

'Shit Disney' or 'storage containers'?

Prison Architecture and Aesthetics through the eyes of Local Residents

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines the relationship between prisons, their aesthetics and those that live around them. It meets a gap in carceral geography research, where there is a need for greater understanding of how prison affects those without a direct connection to the institution (Moran, 2015). The study takes advantage of interdisciplinary emphasis that begins in carceral geography and spans other aspects of human geography, as well as criminology, sociology, planning and politics. To ascertain whether community relationships differ depending on the age, siting and aesthetic of prison, data is gathered using diverse, qualitative methodologies, from the surrounding communities of two markedly different prisons: Victorian city-centre prison HMP Manchester and industrial-estate based newbuild, HMP Berwyn.

The resulting thesis yields rich data on the ways in which local residents engage, and have historically engaged, with prison architecture, eliciting responses around seeing and being seen, historic and contemporary NIMBYism, YIMBYism, and fear.

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While we're on acknowledgements, I'd like to acknowledge this. My PhD took me almost eight years to complete. I met exceptional people and had some amazing experiences, and for those reasons, I'm glad I did it. But there is still part of me that wishes I hadn't.

I am a cis, white, middle class woman in her 30s. Everything is stacked in my favour. But I still couldn't make it as an academic, not necessarily because I'm stupid and worthless (although I grappled with those feelings throughout my PhD), but mostly because of the other things, the things we don't acknowledge when we talk about early-career academia. Because I couldn't afford to take an unpaid writing-up year, and worked two jobs to support myself and my family through it. Because I don't want my entire life, and the life of my family, to be dictated by a series of nine month contracts. Because I wanted a baby, and I didn't want to wait five years for job security and maternity pay. Because when I had the baby, I realised that, as PhD stipends aren't taxed, I couldn't even get statutory maternity pay; I was a gap on the government's records. Because that year after the birth, when our family of three lived off my husband's 14k PhD stipend, was utterly brutal, and I realised then that *all* PhD students are expendable to the institutions they study at. Because while I worked my two jobs and attempted to complete my PhD on the side, the University continued to insist that I travel to campus to take PGCARMS sessions in order to pass. I often wonder -- if I, with all that privilege, still come out of this experience feeling idiotic, incapable and completely unmoored, how do people with even less privilege feel?

These acknowledgements are probably the last thing I'll ever write in an academic context, and I'm sure they'll just gather dust (or whatever the UoB intranet version of dust is). But if anyone does read them, especially fellow PhD students, I hope they help you to accept what you might already suspect: that it's not *you* that's broken. It's British academia.

Anyway, it's over now. To use a prison analogy, I'm getting out. Phew!

Ellie Slee
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Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis focuses on how the prison is perceived by the community living around it. By examining two very different field sites — one Victorian, another brand new, and both, in their way, representative of the prison estate of England and Wales — I will examine community perceptions of the prison, with particular emphasis on their responses to architectural appearance, or aesthetics, as well as exploring their responses to concurrent realities of living close to a prison, such as proximity, materiality and emotion.

The study of prison architecture has long been a key point of focus for criminologists, historians, law and public policy experts, and more recently, a key tenet of carceral geography. Community response to prison siting is also regularly examined by scholars concerned with NIMBYism (Not in my Back Yard) and LULU (Locally Unwanted Land Use) facilities, and the impact of local prisons on the health and safety of communities has been interrogated by social scientists since at least the 1980s. The way that the prison's appearance affects the perceptions of local residents, however, is a facet of this 'host' relationship that remains relatively untouched by academics across the disciplines that engage with prison architecture; it's more usually tackled within the context of prisoners themselves or the architects and planners responsible for the design. Yet this is a vital connection to make if we are to understand the way that we engage with prison architecture as a wider society.

At a time when hyperincarceration is normal (Wacquant, 2001) and the carceral experience increasingly expands beyond physical prison walls through the growth and glorification of militaristic policing and punitive immigration policy (Hernandez et al, 2015), the appearance of the prison and its effect on communities seems a critical lens through which to examine how prison is viewed politically and socially. The way that prison is presented as ‘cushy’ or like a ‘holiday resort’ by the right wing media (Daily Mail, 6 May 2011; The Telegraph, 13 Aug 2017; The Sun, 20 Mar 2020) has become the way that many members of society, unaware of its reality, understand it, and form opinions about it. This thesis will engage with the ways that the two host communities approach the physical aspect of hosting a prison; that is, living alongside the building itself.

Throughout the thesis, carceral geography will be a vital lens through which to view community interaction with prison buildings. Carceral geography is a vibrant, evolving subdiscipline of human geography which draws from a diverse pool of literatures from sociology and criminology to law and environmental planning, but also from other aspects of human geography, such as historical geography (Morin & Moran, 2015), geographies of architecture (Moran et al, 2016), and geographies of emotion (Moran & Disney, 2018). Using these diverse literatures, I will expand upon existing carceral geography texts that discuss the way in which prison boundaries blur, from the perspective of local residents.

The thesis will contribute to these literatures, and also to the emergent field of visual criminology. Visual criminology is a subdiscipline that relates visual

representations of crime and crime control to the way that these things are understood in a mass media-consuming society. These representations vary hugely, and virtually anything that can be ‘seen’ can be analysed as part of visual criminology, from news photographs, CCTV recordings and mugshots to objects, crime scenes and architecture. The prison is a site that receives special interest in visual criminology, so my thesis and its findings will align comfortably with the subject. As the prison has long been perceived as a LULU facility, links to NIMBYism and YIMBYism will be explored, too.

The two field sites I have chosen to look at are HMP Manchester (which I will hereby refer to by its former, more popular name, Strangeways) and HMP Berwyn (from now on, Berwyn). In order to understand the literature and my methodology in relation to the significance of these two sites, it is important to contextualise them in terms of how they relate to their respective hometowns of Manchester and Wrexham, as well as nationally and globally, highlighting aspects of both prisons’ cultural histories and giving focus to where they sit in their communities in order to provide richer context to the ensuing chapters. It is important to note here that in most of the chapters, analysis of Strangeways will predominate. In part, this is due to a wish to break down the empirics in a systematised way, and because, due to its history and cultural significance, there is often more to *say* about Strangeways; however, there is also the issue of objectivity. My feelings about the Strangeways site are much more complex than the ones I have for Berwyn, and over the years since I began the PhD in 2014, I have come to feel something like affection for it.

In Sections 1.1 and 1.2, I will provide context around the choices of Strangeways and Berwyn. Section 1.3 provides a summary of the British prison estate, with particular focus on its history, while in Section 1.4, I will give an outline of the thesis.

1.1 Strangeways



Fig 1.1 Strangeways (Alamy)

In Manchester, the prison is located in the Cheetham ward, though the ward is split into named districts, with the prison's area historically known locally as Strangeways. This extends occasionally into present-day conceptions of the area; it is still referred to as Strangeways on Google Maps, for example (Fig 1.2). The Strangeways district was originally named after the medieval de Strangeways family who used to own the land, and the prison took its name from the area,

though it was renamed HMP Manchester in 1994 (Ministry of Justice, accessed October 2020).

The Cheetham ward is an historically light-industrial area that is now notorious for high crime rates, with the area around the prison specifically known as a red light district and the epicentre of the city's counterfeit goods trade. Since the demolition of the area's slum buildings, its architecture is predominantly made up of Victorian warehousing with very few residential properties; Manchester's developers' propensity for turning old warehouse stock into housing has not reached this corner of the city yet, and most are either used as initially designed or have been allowed to become derelict.

The prison was designed by celebrated Manchester architect Alfred Waterhouse as part of the city's Assize Courts, and built on the site of the de Strangeways family's historic home, Strangeways Hall. It is built from a traditionally Mancunian combination of red brick and sandstone, and features a cooling tower at the centre, a visual that feeds into the concept of the building as a landmark. Existing literatures on landmarks have explored them in relation to sense of place, but also banal encounters, such as navigating an area by car (Presson and Montello, 1988; Hirtle, 2003; Zhou et al, 2017).

The Strangeways district abuts the city's Green Quarter (see map, Fig 1.2), where many of my participants live. Although it is technically part of the deprived Cheetham ward, it is an inner-city development that perfectly fits MacLeod and

Ward's description of the landscape of the contemporary city as having 'tenderly manicured urban villages, gated estates and fashionably gentrified inner-city enclaves' that are 'furiously marketed as idyllic landscapes to ensure a variety of lifestyle fantasies' (2002: 153). Sure enough, the



Fig 1.2 Map of HMP Manchester and the surrounding area



Fig 1.3 Aerial view of HMP Manchester (Google Maps)

Green Quarter was described at the time of its construction in 2004 as ‘a self-contained urban oasis, combining 10 cutting-edge apartment blocks, business accommodation, hotel, leisure and retail facilities set against the precious commodity of lush landscaped open green space’ (Pride of Manchester, accessed October 2020). The prison is visible from the Green Quarter development, and two streets directly connect the two: Carnarvon Street and Lord Street.

The Green Quarter set the precedent for a slew of subsequent developments in this northernmost part of inner-city Manchester, including the nearby Co-op headquarters at One Angel Square, which also overlooks Strangeways, and is noted

as being ‘one of the most sustainable buildings in Europe’. One of my participants also works here. It received a BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method) score of 95.16% when it opened, at the time the highest ever for a newbuild. It represents a very clear shift in the way that this historically maligned area of north Manchester is used and moved through.

The prison has elicited tensions within its locale, both in the history of the area as a ‘problem’ place and during its current gentrification, and factored into my choice of it as a field site. These tensions will be explored fully in Chapter 6. When I began this PhD, I was aware of the ‘see and beware’ function of Victorian prison architecture highlighted by Jewkes (2012). As well as conforming to Jewkes’ description of the prisons of its era, Strangeways had additional gravitas as a field site due to its ongoing importance in Britain’s cultural and political history, having been the site of Britain’s longest prison riot in 1990 (Carrabine, 2004). The reasons for this riot — predominantly the archaic and dehumanising practice of ‘slopping out’ — have become ingrained in public and political consciousness. The term refers to the practice of providing prisoners who do not have in-cell sanitation with buckets in which to urinate and defecate overnight. ‘Slopping out’ gets its name from the act of emptying the buckets in the morning. After the Strangeways riots, the process was investigated and found to be a grossly dehumanising violation of prisoners’ human rights. A six year sanitisation process took place in Britain’s prisons, though in 2010 there remained ten prisons, with some 2000 cells amongst them, that still provided prisoners with buckets overnight due to inadequate sanitation (National Council for Independent Monitoring Boards, 2010). The

awareness that the Strangeways riot created around the practice of slopping out connected the building to dirt and dereliction in public consciousness, a clear link to Sibley's geographies of exclusion (1995), geographies of dirt and waste (Cresswell, 1997; Campkin & Cox, 2007; Campkin & Dobraszczyk, 2007; Moore, 2012) and, obviously, Jewitt's geographies of shit (2011).

On the 20th and 25th anniversaries of the riots, they were the subject of renewed internet, tabloid and broadsheet analysis (BBC, 23 March 2015; Manchester Evening News, 24 March 2015; The Guardian, 25 March 2015; Esquire, 11 April 2015), as well as a documentary (BBC 2, 2015). When another inmate protestor, Stuart Horner, took up position on the roof in 2015 during my fieldwork period, many of the old tensions resurfaced (Horner's protest is detailed further in Chapter 6), and likewise, when rioting broke out at HMP Birmingham in December 2016, comparisons were made between the two riots, with the Birmingham riot referred to as 'the worst prison riot since Strangeways' (BBC, 12 December 2016; The Guardian, 17 December 2016; The Telegraph, 17 December 2016). These are examples of 'repeated telling, as with fairy tales' that help to pin an event into public memory (Peelo, 2006: 169). In order to understand the way that these riots have connected the building to public consciousness and altered the cultural fabric of Manchester, cultural theory pertaining to events (Sobchack, 2014) and geographies of emotion, particularly work on enthusiasm and excitement (Geoghegan, 2009; Craggs et al, 2013; Geoghegan & Woodyer, 2014) are important.

It is vital to mention here that in 2015, during the period of my fieldwork, I moved from London to Manchester. I lived very close to Strangeways, and though I did not have a view of it from my house, I saw it every day as I walked my dog. I began to think of myself as my own subject, and kept a field diary where I noted down anything I found particularly interesting. During this period, Stuart Horner began his protest, which intensified local and national interest in the prison, and I believe encouraged more interest in my project amongst local communities. At around the same time, enabled by my funding body the ESRC, I embarked on an Overseas Institutional Visit to the University of Tennessee where I worked with visual criminologist Michelle Brown. This trip was an important factor in exposing me to US debates around prison siting and gave me the ability to contextualise my study in a global sense.

1.2: Berwyn

Wrexham is an historic market town situated in North Wales. It has high levels of deprivation; during the time of the prison's construction, a study showed that 26% of households lived under the UK's official poverty line (Wrexham's Wellbeing Assessment, 2017: 31). In 2015 and 2016, when I was undertaking fieldwork, the makeup of the city's retail centre clearly signified economic downturn, with a mix of empty units, charity shops and budget chains (Bagnall, 2016, Accessed November 2020).

The prison is 3.5 miles outside the town centre and sits within Wrexham Industrial Estate, which is identified as 'one of the largest industrial areas in Europe'

(Wrexham Industrial Estate, accessed October 2020). Though it is mostly surrounded by factories, there are also some warehouses and specialist shops near the prison, and there is a small housing estate called Pentre Maelor directly opposite it.

Pentre Maelor was built in 1947 in order to house workers from the nearby factories. It consists of three large oval-shaped greens surrounded by semi-detached houses and has a small children's play park at the centre (Fig 1.5). At the time of my fieldwork (2015-2016) there was a nursery, a community centre and a post office on the edge of the settlement. Due to the proliferation of loud industries in the area, in 2005, as part of the Wrexham Unitary Development Plan, the council designated a strip of land adjacent to the estate as a buffer, to act as sound protection.

The 108 acre prison site was brownfield land, the former home of a Firestone tyre factory (Fig 1.6) which closed in the 1970s and was demolished in the 1990s. Prior to the land being designated for the prison, it had been considered as the site for a power station (The Wrexham Gas Fired Power Station Order, 2016). As it had been empty for so long, the site had become the habitat for a community of rare great crested newts (BBC News, 2008).



Fig 1.5 Aerial view of Pentre Maelor and HMP Berwyn (Google Maps)



Fig 1.6 Firestone factory, Wrexham. Aerial photograph, 1970 (People's Collection Wales)

The local community's response to the proposed siting of the prison was recorded in the national press as being wary, with one local councillor describing the way that many proposed developments for the site had previously faced community rejection (BBC News, 2008). During construction it was billed as 'the UK's first super-prison' (Financial Times, 30 May 2014) and prior to its completion was described as 'the poster child of British super-prisons' (BBC, 28 February 2017) and 'Britain's cushiest jail' (The Telegraph, 1 March 2017). Berwyn (as it came to be known) is named after a local mountain range and with its 2106 capacity, would outscale HMP Oakwood, Britain's largest existing prison, by over 400 prisoners. These aspects — of the prison's scale, its reputation as the country's 'first super-prison' — will be explored in detail through this study's empirics, particularly in Chapter 7.

Given the architectural focus of this thesis, the fact that Wrexham was being built while I conducted my fieldwork was useful, as it enabled me to speak to decision-makers in the design process, and also to speak to local residents as their feelings towards the developing building emerged. This was a 'live' site; the prison was *becoming* as I conducted research around it, which meant that in a similar way to my blossoming relationship with the fabric of Strangeways, my feelings towards Berwyn consistently changed throughout my fieldwork, too.

1.3 The British Prison estate

As of 2021, the British prison estate comprises 117 prisons, 104 of which are managed by Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPSS) with the remaining 13 being

privately run. The estate in its entirety has capacity for 96,000 prisoners, with around 15,000 of these spaces presently in private control (politics.co.uk, accessed November 2021). Berwyn is the UK's largest prison with a capacity of 2106. The fabric of the prison estate varies widely, but can, broadly, be split into three architectural categories. Around a third are purpose-built Victorian prisons, while a further third are mid-20th century prisons. Many of these are *not* purpose built; rather they are housed in repurposed buildings that *became* prisons after the Second World War. The final group of prison buildings accounts for around a quarter of the estate — in the form of more purpose-built prisons that emerged from the 1990s onwards (Beard, 2021).

These categories do not account for every prison building in the estate; for example, the oldest prison in the UK estate, HMP Stafford, was opened in 1794. However, in the 1870s, many prisons closed, and the British prison estate became smaller and more concentrated, due to the construction of a smaller number of larger facilities that were distributed across the country's larger cities and towns; Strangeways was one of these, serving the 'Salford Hundred', or the area surrounding Manchester. Further prisons were shut down after the First World War, and there is a clear gap between the opening of Wormwood Scrubs in 1891 and the next phase of expansion. Then, in the 1940s, many new prisons opened; however, rather than being purpose-built, many of these occupied former internment camps or borstals (see Webster, 2019, for interactive infographic). During this time, 20 prisons were created and housed in repurposed buildings, taking the number of prisons in the estate from 39 to 59 (Fairweather & McConville, 2013: 20).

The next British prison wasn't built from *scratch* until 1958. This was HMP Everthorpe (later merged with HMP Wold to become HMP North, Humber). At the time, the Prison Commission commented that the 'lack of innovation' in the prison's structure was striking,

claiming that ‘the idea is the same as every prison since Pentonville, when isolation rather than training was the chief demand.’ (Fairweather & McConville, 2013: 20). Shortly after Everthorpe opened, Fairweather (1961) wrote that

after the Second World War, when interest was again aroused in the building of new prisons, there was no design experience available to use as a starting point, only an embarrassing legacy of extremely permanent buildings expressing an outdated and outworn penal philosophy, (1961: 339)

This is a succinct analysis of the way in which the British prison estate is structured, and it remains pertinent now; the permanence of the older buildings in the estate continues to impress their penal philosophy on those who live and work in them. Despite the lack of innovation, Everthorpe marked the beginning of a ‘new wave’ of prison building, a necessity due to extreme overcrowding in existing prisons. And despite the misgivings of the Prison Commission and Leslie Fairweather, attempts were made to improve living conditions in these new prisons. Fairweather (1961) acknowledges that Everthorpe was an improvement on its Victorian predecessors because it included larger windows and modern facilities such as classrooms and workshops. Fairweather and McConville note that, in Blundeston (built 1963) ‘cells were smaller because it was assumed that for most of the time, prisoners would not be in them’ (2013: 21); this represented a ‘timid’ reassessment of the needs of prisoners (Fairweather, 1961: 341), but, as Fairweather had previously written, this timid reassessment, and others like it, were now permanent bricks and mortar.

It is to be expected that the external aesthetics of these prisons vary widely; but in their fabric, the buildings represent both the penal and architectural ethea of their eras, so there are similarities across buildings that emerged around the same time. Garland notes that, as

prison reform began, ‘punishments gradually lost their localised character and came to be more firmly and uniformly regulated by state authorities’ (2001 : 30). The uniformity mentioned here is evident in the recognisable prison aesthetic that was established at the outset of penal reform. An instantly recognisable prison architecture was developed from the mid eighteenth century onwards and can still be seen in working prisons around the country. Pentonville, Strangeways and Leicester are three good examples of the ‘see and beware’ function (Jewkes, 2013) of late modern to late Victorian prisons; Pentonville exhibits stately Italianate features, Strangeways has elements of a Gothic cathedral, and Leicester has the rounded gates of a medieval castle, complete with arrow slits. Meanwhile Fairweather and McConville note that, during the chaotic period of building that followed the 1990 riots, ‘there appeared to be no overriding philosophy... so far as buildings were concerned, there had been no ‘philosophical input’ since Blundeston’ (2013: 27).

Yet their idea of a lack of ‘philosophical input’ is not strictly true. In the 1980s, the Conservative government took the first steps towards prison privatisation, leaning on private companies to relieve the critical lack of prison space (Prison Reform Trust, 2005). Relatively soon after, private companies were allowed to tender for prison contracts (Jones & Newburn 2002b), with the first private prison, HMP Wolds, opening in the UK in 1992. At the same time, UK policy changed, ushering in a ‘tough on crime’ stance, which caused the prison population to grow exponentially; to put this into perspective, between the years of 1993 and 2016, the prison population grew from 44,246 to 85,134 (Ministry of Justice, July 2016). This combination of increased imprisonment and profit-from-punishment has neoliberalism at its core (Xenakis and Cheliotis, 2018), a political philosophy embraced by both Conservatives and New Labour.

In the 90s, then-shadow Home Secretary Jack Straw stated that it was ‘not appropriate for people to profit from incarceration’ (Panchamia, 2012); however, once New Labour achieved power, they supported Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contracts in the prison estate and proved as accommodating to private companies as the Conservatives had been. Ultimately, despite Jack Straw’s protests, the most recent philosophy evidenced in the UK prison estate mimics the established American philosophy: that of profit from punishment (Jones & Newburn, 2002a) (The mimicry of the US prison system will be discussed further in the empirics section Chapter 5.2.). This ‘policy transfer’ is in part due to globalisation — private punishment has proliferated almost everywhere since the 1980s — but, according to Jones and Newburn (2002b), the *close friendship* between the two countries, and even particular leaders, may have contributed to this specific type of mimicry. Though the UK hasn’t reached the *scale* of US mass incarceration, it has the highest rate of imprisonment in Western Europe. Many prisons being built in the UK — case study Berwyn included — are built to house *more* prisoners than presently exist to fill them. This is a result of policy decisions by the Conservative government; for example, the government’s ‘Prison Estate Transformation Programme’, which lasted from 2016 to 2019 and was founded to create 10,000 new-for-old prison spaces. It failed spectacularly, creating only 206 (Beard, 2021).

In line with the prevailing neoliberal philosophy of punishment, these prisons are cheap and quick to build, warehouse-like in appearance and behemoth in scale; visually, they are similar to one another, and far removed from their Victorian predecessors.. Jewkes and Moran say these buildings have a ‘mimetic quality, sequestering offenders, sanitizing the pains of imprisonment, and eliciting ignorance and apathy in the spectator’ (2017: 13), linking this to the widespread popular disdain held for prison in wider UK society.

Further discussion on neoliberal politics and the impact they have on prisons is forthcoming in Chapter 2.5, while a deeper examination of prison architecture will be provided in Chapter 3.

