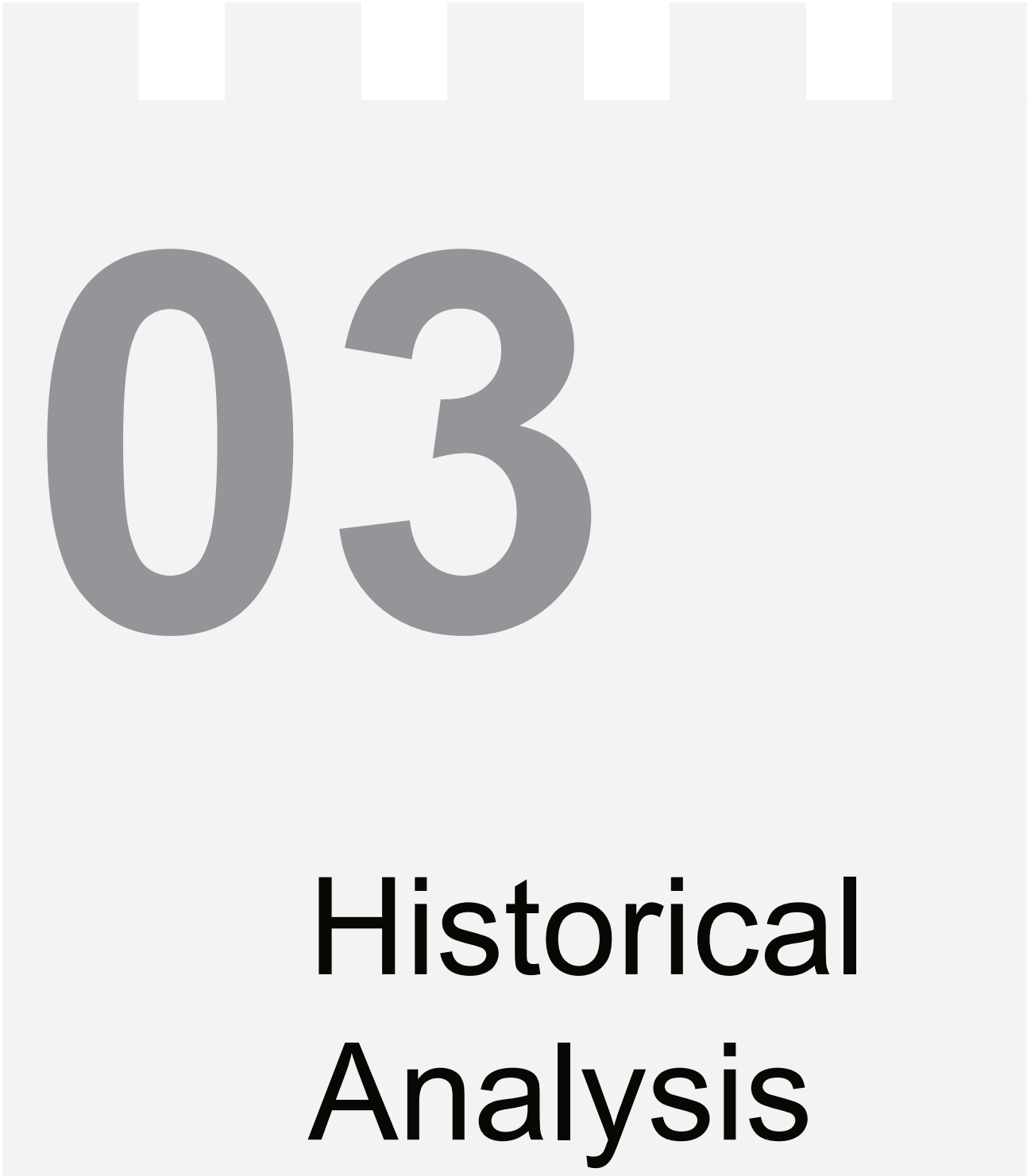
The former mill factory buildings on the site have over the years been demolished. Only one factory building remain. The former mill factory buildings and existing mill building was primarily built from red sandstone.

The roof arrangements were previously typical of industrial factories with several ridges.

The site forms part of the Sellafield park and ride facility. A recent development, an office and storage for Speedy Hire is adjacent to the existing mill building. There is also a small office block east of the site.

The boundary treatments of the site are of medium and new quality with new fencing to the new built speedy hire building and old metal fencing and old stone wall to the river side. The existing hard standing surfaces are of poor quality with informal parking.

The main site has no significant level differences. To the main vehicle entrance to the north is a mix of residential property, a grade 2 listed religious place of worship and a public house. There is a pedestrian pavement on the left hand side down old Kangol Road



03

# Historical Analysis



\*\* 03 Historical Analysis

Brief History of the Site

Cleator Mill is a historically significant site in West Cumbria, originally established in 1800 as a flax mill by Messrs Birley and Son and it coexisted with the thriving iron ore industry in the area that shaped the region's identity. The mill featured a central tower with two wings. Only one mill building and the tower is remaining today.

