



KEY INFORMATION:

CLIENT: Manchester City Council
LOCATION: Chorlton, Manchester
CONSTRUCTION VALUE: £1.9m
CONTRACTOR: Equans
START - FINISH DATE: April 2024-
August 2025
SECTOR: Libraries and Cultural

PROJECT OVERVIEW:

Chorlton Library, a cherished Edwardian landmark in South Manchester, underwent a major restoration in 2025 to preserve its historical significance while enhancing its role as a vibrant community hub. Equans led the project with a commitment to blending heritage preservation with modern sustainability goals, delivering a transformation that honours the past and supports the future.



The refurbishment involved restoring the library's delicate stonework and replastering interiors using traditional methods. A focal point was the iconic domed roof, hidden for decades beneath a false ceiling. Upon revealing the dome, severe concrete damage was discovered, requiring additional repairs and the erection of specialist birdcage scaffolding for safe access. Beneath the dome, a 1920s stone balcony was uncovered and carefully restored with hand-carved stone blocks and intricately cast floral details, allowing natural light to flood the entrance below. Inside, the space was reconfigured to highlight the original octagonal atrium, combining historic architecture with modern design. Decorative tiling, plasterwork, and stone friezes were meticulously restored, preserving the building's artistic heritage.

SOCIAL VALUE PROMISE:

- 52 weeks of training / apprenticeships.
- 28 hours of employment and skills support.
- 2 work experience weeks
- 47 employment / skills development hours
- 121 hours of volunteering

Modernisation was integrated thoughtfully, including full mechanical and electrical system upgrades aligned with the council's zero-carbon 2038 goals. A new fire system, Building Management System, destratification fans, and Open+ technology were discreetly installed to enhance energy efficiency and user accessibility without compromising aesthetics. The refurbishment also added flexible meeting spaces, extending the library's community function while preserving its historic charm.

KEY DELIVERABLES/CHALLENGES

Managing heritage-listed restrictions, unexpected structural deterioration and asbestos laden confined basement spaces posed challenges to the project. Equans facilitated ongoing collaboration with authorities and specialist contractors to meet rigorous planning conditions. Innovative birdcage scaffolding ensured safe dome access, while asbestos removal was carefully executed overnight with a bespoke rescue plan. Phased working environments preserved library operations throughout, balancing restoration demands with community access and safety.



Equans has done a fantastic job renovating the library in my ward, a historic 1914 building designed by Henry Price and funded by Andrew Carnegie. Over the past 12 months, their skilled team have worked solidly, overcoming multiple problems to deliver a sensational renovation of a very run-down building.

Their creativity and resourcefulness have been evident throughout.... Beyond the restoration, Equans has made a meaningful impact in the community, organising social initiatives with local projects and the local primary school which have been greatly appreciated.

COUNCILLOR TINA KIRWIN-McGINLEY, MEMBER FOR CHORLTON