1.4 Thesis Structure

From the outset, it seemed apparent to me that this thesis would be necessarily interdisciplinary. I began by looking at literatures from criminology and geography, but the community-based nature of the study required reading on law, sociology and history, too. The wide-ranging literature that I look at in Chapters 2 and 3 is informed by both the broad church of academic disciplines concerned with prison, and also the massively differing natures of the field sites. These chapters are split to allow literatures on the more bureaucratic side of prison building and policy to sit in Chapter 2, separate from the aesthetic and architectural theory in Chapter 3. Setting up the direction of the thesis and framing the literatures chosen, at the beginning of Chapter 2, *Siting the Prison*, there will be an overview of carceral geography, highlighting its call for analysis of non-prisoners in the carceral context. Chapter 2 then continues to look at siting, along with its regular bedfellows of NIMBY and YIMBYism (Yes In My Backyard). It finishes with an examination of how neoliberal politics inform siting decisions and community response to those decisions. The second literature chapter, Chapter 3, *Designing the Prison*, gives precedence to geographies of architecture and the places that these intersect with carceral geography. There is a further section on analysing Victorian prison architecture from a contemporary perspective.

In Chapter 4, I will discuss my research methodologies, which, like the literatures, were broad in scope, featuring archival research and social media mining, along with questionnaires, in-person interviews, photo-elicitation and walked interviews. This leads on to Chapter 5, *The Prison in its Surroundings*, which is the first empirics chapter and will break down some of the many ways in which the prison is ‘made sense of’ by those who live around it; where they get their ideas about prison (the institution) from, whether that’s news media, pop culture or urban myth, and how these manifest, through NIMBYism, YIMBYism or further propagation of these local stories. It examines the prison as a point of historical action, as a powerful site that can act as an agent of change and then as a symbol of a social shift; and also the prison in a more banal context, as a landmark, which people in the community direct themselves around.

Chapter 6 focuses explicitly on fear. The empirics surrounding fear are split between fear of escape, fear of dirt and dereliction and fear of seeing, or being seen by prisoners, which can be defined as fear of synopticism and panopticism.

Fear is focused on again in Chapter 7, *The Prison at Close Proximity*, which will centre around two walked interviews, one in Manchester and the other in Wrexham. Along with a description of the walked interview participants and their relationships to the prisons, as well as fear, there will be further analysis on the emotion of sadness, and the particular focus on scale.

Chapter 8 will engage with the empirics that specifically focus on appearance itself, in relation to the deinstitutionalisation of institutional architecture, and how that distorts the intended messages of institutional architecture, and blurs the meanings of institutions. It will also look at prison architecture, and the city as a whole as a 'palimpsest', and the ways that, in this constant shift and reshaping, those architectural messages are lost further still.

Next, in Chapters 2 and 3, I will look at existing literatures in order to refine my research focus and address any gaps that I may contribute to with this thesis.

Chapter 2. Siting the Prison

2.1 Introduction

This thesis draws together and develops literature and theory from the diverse fields of geography, sociology, criminology and architectural and design theory. In each of these disciplines, the prison is analysed differently; as a social construct, an institution, an architectural form. The thesis deconstructs the contemporary societal and cultural beliefs about both civic architecture and prison that inform(ed) the designs of both Strangeways and Berwyn.

As the literature used to underpin this thesis is so wide reaching, I will split the literature review into two chapters. The first, Chapter 2, will focus on the politics behind and the community response to prison design, with particular focus on siting, while the second, Chapter 3, examines theoretical texts on carceral architecture. The two chapters are split in this way to effectively allow the practicalities and popular politics of prison building to sit separately from the response and theories that subsequently surround the structures.

In this chapter, Section 2.2 gives an introduction to the field of carceral geography, the subject with which the thesis most aligns, highlighting its roots and its connection to another subdiscipline of geography important to the thesis: architectural geography, which will be looked at in more detail in Chapter 3. Literatures from criminology, sociology and planning that focus on the explicitly political motivations behind prison siting will be explored in section 2.3 whilst

section 2.4 will provide a collation of the literatures — predominantly hailing from the United States — on the NIMBY (Not In My Backyard) phenomenon in relation to prison, as well as an examination of the emergent YIMBY (Yes In My Backyard) trend that has more recently countered it. In 2.5, I will look at the literature that links YIMBYism, neoliberal policy and the prison building boom.

2.2 Carceral Geography

Carceral geography is the term used to describe ‘the geographical engagement with the practices of imprisonment and migrant detention’ (Moran et al, 2013: 1). It is a subdiscipline of human geography, borrowing transdisciplinarily from criminology, sociology, psychology and legal studies to extend established dialogues on the institution of prison and examine the carceral through a geographic lens (Moran, 2015). Moran (2016) notes that buildings and institutions associated with incarceration were traditionally understood primarily in relation to Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish* (1979) or Goffman’s ‘total institution’ (1961). Both retain a place in the discourse surrounding prison (Moran & Keinänen, 2012), with Foucault’s concepts of surveillance-as-power and the extension of the prison into what he terms the ‘carceral archipelago’ underlining much of today’s carceral theory.

Carceral geography builds on and grows these concepts, giving consideration to the relationship between imprisonment, space and time, examining the way the prison affectively extends *beyond* the ‘total institution’ (geographies of affect will be explored further in Chapter 3). Aspects of the carceral experience that have been

previously uncharted in geography are given focus; from prison tourism (Turner, 2015, 2016) to the impact of greenspace on prisoners (Moran, forthcoming; Turner & Moran, 2018; Moran et al, 2020). Carceral geography also lights on the fact that carceral spaces are experienced by inmates and prison officers, but also by architects, builders, visitors and host communities (Moran, 2015), and that, far from existing as the enclosed phenomenon of a total institution, the prison extends beyond its walls in many ways. An early example of this extension of the prison comes courtesy of Moran and Keinänen's 2012 study of prisoners on furlough from Finnish prisons; they list actions such as breathalysing and tracking the mobile phones of the furloughed prisoners as an extension of the carceral into the outside world. Specific attention is given to the prison guards who accompany dangerous prisoners on furlough, 'who themselves embody the disciplinary regime of the prison, beyond the prison walls' (2012: 72). They continue that, 'in this way the techniques of discipline also serve to blur or obscure the delineation between inside and outside' (2012: 72). Further, Turner and Peters discuss 'carceral atmospheres', focusing on the 'elusive, intangible, felt aspects of carceral space' that combine and elicit interest in and engagement with the prison (2015: 314). By engaging with members of the community *around* the prison who live or work close by and experience the prison from the outside without ever actually entering it, this thesis meets a gap in the existing literature that looks at the blurring of inside and outside of prison, exploring how they perceive the carceral atmosphere, and how it affects them.

The emergence of a geographical subdiscipline pertaining directly to experiences of imprisonment correlates with what Wacquant terms the ‘punitive turn’ (2008: 17; 2010: 211) in policy and the ‘brutal swing from the social to the penal management of poverty’ (2011: 3); essentially, the movement by neoliberal Western governments towards the creation of states that are hyperpunitive on multiple levels, from the policing of human existence in public realms (for example, Moran notes increasingly punitive responses to homelessness [2015: 13]) to imprisonment itself. Carceral geography aims to draw ‘direct connections between neoliberal governance and the organised practices and techniques through which subjects are governed via the criminal justice system and the carceral estate’ (Moran, 2015: 14). The link between this shift towards neoliberalism and what it means for architecture is further explored in Section 2.5.

Moran et al note that in studies of prison, the built environment itself has often been neglected in favour of other subjects (2013). Carceral geographers have since incorporated literatures from the established subdiscipline of geographies of architecture in order to ‘read’ prison buildings (Gill et al, 2013; Crewe et al, 2013; Morin, 2013; Moran, 2015; Moran and Jewkes, 2015; Turner, 2016; Moran, 2016a, 2016b; Moran et al, 2016), adding to both carceral and architectural discourse. As a result of this interrogation of the prison estate through the lens of geographies of architecture (Crewe et al, 2013, Moran et al, 2016), the prison has, for example, been recognised as what Rose et al (2010) define as a ‘big thing’ (Moran et al, 2016). The concepts that arise at these intersections — of the significance of the prison’s construction and its subsequent built environment, of scale, and the

architectural ‘actors’ that make up the prison building’s myriad meanings — are explored in depth in Chapter 3, where I will look at geographies of architecture and its existing links with the carceral. It is important to note that this section is an introduction to the field of carceral geography, and literatures from the discipline will continue to be woven throughout other sections of the thesis, as it is the subject with which I most align.

There are existing literatures on historical carceral geography (Morin & Moran, 2015; Peters & Turner, 2015) which I will add to with the sections of my thesis that focus on archival materials from Strangeways. Existing literatures on the conceptualisation of the prison boundary (Turner et al, 2014; Turner, 2014a; Turner 2014b; Turner, 2016) will be expanded upon, too, by interrogating where the *community* deems the boundary to exist, and how this factors into NIMBY and YIMBY approaches to siting.

In 2.3, the next section, I will look at another vital aspect of prison design, which is interrogated extensively in carceral geography and proves essential to this thesis: the decisions behind, and realities of, prison siting.

2.3 Prison Siting

This section examines historic and contemporary prison siting. I position these literatures here because siting is at the very beginning of the prison building process; since the advent of the ‘modern’ prison, choosing a site has been a

foundational stage of prison construction, and an important factor in the way the prison is subsequently designed. However, the ideology behind prison siting and design has changed dramatically since prison, as we recognise it, was conceived, which is why I have selected two field sites from opposite ends of the British prison estate's spectrum, so different in siting and appearance.

It has been proffered that research on prison development is 'frequently difficult to interpret, evaluate and compare' because it ranges from journalistic pieces, through to oversimplified commissioned reports, industry documents which may contain 'inadvertent bias' and journal articles from researchers (Tootle, 2004: 3). Within carceral geography, sociology, law and criminology, the siting of the prison has regularly been analysed (Huling, 2002; King et al, 2003, 2004; Hooks et al, 2004; Hoyman & Weinberg, 2006; Lynch, 2009; Armstrong, 2014; Eason, 2017; Hall, 2019) and in the scope of this literature are studies that function under completely opposing opinions and produce dramatically different findings. A selection of these offerings will be explored here.

Attention will firstly be given to historic prison siting in the UK and abroad, and then to the highly politically charged nature of contemporary prison siting.

Although the thesis focuses on two British prisons, the existing literature written on the contemporary siting of specific prisons has tended to emerge from the United States (though not exclusively; see Armstrong, 2010a, 2010b). The USA is well known to have the largest prison population in the world (Bonds, 2012), standing at 2.3 million at the time of writing (Wagner and Rabuy, 2017), having seen an

exponential rise in numbers of inmates since the 1970s. It is appropriate, then, that US scholars are particularly drawn to the subject. Their literatures tend to take one of several narrative directions, veering dramatically in sentiment from one another. Some articles focus on the attitudes of local communities to prisons being sited in their area, citing either NIMBY or YIMBY responses to proposed prison siting (see Section 2.4), using economics and population profiling to explain these responses. Some articles provide arguments *for* prison siting in an area, including evidence that prison can improve employment prospects, for example, whilst others state that the negative effects of prison siting far outweigh any positives. A more recent line of research proposes that neither is true, and that prison siting has neither positive nor negative effect on the local community. Elsewhere, research focussing on other countries — such as Russia — has found prison siting in inaccessible places to be a method of punishment in itself, making pains of imprisonment more acute for those incarcerated in places their families cannot reach (Moran et al, 2013; Piacentini, 2007), while in the US, the harsher punishment enacted through distance-related familial separation is taken as proof that prison ‘works’ (Bedard & Helland, 2004).

In criminology, there is a strong foundation of work on the emergence of the prison as the institution we recognise today (Hirsch, 1982; Evans, 1982; Rothman, 1990; Morris, 1997; Davis, 2003; Brown, 2009), much of which gives special focus to Bentham’s Panopticon and the American penitentiaries that drew from it. The prison in its 18th and 19th century form was believed to represent a truly civilised and humanitarian society (Brown, 2009), and was situated in city centres accordingly. Criminologists Jewkes (2013) and Liebling (2004) have explored the

ways in which the castellated facades of these prisons communicated the significance — and fearsomeness — of the institution, and the way that their city central locations increased their visibility. The literature that explores this aspect of siting is particularly relevant to this thesis, as one of the field sites — Strangeways — was built during this era of prison construction. One of the key points *missing* from this literature is an interrogation of whether or not these inscribed meanings actually *work*; my thesis meets this gap by scrutinising the way that Victorian prisons are read today, and have been read historically.

Conversely, studies on more contemporary carceral structures show them to be hidden, rendered invisible (Bonds, 2006, 2009; Glasmeier and Farrigan, 2007; Morin and Moran, 2015; Moran et al, 2016; Turner, 2016) by both their location and architecture. Much of the existing literature correlates this with several factors: many countries are now home to a hyper-punitive state, which aggressively and overbearingly corrects ‘transgressors’, not only through imprisonment, but through the use of heavy policing or the issuing of fines.

In both the US and the UK, these acts both feed and are facilitated by the idea that *profit* can be made from punishment. In this case, then, it makes sense that as little as possible is spent on the land where prisons are sited, and as a result this land is normally rural (Moran, 2015: 64, Moran, forthcoming), or ‘extra-urban’ (Morin and Moran, 2015: 5). It is often brownfield land, having once been occupied by a factory — like the Monroe County Correctional Centre in Bloomington, Indiana which forms the fieldsite for Schehpt’s study of US carceral expansion (2015).

Notable in the UK are HMP Addiewell, the subject of two conference papers by Armstrong (2010a, 2010b) and HMP Berwyn, the focus of this thesis which, as mentioned in Chapter 1.2, now occupies the once-derelict semi-rural site of what was a tyre factory until the 1970s. Due to this, literature on rurality is also important; this literature is split, with those that focus on prison siting in rural locations, and those that engage specifically with rural communities. I will discuss these literatures next.

In the US, rural communities are frequently chosen to host prisons (Welch, 1991; Cherry and Kunce, 2001; Hooks et al, 2004; Marquart, 2004; Bonds, 2006; Glasmeier and Farrigan, 2007; Groot and Latessa, 2007; Courtright et al, 2009; Chappell, 2012; Perdue & Sanchagrin, 2016). In the 1980s and 90s, economic recession and the depression of the agricultural industries combined with an escalating prison population, resulting in rural counties in the United States being primed for prison developments. An early study by Cherry and Kunce (2001) found that in California, a proliferation of economically challenged communities significantly heightened a county's likelihood of hosting a prison. Some of these studies (Glasmeier and Farrigan, 2007; Groot and Latessa, 2007) found that the promised positive effects for rural host communities failed to deliver, while others (Huling, 2002) actively counsel against siting prisons rurally. Others dispel the idea that prison is either good *or* bad for rural areas (Hooks et al, 2004; Courtright et al, 2009).

Whilst in the US prison siting in rural areas has been historically commonplace, the UK's move to rural prison siting is more recent, and there is less literature on this shift (with some notable exceptions; Armstrong, 2010a, 2010b), a gap which this PhD aims to address. These less-central locations are beneficial for planners in two ways: they are cheaper, and opposition towards LULU facilities is less concentrated (Moran, 2015) and presumably therefore, not *heard* quite so loudly. The shift in UK siting appears to be reflective of changing attitudes towards prison and the shifting philosophies pertaining to its purpose. HMP Berwyn is a very clear example of what rural siting in the UK looks like; on a brownfield site that was once occupied by a high volume local employer, in an industrial complex surrounded by countryside. This typicality is a core reason for choosing it as a fieldsite; but so are its differences, particularly the location directly adjacent to the prison of a small housing estate with a tight knit community. The situation of this community means that literature engaging with similar groups is important, so Section 2.4 focuses on rural prison-hosting communities and the appearance of NIMBYism and YIMBYism amongst them.

2.4 NIMBYism and YIMBYism

Given the United States' propensity for prison building, much of the literature pertaining to the rejection or acceptance of prison siting in an area emerges from there, albeit from disparate disciplines, ranging from economics to planning. These are often quantitative studies, in contrast with my own qualitative research design which gives focus to in-depth interviews with community members. The phrase

Not In My Back Yard (and acronym NIMBY) originated in the United States in the 1970s (Phillips-Fein, 2017), so it seems pertinent to begin our inquiry there.

The NIMBY response to prison siting has been well researched (Carlson, 1995; Cherry and Kunce, 2001; Hayman, 2002; Tootle, 2004; King et al, 2004; Groot and Latessa, 2007; Hannan and Courtright, 2011; Chappell, 2012), with resoundingly similar results evidencing the presence of NIMBYism in areas with wealthier, higher educated residents: for example, in a study of the perception of economic impact on Pennsylvanian prisons, it was noted that ‘persons with higher levels of education, younger persons, and residents in higher income brackets are generally more likely to oppose LULU facilities’ (Hannan and Courtright, 2011 : 55). Cherry and Kunce explain that these people — the ‘NIMBYs’ — are more likely to live in economically richer areas, stating that the ‘backyards’ in question are more likely to be in a prosperous area (Cherry and Kunce, 2001 : 545)¹. The case for NIMBYism in relation to prison construction can be wide reaching, but tends to fall into the categories of safety and financial concerns (Groot and Latessa, 2007). Prospective neighbours may worry that the proximity of a prison will cause real estate and land value to fall. Groot and Latessa (2007) indicate that vocal opposition to prison facilities documented by the media may be a cause, in part, of falling real estate prices. Safety concerns, such as prison escapes, inmates families relocating to be closer to their incarcerated family member, and escalating crime rates are also cited as reasons for NIMBYism, although Groot and Latessa, whilst identifying these

¹ Siting in such places does happen, however — Marin County Jail in California is one example. When it was built in the 1950s, wealthy local residents did not create such vocal opposition, partly because the prison was designed as part of acclaimed architect Frank Lloyd Wright’s Marin County Civic Center — and partly because it is almost entirely subterranean.

fears, claim that they are ‘unfounded’ (2007 : 2), though it is important to note that this paper is heavily biased in *favour* of new prison facilities.

Rather than ‘unfounded’, these fears may be *residual*, in the way in which Williams (1977: 122) states that:

The residual, by definition, has been effectively formed in the past, but it is still active in the cultural process, not only and often not at all as an element of the past, but as an effective element of the present. Thus certain experiences, meanings, and values which cannot be expressed or substantially verified in terms of the dominant culture, are nevertheless lived and practised on the basis of the residue – cultural as well as social – of some previous social and cultural institution or formation.

For example, McConville cites that in the case of my fieldsite Strangeways, released prisoners were freed without means of returning to their homes in the Salford Hundred and so many began new lives in Manchester itself (1995: 332). This undoubtedly has built and fed into NIMBYism, and yet there is an absence of literatures about *historic* NIMBYism, which this thesis will address in Chapter 6, as the archival materials from Manchester evidence its existence at the time of the prison’s construction.

Perhaps more surprisingly, the emergence of a Yes In My Back Yard (YIMBY) response in relation to prison siting has been documented, too (Thies, 2001; Hayman, 2002; Hooks et al, 2004; Pollock, 2004; Glasmeier and Farrigan, 2007),

in poorer rural areas where the prison has been portrayed as an opportunity for economic revival. When presented with the threat of a loud and angry community rejection from affluent areas, it is understandable that the State might choose to site prisons in places where resistance is less likely. However, there is more at work than the siting of prisons being rejected by communities in economically developed places. Economically depressed rural areas have traditionally experienced problems recruiting high, or even 'decent' paying industry (Chappell, 2012; King et al, 2004), and so prison construction, which may not have seemed an attractive prospect whilst the agricultural industries were booming, has become a seemingly viable option for local economic regeneration. This has led to the YIMBY phenomenon, seen across the US, where communities court prison siting: 'due to a widespread belief that prison construction provides significant economic benefits to local areas, local areas compete to attract new prisons' (Hooks et al, 2004 : 38). The 'competition' mentioned can be extremely fierce, with some counties so desperate to host prisons that they have been seen to give away land, or offer tax rebates in exchange for prison siting (Pollock, 2004). In some instances, communities have even offered to build the prisons themselves (Glasmeier and Farrigan, 2007 : 275). Other studies find the absence of NIMBYism and YIMBYism altogether. Martin (2000) undertook a study in Indiana County along a similar timeframe to mine, in terms of building: his took place among a community where a prison had just begun to be constructed, too. His findings confirmed neither the presence of NIMBYism *or* YIMBYism; rather, once the community believed there would be economic uptick as a result, there was a general feeling of *neutrality* towards the prison.

Although YIMBYism has emerged in the US, according to Armstrong (2010a, 2010b, 2014), NIMBYism is still very much an issue in UK prison siting. This is in spite of the fact that prison siting in the UK has begun to be framed in economic terms (Armstrong, 2014) with the annual revenue of fieldsite Berwyn, for example, publicly discussed and predicted at £23m (Wrexham County Council, 2014), and the investment already made in the build standing at £212m (in 2017). Wrexham Council are also quick to establish that work is being done to ensure that jobs stay within the area, which is heavily economically deprived. Yet Armstrong (2010, 2014) found that in Addiewell in Scotland, despite the fact that in excess of 4000 jobs had been lost due to a factory closure, locals strongly opposed plans to build a prison on the site. According to Armstrong, officials saw the prison as ‘a box of jobs... and the larger the box, the more jobs it can hold’ (2010 : 6), yet opposition from the community came about for far more emotive reasons, and focussed, not only on the NIMBY issues found in earlier American studies — of safety and plummeting real estate values — but also environmental issues, the idea that the prison would be ‘an eyesore’, and even one resident complaining that the light pollution from the prison would destroy their view of the night sky. The fieldsite at HMP Berwyn was under construction when fieldwork was conducted, so these studies — both of NIMBY and YIMBYism — provide an excellent basis for understanding respondents’ attitudes to the prison as it emerged in their community.

Armstrong’s work is an exception, but representations of NIMBYism and YIMBYism amongst rural communities often fall into the pattern described by

Paniagua, who notes that, when they are at the centre of academic studies such as these, rural communities are presented as homogenised groups; that we must consider what has become the ‘analytical irrelevance of the rural individual’ (2016: 512). He notes the tendency, particularly in Geography, towards the *study* of rural communities as an homogenous group — not only in relation to group matters (such as the situation of a prison) but in relation to personal matters (and the situation of a prison can have deeply personal responses, too). This work is expanded upon by Lu and Qian (2020). Much of the literature written on prison siting in rural communities and referenced here does adhere to Paniagua’s theory; opinions are presented quantitatively in percentage-statistics, for example, and qualitative research in rural prison host communities is less common. The rural communities mentioned are often presented as prison-welcoming masses; the reality is likely far more complex. Striking contrasts come from extra-academic areas; Brett Story’s 2016 film ‘The Prison In Twelve Landscapes’ is one such an example, where rural communities are viewed through individuals who are interviewed for their views on prison in what Lydia Ogwang called ‘Story’s pattern of taking a gentle, inquisitive, piecemeal look at a monolithic and violent institutional tradition’, demonstrating ‘an attendant practice imbued with extreme compassion’ (2017, accessed 2020). Ogwang says Story’s ‘loaded displays remain resistant to flattening and caricature’, of the kind that so often emerges in academic discourse. The absence of this kind of qualitative academic research into rural prison host communities provides a convincing argument for the involvement of geographers in the study of communities in these areas — and, hence, for the approach taken in this thesis.