Despite their efforts, the Birley family faced financial difficulties and lost their investment. In 1834, the mill was acquired by Messrs Ainsworth and Stirling, employing around 300 workers. A new flax spinning mill, capable of handling 30,000 spindles, was opened in 1859 under Ainsworth's successful leadership.

The mill utilised water power, with a weir and conduit on the River Ehen driving a waterwheel.

In the 1920s, Jacques Spreiregen, a Jewish Polish WWI veteran, established Kangol and acquired the Cleator site in 1938. The mill became a key supplier of berets to the British armed forces during WWII, producing up to one million annually. Post-war, Kangol expanded globally, with exports reaching 49 countries and production peaking at 120,000 berets weekly in 1957.

The company grew further, winning multiple Queen's Awards for Export and becoming the world's largest hat manufacturer by the late 1970s. However, rising costs led to the factory's closure in 1997, with production shifting to China. Kangol's operations and licensing rights changed hands multiple times, including acquisitions by Bollman in 2001 and Sports Direct in 2006. The Cleator site ceased operations entirely in 2009, marking the end of an era for this historic mill.

It gained prominence for its role in the development of women's labour rights, highlighted by a 1915 strike led by its female workforce, which highlighted issues of worker equity.

The name Kangol itself is derived from "knitting," "angora," and "wool," reflecting its product materials.

At its peak, the site supported 600 workers and contributed significantly to West Cumbria's industrial landscape. The physical structure and location near the River Ehen are emblematic of 19th-century mill design, prioritising proximity to resources and transportation links.

Despite the closure of the factory, the Kangol brand remains iconic.

The area around the mill, including Longlands Lake, also has historical significance due to its links with iron ore mining. The mining activities, which began in the 19th century, contributed to the economic fabric of Cleator before their decline in the 20th century.

This layered history makes Cleator Mill a valuable site both culturally and architecturally, ideal for a thoughtful renovation project that acknowledges its industrial and social heritage.



Kangol hats factory, Cleator in 1978



Aerial view from 1949. The remaining mill building is to the very right of the image.

Statutory Designations

- Designations: No
- Monument and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI): No
- Conservation area: No
- World Heritage site: No
- Non designated heritage asset NDHA: Yes



Brief Building History

Cleator Flax Mill's architectural design is characteristic of the industrial mill structures of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. These mills were often designed to optimise space, natural light, and the flow of production processes. While Cleator Mill's exact architect is not recorded, we can contextualise its design by comparing it to other mills of the era and examining technological influences like Sir William Fairbairn's engineering contributions.

Key Architectural Features Found at Cleator Mill:

Symmetry and Functional Layout:

Mills commonly had a centralised layout, with a tower for water storage or mechanical operations and flanking wings for production and storage. This mirrored the designs seen in other mills like Quarry Bank Mill in Cheshire.

The structure of Cleator Mill, with its central tower and wings, would have been arranged to maximise efficiency in flax spinning and weaving.

However some of the mills has since been demolished and only one mill building remain at the Cleator mill site.

Use of Durable Materials:

Early industrial mills used locally available materials, often stone or brick, to ensure longevity and fire resistance. Cleator Mill is built with sandstone.

Cast iron was increasingly used in structural elements to support machinery.

Large Windows:

Providing ample natural light was crucial for intricate tasks like spinning and weaving. Cleator Mill likely features large, evenly spaced window openings, as was common in textile mills.

Power Infrastructure:

Powered initially by a water wheel, the mill's design incorporated water channels and a weir on the River Ehen.

Significance

Cleator Flax Mill is significant both as a physical reminder of England's industrial heritage and as a testament to the adaptability of industrial sites. Its history reflects the broader narrative of economic and technological shifts over two centuries, making it an essential study in the evolution of industrial processes and community impact.

Key Points of Historical Significance

**19th-Century Industrial Development:** Its initial design, featuring a central tower and two wings, typifies early mill architecture, which balanced functionality with emerging engineering practices of the Industrial Revolution.

**Technological Progression:** Initially powered by a water wheel, the mill transitioned to advanced technologies such as the beam engine in 1857 and turbines in 1901, highlighting the shift from natural power sources to mechanised energy in the industrial era.The involvement of Sir William Fairbairn, a pioneering engineer, in designing the water wheel and beam engine underscores the site's significance in industrial engineering.

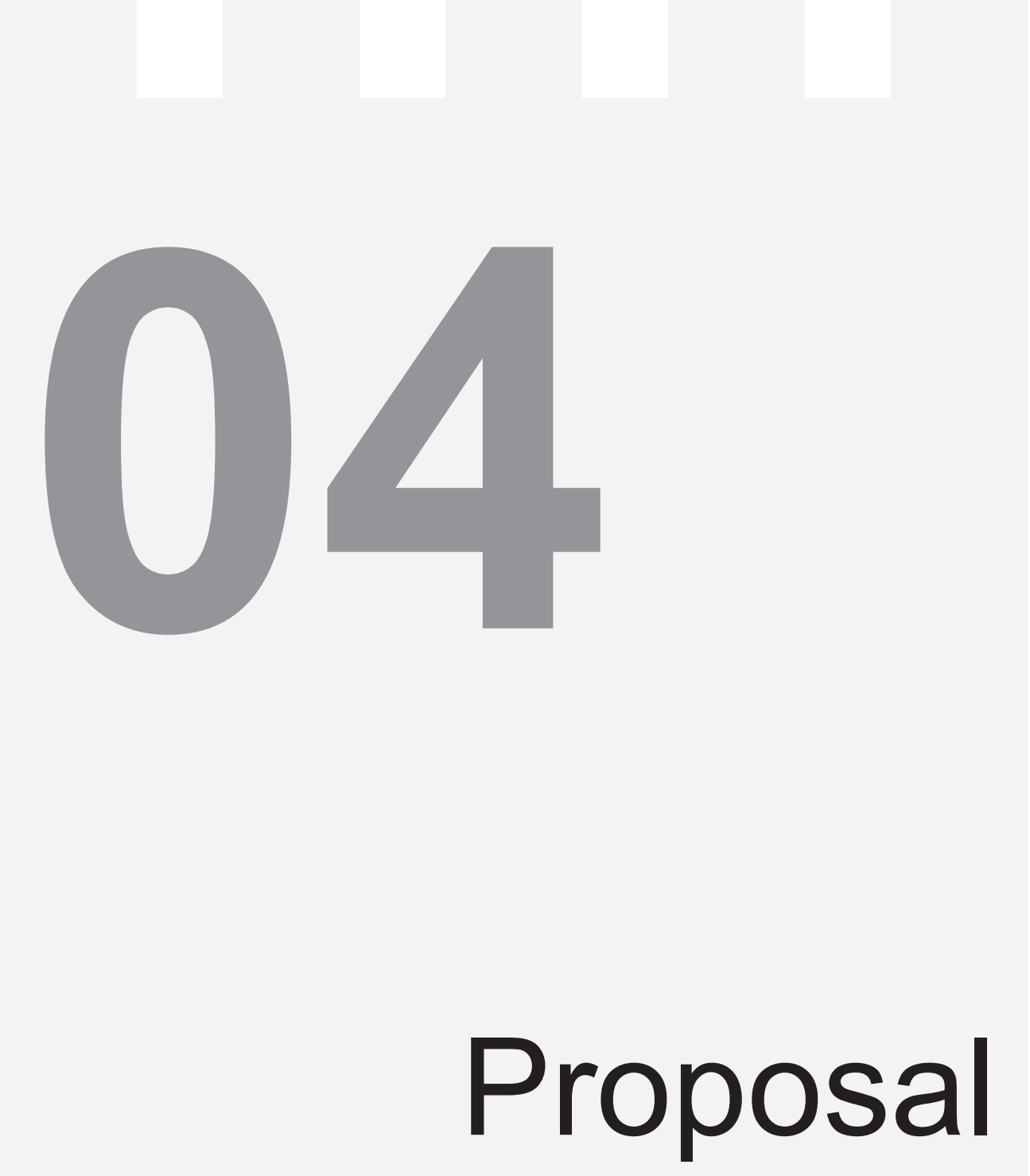
**Adaptation and Reuse:** The site underwent a transformative phase in the 20th century when Jacques Spreiregen repurposed it for Kangol's hat manufacturing, transitioning from flax spinning to global-scale headwear production.This shift demonstrates the mill's ability to adapt to changing economic demands, ensuring its continued relevance and use.

**Contribution to National and Global History:** Kangol, operating from Cleator Mill, played a pivotal role in supplying berets to the British armed forces during World War II, marking the mill's contribution to national defence efforts.Post-war, Kangol established a global presence, producing millions of hats annually and exporting to countries like the United States and Japan, cementing Cleator Mill's legacy in industrial and cultural history.

**Architectural and Community Legacy:** Though not a listed building, the mill's historical layers represent the socio-economic evolution of Cleator and the surrounding region. It offers insights into the lives of mill workers, technological innovators, and the community shaped by its operations.

Cleator Flax Mill is not just an industrial site but a lens through which the economic and technological history of England can be understood. Its progression from a water-powered flax mill to a hub for globally significant hat production exemplifies the resilience and adaptability of industrial infrastructure.