2.5 The rise of Neoliberalism

Having discussed the economic landscape of the deindustrialised, agriculturally-waning United States in particular, and its subsequent contribution to contemporary prison siting patterns, it is important to examine the politics that accompanied the shift. These politics did not solely arise in the States; rather, the global demise of traditional industry has been accompanied by a rise in neoliberal policy (see Kinder, 2014, on Detroit, but also Kelly, 2001, on Mexico; Young & Matthews, 2007, on British Columbia; Walker, 2009, on rural India.) This section will highlight the existing literature on the links between prison expansion and neoliberalism, both politically and economically. It will also take into account what ‘neoliberal architecture’ — that is, architecture that is linked to the neoliberal politic — looks like in the United Kingdom, in particular the ways in which UK prison construction began to mirror US patterns in the 1980s as it had done two centuries before. This link to neoliberalism is critical when examining the architecture at Berwyn; but also, to understand the response of local residents, which is not quite YIMBYism, but more of the passive acceptance that Martin (2000) found in Indiana.

This section will examine the neoliberal policies which advocate for less government spending in traditionally government-run sectors. One example of this can be the sometimes-dubious concept of ‘cost efficiency’ nurtured by governments, advocating the use of private finance in public projects. Another is the replacement of welfare programmes with what Wacquant calls ‘workfare’.

The links between neoliberal politics and prison expansion have been documented widely (Bonds, 2006; Herbert and Brown, 2006; Wacquant, 2009; Brown, 2014; Schept, 2015), with criminologists, sociologists, historians, carceral scholars and activists believing that the two are mutually dependent. Black feminist and anti-prison activist Angela Davis draws direct links between race, incarceration and the deindustrialised US economy, convincingly claiming that the prison ‘has become a black hole into which the detritus of contemporary capitalism is deposited’ (16: 2003). Though he rejects some of her hypotheses, Wacquant (2009) draws together Davis’ links, further stating that the ‘hypertrophic and hyperactive penal state... (is) one of (neoliberalism’s) constituent ingredients’ (252: 2012). Wacquant, a definitive voice on the subject of security under a neoliberal government, also links the dismantling of the welfare state to the rapid growth of the prison estate. Hay (2004) provides a seven point definition of economic neoliberalism, point six of which is as follows

6. A commitment to the removal of those welfare benefits that might be seen as disincentives to market participation (in short, a subordination of the principles of social justice to those of perceived economic imperatives). (508)

Wacquant links this component element of neoliberalism to carceral expansion, noting that the replacement of welfare with ‘workfare’ (defined as forced involvement in subpar, low-paid employment) for the dispossessed is related to the unprecedented public support of carceral punishment (248: 2012). In 1958, Sykes

asserted his belief that imprisonment would continue to occur on a large scale for the foreseeable future, and attributed the phenomenon of this level of incarceration to social and economic inertia and a ‘primitive desire for vengeance’ (132: 1958). Wacquant (2009, 2010, 2012) offers an updated theory; yes, the primitive desire for vengeance is alive — it has been deliberately sewn into contemporary society, but it is the opposite of economic and social inertia that drives prison expansion. He proffers that economic neoliberalism proves highly ‘interventionist and authoritarian’ when negotiating the damaging effects of economic deregulation on those of lower socio-economic and class backgrounds (252:2012).

Foucault’s analysis of public torture and execution sits well alongside the structure of Wacquant’s argument. Foucault states that public torture is the ‘effect of a system of production in which labour power, and therefore the human body, has neither the utility nor the commercial value that are conferred on them in an economy of an industrial type’ (1977: 54). The deindustrialisation of the US economy has devalued the bodies of workers again; to use Foucault’s theory, mass incarceration can be seen as a direct response to this. In accompaniment to this, we know that the economy of imprisonment has been deemed ‘recession-proof’, and that capitalism has forged an association between ‘pauperism’ and criminality (Turner, 2013 : 38). As a result of the introduction of ‘workfare’, everyone but the wealthy is put at a similarly impoverished disadvantage. Again, Foucault provides a frame for analysis of the results of this in *Discipline and Punish*:

The least-favoured strata of the population did not have, in principle, any privileges: but they benefited, within the margins of what was imposed on them by law and custom, from a space of tolerance, gained by force or obstinacy... (82)

Hence an ambiguity in popular attitudes: on the one hand, the criminal — especially when he happened to be a smuggler or a peasant who had fled from the exactions of the master — benefited from a spontaneous wave of sympathy: his acts of violence were seen as descending directly from old struggles. On the other hand, a man who, under cover of an illegality accepted by the population, committed crimes at the expense of this population, the vagrant beggar, for example, who robbed and murdered, easily became the object of a special hate: he had redirected upon the least favoured illegality that was integral to their conditions of existence. (83)

Those who reject the circumstances of workfare, while others endure the same circumstances, may become the Foucauldian ‘vagrant beggar’ (83) — committing a crime by rejecting the status quo at the expense of the community and subsequently becoming the object of the ‘special hate’, or Sykes’ ‘primitive desire for vengeance’. In ‘Dead Cities’, Davis uses Compton as a case study noting that federal aid had once kept the city afloat, and that nowhere suffered more as a result of Reagan and Bush’s careful dissemination of it. Alongside this, he quotes Theresa Allison, a civil rights campaigner whose focus lies specifically in supporting Black and Latina mothers whose children are disproportionately incarcerated. “Who now remembers the pride and bright hope this city once represented? *Who could have*

predicted our own people would come to treat us this way?" (2002: 279 [my italics]).

Further, Wacquant says that forced market discipline can never be enacted smoothly; in fact, it causes backlash amongst the lower and working classes that it predominantly affects (Wacquant, 2010). Though Wacquant (2010, 297) believes that the 'death of the spectacle of the scaffold' has been exaggerated, pointing to the carceral state's alternative avenue to a disappearance from view in 'institutional relocation, symbolic elaboration, and social proliferation', it is possible to view it otherwise. Foucault's theory behind the disappearance of public torture was that it damaged sovereignty in the eyes of the subjects and so had to be retired. If the poor and disenfranchised continue to be vocal, or exploit other systems (drug-dealing, for example) in the backlash against their plight, it is vital to remove them in order for the system to be upheld, in order for power to be retained by those who currently hold it. Those people (the tortured, in Foucault's work) though still extant, must be rendered invisible, so in neoliberal America, they are put in prison (this is what the famous American 'war on drugs' policy strives for, for example). These literatures and the policies that they explore are further illustrated by my field site, Berwyn, which embodies the shift away from building prisons in city centres to situating them in rural or industrial areas, thus removing the prison and its inhabitants from view. And although it is a prominent city central building, these tensions are elicited and explored in the responses to *Strangeways*, too.

Viewed on a timeline, it is easy to see a direct correlation between the advent of prison privatisation and neoliberalism. In the US, privatisation began in the 1980s under presidents Reagan and Bush, but it peaked under Bill Clinton in the 1990s alongside the Wall Street boom (Ashley, 2013). It is proposed by Hay (1999) that Tony Blair's New Labour sought to draw political inspiration from Clinton's New Democrats. This is prevalent in Blair's continuation of 1990s Conservative privatisation, one example being in New Labour's embrace of Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contracts. Indeed, Wacquant uses Britain under Blair as an example of the 'causal link between economic liberalisation and penal expansion', noting that under Blair's leadership, Britain incarcerated more people than anywhere else in Western Europe (252: 2012).

Both Hay (1999) and Shaw (2012) note the desire of 'New Labour' to distance itself from 'Old Labour', with Shaw specifically highlighting a move away from what was seen as Old Labour's 'financial profligacy' (91). According to Shaw, Gordon Brown promoted private finance contracts because it was simply assumed that the public sector made for less efficient and effective management of large projects, due to lack of economic incentive, either in profit-making, or in recouping the cost of capital (Shaw, 2012, 93). Scott (2007) highlights the reality of prisons in the post-Woolf report, post-New Labour UK; that in requesting a new era of 'just prisons' in his 1991 report on the Strangeways riots, Lord Justice Woolf accidentally beckoned a wave of pervasive managerialism over the British prison estate of the 1990s. Resultant of this, according to Scott, was the alignment of the prison with Brown's PFI contracts and their ilk — the consumerist, capitalist

ventures appearing across what were once government-led agencies. Prisons came to be regarded as service-providers, commodities, even (2007: 60), and the prisons' efficacy as a service provider was interrogated more than the successes and failings of prison as an institution overall. To counter Scott's argument that prison privatisation and the Woolf report's findings have been entirely detrimental, Shefer and Liebling (2008) light on the lived reality of prisoners and tentatively put forward one possible positive outcome from prison privatisation; private prisons, according to them, appear to produce more respectful relationships between guards and prisoners. Jewkes and Reisdorf (2016) also highlight the positives attached to the provision of Information and Communication Technologies to those in prison, an area in which private institutions can be more progressive. Some of these technologies are also supplied by private sector companies, providing a positive in relation to the private sector's relationship with the penal estate.

Environmental psychologist Wener asserts that the design of a prison is directly related to the philosophy of its country's criminal justice system at the time of its construction; an essential consideration when examining the architecture of neoliberal prisons. He draws upon the fact that the building may show these philosophies explicitly or that they may manifest subtly (2012: 7, 12), though Schept asserts that the visible enactment of punishment on even very minor crimes is actually a critical force behind neoliberal carceral expansion (Schept, 2015:127, 143). HMP Oakwood embodies many of the neoliberal *design* ideals instigated by New Labour; 'a covered walkway up to the prison that coils into a lightly waving snake shape for no reason', occasionally coated in 'non-committal turquoise paint',

a ‘windowless box’ with a gleaming corrugated roof, only interesting because of its sheer bulk; ‘artificial and sterile, numbing in its blandness’ (Jewkes et al, 2017). Moran et al say that ‘aesthetically bland, functional, and rather nondescript exteriors of recently built UK prisons, for example, may be read as indicators of a loss of public empathy for prisoners’ (2019: 76), a concept that I will draw out in the empirics chapters.



Fig 2.1, Oakwood Prison (Ellie Slee, 2015)

The ‘public-private style’ (Hatherley, 2010) employed at Oakwood (Fig 2.1) is familiar to all British citizens, Hatherley claims, in the following description of his local — (or rather, less than local — ‘like all PFI hospitals, it is very far from the

town centre') — hospital. He could just as easily be describing Oakwood, or Berwyn.

A landmark in the strange new landscape created by the loosening of planning controls in the 'Thames Gateway', Darent Valley Hospital is just adjacent to Bluewater, the ultimate out-of-town, out-of-this-world mall, which is bunkered down inside a chalk pit and impossible to reach on foot. So the bus takes you past the M25, through what is probably legally the green belt — that is, a landscape of 1930s speculative housing and minuscule farms where forlorn horses look upon power stations and business parks — before eventually dropping you off at the top of a hill, from which you can survey an extraordinary non-place...

The hospital itself, designed by Paulley Architects in 1999, is done in the public-private style which is by now familiar from a thousand New Labour non-projects. No doubt constructed with a concrete or steel frame, it attempts to avoid looking 'institutional' via a series of plasticky wavy roofs..., tiny windows, some green glass, and a lot of yellow London stock brick. ... it represents a horrible, unplanned new landscape, the embodiment of New Labour's attempt to transform the Welfare State into a giant business. (Hatherley, 2010: ix-x)

Hatherley claims that PFI contracts are to planning what pseudomodernism is to architecture, and that pseudomodernism is Modernism without utopianism — pseudomodernism is, as its name suggests, a poor imitation of Modernism. He argues that though the late 80s and early 90s neoliberal architectural structures are

obscene in their flashiness, this was nevertheless neoliberal architecture at its most transparent, before it ‘dressed itself up in social concern’ (xxiv). If neoliberal state-sanctioned architecture is ‘dressed up’ in social concern, then it carries with it all manner of contradictions; the reasons for these lumpen (in both senses of the word), visually unwieldy structures being essentially that they must be cost efficient (Jewkes, 2013). As Majerowitz and Alleil say, the fast moving, large scale neoliberal development of contemporary cities privileges ‘capital extraction over urban planning and urban design principles, compromising the city and the wellbeing of urban citizens’ (2019: 44).

It is important to note that Hatherley is vociferous in his disdain for buildings born out of New Labour policy, but there are British neoliberal construction projects which do not incite such a response; Kraftl (2014) notes two Sustainable Communities built in the wake of New Labour’s vow to build more housing in the Midlands, describing them as neotraditional villages. There is an immediately noticeable difference between the buildings Hatherley describes and the housing developments discussed by Kraftl, namely that Hatherley’s buildings are all public, whilst Kraftl’s are domestic. However, there are interesting similarities, particularly in the lived experience of these developments.

The settlements Kraftl uses as field sites were subject to intense planning procedures in an attempt to optimise their ‘liveability’. Although positive elements are evident in the extensive planning and subsequent inhabitation of these communities, Kraftl mentions that residents feel that because they have ‘bought

into' the concept of community they reject various behaviours that they deem 'threatening' to that community. These can be occurrences as banal as two ten year olds walking along a street with one another (2014: 287-288). Elsewhere in the development, Kraftl describes the passing-down of governance to designated resident wardens, which aims to reduce criminal behaviour on the estate. This represents the 'government-at-a-distance' exercise described by Rose and Miller (1990, 1992) and Garland (1997) as emblematic of neoliberal rule. In these instances 'government' is extended by the election of governors, guardians, or in this case wardens, and enhanced by their occupation of the space between the state and the criminal (Garland, 1997 : 187). Here, neoliberal policy interweaves with the daily experience of those living on the estate; likewise, this experience of neoliberal government, but more specifically, neoliberal *justice* is experienced in the communities surrounding neoliberal British prison developments, something that is highlighted in the empirics of this thesis.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a critical overview of the existing literatures on prison siting. Section 2.2 provided an introduction to the field of carceral geography, the sub discipline which this thesis most aligns with, and which I will expand upon with my focus on architecture and rural siting.

Section 2.3 used texts from planning, sociology and criminology to explore the sociocultural and political reasons that underpinned prison siting from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to the present day. Within this discussion, I

highlighted the fact that many of these studies are quantitative, with little or no detailed qualitative research into the human impact of prison siting, and put forward my intention to expand upon the qualitative data on prison siting.

In Section 2.4, the concepts of NIMBYism and YIMBYism were explored, with an analysis of why these disparate phenomena might occur in different places, towards different LULU facilities, at different times. I included a brief examination of Armstrong's UK-based literatures that cite the external aesthetic of the prison as a reason for NIMBYism. I also exposed a gap in the conversation around NIMBYism; the fact that there is no existing literature that interrogates the existence of NIMBYism in historic discussions of prison siting.

Finally, the chapter examined the intersection between neoliberal economics and neoliberal politics globally, which informs the policy, siting and aesthetic decisions around UK prison building today.

Chapter 3: Designing the Prison

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the literature that exists around the design of prisons. Following on from section 2.4, which looked at the policy that underpins design and siting, it will discuss theoretical approaches to *reading* prison architecture, beginning with 3.2, an introduction to writing that explores how to interpret Victorian prison architecture and how prison design has developed, with a brief summary of what prison looked like prior to the development of the American Penitentiary and Joshua Jebb's 'model prison' Pentonville. It offers a chronological account of various philosophies that have underpinned prison construction and design. In section 3.3 I will look at architectural geographies, a subdiscipline of human geography that offers established frameworks that have previously been used in carceral geography as a very useful lens through which to look at prison architecture. In Section 3.4, I will go on to discuss the existing intersections between architectural geographies and carceral geography, and also assess where my thesis sits in and contributes to this intersection. This final section lays vital ground for the archival research that will appear in the empirics chapters.

3.2 Reading the Victorian prison

This section, *Reading the Victorian Prison*, provides a summary of essential texts on the architectural history of prison buildings. Given the selection of Strangeways as one of my field sites and the archival empirics in this thesis, it is critical to

understand how that prison, and others like it, came to exist and remain part of the British penal estate. The literatures that examine Victorian prisons and their architecture are rich and varied, and shed light on the ways in which their design was representative of the social and political cultures of their era.

At one time, prison existed as a means to an end — a holding place for criminals while they awaited corporal punishment or exile (Evans, 1982; Johnston, 2000) — regularly housed in ‘opportunistic, occupying structures built for quite different purposes’ (Johnston, 2000: 1). In the 1770s and 1780s a prison reform movement began to develop in Britain and Europe, and increasingly, trained architects were employed to design prison buildings (Johnston, 2000: 42). In *Discipline and Punish* (1975), Foucault famously focuses on the exertion of state power of the bodies of citizens with particular scrutiny placed on Jeremy Bentham’s eighteenth century design for a circular prison: the Panopticon. Foucault’s deep analysis of the Panopticon propagates a skewed belief that it widely was implemented in carceral construction; in reality, very few prisons resembling panopticons were actually built, and only recently has direct observation of inmates, through new technologies, begun to be explored in earnest (Johnston, 2000). Rather, the prisons of the time about which Foucault writes (the late 17 and early 1800s) tended to be rectangular, and were gradually replaced by a radial design in the nineteenth century, beginning with the construction of Joshua Jebb’s Pentonville in 1842, which saw the beginning of a new era in prison construction, borrowing heavily from the American Penitentiary (Brodie et al, 2002). Pentonville became the exemplar prison for local authorities across the country (Evans, 1982: 346) and was

known as the Model Prison. To a passerby today, it resembles a Grecian fortress; stuccoed white with gently sloping rooves and a huge, pillar-flanked entranceway. To the local community of Caledonian Road in 1842, it must have resembled an alien spaceship. Pentonville is particularly important in the context of this thesis as its radial design was later loosely copied by Waterhouse in the design for Strangeways (Brodie et al, 2002).

In the 1860s, under the influence of Jebb, conservative politician Henry Herbert, the fourth Earl of Carnarvon, began to work on penal reform with a direct view to creating a uniform system of imprisonment across England, managed by central government (McConville, 1995). Like Jebb, he believed that imprisonment could be made more humane through improved prisoner diet, sanitation and the removal of corporal punishment. In 1864, Carnarvon attempted to pass the Gaol Bill, which would have seen uniformity introduced across the penal estate, but the bill, which would have required the closure of many prisons that Carnarvon did not deem fit for purpose, did not pass (McConville, 1995: 134). Instead, it was amended and given royal assent a year later, becoming the 1865 Prison Act. For Jebb, Carnarvon and his successor, Edmund Du Cane, the prison building itself was a key component in the improvement of prisoners' lives and health.

Externally, what is referred to as *architecture parlante* (Rosenau, 1946: 168; Welch, 2015: 79; Feyaerts, 2017, 2018) or 'architecture that speaks' was occurring in the fabric of carceral structures. Architecture parlante is first attributed (variously) to the French architects Ledoux and Boullée. In 1801, Boullée is said to have

identified the importance of ‘expressing the aims of a building in a clear and convincing manner’ (Rosenau, 1946: 168). Extending upon this, Jewkes (2013) notes that prison buildings were traditionally imbued with symbolisms aimed to frighten not only prisoners but wider society into submission; Strangeways is an exemplar of this approach. Johnston notes an encyclopaedia article from 1826 which claims ‘the exterior of a prison should, therefore, be formed in the heavy and sombre style, which most forcibly impresses the spectator with gloom and terror’ (Johnston, 2000: 68). Jewkes refers to this as the architecture’s ‘see and beware’ function, a concept seized upon by penal reformer John Howard as early as 1789 as he wrote on Irish prisons of the time. Jewkes notes the tendency in this era towards prison buildings that look like fortresses, castles, citadels (2013: 10) — visible representations of religion and sovereignty, at that time society’s two great powers. Howard said that, ‘the new gaols, having pompous fronts, appear like palaces to the lower class people of Ireland; and the same people object to them on this account...’ (in Johnston, 2000: 65).

Božovič states that in punishment

it is only the punished individual (that is, the one for whom the punishment is not intended) who suffers pain, whereas the punishment acts upon all others (those for whom it is specifically intended) exclusively through its external appearance. This means that appearance (apparent punishment, apparent suffering) outweighs reality (real punishment, real suffering)... (1995: 4)

The ‘gloom and terror’ designed into the external fabric of the prison serves this purpose. Furthermore, the penal philosophies of the time — which were heavily invested in ideas of penance — were regularly designed into the outward-facing parts of prison buildings, through use of ecclesiastical architecture. The architecture at Strangeways is one such example. Jewkes says that

Arguably no other type of building employs the concepts of ‘outside’ and ‘inside’ quite as dramatically or self-referentially (in the sense that one interpellates the other) as the prison, and the penal philosophies of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries – based on principles of austerity, isolation, silence, remorse and reform – are evident in the juxtaposition of the prison’s cathedral-like exterior and the minuteness of private interior space within (201: 10)

At this point, to begin to conclude this chapter, I would like to explore how we can combine the geography literatures with these others, on prison history, *architecture parlante* and criminology, to explore how the prison facade is read today. When accompanied by the concept of the ‘decentering’ of the architect explored in Chapter 3.3 and by the external actors upon the building — both human, like other, subsequent architects and rioting inmates, and inhuman, such as weeds, mould, decay — the dramatic appearance mentioned by Jewkes is heightened. Over centuries, the Victorian prison building becomes unloved and unkempt, ruined in a way; the many reasons behind every aspect of its construction irrelevant in a new dawn of penal philosophy, leaving behind a building mostly now misunderstood. Woodward (2001) argues that in some ways, neo-Gothic buildings such as

Strangeways are architecturally based in ruin to begin with. He uses the example of Pugin, an architect who's every building was laced with 'ritual and sacrament' (Wilkinson, 2000: 143) and according to whom Gothicism was linked directly to Roman Catholicism, and the dissolution of the monasteries the beginning of most of society's ills (Woodward, 2001: 115). Others (Vidler, 1992; Brown, 2009) claim that it is the unknown nature of the decaying building that inspires feelings of unease amongst viewers. The disparity between what is 'real' about the prison and what is 'imagined' is a point of focus for Brown; given the prison's ability and tendency to shield huge parts of its anatomy from public view, the untrained onlooker must create a full picture of the building partly from imagination. She describes the rampant 'cultural imaginaries' that surround prison (2009: 192), but debunks these, saying that, though it is exoticised by outsiders as something thrilling that harks back to Foucauldian spectacle, to those embedded in it, through study, work or incarceration itself, prison starkly contrasts this as a series of 'empirical realities' (192). Brown theorises that the invisibility of prison to the general public provides a chasm which can be filled by and projected full of fantasies, born of film and television but extended to the voyeuristic fascination that leads those who are interested to the gates of disused prisons for tours. If what we understand of prison is so limited that we are consequently able to project an imaginary 'prison' on top of it, perhaps there is an argument that for most people, prison is unable to be contextualised without the help of something else. According to Foucault, historically, in times of uncertainty, imagination was required as an accompaniment to knowledge (O'Malley and Bougen, 2002). This is a critical point when examining the empirics of this thesis.