*By retaining and interpreting this heritage, Cleator Mill can inspire contemporary approaches to sustainable reuse and celebrate the ingenuity of past industries.*



04

Proposal



## 04 Proposal

### Scheme Images



Artist impression of the north elevation



## 04 Proposal

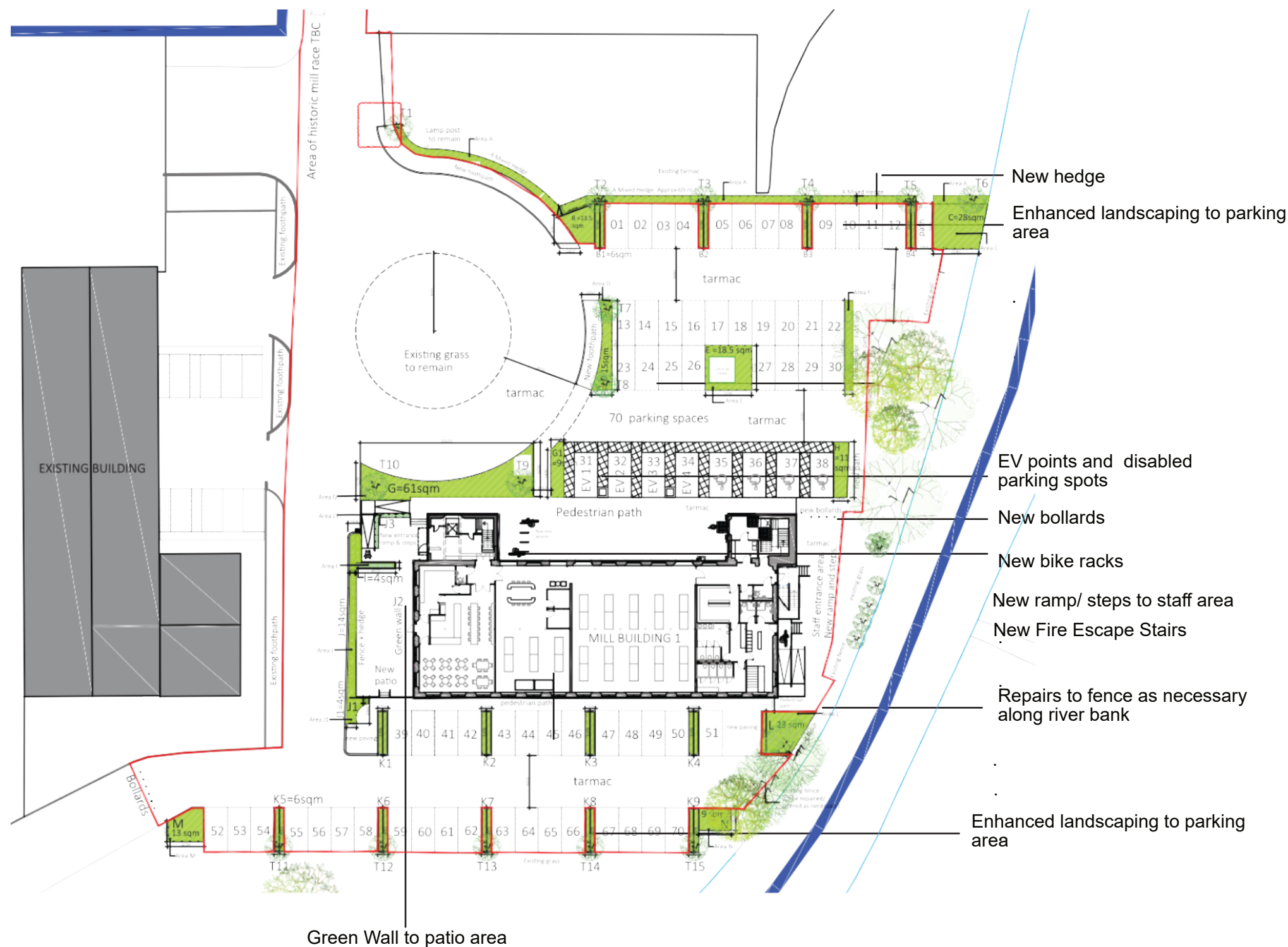
### Scheme Images



Artist impression of the west elevation and rear parking area.



## Proposed Site Plan and Landscaping



## Access and servicing

The proposed refurbishment of Cleator Mill includes a comprehensive improvement to the building's facilities and the surrounding environment. In addition to preserving its historical features, the design incorporates modern amenities to support sustainability and accessibility.

## Parking and Green transport

The redevelopment will provide 70 parking spaces, including 4 disabled parking spaces, ensuring ample access for visitors and staff. Furthermore, 4 electric vehicle charging points will be installed to support environmentally-friendly transportation options.

In response to the growing demand for sustainable travel, the project will also feature new bike storage facilities externally and internally, encouraging cycling as a green mode of transport. The site will be enhanced with new landscaping that integrates green spaces and promotes biodiversity, providing a pleasant and sustainable environment for both occupants and visitors.

Existing pedestrian access will be enhanced, with new ramps added to both the west and east elevations of the building. These ramps will provide easy, barrier-free access to the mill for individuals with mobility challenges, improving accessibility across the site. The new ramps are designed to blend seamlessly with the surrounding historic fabric while ensuring compliance with modern accessibility standards.