3.3 Architectural Geographies with Relation to Prison Symbology

Architecture began to be explored by a group of geographers at the Berkeley School in the 1930s, spearheaded by Carl Sauer. The ‘Berkeley School’ of geographic thought looked at the ways in which culture and history existed in landscapes and the idea of landscape as a complex, layered thing. Over the ensuing decades, geographers have continued to examine the capabilities and restrictions of architecture in a social, cultural and political context, giving focus not only to ‘architecture’ as it is widely understood, but to the formative processes that underpin it and the subsequent possibilities that redefine it, too. In the 1990s, architecture came to be seen as a physical representation of geographical distributions of power, politics and culture.

Kraftl (2010) collates four methodologies with which cultural geographers have begun to put forward an argument for the de-centring of the master architect. Firstly, he identifies that, though architectural symbolism has been of keen interest to both architectural historians and cultural geographers, it wasn’t until the 1980s that geographers argued that social meaning was also inscribed into built form — as with Domosh (1989), who, in a seminal article, revealed that the skyscrapers of 1930s New York were, in part, as had been previously understood, a response to a need for more office space in a small area; but she contested the idea that this was their sole purpose. Domosh revealed that the skyscrapers had not been built at the point of maximum land value, and that as such, they served as ‘material expressions

of social legitimacy and economic power for New York's nouveau riche class' (1989: 352). These imbued political and personal messages are visible today in UK architecture, though they are, albeit, far less impressive and aspirational; rather, they are dystopian. For example, when describing what Augé refers to as 'non-places' (1995), what Stoner might refer to as a 'minor architecture' (2012), and what he refers to as the architectural 'pseudomodernism' I mentioned in Chapter 2, Hatherley (2010) lists a series of recently constructed buildings which he politically links with Britain's New Labour government. 'Barn-like' buildings, not dissimilar to branches of the supermarket chain Asda, this time home to children's centres; a Justice Centre constructed in a 'lumpily jolly 1986 postmodernist style', but which was actually completed in 2005; 'a primary school that resembles... Belmarsh Prison' (2010 : 11). Hatherley claims this blending of various previously recognisable architectures into one mass, referred to as 'chillingly blank', is to Blairism what Postmodernism was to Thatcherism. Rose says that 'modern town planning sprang from two places, the one embracing ideal cities and finite visible utopias... the other composed of documents, manifestos, pamphlets and blueprints for new social orders' (1984 : 33). What is implicit in this quote, but left unsaid by Rose, is that the 'finite' nature of the 'visible utopias' requires the *dystopian* aspects of society — institutions like prison, for example — to be placed somewhere out of sight, something that is demonstrated in the siting of Berwyn. This will be explored explicitly in my own study.

In the second part of Kraftl's four-part framework, he identifies the recent shift away from concentrating on architecture's intended symbolisms towards the ways

in which built environments are used on a daily basis. This point stems from the work of Lees, who proffers that we look at the ‘active and embodied practices’ that allow architecture to be ‘produced, appropriated and inhabited’ (2001: 55).

Architecture, according to Lees, is performative, involving continuous social practices which mean that it is constantly reshaped and inhabited. This — the notion of reshaping, and constant inhabitation — Kraftl says opens up the architecture to a greater, more diverse body of ‘meaning makers’ (2010: 329). In the Editorial of a special issue of the journal *Social & Cultural Geography*, Jacobs and Merriman speak of ‘practising architectures’ (2011) — referring to all those who, as they put it, *practise* architecture. The obvious, they say, are the building’s architect, and its users; yet there are multiple other practitioners involved. These tend to be human; builders, for example, and cleaners, even vandals; but in their chapter, Jacobs and Merriman begin to push their concept further, questioning whether or not pets, or rodents, or plants, or moulds might be architectural practitioners too; and if they can, then why not the things that make up and essentially define the construct itself; ‘supporting, sealing, joining, weathering, peeling, rusting’ (211)?

Thirdly, Kraftl uses the example of Jacobs’ work on Modernist high rise structures, in which she focuses on ‘big things’, questioning what it is, exactly, that means they *become* where they do (Jacobs, 2006: 3). ‘Big things’ are identified and concentrated upon by many cultural geographers, and a list of them is drawn together by Rose et al (2010), who state that in geography, big things are not simply defined as large buildings. The ‘big thing’ that is focussed on is the way in which

these things *come to be* and are experienced once they *are*. Rose et al take into account geographies of emotion and geographies of affect, noting that big things may exist within both strands. Their list, compiled of a series of buildings referred to as 'big things' by other geographers, is as follows: residential tower blocks, airports, skyscrapers, shopping malls, office blocks, flyovers, plazas, libraries and even ships. Moran et al (2016) go on to add prisons to this list, so the concept is important in the context of this thesis.

In her work, Jacobs (2006) argues that the idea of building is entirely changeable, depending not only on users, but on the myriad of things that allowed the building to come to being, and continue to hold it upright; these are as diverse as the physical pipes, cables and concrete, to the human managers, owners and investors. Much as Domosh did with 1930s New York's proliferation of skyscrapers, Jacobs lists the multiple meanings, events and stories that go into making up what we see when we see a residential high rise building; visions of utopian living, the career of Le Corbusier, national models of modernisation (2006: 3-4).

Kraftl's fourth point revolves around the *technologies* of affect and emotion imbued in architecture. Stemming from both mid-twentieth century phenomenological geography and a recent resurgence in interest in affect and emotion amongst social science disciplines, this final point focuses on Thrift's idea that urban spaces are intrinsically linked to affect (2004). Architectural geographies, geographies of emotion and geographies of affect are often explored in conjunction with one another, with Kraftl and Adey (2008), Adey (2008) and Rose et al (2010) explore

architecture's *positive* affective possibilities. However, the four points laid out by Kraftl here are subsequently used by Moran et al (2015) to examine the *dystopian* spaces of prisons, linking carceral geography with key tenets of architectural geography. In relation to prison architecture, geographies of affect are particularly important due to the heightened understanding of the building's spatial power that affect theory can afford us; affect, after all, is defined as 'the *how* of emotion' (2005: 451).

More recently, and pertinently for this thesis, affective heritage and its relation to architecture has been further explored, with emphasis on the way in which 'the politics of affect [radiates] outward from places of difficult heritage through embodied encounters with both official and unofficial heritage and memory making' (Micieli-Voutsinas & Person, 2020 : 4).

As I mentioned when discussing Kraftl's analysis of symbolism, analyses of dystopian architecture provide an important foundation for this thesis. As early as 1990, Davis wrote that amongst the well manicured lawns of Los Angeles' powerful money driven elite, 'the defense of luxury has given way to an arsenal of security systems and an obsession with the policing of social boundaries through architecture' (1990: 154). He explores various Los Angeles buildings, noting the sense of foreboding that their architecture instils. Even positive-meaning quotations used by Davis betray the true meaning of many of the fortress-like buildings used

as boundaries throughout the city. On a neoconservative university Law building designed by ‘signature’, ‘spectacle’ architect (Hatherley, 2010 : 28) Frank Gehry in 1984, one critic stated that it was

open, but not too open. The South Instructional Hall and the chapel show solid backs to Olympic Boulevard, and with the anonymous street sides of the Burns Building, form a gateway that is neither forbidding nor overly welcoming. It is simply there, like everything else in the neighbourhood (in Davis, 1990: 168)

Davis’ further descriptions of Gehry’s architecture explore the architect’s tendency, when catering towards those who would prefer to police their precious buildings, to reject what had previously been the US system of low profile, high tech security systems as a means of protection, instead favouring the old fashioned high profile, foreboding buildings as a low tech means of dissuading vandals (1990: 169). The irony here being that, as it so often had been in the past, the panic was mere paranoia — as Davis states, the surrounding streets were ‘seedy, but not particularly hostile’ (1990 : 169) yet the perceived threat was met with combative architecture. Bentham’s panopticon followed a similar architectural pattern; meeting paranoia by imbuing yet more. Rose et al (2010) make a comparison between power through exclusion and power through seduction. But here is an additional facet of architectural power: power through fear. This has been an element of prison building — of architecture in general — since the first penitentiaries were conceived. This thesis will contribute to this discourse by establishing what it is that communities feel about the architecture of prisons today. Though the meanings

imbued in those historic prison buildings may exist in hangover form over contemporary prison buildings, if there is fear attached to contemporary prison buildings, it is likely created through personal understanding, rather than direct symbologies of the architecture. This is due to the fact that nowadays, British architecture has taken a direction that means it can be difficult to differentiate prisons from other buildings. Kraftl draws a line in architectural geography between the symbolism of a building — the intent behind it when it was designed — and the way that it is used, taking inspiration from Lees (2001) who studied moments in the lives of a building's users inside it as a means of removing its found purpose, its ongoing performances, from the very deliberate debates that surrounded its facade. More recently Lorne (2016: 258) has discussed the inability for architects, who have 'sought a retreat to the visual realm in an attempt to retain a semblance of control' to create buildings with much individual symbolism at all. This is perhaps due to stringent building standards (Cass et al, 2018), which seek to homogenise the buildings to be universally fit for their designed-in purpose.

3.4 The crossover between carceral geography and architectural geography

Until recently, the construction of buildings that are heavily regulated and generally standardised has constituted a peripheral element of the discipline of architectural geography. Sage (2013) sets clear boundaries between studies of the built environment and the act of constructing that environment. Moran et al explore the field of architectural geography from a carceral perspective, noting as they go along that texts which focus on the 'nitty gritty realities of producing large, cost-efficient,

robust, unglamorous buildings' (2015: 2) such as prisons are rare, although Moran has made considerable progress in rectifying this (Moran et al, 2019; Turner and Moran, 2018; Moran et al, 2016b; Moran and Jewkes, 2015). This thesis furthers these lines of inquiry by providing members of a host community's perspective on a 'large, cost-efficient, robust, unglamorous' building *as it is erected* alongside their homes.

When examining prisons from an architectural geographical perspective, it is difficult to separate the 'myriad processes of commissioning, procurement, tendering, consortia-building and negotiation' (Moran et al 2015 : 10) from the final built environment. Kraftl (2010) suggests that a building is an object, yes; but necessarily not a fixed one. In fact Sibley and van Hoven claim that spaces — they focus on prison spaces specifically — are 'produced and reproduced on a daily basis' (2009 : 205). The building also involves numerous intricate technologies in order to come into being, and in order to be. Kraftl lists these, amongst others, as intrinsic to the building's success: pipes, bricks and cabling; construction, inhabitation and even demolition, and then, regulations — laws, codes, legislation (2010: 407). The building requires negotiation, and then constant re-negotiation, between these things in order to exist. Kraftl describes this as the 'ever changing mixture of human and non-human elements that make up a building' (2010: 408). In carceral geography, when looking at the architecture of prisons, consideration of the non human, in particular, Kraftl's third sub-section of regulations, is essential. This is because prisons are subject to stringent cost and regulatory standards, which, Moran et al (2016: 416) argue, decentres the 'designing architect' of the

prison from being its ‘dominant meaning maker’ — basically, if building regulations are as strong as they are for prisons, the architect almost becomes obsolete as the building project is perhaps bigger than them. Whereas in historical prison design, prisons were the making of some architects’ careers — Waterhouse, for example, who after designing HMP Manchester in the 1860s, went on to design much of the city centre, including its town hall, university and libraries — nowadays, the prison architect is subject to a rigmarole of hoop-jumping. In fact, the legal standards of the building almost replace the architect as the governing force behind the building’s construction, appearance and size. Moran et al (2015) make a conscious push to move past the preoccupation with exploring architectural symbologies in relation to contemporary prison buildings as, essentially, the prisons currently being built in the UK are simply symbols of cost efficiency and safety, and though they are not necessarily designed to project that, they do so by default. Furthermore, as a senior architect at the Ministry of Justice explained, ‘[They] want consistency and commonality... right across the estate... all the designs currently now are designed to Cat B standard’² (Moran et al, 2015 : 11). The reason for this standardisation is, as Moran et al refer to it, ‘future-proofing’; where the Ministry of Justice prepares for a hypothetical increase in the number of Category B inmates by imprisoning lower risk prisoners in a facility with the potential to house Category B if it ever becomes necessary. In itself, this disallows much variation within the prison estate’s future prisons (Moran et al, 2015: 11), as all of the prisons built at present must meet the same, stringent, Category B standard.

² ‘Cat B’ refers to a Category B prison; there are four categories of prisoner in the UK (A, B, C and D), with B being those who ‘do not require maximum security, but [for whom] escape needs to be made very difficult’ (Moran et al, 2016: 422).

Van Hoven and Sibley (2008) note that once in prison, the architecture is used to structure the way time is spent and to govern bodies using surveillance, whether it is present, or assumed. They describe the carceral regime as being characterised by ‘a set of inflexible spatial and temporal routines which take place in strongly classified material spaces’ (201), and describe the prison as somewhere that space and time become crucial to the disciplinary regime (205). Kraftl and Adey (2008) state that it is architectural manipulation that facilitates inhabitation (214), and that the careful ordering and construction of bodies and building materials can create stubborn ‘persistiveness affect’ — here, they use the example of a school curriculum (227). Similarly, in many ways architectural manipulation facilitates incarceration and subsequently carceral regime. The relationship between space and time is governed by the design of the building, so though the architect may be de-centred, and may never be actively considered by inmates, their presence may be felt, in, for example, the way that prisoners or visitors are forced to move through the building. This applies to those people who live *outside* of the prison, too, in the ways that they view and interact with its external fabric. This is a perspective that has received far less consideration, something that this thesis aims to provide, examining everyday interactions with prison buildings through the split lens of architectural and carceral geographies.

3.5 Conclusion

Chapter 3 focused on the subdiscipline of architectural geography and the frameworks within it that allow us to read the meanings of buildings, as well as the ways in which these meanings often shift and change. I also looked at the way that visual criminologist Michelle Brown establishes the need for imagination in order to read, or understand, the prison building.

Having discussed architectural, carceral and historical approaches to prisons, and revisiting calls to engage the communities around prison buildings in the discourse on prison, in Chapter 4, I will explain the research methodologies that will enable me to create data around these topics. These data collection methods will include archival research and different types of interviews, including visual elicitation, and walked interviews. As a result, I will contribute to the literatures I have discussed here by focusing on the ‘external’ viewers of the prison building, who nonetheless live with it daily. I also wish to re-engage geography with the visual and symbolic — something that has fallen from fashion in the discipline, in favour of looking at nonhuman, non-representational actors. I argue that these symbolisms and the reading of them can provide rich scope for analysis and deep insight into the way in which prison buildings are lived around.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

As discussed, this project explores the responses to prison architecture and siting from those who live and work around the prison, but do not have a direct link into it. These people may walk or drive past the prison daily, or have a view of it from their house, but they have never had cause to enter the building, which gives them a different perspective on it — more spectatorial than that of prisoners or officers who have, or have had, physical contact with the prison on a daily basis. The literature review listed existing explorations of the responses to prisons by local communities; these generally focussed around prison siting and NIMBY or YIMBYism. Very little has been written in relation to whether or not the external aesthetic of the prison informs these responses, and part of the aim of this research project is to provide further study on that matter. Furthermore, bar Sarah Armstrong's work at Addiewell (2011, 2014) much of the literature currently available focuses on the United States, leaving a space for a dialogue on the siting and architecture of British prisons. Given the hugely differing architectural carceral landscape in the UK, I chose to conduct a comparative study of two markedly different constructions, as discussed in the introduction: HMP Manchester, or Strangeways, which opened in 1868 and HMP Berwyn, which was under construction for the entirety of my fieldwork period, and opened in 2017. I believed that a focus on these two architecturally disparate buildings could lend a more comprehensive view of public opinion on prison buildings, as opposed to the more

polarised view that an analysis of one prison might have afforded. I also felt that opinion and feeling might be more *raw* surrounding Berwyn, as it was still being built when I conducted the interviews.

As well as interviews, I conducted archival research, social media mining, and kept a field diary. These methods will be discussed further throughout this chapter.

4.2 Qualitative Research

As the project focuses on the personal opinions of local residents, it was crucial to adopt a qualitative approach in the research. I used several different qualitative methods to achieve a rounded response. These included 17 semi-structured interviews with local residents across both sites, with. There were three further semi-structured interviews with experts: one with an anonymous senior source from the National Offender Management Service (NOMS); one with journalist Katie Butler, who covered Stuart Horner's protest for the Manchester Evening News, and another, this time a group interview with the project manager at Berwyn, Simon Caron, and the Lead Design Manager at Berwyn, Jonathan Harrison. All of the participants are anonymised in the thesis, save for Butler, Caron and Harrison, who were happy to speak publicly. Subsequently, I completed two walking interviews, one on each site, in order to explore the sites, and responses to the physical sites, in more depth. I used an online questionnaire and social media mining to capture additional data; for example, an email exchange with a police officer also took place, after he was targeted by Facebook's algorithm and directed to my page. He

consented to the inclusion of his emails, stating that his observations were personal, rather than police-related, but requested anonymity, so is referred to as ‘a police officer’ in the empirics.

As I mentioned in the introduction, during the period of my fieldwork, I moved to Manchester. Parts of my data will be observational, as I kept a diary of my encounters with the prison and my participants, and excerpts of this appear in the thesis; one involves a conversation with my best friend, Hannah (who, along with her partner Jeremy, consented to being named in my thesis). Finally, I visited archives and viewed planning documents for both prisons.

4.2.1 Participant Recruitment and Interviews

I began by creating two online questionnaires, one about Berwyn and one about Strangeways (in Appendix A), which provided an option to leave an email address if the participant was happy to be contacted about a further interview. I then posted these on various forms of social media. I posted both questionnaires on my own Twitter account and on Reddit. I also created a Facebook page called ‘A View of the Prison’ and used Facebook’s targeted advertising to show the page and the questionnaires to people in the local area. In Wrexham, I did this by targeting people aged 18+ who Liked other pages on Facebook such as ‘BBC North Wales’, ‘Wrexham’, ‘Welsh rugby’. I chose similar targeting criteria in Manchester; ‘Manchester’, ‘Manchester City’, ‘Manchester United’, ‘Northern Quarter’, ‘BBC North West’. In April 2017, the page was Liked by 340 Facebook users and the questionnaire about Berwyn had received 62 responses whilst the one about

Strangeways had received 31. In Berwyn, 15 participants left an email address to be contacted about an interview, and of these, though I contacted all of them, ultimately only three agreed to be interviewed. Likewise, in Manchester, 13 participants left an email address; only two consented to an interview.

I recruited other participants through other Facebook groups — I was particularly lucky in Manchester to be added to a group belonging to Green Quarter residents, three of whom agreed to speak with me. I also contacted local businesses in both places directly, which was a successful means of recruitment. I visited local houses, businesses and pubs with postcards which explained the research project and the need for volunteers who were willing to speak about the prison — I'd place these through the letterbox or on the bar, but this only gained one participant in each place.

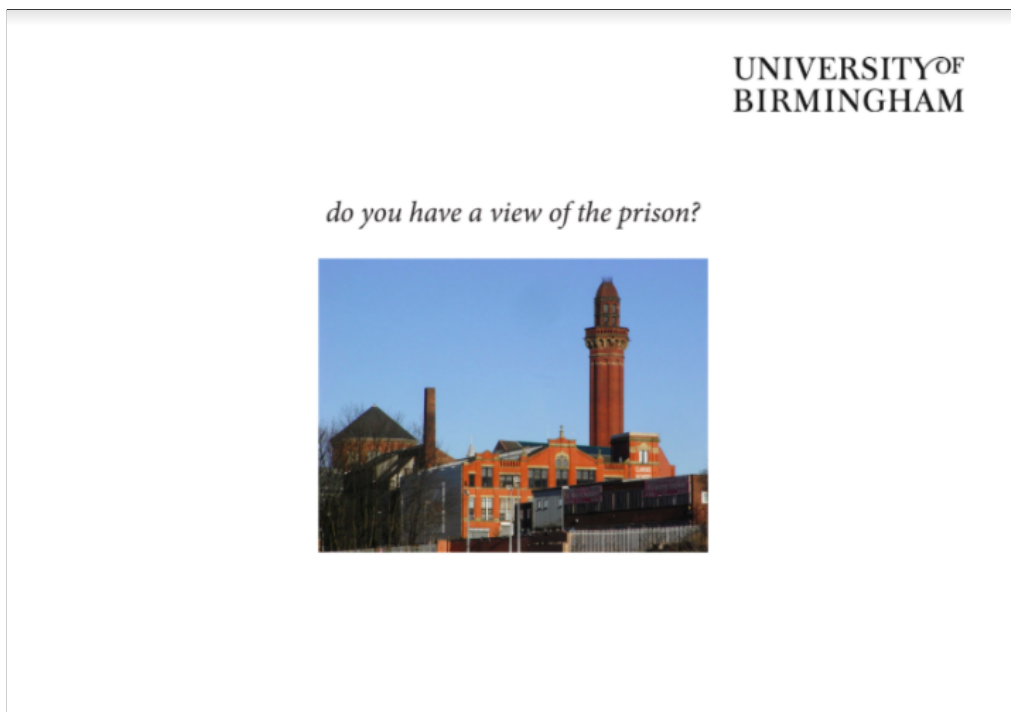


Fig 3.1 The front of the postcard distributed in Manchester

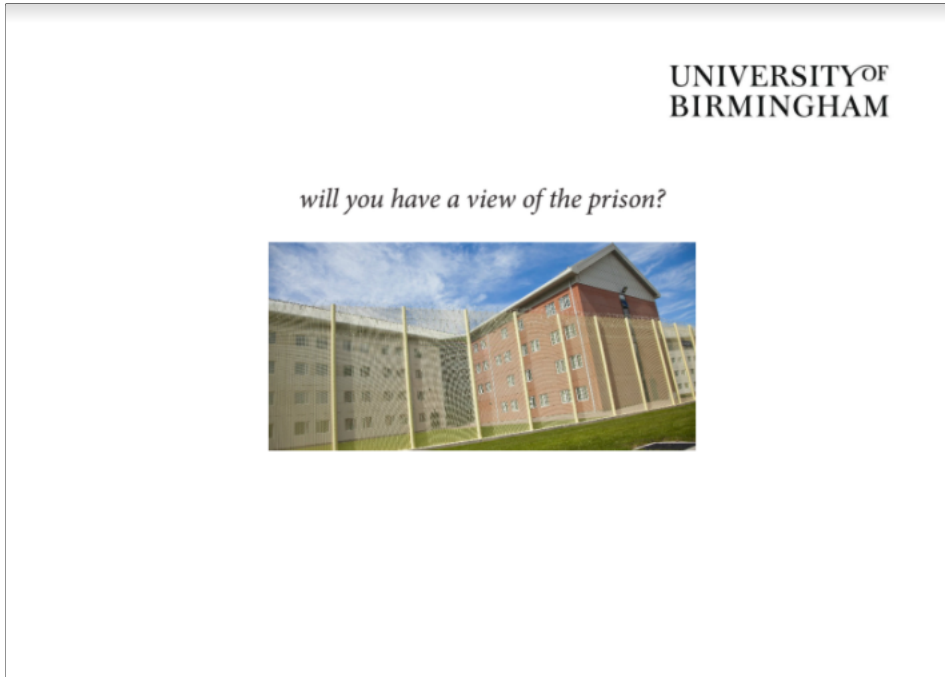


Fig 3.2 The front of the postcard distributed in Wrexham

I am a researcher at the University of Birmingham.

I am currently trying to determine what effect living near a prison has on communities. Does your view of Strangeways affect your daily life? What do you think of the building? What do you think about prison in general?

If you would like to participate in my research, or even if you would just like to find out more about it, please email me at viewofthepriison@gmail.com or alternatively, Like 'A View of the Prison' on Facebook.

Fig 3.3 The back of both postcards were the same

Overall, I began to sense that there might be disinterest amongst prospective participants, because the prison affected them so little. One such participant decided to take my online survey, saying, in response to the question, ‘Do you think what prison looks like matters to the local community?’:

No it's a prison, only complete dullards care about what a prison looks like, we're not talking about the Taj Mahal here or St Paul's Cathedral, so take a reality check. It's like asking if people care what toilet floor tiles look like. Both functional locations, aesthetics don't come into it. I cannot believe you are attempting to carry out an academic study on this.

After participants agreed to speak to me, I conducted recorded interviews in places that they suggested so that they would feel comfortable. These places included their sitting rooms and kitchens, workplaces, bars and cafes. After one interview had been arranged with a participant called Sophie, she asked if her housemate, Josh, could join us; I interviewed them at the same time.

I chose to use semi-structured interviews as they provide increased scope for the participant to discuss what they feel is important. I used a script to begin with (available in Appendix B), and showed participants several images. These included architectural drawings of Berwyn and a photograph I had taken of Oakwood, in

Staffordshire because Berwyn was not yet complete, but Oakwood was visually almost identical. I also used images I had taken of Strangeways and some of Halden, in Norway, which I had taken from Google (Figures 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5). This method is known as photo-elicitation (Harper, 1984; Heisley and Levy, 1991) and is believed to create complex data by asking the participant to respond to something other than a question, which diffuses the somewhat alien experience of being interviewed (Schwartz, 1989).



Fig 4.1 During interviews, I used this image of Oakwood prison in Staffordshire to give participants an idea of what Berwyn might look ultimately look like whilst it was still being built (Ellie Slee, 2015)



Fig 4.2 I also used a second image of Oakwood. (HMPOakwood.co.uk)



Fig 4.3 An artist's impression of what the prison in Wrexham may look like from 2015 (BBC/ Ministry of Justice)



Fig 4.4 A photograph of Halden prison, Norway (FastCompany.com)



Fig 4.5 The gatehouse at Strangeways, with the cooling tower in the background (HeatherBurnside.com)

Once I had interviewed all of my participants, I then chose to ask two participants to complete a walked interview with me around their local site. I used walked interviews to add an additional, more complex dimension to the data that I already had, as the previous interviews had taken place in living rooms, cafes and bars — relatively neutral, safe spaces, removed from the immediate proximity of the prison. The experience of being interviewed in a neutral place about a building that you can't actually see — but for a photograph on a screen — is very different to being faced with the physicality of that building; Jones et al (2008) and Evans and Jones (2011) describe the dichotomy between interviewing in a 'safe, stationary

environment’ and the ‘mobile’ walking interview, noting that in some instances, the latter generates richer data, with participants less likely to try and give the ‘right’ answer. Finlay and Bowman say that, in their 2017 study, ‘the open format put participants at ease and “in charge” (2017: 266). I think the study could have benefited from further walked interviews; however, by this stage in my PhD, I was pregnant and suffering from severe pelvic pain when I walked.

In order to create accurate transcripts of these interviews, I used a tracking app that monitored and mapped our movements as we walked around the prisons, creating a mapped trail with timestamps. It was then possible to see where we were during different points of the interview. I gave each participant a camera to use while we walked, encouraging them to photograph anything they found particularly interesting on our journey. The walked interviews are explored in depth in Chapter 7.

4.2.2 Archival Research

As Strangeways is an historic building, one of the initial methodologies I wanted to pursue was archival research. Relatively early in my fieldwork period, I visited archives in order to view planning documents and architectural drawings.

Strangeways was designed by Alfred Waterhouse, a celebrated nineteenth century neo-Gothic architect who was a fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) and acted as its president between 1888 and 1891. There is a wealth of his paper based work in the RIBA archive at the Victoria and Albert museum (which

he also designed), including letters, blueprints and sketches pertaining to the construction of the Assize Courts, to which the prison was attached. Blueprints and sketches directly associated with the prison are held by the Ministry of Justice and are not available to the public, but the fact that the Assize Courts were part of the same building as the prison provided me with an excellent parallel to draw from — when Waterhouse was writing to friends and colleagues about the Assizes, he was also talking about the prison. I found RIBA's digital catalogue easy to order archival material to view through; it is possible to search for specific buildings within the catalogue, and choose the materials you wish to view from there.

I also visited the Waterhouse Collection at the Museum of English Rural Life in Reading. The museum is situated in Waterhouse's family home, which he designed himself, and the small collection is predominantly composed of letters written by Waterhouse's wife, Mary. I had to agree a time to see it — at that time the Museum only accepted visitors on specific days — and it was delivered to me in the reading room, stored in battered cardboard boxes. In Mary's letters, she discusses various moments in their personal life which may have impacted Waterhouse's architectural style, such as a visit to Germany where he became interested in ecclesiastical Gothic architecture. Manchester Libraries have further collections of Waterhouse's letters and information on his subsequent Mancunian commissions, such as Owen's College and the Town Hall, and newspapers with information pertaining to the construction of the Assizes. I visited Manchester Libraries' collections several times while I lived in Manchester. All of these archives allow flash-free

photographs to be taken of their holdings, and some of my photographs of the materials appear in the thesis.

I undertook similar archival research in Wrexham, visiting the local library to read meeting minutes, retrieve photographs and look at planning applications that related to Berwyn.

As Berwyn is such a recent development, information about the prison is more widely available online, with many council documents available on open access. Through Google, it is possible to find an archive — not in the traditional sense of the word, as they are unorganised and uncollected, but nevertheless, a group of materials — pertaining to the construction of Berwyn. These are scattered in various places; from PDF planning documents on the council’s online archive, to architectural drawings on the BBC News website, to promotional blog posts on the fencing contractor’s website (Binns-Fencing.com: Accessed November 2020). Duncan (1999), Edensor (2005) and Moore (2010) have all variously discussed the problems around what is and is not deemed worthy of archiving, and raised the impossibility of impartiality around what is archived. Yet due to its seemingly infinite scope, the internet arguably goes some way to depoliticising what is archived. The Internet Archive, for example, has existed since 1995 with the aim of ‘universal access to all knowledge’ (Kimpton & Ubois, 2006: 201). While the Waterhouse materials at RIBA and the Museum of English Rural Life have been saved for posterity due to Waterhouse’s position as a prolific and celebrated architect of the Gothic Revival period, the archival materials pertaining to

Wrexham are stored online for a more complex set of reasons. These might be by default, in the archives of news websites, or under legal requirement, in the case of council planning documents. These materials are very useful in terms of rounding out participant-focused data, too. In praise of archival research, Alan Baker famously titled a 1997 paper ‘The dead don’t answer questionnaires’; but the truth is, sometimes the living don’t, either. I made contact with, and asked to interview, some members of the community at Berwyn — such as a local councillor who had previously been vocal about the build — but was often rebuffed or ignored. However, there is a wealth of quotes available to access via online news archives and council meeting minutes from these very people, which can be used to add complexity to the other data. This brings me to another, rapidly evolving form of online research, involving social media.

In a way, social media mining is an emergent type of archival research. The internet has long been recognised by academics as a new vantage point from which to observe human behaviour (Walther, 2002). McCay-Peet and Quan-Haase say that, as an area of the internet specifically designed to allow people to connect and communicate, social media gives researchers the opportunity to ‘collect rich, vast and networked data, recruit diverse groups of participants and perform complex analyses’(2017: 14). They note that given the vast scope of social media material, it is ordinarily associated with ‘big’ data, but stress the opportunity for qualitative data collection, too, which is what this thesis best benefitted from. By entering words or word groupings into the search engines of websites like Twitter and Facebook — such as ‘Strangeways’ or ‘Wrexham prison’ — I was able to find

relevant content that had been made available to the public by the person who had written the post. I have explained the ethical considerations I took when designing my methodology below in section 4.3.

4.3 Methods and ethics

When human geography research involves people, there are implicit ethical considerations, from confidentiality, clarity and consent (Griffith, 2008) to positionality (Sanyal, 2020) and the consideration of vulnerabilities amongst participants (Darling, 2020). As well as archival research, the empirics for this PhD were gathered using questionnaires, face-to-face and walked interviews and social media mining, and these methodologies were assessed for ethical and safety suitability by the University of Birmingham prior to the conduction of the fieldwork.

When designing and seeking participants to take questionnaires, for example, producing a representative sample amongst questionnaire participants can be difficult (Groves et al, 2009). According to Groves et al, it is inevitable that all surveys will encounter ‘nonresponse’ from some of the participants that should be sampled (2009 : 183). This is particularly problematic in quantitative research, but it translates into qualitative research as well; for example, a heavy majority of my interview respondents were white, and all of them were under 60.

I designed free online questionnaires on website SurveyMonkey and included a description of the research project as a ‘first page’. I initially intended to use these questionnaires to collect both standalone data and to recruit interviewees. I included an optional field for respondents to provide their email addresses if they were happy for me to contact them in future. The responses to the questionnaires were not as rich as the in-person interviews I conducted, however, so limited amounts of this data appears in the thesis.

The subject of participant consent was not complex, because all participation was solicited speculatively and participants opted *in* to the project. Communication took place over email, and interviews were completed in places suggested by participants; these places included local coffee shops and participants’ workplaces or homes. Interviewees were given a statement of consent to read or sign, offering them the option of retracting involvement at any point and explaining that their names would be changed and that their homes and/or workplaces would be described but not directly named. Walked interviews present practical concerns, such as the weather and the physical capabilities of the participant, while some ethical issues — like confidentiality — are made more difficult by being out in public (Kinney, 2017). Given that the surrounding areas of both fieldsites are fairly quiet, this was of less concern than safety considerations. I ensured that the paths on both sites were safely and legally accessible before conducting the interviews.

Because it is a relatively new means of gathering data, the ethics of using material mined from social media and blogs are also emerging and often contested, and this

was in some ways the most ethically complex aspect of the methodology. Walther (2002) wrote on the subject relatively early on, reminding researchers that although the internet provides a shield between researcher and subject, this kind of research still deals with human subjects. Moreno et al (2013) highlight the risks that occur when ethically reviewing research that deals specifically with social media. They state however, that if ‘access to the SMW [*social media website*] is public; information is identifiable, but not private; and information gathering requires no interaction with the person who posted it online, and then presumably the proposed project does not constitute the human subjects research’. They use YouTube as an example, as no human contact is required when accessing a video online. Twitter’s privacy policy states that, ‘Twitter broadly and instantly disseminates your public information... Our default is almost always to make the information you provide through the Services public for as long as you do not delete it, but we generally give you settings or features, like protected Tweets, to make the information more private if you want’. Twitter’s crux — and part of its appeal — is that the information shared on the site can be widely disseminated. Facebook provides an ‘audience selector’ button which allows users to choose whether or not a post is public or private. Facebook states in its privacy policy that, ‘When you share something with Public that means anyone including people off of Facebook can see it.’ This means that the data shared publicly by Facebook users can be retrieved, not only through Facebook’s own search engine, but through others, such as Google. As Moreno et al (2013) state: ‘Facebook informed the user that if the profile security settings are publicly available, the profile owners *should not* have a reasonable expectation of privacy.’ [my italics]. Legal cases in the US have

determined that using *any* setting on Facebook removes the user's reasonable expectation of privacy. I, however, only used posts that are retrievable on Facebook's public search engine (when searching 'Strangeways' or 'Berwyn', the prison's names, for example).

Whilst ESS and the AoIR Ethics Working Committee (2002) recommend that the greater the acknowledged publicity of the venue, the *less obligation* there may be to protect individual privacy, confidentiality and the right to informed consent, Moreno et al (2013) do suggest that to properly protect confidentiality, researchers should avoid direct quotes from social media and blogs as this could lead to identification of the research subject. Though I felt that it might weaken the data and the reader's experience somewhat, in the text I chose to refer to Facebook and Twitter users as 'one Facebook user', or 'a music blogger', for example, to avoid ethical implications; I also have not included any of the images posted on Facebook or Twitter, but rather I have chosen to describe these where necessary.

4.4 Conclusion

Chapter 4 explained the methodologies that would be used to elicit data at and pertaining to the field sites. Due to the different ages, locations and histories of the prisons, and the thesis' different aims and strands of inquiry, a diverse group of methods would be essential. I introduced the archives I visited in London, Reading, Manchester and Wrexham, and the concept of an unintentional archive of online

material surrounding Berwyn. I discussed — and explored the ethical implications of — mining data on social media.

I also explained the way that I recruited the 17 participants from the two prisons' host communities, with whom I conducted semi-structured interviews. I also looked at the walking interviews I subsequently conducted with a community member on each site, and expressed my desire that these would elicit rich, more immediate data. In Chapter 5, my first empirics chapter, I will begin to introduce the data retrieved using these diverse methods.

5. The Prison in its Surroundings: Making sense of the prison

5.1 Introduction

This chapter interrogates what the site of the prison means to the people who live and work close by, and how these meanings are constructed and perpetuated. I will explore these meanings by sharing quotes from my participant interviews and archival research, analysing themes that arose in this data: of mythology and pop culture, of NIMBY and YIMBYism, and of US prison siting.

In Chapter 2, literatures on the reasons for and responses to prison siting were explored, with particular reference to American literature (Cherry and Kunce, 2001; Hooks et al, 2004; Marquart, 2004; Bonds, 2006; Glasmeier and Farrigan, 2007; Groot and Latessa, 2007; Courtright et al, 2009; Chappell, 2012; Schept, 2015) as the USA is where much of the study of prison siting emerges from. This American-centric analysis of siting was ironically mirrored in the empirics, with questions about a replication of the American system occurring; this is explored in section 5.2.

Section 5.3 focuses on the mythologisation of prison with relation to the themes raised in Chapter 3, where architectural geographies were discussed, with particular reference to geographies of utopia, Big Things and concepts of ‘practising’ architecture.

Other themes that repeated across the interviews were NIMBYism and YIMBYism, literatures of which were discussed at length in Chapter 2; these themes will be explored in section 5.4. In Wrexham, the response to the prison was often YIMBY, although there was some strong, concentrated opposition from the small housing estate, Pentre Maelor, which is on the opposite side of the road from the site. As I identified in the literature review, there is little to be found with regards to historic evidence of NIMBYism, yet archival documents from the 1860s that charted the construction of Strangeways evidenced some form of proto-NIMBYism; these, too, will be explored in 5.4. The chapter will finish with section 5.5, which focuses on the ways in which the prison becomes a physical landmark in the local area.

5.2 Ideas of punishment and siting

Where prisons are, and should be, sited continues to be a contentious issue, and so one of the questions I asked all participants was ‘where should we put prisons?’ There is an historic perception of a relationship between crime and the city (Bannister and Fyfe, 2001) but interestingly, in adherence with the American literature on prison siting for economy detailed in Chapter 2, almost all participants suggested that the countryside was the best place to put a prison. The responses generally reflected the prevailing attitudes found in the British media — that prison is supposed to be unpleasant. The idea that distance from family and loved ones heightens the ‘pains of imprisonment’ is academically recognised (Moran, 2015: 69) and was also recognised by participants — and deemed deserved. Nicole said that prisons should be:

I think as far away in the middle of nowhere as possible, for punishment reasons... If you think about it, if you look at the classes of people that are in prison, but look at their family as well, do they have public transport? Just, yes — would they be able to get there to see their family? Probably not, so it would be a punishment to them as well, the prisoners, but also the family as well. I know you shouldn't punish a family for what their son, daughter, whatever, has done, but that will punish the prisoner more, knowing that the family's suffering, so maybe they won't do it again.

Anna said that, 'prisons are not meant to be nice places to go, so why should inmates have somewhere that they feel good?' On sitting, though, she recognised that her gut reaction — to put prisons in 'the middle of nowhere' — might not be practical:

ES: So in your opinion, where's the best place to put a prison?

A: [10 secs] In the middle of nowhere. [laughs] Well no, because that defeats the object then for people having to work there... it's... soul... searching... you know, depressing for them. I don't know. I would guess... somewhere away from everyone so that the surrounding areas don't feel intimidated that there is a prison there.

Despite what anyone says, they are going to think, 'oh my God, there's a prison down the road'.

Both Josh and Nadir used the example of Alcatraz as their idea of a quintessential prison siting. Before I asked him directly where he thought prisons should be, Josh said:

I always just thought that a prison got put in a pretty random place, like, out in the middle of nowhere. I was a bit shocked, cause you'll watch like, American TV dramas and they'll have prisons like San Quentin, or Alcatraz, and they're always in really remote places and then you've got Strangeways which seems like... I could go and buy a pair of shoes, and two minutes later, I'm stood next to Strangeways. It seems a bit, a bit strange.

When I asked him directly, he continued:

J: Out in the middle of nowhere, cause that's kinda where a lot of people associate prison being like. Which, where, you have to drive really far to get to it. Um.

ES: Why do you think people associate that with prisons?

J: To get them away from like...the general public. Like in the TV show Making a Murderer, they have to like, drive really far to go and see them. And it seems like that.

During the interview, I recognised that Josh was open to debate and hoping to appeal to this side of him, I described the journey from Manchester to Wrexham and asked Josh to imagine the partner of a man in prison, navigating two or three trains and Wrexham's difficult public transport system with a toddler and a buggy. He replied, 'Well she's gonna be pretty pissed off before she even gets there.' We continued:

ES: I think the best way to do it is to put them in accessible places.

J: But aren't they there to be punished though?

ES: Right. But are their families supposed to be being punished?

J: That's true. I don't know why this mentality. I think it's because people think — they've done something wrong, we need them away from us, in case they escape or get out, and then — I don't know, I don't think people like to be associated or, near bad people. I think that might be why they've started putting prisons so far out.

Louise lives in Wrexham but grew up in Reading, where there is a red brick, cruciform-shaped Victorian prison in the city centre. Because of this, she immediately identified Strangeways as 'looking most like a prison', and yet when I asked her where prisons ought to go, she said:

L: I think I always imagined they were in the middle of nowhere.

ES: Did you? Even though you grew up near one?

L: Yeah. Yeah, that's weird isn't it?

ES: Where does that idea come from?

L: American films?

Her response links to Josh's — the American media representation of prison has influenced both of their ideas about where prisons are in the UK, in spite of the two countries vastly differing in scale and landscape.

Sophie also thought that prisons should be sited further away from the city, but for different reasons, believing that proximity to family might be harmful:

ES: Do you think it's better to have prisons in cities and towns or countryside?

S: I think countryside.

ES: Why?

S: [6 seconds] Just... so that it's as far away from anything as possible. I think that would be better than having it in the middle of the city.

ES: Why does it need to be far away?

S: I don't know. It's just how I imagine a prison. Cause you just get... cause in my head, they're always really far away.

ES: That's the punishment?

S: In the middle of — yeah, exactly yeah. But it's probably harder for the prisoners if they're in the city.

ES: Why do you think that?

S: Cause geographically they're closer to their family, or... they're literally just down the road, but they can't get out. So it's probably more, like... mentally stressful.

Joan recognised the important role of the family in prisoner rehabilitation. She said:

ES: In your opinion, do you think it's better to have a prison in the countryside as it will virtually be here, or in a town, like Strangeways?

J: [5 seconds] I don't think it makes any difference. I really don't.

ES: Why not?

J: As long as the infrastructure's there for the people to get to and from it, I really don't think it makes a difference.

ES: Do you think the infrastructure is definitely there in Wrexham?

J: I don't think public transport is, no. I really don't, no. I think the road structure is, but public transport, no. It's not an easy journey. I used to work on the industrial estate many years ago, when I first left school, and public transport was a nightmare to get there. It was either one bus at something like 5.30 in the morning and that's it. So, no. What they would be better doing on the days — I don't know if they have specific days for prison visiting or what — they might be better running a public service from the train station directly there.

This is accurate; the public transport available in Wrexham is limited, with bus services leaving the town centre for the industrial estate once or twice an hour from 5.30am, ending at 5.49pm. Furthermore, realistically, the infrastructure is not present nationally to make the journey to Wrexham feasible for many of the families of men imprisoned there, and over half of the prisoners at Berwyn will be from other parts of the country.³ As the senior NOMS source I interviewed said,

³ In 2015, 2016 and 2017, I regularly travelled to Berwyn from Manchester — one of the places that the NOMS source said would probably feed prisoners to Berwyn. The cost of a return train ticket started from £18.70 and there was no direct train into Wrexham — depending on times, visitors have to change at least once or twice. There is then a fifteen minute walk to Wrexham bus station. Buses to the industrial estate leave every twenty minutes and take half an hour, but are run by different companies so it is unwise to buy a return. The buses are very small — there is room for a wheelchair or a buggy on each. The last service runs at 17.49.

Statistically, there's 860 prisoners who are categorised North Walian. So, 800 — not all of those, contrary to popular belief, will be located in the North Wales prison, because they may not be of an appropriate security category to be in there, they may have specific needs, there may be er, offender behaviour programmes that can't be served within that prison, there may be er, accessibility issues, there may be medical issues, so out of that 860, circa, they won't all be there, contrary to popular belief, little, little Dai is not necessarily going to be in there, sorry. Um, because the system can't deal with that.

As the biggest prison in the estate, Berwyn was a major development for the UK; but for North Wales, it was unprecedented. Including Berwyn, Wales is now home to five prisons, and Berwyn is the only site in North Wales. Though prevailing ideas around rehabilitation suggest that imprisoning people closer to their families is preferable, the source instantly frames this as an impossibility, using 'Little Dai', a stereotypical and perhaps deliberately pejorative construction of Welsh identity, to make light of it.