These improvements demonstrate a commitment to environmental sustainability, accessibility, and enhancing the overall user experience at Cleator Mill.

## Enhanced Landscaping

The enhanced landscaping scheme around Cleator Mill will improve the setting of both the building and the car parking area. A new hedge will help define the site boundary, providing a natural buffer and enhancing biodiversity. Various shrubs and planting will soften the hardstanding areas, creating a more attractive and welcoming environment.

A green wall to the west elevation will introduce vertical greenery, contributing to visual interest and environmental benefits such as improved air quality. Together, these enhancements will create a greener, more cohesive landscape that complements the historic character of the site.



\*\* 04 Proposal

Proposed Elevations

The refurbishment of Cleator Mill prioritises preserving and enhancing its historical industrial character while meeting modern functional requirements. The existing façade, constructed of local sandstone, will be carefully repaired to ensure its long-term durability and visual integrity. Traditional repair techniques will be employed, including:

**Cleaning:** The façade will undergo gentle cleaning to remove surface grime while protecting the stone's natural patina.

**Repointing:** Areas with deteriorated mortar joints will be repointed using a lime-based mortar, matching the original in texture and colour to maintain historical accuracy.

**Stone Repair:** Any damaged or eroded sandstone blocks will be repaired or replaced with locally sourced red sandstone to blend seamlessly with the original fabric.

Existing window and door openings will be retained wherever possible and repaired as necessary with sandstone alternatively with acceptable resin based consolidation techniques which must be carried out carefully and sensitively.

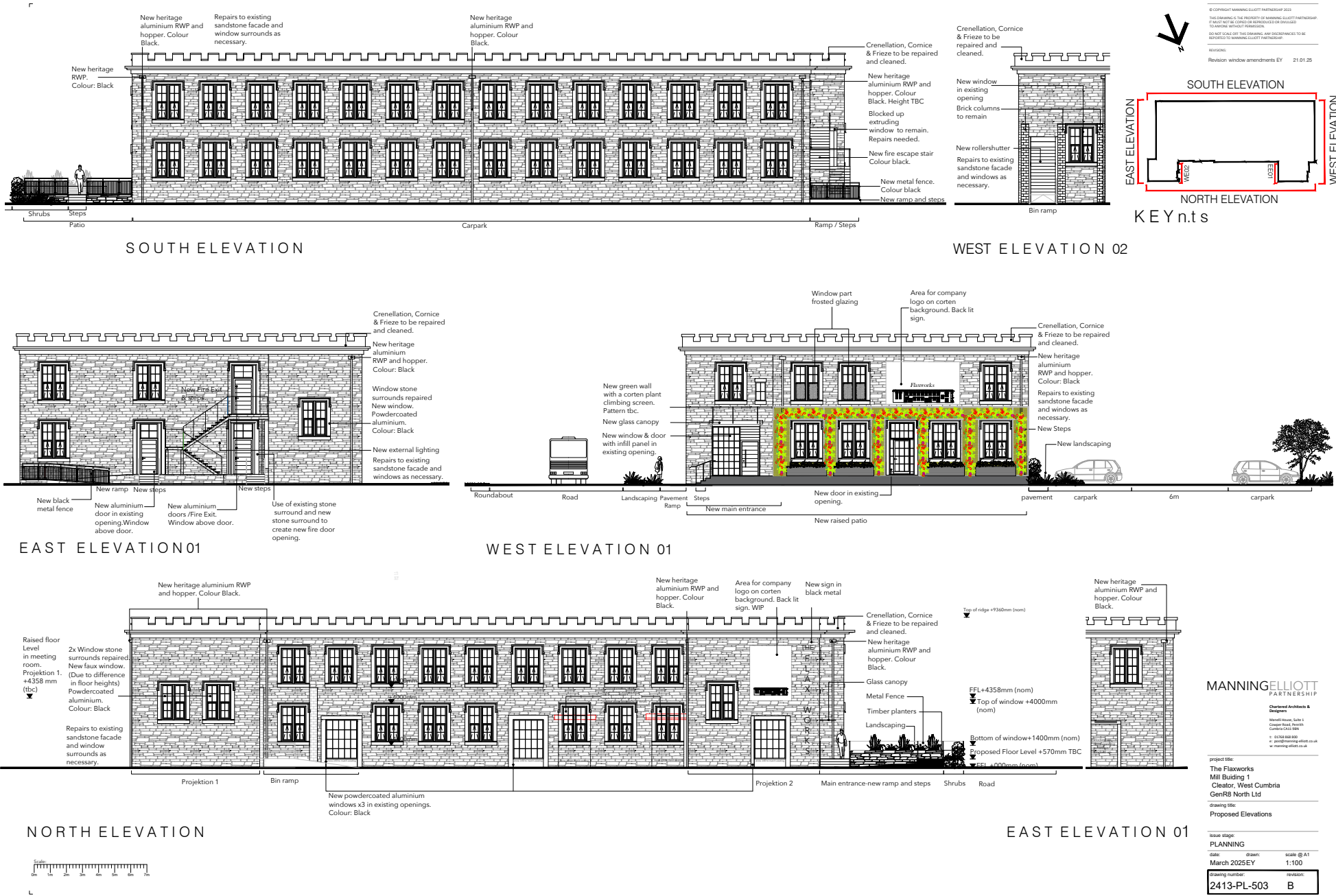
Selective amendments to windows will include modifying some window openings to improve the balance of the elevations and introduce additional light to meeting rooms and stairwells. Certain existing door openings will be converted to windows to adapt to the building's new use while respecting its heritage.

New windows will feature aluminium frames, chosen for their durability, recyclability, and compatibility with the building's aesthetic.

A feature of the west elevation will be the addition of a green wall, which integrates sustainability into the design. The green wall will not only enhance the visual appeal of the building but also improve air quality and provide natural insulation. The green wall will be carefully placed to blend with the surrounding architecture, contributing to the building's overall environmental and aesthetic value.

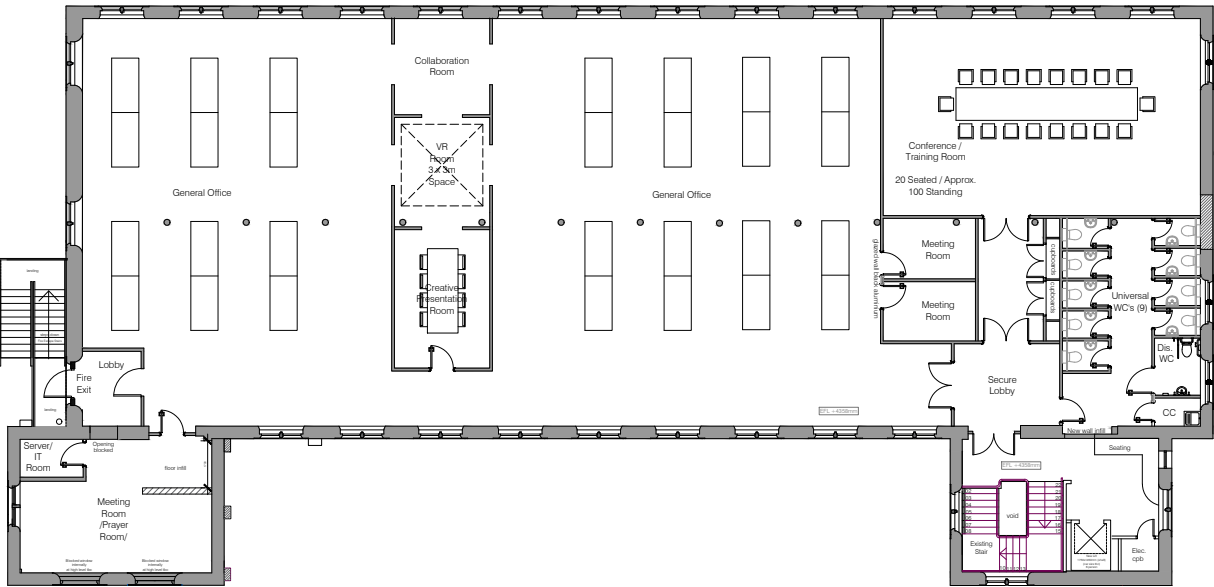
Additional features include business signs made from corten steel, developing a weathered finish that reflects the industrial history of the area. A distinctive iron-like building sign will celebrate the region's legacy of iron ore mining, connecting the refurbishment to West Cumbria's rich heritage.

This approach ensures a sensitive balance between conservation and adaptation, preserving the historical significance of Cleator Mill while enhancing its functionality for modern use.