What is also implicit in the source's statement is that with a capacity of 2106, the size of the prison means that, while many North Walian prisoners would not be relocated to their home region upon Berwyn's opening, prisoners from other areas of the UK would be assigned one of the 2106 places and be displaced from their home communities.

At the time of our interview, Jen was a criminology undergraduate at Gllwyndr University, Wrexham. She and her classmates had worked closely with NOMS and Lendlease to create a book about the construction of the prison for the community. Copies of this book would be given to each person who worked on the construction of the prison and copies would also be distributed amongst schools and libraries. This project works to remove what has been referred to as the banality (Moran et al, 2016) from the building, investing it with time and attention and creating an historic document around it. As a result, Jen was extremely emotionally invested in the prison. She believed that Berwyn's position was superior to that of Strangeways and said that improvement of infrastructure to improve journey time to the prison was:

a plan here in Wrexham, I know we're improving infrastructure, they're looking at the um, the er motorways, the rail network, so all that's in place, there's gunna be a budget for that, so I mean, that's a plus side as well for Wrexham, isn't it, really, so yeah, all that's going to be put in place.

Essentially though, looking back to Moran's theory of distance becoming a pain of imprisonment (2015) whether the infrastructure is there, in the form of motorways and rail networks, or not, the positioning of large prisons in inaccessible or remote areas is an example of the state's ability to punish being wielded disproportionately 'against those already likely to be experiencing a range of social disadvantages' (Condry et al, 2016: 632). The families of prisoners are being punished in this instance, too. Condry et al note that the expense of supporting a prisoner —

including the expenses associated with travelling to visit prisoners — regularly puts economic strain on families of prisoners, who are likely to be from lower socioeconomic backgrounds already; they quote from an interview with an eleven year old girl who does not know where her imprisoned mother is, only that ‘we can’t go and see her cos we can’t afford it’ (629). Condry (2007) describes how the partners of prisoners can often structure their lives around imprisonment, organising their days around visits. In the example mentioned in the footnote above, a woman from Manchester might well have to spend an entire day travelling to and from Wrexham to visit her loved one.

5.3 Popular culture and myth as recurring themes

The aim of this section is to explore the permeability and adaptability of architecture; arguing that though it is fixed, it is susceptible to change, both materially and affectively, particularly when touched by the political (Jacobs and Merriman, 2011: 216) — as prison often is. Day says that:

Old buildings are rarely just museums of a particular period of history. They have physical elements from many dates right up to the present and they have the imprint — both visibly and invisibly — of the many occupants, lifestyles and values that inhabited them. (1990: 106)

In this sense, Strangeways is an example of architecture as a palimpsest (Powell, 2015; Stevenson, 2004; Valceanu et al, 2014). The building as it was initially

envisioned has been overwritten and reconstructed by external actors unanticipated by the architect. This provides an immediate, visually navigable history for viewers. An understanding of the building's history was prevalent in Manchester, though sometimes confused with misunderstanding and rumours, a recurrent theme on both sites. The building has been adapted externally on several occasions and as such the fabric of the building represents many things: external splendour reflective of nineteenth century penal ideals; the Second World War; the violent riot that resulted in the destruction of part of the building; a mid-nineties attempt at reconstruction; and expansion. The result is a confection of architectural styles — there are some remaining sections of 1860s wall, for example, knitted together with a 1990s reconstruction.

The original gatehouse — comprised of two squat, mediaevalsque towers with grey spires, flanking a foreboding wooden door (which we saw in Fig 4.5) — remains, but has been replaced by a new entrance, about a hundred metres away, with mechanically operated silver doors. In the building's patchwork is the embodiment of a tension that was evidenced in an English Heritage document from 1995 which describes how best to alter a listed prison building without damaging it. The document warned against many of the adaptations that would have rendered Strangeways temporarily habitable — for example, 'English Heritage... recognise the humanitarian case for the enlargement of windows in cell blocks, where these are so small as to be unhealthy. However, they would expect the change to the character to be kept to a minimum' (1995: 3). It also provided an

architectural framework for adaptation and expansion, like the newly constructed entrance at Strangeways.

During a field visit in 2015, I wrote, of the prison's reconstruction:

Here is Manchester's gaol resurrected. Buttressed and fortified, it is mammoth like the rest, a modern monolith; yet there is none of Waterhouse's conviction here. The architect has begrudgingly stuck to the grade listing rules he was bound to — but he and his contemporaries are no longer gripped by the Victorian notion that prison could reform. The walls are still thick and red, but the bright, cloying red of mid-nineties neoliberalism, not industrial revolution-era Manchester. I'm playing along, it says, but I don't believe. (in: Jewkes et al, 2017)

Other cultural and historical links were common themes of exploration for participants. For example, Nadir, a participant who lived in the Green Quarter, believed that between Wrexham and Strangeways, Wrexham would be a more pleasant building to inhabit, yet he preferred Strangeways, in spite of what came across as indifference towards its appearance. It was the building's history that he was particularly interested in:

ES: What about Strangeways? Is there anything you think could be done to make it look more appealing?

N: Not off the top of my head. I mean, I like — I like the look of the tower, what's not really appealing is it's all brick, so... but I would — I would still always be in favour of keeping it because it still represents a part of history and back in that time, that's how we designed those buildings, so if anybody, like yourself, was studying that era, keep it for future generations. In terms of improving it, um... maybe a little paint?

The building acts as a physical representation of history to Nadir, who when asked about Wrexham thought that, 'like most architecture, I would say they're getting more efficient but also more boring.' Liam, too, thought that the prison's history was 'just so interesting', having looked it up on Google prior to our interview. Liam, like many other participants, then began to discuss the 1990 riots. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the riots ushered in a new wave of neoliberal governance over the UK prison estate. Eamonn Carrabine, who has studied the Strangeways riots at length, wrote in 2005 that 'it is important not to exaggerate the extent to which those prisons which do experience some form of collective discontent are fundamentally different from other prisons' (906). Carrabine is talking about 'the role of contingency' in *creating* prison riots, yet my participants evidenced that, after a riot has taken place, the extent to which the prison where it happens *becomes* different for the community is great.

On the subject of the building's history, Liam said, of the first riots:

I remember the time when it happened, I remember it being on the news a lot and I remember, you know, well, since then, there's been you know, publications and books about it and stuff — even ex inmates who have actually gotten out since and written their own story or their own publishings about what happened, so yeah, it was quite an historic event, wasn't it — when he [Stuart Horner] got onto the roof, he was saying I wanna be — cause they were — I suppose it was probably an in-house thing, but they, you know, stayed up there for 27 days, he was saying it would be 40 days but I suppose the temptation — after being up their for four days, and the temptation of that pizza, you know...

For Joel, the riots had become family lore:

When we had the riots back in the 1990s... My grandparents have owned that building since the 1960s, so when the riots happened, my Mum and my grandparents were on the roof. They were waving at the prisoners and they were waving back to them.

The omnipresence of the riots in local consciousness is also evidenced on Facebook. One user wrote, alongside a photo of the prison, 'sun up in MCR. surprised there's no one on the roof on such a fine morning..', whilst on the 23 January 2016, another user 'tagged' himself at 'Strangeways prison', writing 'SLOP OUT' alongside the tag. Horner's escape and subsequent protest was described to me in detail by Katie Butler, one of the journalists who covered the story for the Manchester Evening News. With regards to the party, she said:

Katie: My colleague [redacted] was there, but he said that it was absolutely bizarre, that it was just, it was wild, so there was fireworks, there were fireworks, I remember him saying there was just cans of beer all over the road, you could tell people had like a big party.

ES: Do you think people came from miles around?

K: Yeah, it seemed like a lot of people were there with their kids, it was like um, like a... not a tourist attraction, but it was kind of like... lets go, we've gotta go and see this, there were lots of people, even quite early in the morning there were quite a few people there just kind of having a nosey about what was going on.

ES: Why do you think that is?

K: I think it's because it's... I think the one, obviously, earlier on, the Strangeways riots there, that was just such a massive thing and whether you agree or disagree with it, it's just a massive part of like Manchester's history so I guess people wanted to try to be like, maybe part of something similar. I think.

The 1990 riots arrived at the pinnacle of rave culture, which was pioneered in Manchester (or 'Madchester'), and for some the two are tightly connected, evidenced by a contributor to an alternative music website, who writes an account of the riots from a raver's perspective:

It's 3.30 in the morning and in the gloom of the streets there is a motley crew of relatives and E heads monging out, dancing in the misty rain. The prisoners look like twitching ants on the roof dancing like E heads to Snap and other tunes played through a stolen PA on the roof whilst shouting at their loved one in the streets, waving down at their relatives and the ravers whose dishpan eyes are on stalks whilst they were bouncing around the tarmac.

It's the weirdest rave in the history of the scene and it's Madchester Rave On gone truly mad and a riot that may have been sparked by the general air of craziness that hung over the city in those months. A craziness that bounced off the roof and was matched in the surrounding streets.

He describes a tangible 'craziness', a moment of flux in Manchester's history where madness trickled through the arteries of the city and it became 'Madchester'. In his memory, the rioters look like ravers — 'E heads' — on the roof; they are even dancing to the music of the rave movement. He continues, describing himself and his fellow ravers making their early morning, drug fuelled pilgrimage to the prison to show their solidarity with the rioters:

We went down there, winding our way up from the clubs and the parties and murky madness of the nightlife to continue leerily dancing in the streets as Mick Jagger and David Bowie has [sic] so badly sung a few years before.

The overcrowding over the prison saw one of those rare moments when people in the UK took a stand and took the prison. They ended up in the stand off on the roof.

It was right in the middle of the Madchester Rave On when the city was teetering on the brink of chemical anarchy and the wild party in the now barley [sic] recognisable old streets of the city was on fire.

The prisoners sat on the roof having their own rave and made a statement about the overcrowding, slopping out and the caged animal conditions that was all part of the swirl of filth at the time that came from the top down from Thatcher and her mob.

For the writer, rave is political — an instigator of ‘chemical anarchy’ — and in making their political statement on the roof, the rioters are engaging in rave culture, too. At one point in his description, he writes:

Strangeways is so meshed into the culture of the period it's hard to operate [sic] the prisoners silhouetted and swaggering on the roof and the cool angular poses of the Stone Roses as they swaggered into the charts.

In those lunatic months the city was going crazy and the riot seemed to capture the anarchy and the madness that was also inside the Stone Roses and Happy Mondays music.

His connection between the rioters and the Stone Roses — calling them inseparable from one another — cements the idea of the rioters as iconic Mancunian characters. The Stone Roses and the Happy Mondays are deeply revered as part of Manchester’s history. Halfacree et al (1996) note that it is important for neo-tribes (which they claim the Madchester movement was) to identify a physical space with

its own emotional geography as an anchor. For the Madchester movement, the Hacienda nightclub, co-owned by members of New Order, is a particularly iconic space. This music blogger contests that Strangeways acts as an anchor, too, at least for him.

Both Katie and the blogger describe moments in time that saw a collection of likeminded people congregating at the prison add to the idea of Strangeways as having become more than the sum of its parts; meaning more than just ‘prison’ to some people, meaning ‘history’, ‘1990’ or even ‘rave’. Bassett understands events like the riots to be ‘a major historical turning point, or moment of rupture in time and space, which brings something new into the world’ (2008: 895). Kraftl (2010) connects events to mass media, claiming that because of the media, certain happenings — he uses the 9/11 attacks, but for our purposes, the Strangeways riots — are now framed as ‘events’. According to Kraftl, the *mediatisation* of these things is what turns them into named events. The death of Princess Diana is marked as the first of a series of ‘national obsessions’ which found their outlet in ‘24 hour media coverage, vigils’ and so forth (Kraftl, 2010). Though the impetus behind the gathering at Strangeways is very different — excitement, anger or anticipation, rather than grief — there is a tangible similarity in that groups of otherwise unrelated people met in one place to represent some form of solidarity. This magnetism is one way in which the Strangeways building becomes a ‘building event’ (Llewelyn, 2004; Rose, Degen & Basdas, 2010).

Further, in the context of schools (but relevant here) den Besten et al state that

... where Social Scientists have attended to such site-specific practices with/in buildings, they have tended to do so via a particular reading of Foucauldian governmentality and panopticism, foregrounding the (often dramatic, iconically powerful) disciplining technics of particular institutional buildings... we contend there are more kinds of story to be told about the materialities of contemporary school spaces (2011: 13)

Den Besten et al go on to note that geographies of education are not only that; that school buildings are points of articulation for tensions extant in beliefs about children and their future. It seems that at some times, Strangeways has been a point of articulation, too, for societal tension, which in part also explains the occasional congregations outside.

The way that both Katie and the music blogger describe the pilgrimages to Strangeways is reminiscent of what Maddrell explores in her work on Geographies of Grief.

Specific locations associated with the deceased in life or death, can also be sites for action, the active emotional-affective practices and performances of expression, remembrance and ongoing relation, for example a roadside shrine. Death and bereavement produce new and shifting emotional-affective geographies whereby artefacts, places and communities can take on new and heightened significance. (2016: 170)

The 1990 riots caused the place to take on the ‘heightened significance’ that Maddrell mentions, and when Horner began his rooftop protest, he renewed interest and magnetised both media attention and physical human presence to the building itself. The prison building in Manchester became a ‘site for action’, and for those few days, an outpouring of public anger and scrutiny was concentrated on that part of Manchester.

The history of the building plays a huge role in this migration to the prison; there is an enthusiasm, a hopefulness that in coming to the prison building, attendees might leave a part of history. Geoghegan conceptualises enthusiasm as ‘an emotional affiliation that influences passions, *performances* and *actions in space*’ (2013: 45, my italics). Here, the enthusiasm is for Manchester and Manchester’s ongoing history, but there is also evidence of enthusiasm or public fascination with crime and criminals (which Presdee, 2003, claims is a natural phenomenon); and the performances and actions are arriving at the gates of Strangeways.

As well as Madchester, the data showed a recognised link between Strangeways and the Smiths, who released the album *Strangeways Here We Come* in 1987. Joel, who runs a recording studio out of his grandparents’ old car shop, named the studio something Strangeways-relateds. I asked him why.

I suspect I was duped by my friend. He’s a big Smiths fan and I suspect he got it from Strangeways Here We Come. I didn’t know that at the time. At the time, it made sense to me because, yes, it’s opposite Strangeways, so it’s an appropriate name. If anybody goes, “Where are you?”: “I’m near Strangeways.”

Well, I think he intended it as a Strangeways, Here We Come, and, looking back, I bitterly regret that. I don't like the Smiths. Well, they're alright, but I don't like them enough to warrant naming the studio after them. Anyway, they're alright.

Liam also said, on the way the prison has a habit of reappearing in the public conscience, 'Completely, yeah, many times before. Even like the Smiths and that, you know, with *Strangeways Here We Come*, it's weird.' In the data mined from social media, several users of Facebook and Twitter had 'checked in' to the prison, posting photographs of themselves outside with captions about the Smiths. One user wrote,

Strangeways, my last stop in Manchester at exactly 2 years ago. There are still some The Smiths/Morrissey related places I need to visit. Just hold on and I will be back. Hopefully not to Strangeways!

Two other users had posted photographs of the gatehouse, one a portrait of friends in front of it, the other artily shot and photoshopped, both captioned 'Strangeways here we come'. The connection to the Smiths may add to the way that the building is seen as an icon.

What I have called the theme of 'mythologisation' appears in several interviews, too, perhaps because, as Barthes says, it is possible, and sometimes preferable, to 'mythify absence' (1958, trans 1972). As discussed, the riots have been somewhat mythologised — turned into a family story, for example. There were other instances

though, where misunderstandings, untruths, false histories and rumours were discussed in relation to the prison. When I asked Josh what he knew about the prison, for instance, he replied, 'I know that Bronson was in there. Charles Bronson.' This is not true; Bronson has been imprisoned in multiple other British institutions, but not Manchester. Misconceived ideas and rumours were often prevalent in the data on both sites. At Wrexham, Brigitte said, 'there's all sorts of rumours, isn't there, about the sort of people that are going to be in there,' and continued to explain how in a small community like the Pentre Maelor estate, rumours, especially negative ones, can quickly spread:

B: There was um, a pub that was being turned — they knew it was going to be being turned into something and the rumours were flying round, it's going to be a drug rehabilitation centre, it's going to be a this, it's going to be a — and people are campaigning, and they don't even know what it is — and then it turned out to be a residential home for people with disabilities and all those people who'd got on petitions must've felt awful stupid, but — it's cause it's a kneejerk, 'oh God, there's going to be criminals,' criminals...

ES: Is it because some of the people on the estate kind of feel like all these bad things have been put there, or...?

B: Yeah. I, I think they think, well we've got a nice safe little community — which we have, and it's lovely — and they don't want criminals coming in and I think it's this thing about the families — it's people who are coming to visit them, and their

families are criminals, so therefore they must also be criminals, which obviously is rubbish, but they — that's the way they see it, it's that 'us and them', there's us, the nice people and then them, the crims, they don't want anything to do with them.

The rumours that Brigitte is describing here turn into a sort of hysteria that results in petitioning something imaginary. This is a cornerstone of NIMBYism (Bernstein and Bennett, 2013; Kiel and McClain, 1995; Schmidt, 2013), which will be discussed in further section 5.4.

This section explored the ways that connections can be made to the prison through pop culture, pilgrimage, collective memory and shared hysteria. The prison building itself acts as a site of articulation in these instances; the meeting point when there is an opportunity to make history, for example, or a place to come together and express anger. When this happens, the prison itself becomes an icon amongst different communities; not only those who live nearby, but those who are joined by mutual interests that collide with the prison, as is the case with Smiths fans, for example.

5.4 N/Y/IMBYism

Some people are just against everything though, aren't they, you know, you just get people who, whatever you could've proposed... a dairy, or a... or a, you know, anything. A rainbow factory. You know, and they would still go, 'oooh, think about the colours'.

- Brigitte, Wrexham

As explored in Chapter 2, the existing literature on NIMBYism, YIMBYism and neutrality in relation to prison is wide reaching, though I identified some gaps: the absence of literature on historic instances of NIMBYism, for example, which will be a key contribution of this chapter. There were instances of both phenomena on each site, with the participants in Wrexham providing a far more ‘YIMBY’ response than I had anticipated. I also noticed an awareness of NIMBYism that I had not expected prior to embarking upon fieldwork; some participants used it as a buzzword. Also surprising was that the data retrieved from the RIBA archive and newspaper archives indicated the presence of NIMBYism, though not yet so-called, in Manchester during the construction of Strangeways. Other themes included perceived benefits of the prison in Wrexham — by participants on both sites. These aspects of the data will be discussed now.

5.4.1 N/YIMBYism at Strangeways

In Manchester, the prison was situated close to the city centre by default, because it was built in conjunction with the city’s new Assize Courts. According to Hay, at this time in England, the Assizes were ‘the most visible and elaborate manifestation of state power to be seen in the countryside, apart from the presence of a regiment’ (1975: 27). From this evocative description of the biannual Assize ceremony, it is possible to imagine all of the architectural pomp and ceremony that was imbued into a court building specifically designed to host such an event. Sure enough, Figure 5.1 presents Waterhouse’s own painting of the facade — believed to be part of the competition entry that won him the Assizes contract.



Fig 5.1 Alfred Waterhouse's painting of the façade of the Assize Courts, believed to be part of his winning competition entry to design them. (RIBA Archives)

The Assizes were said, in part, to be located in the relatively city-central locality of Strangeways because of the area's proximity to Victoria Station — the prison is around 600m away — making the courts easily accessible by those 'jurymen, litigants or witnesses' (E.P., 1864: 10) travelling into Manchester from the surrounding 'Salford Hundred'. This was an area of nearly 900km² that roughly encompassed what is now the metropolitan county of Greater Manchester. Some of what was the Salford Hundred, or the Hundred of Salford as it was also known, included parts of what is now Cheshire, as well as areas of Rossendale and Todmorden — it was a large expanse of grouped areas to be served by one court by the standards of the time, so the adjacency of the station was unarguably important.

However, the proximity of the station is unlikely to have been the main reason for choosing Strangeways as the location for the new courts and prison; other circumstances factored in.

In 1858, royal assent was given and “The Manchester Assize Courts Act” was passed, giving the Corporation of Manchester permission to build new courts and a new gaol. The committee immediately advertised for a new plot, which as previously noted was hoped to be central, in order to group the new court buildings — not yet designed, but expected to be magnificent — with other municipal buildings. Ultimately though, the chosen land was about 1.3 kilometres from the city centre. The ‘annoyance that would result from the noise, consequent upon contiguity to streets with heavy traffic’ was cited as one reason for seeking a plot just outside of the city centre (Manchester Guardian: Oct 26, 1858, p3), but the price of land per square yard was also intensely scrutinised in the local press and was deemed to be the main reason why a more central plot had not been chosen (Manchester Guardian: Oct 26, 1858, p3). When Joshua Jebb first proposed a site in London for his model prison in 1856, the Treasury vetoed it, deeming £100 per acre of land excessive for a 150 acre plot (Tomlinson, 1975). Salford Council’s bid to keep the prison, and build the Courts, on the site of the extant New Bailey prison was dismissed on the basis of the land being too expensive, at £40,000. Ultimately, the land at Strangeways was procured for less than £20,000 (Manchester Guardian, 26 October, 1858). A comparison here, between the amount of money spent on the land for the prison, and for other public buildings at a similar time, is of interest; when calculating the cost of Manchester Town Hall, the plot alone — purchased

just five years later, in 1863 — was said to total in excess of £267,000 (British Architect, 1878: 58). Later, Alfred Waterhouse, the architect chosen to build the courts and prison, would write on a sketch of the designated land, ‘I will not be certain that the dimensions (above) are exactly what we want’ (see Fig 5.2, from RIBA archives, circa 1859) — which indicates that finding the perfect plot of land for the Assizes was not a foremost consideration.