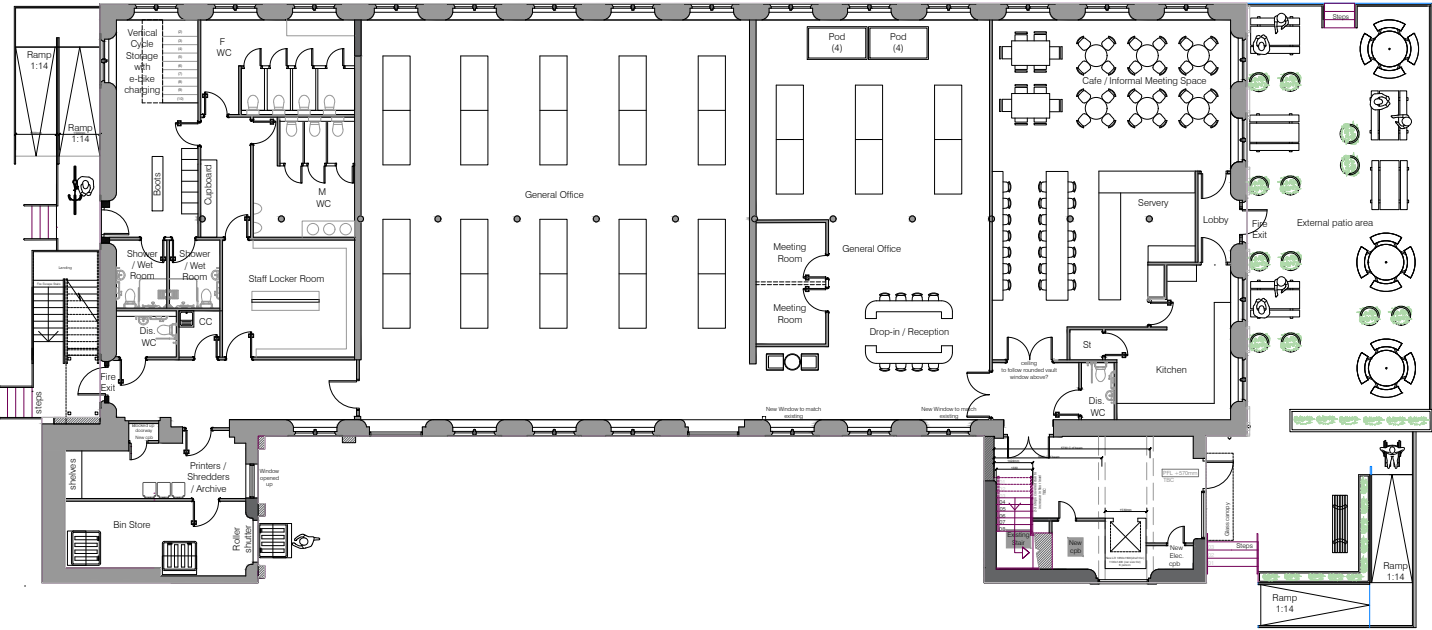


Proposed Ground Floor & First Floor



Typical example of the interiors of a meeting room, option 1. Subject to insulation strategy.

PROPOSED FIRST FLOOR PLAN



Typical example of the interiors of a meeting room, option 2. Subject to insulation strategy.

PROPOSED GROUND FLOOR PLAN





## Materiality

### Heritage Inclusion

Where possible architectural salvage will be used to compliment existing architectural features, including but not limited to salvaged materials, handles, taps and mirrors, cast iron style radiators and/or other recoverable or reproduction period features which enhance and contribute to the heritage of the structures and the project.



Reclaimed heritage tiles to be reused and cleaned up.



Rustic oak luxury vinyl tile flooring



Heritage cast style aluminium rainwater pipes. Guttercrest or equal and approved.



Industrial style black composite aluminium windows



Industrial style lighting.



Heritage metro tiles and brass/gold taps to WC's.



Energy & Lighting

PV Solar

Roof mounted and South /South West facing PV solar installation of circa 80kW deliverable capture and dual provision inverter unit delivering power/ heat and power to the property.

Access points

LED lighting to all entrance and egress points and main external circulation zones on PIR sensors and timer control with switched override. All external light fittings to be on dusk/dawn sensors.

Security Lighting

LED floodlights to the rear to illuminate proposed parking area to the rear. Lighting columns with LED floodlights to car parking area, to the front of the building.

Building Illumination

Decorative external lighting to front façade (design/specification for this element TBC)

Internal Lighting

Industrial style reproduction LED luminaires hung on cables from the existing vaulted ceiling at ground floor and the new ceiling at first floor with surface mounted fixings and black cables trays in an industrial style to match the existing building. Lighting to all entrance and egress areas and main external circulation zones on PIR sensors and timer control with switched override. Integrated LED spotlights to all WC, shower rooms and kitchen spaces.

Security

Alarm system and CCTV cameras, security lighting. Secure aluminium solid doors to the rear and east elevation.





04 Proposal | Design Strategies

Recycling & Waste Management Strategy

The refurbishment of Cleator Mill will incorporate a comprehensive recycling and waste management strategy to minimise environmental impact and align with sustainable development goals. This strategy includes:

Construction Phase:

**Waste Segregation:** On-site waste will be sorted into categories (e.g., metals, plastics, timber, and masonry) to maximise recycling opportunities.

**Reuse of Materials:** Where possible, materials from the existing building, such as bricks,stone,etc. will be retained and reused within the refurbishment if possible.

**Responsible Disposal:** Non-recyclable materials will be disposed of through licensed facilities, ensuring compliance with environmental regulations.

Operational Phase:

**Recycling Facilities:** Dedicated recycling points will be installed throughout the office, including bins for paper, cardboard, plastics, and metals.

Sustainability

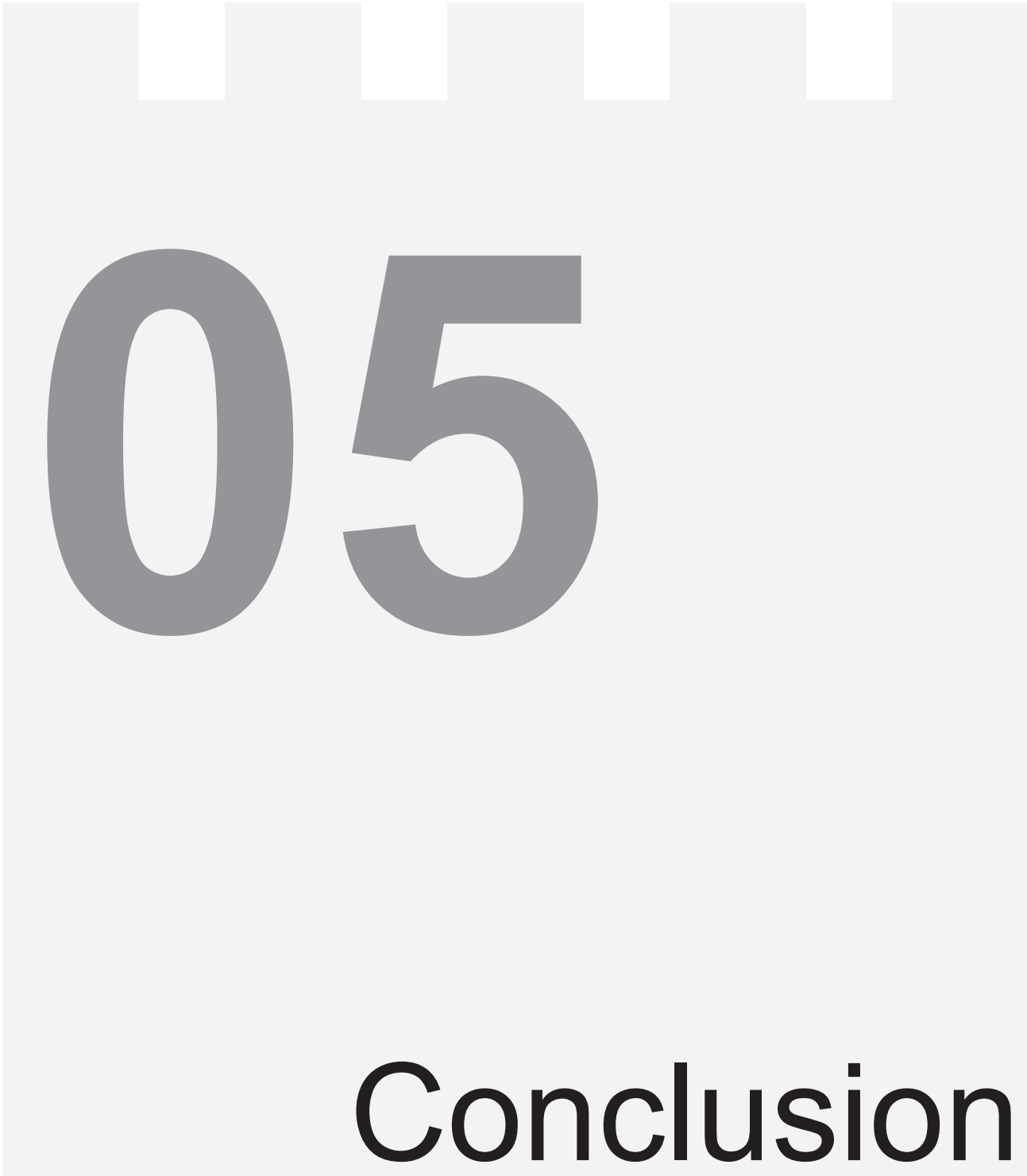
The materials used in the building refurbishment are chosen for their durability, security and low-maintenance requirements. The aluminium windows and doors need minimal upkeep, while the guttering and down pipes, made with a heritage inspired finish, are low maintenance.

The aluminium window frames are both durable and recyclable, offering a long lifespan with fewer replacement intervals. This approach balances sustainability with practical, long-term cost efficiency.

Energy efficiency is considered throughout the building’s life cycle, not only during refurbishment but also through operational and maintenance strategies.



Artistic impression of proposed green wall to the west elevation.



05

Conclusion



\*\* 05 Conclusion

The refurbishment of Cleator Mill represents a thoughtful balance between preserving the building’s historical significance and meeting modern requirements.

The design retains most key architectural elements such as the red sandstone façade and existing window and door openings, with sensitive modifications to enhance functionality and natural light.

Sustainable features, including electric vehicle charging points, a green wall, and bicycle storage, highlight the project’s commitment to reducing environmental impact

Accessibility improvements, such as new ramps and enhanced pedestrian pathways, ensure inclusivity, while careful repairs to the historic fabric honour the mill’s industrial heritage. Together, these measures breathe new life into Cleator Mill, creating a functional, sustainable, and historically respectful space for future use.