Land in the Strangeways/ Cheetham Hill area was likely cheap due to several combining factors. It was surrounded by the city’s industrial heartland, backed on to by breweries, ironworks and brickworks. The industry brought with it thick smoke, riotous noise, offensive smells and slum housing. At one end of the area, the nearby Angel Meadow or ‘New Town’ was understood quite early in Manchester’s young history to be the city’s most disreputable locality; its cottages ‘rotten in condition and evil of reputation’ (Manchester Guardian, May 9 1892), ‘abounding with loose women of the lowest description’ (Manchester Guardian, September 14, 1822), a place where petty criminals lived (Manchester Guardian, Oct 1, 1825) and killers killed (Manchester Guardian: March 31 1827; October 18 1828; June 27 1838). As late as 1888, an anonymous writer stated: ‘Why one of the ugliest-looking churches in Manchester, situated in one of the most crowded and notorious parts of the city, should have for so long enjoyed the pleasant-sounding name of ‘St Michaels, Angel Meadow’ is beyond all understanding’ (Manchester Guardian, December 28, 1888). The area was seemingly doomed from as



Fig 5.2 Sketch of the land for the Assize Courts and prison, on which Waterhouse has written, 'I will not be certain the dimensions are exactly what we want...' (RIBA Archives)

early as the 1700s, when a burial ground for the city's poorest was consecrated on the patch. There, later, Irish immigrants fleeing the famine lived ten to a house (Busteed & Hodgson, 1994) in 'the lowest poverty' (Leigh and Gardiner, 1850). Ingrained racism towards the Irish meant that the English press and police forces did not respond compassionately to unrest in Angel Meadow, here evidenced in the Manchester Guardian's report on a case of 'serious affray' in 1825:

it is certainly too true, that the lower classes of Irishmen (protestants as well as catholics) are disposed to pay very little attention to the law, or to those who enforce it... the administration of justice in Ireland has been so corrupted and perverted, that the catholics, feeling no protection from the law at home, are disposed to pay it very little reverence, either there or elsewhere (May 21, 1825).

Furthermore, by the 1840s, a Jewish ghetto had developed moments away on the lower part of Cheetham Hill Road. Here, across less than one square mile, on what came to be known as the Red Bank, over 8000 people lived in 1500 properties (see Figs 5.3 and 5.4).



Fig 5.3 Red Bank, 1904. (Manchester Libraries)



Fig 5.4 Red Bank, 1904 (Manchester Libraries)

These areas, Angel Meadow and Red Bank, did not benefit from the £5,000 a year set aside to clean the city's streets, though, as one observer noted, they should have been cleaned daily (Briggs, 1963: 102); the sheer volume of people and animals living, dying and defecating in close conjunction understandably created a terrible smell. In fact, an 1869 account in local journal *The Sphinx* joked that 'if we were compelled to lose one of our senses, and had the option given to us, we should elect to be bereft of the faculty of smelling. This notion chiefly affects us when duty calls us into Strangeways and the Bury New Road' (1869: 132). The article goes on to blame the local fish market for the 'ancient' stench there (1869: 132) and of course the city's light industry, which had apparently tarred the waters of the nearby convening rivers Irk and Irwell until they were 'black as ink, or the Stygian lake' (Briggs, 1963: 89). In Engels' *Conditions of the Working Class in England*, he concurred:

At the bottom [of the channel] flows, or rather stagnates, the Irk, a narrow, coal-black, foul-smelling stream, full of debris and refuse, which it deposits on the lower right bank. In any weather, a long string of the most disgusting blackish-green slime polls are left standing on this bank, from the depths of which bubbles of miasmatic gas constantly arise and give forth a stench unendurable. But besides this, the stream itself is checked every few paces by high weirs, behind which slime and refuse accumulate and rot in thick masses. (1845: 89)

Of the bridge crossing the black, swampy Irwell from Manchester to Salford, early nineteenth century working class radical Samuel Bamford once said that ‘Venice hath her Bridge of Sighs; Manchester, a Bridge of Tears’ (Taylor et al, 1996 : 56). The bridge united Salford with New Town — two of the poorest areas in Lancashire, those with the highest rates of cholera, unemployment and mortality. These combining factors significantly lessened the value of the land.

Criminal activity in North Manchester was another factor that did not go unnoticed by outsiders. At around the time of the prison’s construction, one local wrote to the Manchester Guardian about the ‘pugilistic encounters... dog fighting, gambling and Irish faction fights, with all their brutalising accompaniments’ in the nearby burial ground at Angel Meadow, stating,

my pen would fail me to describe the demoralising scenes I have witnessed on this spot, and were it possible to do so, your readers would hardly credit my statements; the yelling and shouting, and blasphemous oaths I have heard when attending service in the adjoining church have been such as those who worship in more favoured localities have little conception of. It is no uncommon thing for the congregation to be put in bodily fear by stones being hurled through the windows... the assistance of the police has been repeatedly solicited, but though they have endeavoured to do their duty they are powerless against the numbers that frequently congregate here. That such a state of things should be tolerated in the very heart of a civilised community will scarcely be believed; but such is the fact, and the amount of evil engendered thereby is almost incalculable. The clergyman of

St Michael's and others are making great efforts to Christianise the people of Angel Meadow, and to ameliorate the moral darkness that prevails so largely among them, and, I ask, can anything have a more blighting influence on those efforts than this pestilential plague spot in their midst. (20th April, 1865)

One interesting point from the above excerpt, corroborated by Briggs (1963) is that in the 1860s Manchester's police force was unable to manage the city's crime (see Figure 5.5).

North East Manchester was particularly notorious. The siting of a court building and a prison, with their purposefully employed architectural symbols of power (Jewkes, 2013) in Manchester's poorest, dirtiest — and therefore deemed its most morally wanting — district, was not an accident. In his 1970 edition of Eastlake's seminal *History of the*

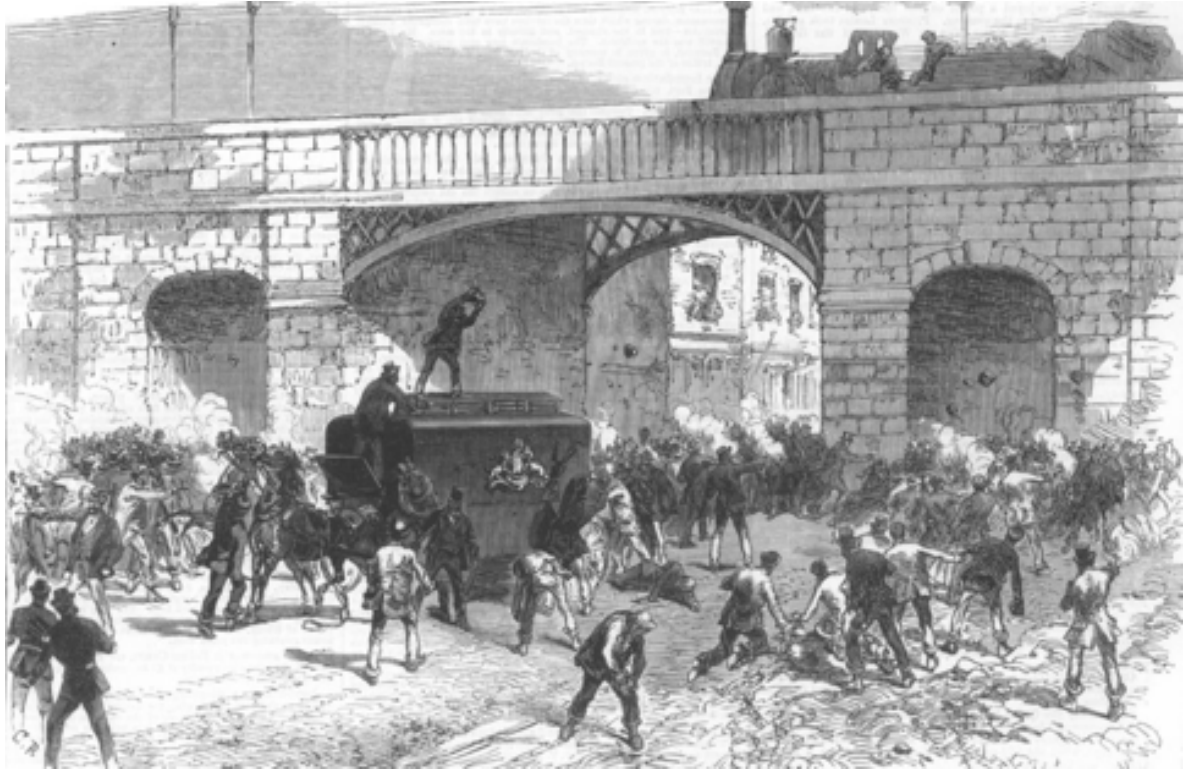


Fig 5.5 ‘The Smashing of the Van’. This image, of the police unable to control a crowd of angry protesters who are trying to free Fenian prisoners from the van, first appeared in the *Illustrated London News*, 1867. (HistoryIreland.com)

Gothic Revival, Crook attests that by the 19th century, Gothic revivalism had emerged ‘almost as an ecclesiastical dogma’. Waterhouse’s ‘emphatically gothic’ (Maltby, 1983: 17) design of the prison and the Assizes fits in with this description beautifully. It is cathedralesque; based in part perhaps on his recent visit to Cologne Cathedral, which his wife Mary wrote about in her journals (16 August 1857). Cologne is the largest Gothic cathedral in Northern Europe, and Waterhouse is known to have taken direct inspiration not from his contemporaries, or even the inspirational Gothic Revivalists who came before and influenced him, but from original Gothic civic buildings in Europe. These were his confirmation that the origins of Gothic architecture were just as applicable to the requirements of

Victorian civic buildings as Revivalist architecture (Smith, 1976). His design for the courts imbued much religious symbolism (Figure 5.6), incorporating into it carvings of Commandments (Thou Shalt Not Bear False Witness Against Thy Neighbour) and judge's quarters that were 'ecclesiastical, church-like in appearance — almost as if God is the judge' (from my field notes, December 2015). To reiterate Jewkes: it is a building 'inscribed with symbolic meaning that seeks to secure the acquiescence of society at large as well as that of convicted offenders' (2013 : 10). To the Corporation of Manchester, the positioning of such a building in such a notorious place must have seemed like the perfect marriage.

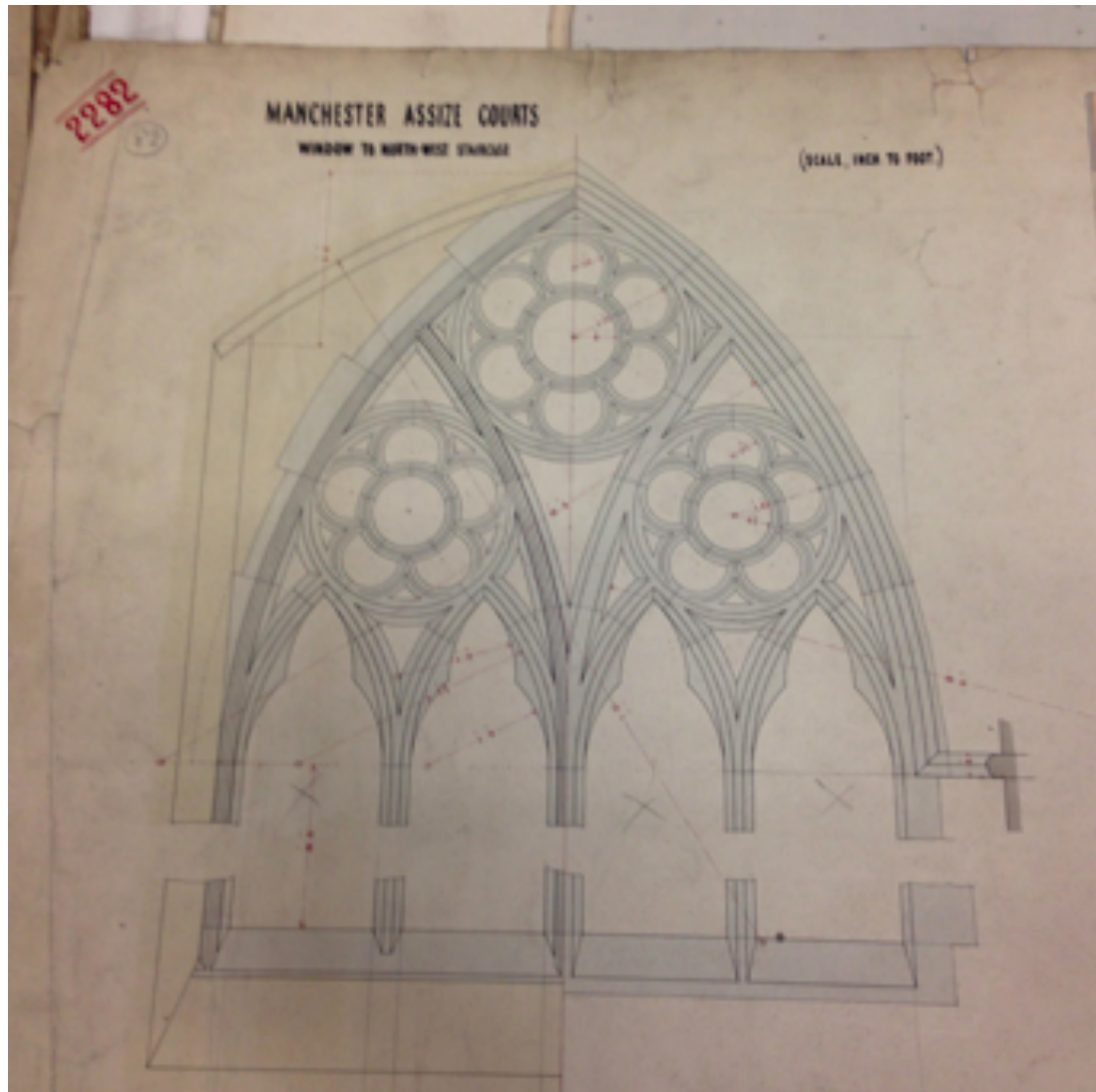


Fig 5.6: Tropes of ecclesiastical windows - such as vaulting and stained glass - in Waterhouse's design for the Assize Courts windows. (RIBA Archive)

This, however, was not necessarily taken as intended. What appear to be early instances of NIMBYism appear in Letters to the Editor of the Manchester Guardian around this time. The prison was to back on to the Assize Courts — to be almost camouflaged by them — and yet the public mounted a ‘movement of resistance’ against its ‘threatened nuisance’ and ‘serious social evil’ (13 March 1862: 4). Perhaps this is an example of NITBYism — not in *their* back yard — as the writer goes on to say

It will be admitted that the erection, in the proposed locality, of a large county gaol, where all the felonry of the district will be successively immured, and to the outside walls of which its kindred, but uncaged felonry will so frequently and periodically be attracted — (to say nothing of the grim attractions of an occasional execution) — must create a social evil and a public nuisance of the most enormous kind. It will, doubtless, be felt most keenly by the residents of the Cheetham, Strangeways and Broughton districts; but hardly less so — and certainly on public grounds, equally so — by the whole municipal borough.

Just as Armstrong (2012) found in her study of NIMBYism in Addiewell, we see this writer simply cannot see past the moral implications of such a siting. The idea of ‘uncaged felonry’ being almost magnetically attracted to the walls of the prison mirrors Armstrong’s participant who worries about increased thoroughfare of drugs through her town: ‘These drugs are brought into prison by those visiting and...those visiting will have to pass through Addiewell, no doubt stopping off in shops and/or public houses in Addiewell, this could lead to increased drug problems in the village.’ Neither writer acknowledges the agency of those on the outside of the prison; rather, the prison’s inexplicable force for corruption is the focus of their fears.

These fears are mirrored, in some ways, in Manchester today. On 10 October 2016, I received an email from a police officer, who permitted the inclusion of his

statement, but wished to remain anonymous, detailing the very high levels of crime in the area directly abutting the prison, as follows:

I have some experience of the area of Strangeways prison, having lived and worked around there for a couple of years. A few years back I also lived near the prison in Preston City Centre.

The main thing that struck me about both areas is that they are areas of high criminality. It struck me as a strange contrast that people are willing to commit crimes, when faced with such a stark reminder of the potential consequences of those crimes — like literally right in front of their face is a prison and yet they are breaking into vehicles and stealing things!

For instance — the immediate area around strangeways is a very high crime area for vehicle thefts — don't leave your car parked there please! My own personal theory is that the area immediately around prisons obviously has very high walls and creates an area which is undesirable for high affluence businesses and residences. This in turn results in reduced footfall in those areas, making ideal conditions for the commission of crime.

Across the road from strangeways is a series of shops which are frequently the subject of police warrants, for selling counterfeit goods. In addition, the petrol station just down from strangeways, next to the green quarter, was the subject of a

crime last year when a group of individuals tried to tunnel under the cash machine (this was reported in the M.E.N) — they were all caught and charged for it.

Additionally, the area around strangeways is one of two known red light districts in Manchester, the other area being close to Picadilly [sic] train station — this area also has a similar appearance to around strangeways — with high walls, low footfall, very dark at night. This is the same as the prison at Preston, where the main road that runs along side the prison is a red light area. By strangeways, there had recently been an influx of eastern european prostitutes plying their trade. On one night when we patrolled down the road, there was about 8 or 9, each stood on street corners, wearing what seemed to be matching dayglo skirts/tops. This has now been reduced as the border agency has been involved and has been enforcing some of their rights to require non-residents to leave the country where they are guilty of committing certain crimes.

The officer's assertion that the area is one of high criminal activity is corroborated by the Police.uk crime map. On average, between March 2016 and March 2017, 183 crimes a month were reported in the area, with the highest incidence of crime being 225 in March 2017. In March 2017, 56 of these crimes were 'on or near prison' (Figure 5.7); these included criminal damage or arson (one incidence), drug related crime (eight incidents), 'other' crime (25 incidents) and violence and sexual offences (22 incidents). In the adjacent Collyhurst area, an average of 79 crimes a month were reported.



Fig 5.7: Crimes ‘on or near Prison’. Screenshot of Crime.uk site, March 2017.

The council where Pentre Maelor is located is known as Abenbury, and a similar occurrence happened there. When the prison opened, there was an increase in ‘local’ crime because the criminal activity that was recorded within the prison went on record as happening within Abenbury (Abenbury Community Council Meeting Minutes, 9.10.17). In their work on NIMBYism, Martin and Myers (2005) report that US prison communities tend to anticipate ‘no change’ in crime rates; yet from these two British field sites, we can see that this objectively isn’t true, whether that is because of the way crime is recorded or because of the makeup of the surrounding area. In Abenbury Council’s meeting minutes of 13.11.17, it was noted that, ‘Members were unhappy that the Graphs [which showed an increase in crime] included incidents at the Prison’, which implies that, although the prison is within the community council’s remit, it is considered *separate* by residents.

Criminal activity in the Strangeways area has also been explored by the local and national press. The crimes charted included the sale of counterfeit goods (Manchester Evening News, 2 October 2015; 23 November 2015), drug rings (Manchester Evening News, 26 March 2015), auto theft and soliciting (GMP website, accessed December 2015). As the officer explained, the Strangeways area is well known as home to Europe's largest counterfeit goods industry (Manchester Evening News, 25 October 2013). Gang warfare (Walsh, 2005) and drug abuse are also common, the latter leading to one local street's nickname of Smackhead Alley (Daily Telegraph, 22 May 2005). The area's notoriety remains, and, as evidenced, it frequently features in the local and national press. There are also small details that could perhaps go ignored or unnoticed; like the price of car-parking. In some other city central locations — a car park on Deansgate, for example, drivers can expect to pay up to £12 for a day's parking. In Strangeways, just ten minutes walk away, it costs £1. Vehicle crime in the Strangeways area has led to increased patrols by Greater Manchester Police in Lower Cheetham (GMP website, accessed December 2015). On Facebook, one user had 'checked in' to HM Manchester, saying 'Standing next to prison. If the look of the area is anything to go by I would be breaking in to the prison rather than trying to break out.' Two participants, Sophie and Josh, rented rooms in a pub turned house share, about 50m from the walls of Strangeways (and therefore probably the closest dwelling to the prison) — and they corroborated these stories. Josh had lived in Manchester for two years and called the Strangeways/Cheetham Hill area 'counterfeit city', saying, 'you can buy pretty much anything up there. Watches, Rolex. Literally, bags, pens, anything you want really.' When I interviewed her, Sophie had recently moved in but said:

Sophie: I don't really know much about the local area to be honest. I know that we're slightly out of the town centre, um... from what I can see it's a bit more run down than other areas... um. I know there's brothels on our road. That's about it.

ES: How do you know there are brothels on your road?

S: Uh — cause they advertise, yeah. And they have websites. And I've uh — I thought that one was a nightclub — I googled it, and it was a brothel. [both laugh]

Salon 42!

ES: Do you feel safe here?

S: I would say yes. I do feel safe but... I think... I don't know, it's difficult to say really. Cause opposite the front door, there's like a — it's not like a homeless shelter, but it's like somewhere for homeless people to go and erm, like, take classes, um, and like, write their CV and do all that sort of stuff. And, so, we get quite a mix of people, and a couple of weekends in a row, we've had someone trying to like, get in in the middle of the night.

Sophie's reference to the proximity of another LULU (Locally Unwanted Land Use) facility — the homeless charity across the road — links to NIMBYism as well. The charity aims to help Manchester's swelling homeless population find

accommodation, work and education and combat addiction. Siting of similar centres has historically also received a NIMBY response (Gibson, 2005; Takahasi, 1997) with homeless centres being the most controversial facility to site according to planning directors (Takahasi and Gaber, 1998). Weisberg believes that in the case of LULU facilities like prisons and homeless shelters, it is advisable to minimise their size and distribute them fairly as 'no community should carry a disproportionate share of this responsibility' (1993: 96). However, prior to the reappropriation of the pub where Sophie and Josh lived as residential, there had been no 'community' in the direct locale for many years, which may explain the close concentration of LULU facilities, as well as abundant illegal activity.

5.4.2 N/YIMBYism in Wrexham

In Wrexham, Abenbury Community Council covers the Pentre Maelor estate and the council's meeting minutes provide an excellent insight into community response to the prison, and to other LULU facilities once proposed for the ex-Firestone factory site which the prison has ultimately come to occupy. Minutes from 9 October 2012 show that the community had registered its objection to the erection of a power station on the site. Meeting minutes from February 2015 also show that the area has been proffered as a possible fracking site, which a group named Frack Free Wrexham asked Abenbury Community Council for help in protesting. The proximity of another LULU site, an abattoir, less than a mile from the prison site in Wrexham is indicative of the perceived 'worth' of the local land. An interesting cross-site comparison is provided in the March 4 1862 letter to the Manchester

Guardian, in which the correspondent lists a precedent for the municipal borough to reject, or at very least, rethink, the siting proposals for Strangeways. This precedent:

in the recent Cheetham slaughterhouse case, which was surely a nuisance of a much less objectionable character, the Council properly took action upon the express ground of its being a public nuisance. Of how much greater magnitude would be the one in question!

Simon Caron, the Project Director of the Berwyn construction site presented a dichotomy in his description of working with Wrexham locals, specifically Abenbury Community Council. He began by explaining the very formative processes of prison construction:

Very early on, and this is on every build that I've done, so we'll put our planning application in. Before we put the planning application in, we'll go and talk to the local planners, which we did here — Wrexham, had a chat with those — and then we went to speak to Habenbury Community Council (sic) which is that estate predominantly over there, and then we sat with them and said — look. This is what it's going to look like, this is what it's going to feel like — the board is still behind my desk — this is the samples, this is the type of brick — and then we had lots of debate on what's the lighting levels going to be, what does that feel like, um — so

we did work very hard with it, and one of the things they were very concerned about was the screening of the prison.

Moran et al (2016) explain that in prison building projects, the architect is regularly *decentred* from the process of design and construction, in a way that renders them invisible. Conversely, Caron seems to be particularly invested in ‘centring’ the local *residents* in the process instead. He continued:

They wanted — this has been the strangest prison I’ve ever built, people want this prison in Wrexham, it’s a deprived part of the country, they want the employment, they reckon it’s going to pump £24 million into the local economy, um, so they really wanted it to come, it’s a long term employer; they’re not going anywhere, so you could have built a factory here and in two years they could’ve gone into administration — the biggest thing they wanted was screening. So we worked very hard with them that here down this end as you drove in you’d have seen a nice big grass bund here — we put that in day one, we said we’ll clear the site, we’ll get you the bund and we’ll plant it, so then you can start to get used to the height of what this building’s going to be against the height of your bund and see if you can see it...

Though Caron calls it ‘strange’, people ‘wanting’ the prison in Wrexham is actually symptomatic of a Western shift towards YIMBYism around prisons (Bonds, 2006; Carlson, 1995; Chappell, 2012; Che, 2005; King et al, 2004). Like the YIMBY

settlements in the US, Wrexham is struggling economically, having been severely impacted by the recession. Nationally, it has one of the highest rates of child poverty (End Child Poverty, 2014) and comparatively high levels of youth unemployment (Economic Ambition Strategy for North Wales, 2012). A Wrexham Council document entitled 'Wrexham Strategy and Action Plan, 2012-2015' stated that the town centre had 'been affected by the closure of Game, Gamestation, La Senza, Jane Norman, Past Times and Peacocks' (2012: 3). At a symposium dedicated to the discussion of a prison in North Wales (Youtube, accessed 2015), Gwynedd council's Corporate Director Iwan Trevor-Jones asserted that the region had been 'lagging behind' the rest of the UK in economic development, its GDP standing at 78% of the UK average. The prison that would eventually be sited in Wrexham was described evocatively in 2008 by the chairman of the North Wales Economic Forum as a 'glittering economic prize' (Evening Leader, 23 August 2008).

Caron's belief that the desire for a prison is 'strange' is inaccurate; it is in fact a pattern in places as poor as Wrexham, where prison has come to be seen as a development strategy (Tootle, 2004). The Wrexham site mirrors the prison site in Bloomington, Indiana that is the case study in Schept's *Progressive Punishment* (2015). Schept illustrates and strengthens Armstrong's argument that in a post-industrial context, in poor areas the prison becomes 'a box of jobs' (Prison's Prisms conference paper, 2014):

In looking to build the justice campus on the very site from which 8,000 jobs disappeared and a factory was razed, local officials proposed an answer to the question of what is left for the children and grandchildren of the class of skilled (if narrowly so), un- or undereducated, and now jobless workers in the wake of migrations of capital and jobs into and out of the county: carceral futures. (Schept, 2015: 40)

Furthermore, Cherry and Kunce (2001) note that in America, a proliferation of economically challenged communities is likely to significantly heighten a county's likelihood of hosting a prison, claiming that 'the heterogeneous economic conditions' of prospective host communities are considered by policymakers when designating sites for LULU facilities. Iolo Madoc Jones, from Wrexham's Glwyndr University, gave a paper at the North Wales Prison Symposium (2015). In it, he notes that communities around suggested prison sites in prosperous South Wales had a NIMBY response, whilst poorer North Welsh communities were more responsive to the idea, just as Hannan and Courtright (2011) state that the higher a resident's income, the more likely they are to oppose LULU facilities.

However, Caron's theory of YIMBYism in Wrexham is not unequivocal. It is clearly countered by the fact that realistically, Abenbury Community Council and those they represent do not want to *look* at the prison: as he says, 'the biggest thing they wanted was screening'. Hence his focus on 'the bund'. He continued,

Now the second thing we did was we put all this car parking in and got all the street lighting in. So then they could see what all the street lighting — because people can't fully understand the drawing, and they can't understand light spread, so we put that in and they've got all this time to get used to it, so they've now had that for — or they will have had that for two years before we put a prisoner in that, into that site. So that's how we've worked with them closely. The other thing is, I like to build like we're finished, so... getting this landscaped, getting all this green around here, it just looks better from a construction site anyway, so we put the big fence up, day one, that also did, well that's going to be the fence, that's what it looks like, it also gives me the best security that I can while I'm building, so we — that's how we've worked and coordinated with them. Then there was lots of queries about foul drainage, the draining system, so we spend a lot of money with Welsh water actually proving the size of the drains, we did a lot of flow-read metres for weeks and weeks...

Infrastructure was an important focus for many participants who believed in the prison's regenerative possibilities in relation to the industrial estate itself. Che (2005) linked the disproportionate number of inmates from urban areas imprisoned in rural areas to economic growth in those rural areas, through redistribution of tax dollars. This is not the only perceived benefit of prison; many are much more tangible for those living and working close by. In the data, Magnus, a small business owner, claimed to have relocated his business to the industrial estate *because* of the new prison, saying:

There's two things which have happened here which have been really positive and good. One is the prison being built, and the other one is the road being put in. [...]

When you put a prison like this in, you get a lot of infrastructure being put on the back of it, and as a result of that, you know that, all of a sudden, you're going to get fast fibre optic being installed, you're going to find out that the road junctions are going to be improved, um, I mean... GS4 [sic] are running it, so a lot of money is being thrown onto the site so it does create a lot of spillover into the local amenity area, you'll find that since they started, you're finding new, relatively cheap build low level offices are being built. Um, you're finding that other things are being improved, a lot of this is spurred off the back, they got the new access road coming in. I mean, before the access road actually was built, occupancy rate around here was sitting about sort of, 65% on the units and the offices and workshops, since the road's been built and since the work has been announced for the prison, that's jumped to about 85%, so there's been a 20% increase in occupancy rate. Rents have gone up, not always great, um, and, but, if the landlords are renting space and selling, you know, office space, workshop space, it means they can then reinvest back into improving sites and so forth, and we have noticed that overall, business confidence seems to be higher here than other parts of Wrexham. Cause as a business we've been going for five and a half years, so we're not brand new, we've been around for a while and we actually have traded in the middle of the town centre, as well, so we have certainly found that in the immediate area, I mean, there's national trends, you know, the internet, out of town shopping, but we have noticed that there has been a shift, er, overall, positive fortunes for round here.

Another independent business owner, Joan, agreed:

I think it's a good thing, personally. I really do. I think it'll be great for the area, hopefully for the infrastructure and things like that, because it has the investment in the infrastructure itself, I mean I know they've spent a lot of money on the road and stuff there...

Road construction and road improvements have long been connected to the carceral, dating back to the chain gangs of the nineteenth century USA (Ireland, 1991). Here, Magnus and Joan see the new road into the industrial estate and the prison as being linked, and Magnus believes that together, the two may have already raised the desirability of the area for small businesses like his by 20%. He continued to talk about the possibility that the prison might bring fibre optic broadband to the industrial estate and told me he was 'convinced, actually, the Village Bakery approved their £4 million extension because of that'. The idea that the perceived positive influence of the carceral might have a physical impact on the landscape resonates with the geographical concept of 'reading' landscapes as texts (Wylie, 2007; Moran, 2016). If carceral buildings and the carceral landscape is representative of the prevailing intent of the criminal justice system (Moran, 2016: 129), the changing landscape of Wrexham Industrial Estate can be perceived as the embodiment of the 'profit from punishment' rhetoric, as Magnus seems to imagine. The prison, according to Magnus, is directly connected to road and infrastructure improvements and as new buildings are erected and the landscape visibly changes,

it is possible for local business owners to construe a positive shift in local economic fortune, however accurate, and however much this directly affects them.

Non-economic benefits are also expected or perceived, such as improvement in the quality of local life, as the construction and maintenance of prison can be seen to uphold or support social infrastructures. Moran notes that in some parts of rural Russia, the prison system has introduced ‘mobile telephone signal, mains gas and piped water, kindergartens, schools...’ (2016: 142) to the immediate local area, making these settlements better equipped than others of comparable rurality without prisons. Che’s (2005) participants believed that the prison in Marienville could sustain local institutions such as the high school and fire department. In these instances the ‘poverty of connections’ experienced by rural communities (Graham and Marvin, 2001) is lessened by the proximity of the prison. For Magnus:

We do find that because you’ve got all the prison workers there, you’ve got a catering van, which sits outside the prison, and that catering van is from er, the guy who runs the local Post Office, so because he makes money off the catering van, and the girls prep the sandwiches in the actual Post Office, it means the Post Office is then viable, which means we have a local Post Office that’s able to stay open, and it’s open for longer times, which then means a business like ours, if we then decide to do internet sales, can then take stuff down to the Post Office, which then makes it much easier for us to operate that side of the business there. So, you end up with, ah, very very much the snowball effect, that you end up with... It’s a bit like putting jam on toast, and if you actually have more jam, and it’s going on just one

bit of toast, and you're squirting more on, it will eventually, although it gets more thick on that one part, you will eventually trickle down and spread out, and we do find there is that trickle and spread, and it is actually helping.

In Wrexham, though the building is not deemed particularly appealing, there certainly *are* things about the prison that appeal to local residents and business owners, such as improved infrastructure and a boost to the local economy. This makes a marked shift from the proto-NIMBYism that was implied in the archival documents at Strangeways. The presence of other LULU facilities in the vicinity of Strangeways add to participants feelings of NIMBYism in Manchester, creating an overall feeling of neglect in the area, whilst in Wrexham, investment in the area as a direct result of the prison creates the opposite feeling. The fact that the prison can have such a marked effect on its surroundings in terms of improvement of infrastructure and provision — and subsequently the attitudes of those occupying its surroundings — supports Moran et al's assertion that it is a 'big thing' (2016). These things are perhaps some of the elements of 'negotiation' mentioned by Moran et al as one of the many processes that must occur prior to the construction of the prison.

5.5 The prison as a landmark

Whilst it can be a reason for improved infrastructure, the prison's structure itself can act as an important tool in the local area; as a point of navigation, or a

landmark. Carl told me that, ‘it’s the tower that everyone sees normally. And it’s included in loads of like, murals and paintings of Manchester’s skyline. It’s quite iconic.’ He also said that when driving around Manchester, his father — a Mancunian who left the city around 20 years ago — uses the prison as a point of navigation:

He directs himself around Strangeways, he’s like, oh yeah, you head towards Strangeways, it is very much, for my dad particularly, a landmark that you plot a route from, in much the same way that the train stations are, as well, for him, it’s probably one of the few landmarks that still exist because like, back when he was navigating the city, when I was five, um, none of this existed that we’re in now. The road layout and everything was completely different, but they’re a constant for him — so he thinks ah, I know where that is, so I need to get round there.

Joel uses the prison as a landmark for other people who are visiting his recording studio:

I use it as a reference point. I suppose if somebody is coming from town, I’ll say, “Pass Salford Van Hire on your right. Strangeways is on your right. Turn left.” Yes, it’s easy. “Straight down.”

Laura had friends who lived in the Green Quarter, and she said they, too, very often used to talk about the prison being — right on their doorstep — so if they were, say for example, people were coming to visit them, from somewhere else, so

when we first moved here, and we were going to visit them for the first time, they would navigate people there by the prison [laughs]

Presson and Montello state that landmarks — in this case Strangeways, its tower looming over Cheetham Hill — as reference points imply that ‘the structure and organisation of spatial memory is fundamentally influenced by the existence of landmarks’ (1988: 379). In a city that is changing rapidly, Strangeways has remained a constant for 150 years; it provides a centre around which it is possible to reroute and realign. This is how Carl’s dad uses Strangeways. Presson and Montello go on to say, though, that there is another understanding of the term landmark; it comes into play in the context of navigating space for the first time, or when one is lost, or unsure of where they are. In this case, they say, ‘the landmark provides a point of reference between spatial experience and known spatial representations’ (1988: 380) — in other words, the landmark becomes a point of correspondence, which is how Laura’s friends and Joel use the prison.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter explored the myriad ways in which the prison is experienced as part of its environment. Special consideration was given to the historic events that surround Strangeways, in particular, in section 5.2, with an exploration of what the 1990 riots meant for the prison and also for Manchester. It was established that they had become ingrained, not only in Manchester’s cultural history and landscape, but also in the history of the UK prison system and as a seminal event of the 1990s

which has continued to impact on society. Other cultural links, such as Strangeways' link to The Smiths, were also explored, as well as the propensity that exists for creating rumours about the prison. This mythologisation can be used, for example, to imagine illustrious inmates, but also to the detriment of prison planners, who may be met with NIMBYism from those local residents who have imagined worst case scenarios as a result of an overactive rumour mill. Subsequently, section 5.3 focussed on NIMBYism and YIMBYism on both sites, with particular reference to what appeared to be a historical 'proto' NIMBYism in Manchester during the construction of Strangeways. This is a key contribution of this chapter. I also looked at the way that the improvement of local infrastructure in Wrexham had created a YIMBY response amongst some participants there. Finally, the prison's ability to act as a landmark was discussed in relation to Strangeways, which, situated in ever-changing Manchester, remains a constant for some people.

6. Fear of the Prison: Escape, Dereliction and Panopticism

6.1: Introduction

In Chapters 2 and 3, I focussed on the literature available on both the deliberate visual messages imbued in historic prison buildings and the vocal opposition to the erection of prisons from communities. As detailed in Chapter 2, existing American literature on prison siting and NIMBYism amongst the prospective host community generally focuses on the possibility of escalating crime rates or prison escapes. I was interested in whether or not the prison architecture could aid or abet these ideas. Serendipitously, at the beginning of the period of data collection, an inmate at Strangeways named Stuart Horner climbed the wire fence surrounding the prison's exercise yard and began a three day long protest on the roof. This certainly inspired more consideration of the prison building's adequacy for purpose amongst participants and invoked fear of escape amongst some, focussed on in section 6.2. Fear has been a key aspect of work in feminist and emotional geographies since the 1990s, and fear of escape has long been a commonly explored theme in criminology. Turner (2013, 2016) expands on the conventional idea of 'escape' by exploring the porous nature of the prison boundary, proposing that as global issues infiltrate the prison boundary, carcerality may leak out of it, too (2014: 321).

When exploring prison aesthetics with participants, fear of the building, and more specifically of the building's capabilities, became prevalent. Section 6.3 focuses on the fear of dirt and dereliction amongst participants, and what these things might

mean for the safety of those both inside and outside the prison. Strangeways has a longstanding relationship with ‘dirt’. In a prison context, the word ‘dirt’ is regularly used to sanitise what is in fact faeces; the ‘dirty protest’ being a good example (mentioned in 6.3 by the senior NOMS source I interviewed). As explored in Chapter 4, one of the highly publicised root causes of the 1990 riots was the fact that the practice of ‘slopping out’ still existed at Strangeways — essentially, Britain’s most famous prison riot rested on buckets of excrement. The abolition of slopping out was one important legacy of the riots. Strangeways is inextricably linked to ‘dirt’ as a result and I explore what I believe to be an abiding memory of this link in section 6.3. Dereliction and abandonment were also focussed on by participants, and these are also discussed in 6.3.

In section 6.4, I look at the awareness — which some found uncomfortable, and some found titillating — amongst participants of their ability to see various parts of the prison. Added to this, from some, imagined elaborations were made to the building’s structure, which allowed them to feel that *they* were being watched. This peculiar idea — that the prison had been designed in such a way that might allow prisoners to use the building to their own, voyeuristic advantage — is touched on by Welch (2011), who highlights the omissions made by Foucault (1977) when defining panopticism and Mathiesen (1997) when defining synopticism. Welch notes that though there are instances of the *many watching the few* and the *few watching the many*, when applying these concepts to a contemporary viewer society, it is important to remember that there are also instances where those being

watched do watch back (2011: 304). This idea of reciprocal watching again links to Turner's porous prison boundary (2016).

6.2: Stuart Horner and the Fear of Escape

On September 16, 2015, Stuart Horner, a convicted murderer serving a sentence of 27 years at HMP Manchester, ended his three-day long protest on the roof of the prison in return for a 12 inch pizza and a can of Coke (BBC, 2015; Manchester Evening News, 2015). During his time on the roof, Horner had caused millions of pounds worth of damage to the Grade II Listed building, removing hundreds of roof tiles and smashing glass windows and roofs. He also procured a marker pen and wrote the following message, in reference to Strangeways' last rooftop riots, on his T shirt:

It's not 1990

Tell the government we've all had enough

Sort the whole system (See Figure 6.1)



Fig 6.1 Stuart Horner on the roof of Strangeways, displaying the message on his t-shirt. (Manchester Evening News)

During the protest, around 60 inmates were transferred to HMP Belmarsh, and a further 25 moved within Strangeways itself to avoid injury during the destruction of the roof. Large numbers of people began to congregate outside the prison in solidarity with Horner, staging what were termed as ‘protest parties’, where groups of people formed a conga line and danced the Macarena before pelting prison officers who were leaving work with eggs (Manchester Evening News, 16 September 2015). As mentioned in Chapter 5, Horner’s escape and subsequent protest was described to me in detail by Katie Butler, one of the journalists who covered the story for the Manchester Evening News. She told me about the party (for full quote see section 6.2), saying that the 1990 riots had become ‘a massive part of Manchester’s history’. This is compounded in the level of interest that still pervades the topic. It also, of course, made its architectural mark on the prison itself, forcing an expensive reconstruction of the building in the 1990s (detailed in Chapter 5).

In Chapter 5, I explored the idea that for some participants, the 1990 riots seemed to have become something akin to family legend. Carl, who had lived in Manchester as a child and moved back for university, spoke of his father’s propensity for speaking about the building, finishing with:

We have spoken about the riots before, cause my dad told me about them, probably no more than 'oh, in the 90s there were some riots and it was because it wasn't very nice there, and money got pumped into it and it was fine', and I think last time he told me that was when the name changed, cause I didn't realise it wasn't called Strangeways any more, it was Her Majesty's Prison Manchester, um, so we've probably had more conversations than the average family has about Strangeways...

Likewise Joel, whose recording studio is in a repurposed garage which his family has owned for generations, described his mother and grandparents' response to the 1990 riots:

When we had the riots back in the 1990s... My grandparents have owned that building since the 1960s, so when the riots happened, my Mum and my grandparents were on the roof. They were waving at the prisoners and they were waving back to them.

[later]

ES: *Do you remember the first riot?*

Joel: *I remember it. Yes, I do, actually, because I remember being round at my Nan's. It was on TV. It was a big deal because my Grandad worked opposite — well, just near it — in the factory there. Yes, so I remember it. I was a kid. I was in*

Stockport then, and even though it was something like four or five miles away, when you're... When was that — 1990?

ES: *Yes.*

Joel: *I was nine, so, at the time, I guess Manchester seemed a long way away... Yes, I knew my Grandad was right near it, and I remember my Nan being all, "Ooh, be careful," because my Nan is super careful about anything.*

Carl is in his mid twenties and could not speak about the 1990 riots from a first hand perspective; rather, his were second-hand stories, passed on to him from his parents. Joel's memories are more developed, yet are predominantly still anecdotal — personally, he remembers his Nan worrying about his Grandad's safety, but his initial memory is actually what he has been told by his family — that they were waving at rioting prisoners from their roof, and being waved back to. These memories go some way towards explaining Katie's observation that 'a lot of people were there with their kids, it was like um, like a... not a tourist attraction, but it was kind of like... lets go, we've gotta go and see this' — it would make sense for parents who remembered the 1990 riots to want their children to witness what they might deem to be a similar moment of history in the making. Sobchack notes that there is a newly developed sense 'in which we believe we can go right out and "be" in history', whereby people flock to events — like the Strangeways riots — on the off chance that they might make the five o'clock news. She notes the O.J. Simpson case as an early example of this: 'the people who stood outside of Nicole Simpson's Brentwood condo and told reporters they were there because they wanted to be

‘part of history’ (2014: 5). Sobchack alerts us to the possibility that this may be the end of history as a distinct temporal category; that it may in fact be moving into the present day.



Fig 6.2 The view from Liam’s kitchen window. Photograph taken by Liam.

Liam has lived in Manchester for 40 years, and in his sixth floor Salford flat for ten. Liam ‘really likes’ his view of the prison [pictured, Figure 6.2] finding it to be ‘beautiful’ and ‘aesthetically pleasing’, but admitted, ‘I don’t think of it as being a prison, as such.’ Liam said that aside from seeing the odd police convoy or

armoured vehicle, the first time he had thoroughly *focused* on the prison was when Horner was on the roof:

I don't really think about it too much, what it generally is. Other than the other week you know, there was so much attention on it, you know, I started looking back over old videos of the riots when they were on the roof and all the rest of it, kind of expecting it to — you know, you heard about tensions inside, and how they were moving a load of prisoners out because — well probably because it had started kicking off and they were worried about another riot or something, so um, you know, it's interesting. I did focus on it, for a — more so than I have in the last, in the whole time I've been here, you know, I got my video camera out and started um — well, I was looking out for him, on the roof and you know then one day, I thought I saw him, and I saw these pigeons fly up, and thought oh it's probably him, set them off from the other side, but couldn't see him, and then the next day he appeared right in view of where I was. I was like — ooh, camera, camera, where is it!

In interviews with other local residents, however — particularly with those who lived in the Green Quarter, the development of luxury flats that overlooks the prison — the response to Horner's escape was less excited and more worried. When we were talking about the stagnation of the Cheetham Hill area, one participant, Dev, evidenced fear of dereliction, speaking about his belief that the

prison was preventing the area's regeneration, and that more specifically, the riot and the 'protest parties' had added to this:

Yes, the thing is, this guy going up on the roof will kill any thought anyone had of going near it [to regenerate the area]. Because again — it didn't affect me in any way — but if I was in a block of flats across the other side of Cheetham Hill Road, and I'd got a whole load of idiots outside, having a street party, letting off fireworks because some guy's up on the roof of the prison smashing stuff up, I just wouldn't want to live there. ... It's just utterly depressing the area.

... if that was literally outside my front door, trying to come home from work or something, it'd be like "What are these people doing here, drinking beer and playing loud music? What's this all about? There's a guy on the roof over there." It'd just make me think "Why the hell am I living here? Why don't I go and live somewhere this isn't going to happen?" And it's like — obviously you could live here, in one of these flats, and have drunken people on a Friday night or a Saturday night, and that could be even worse. But in a way, you accept that.

In contrast to the testimony of the anonymous police officer that I included in Section 5.3.1, Dev had begun our interview by saying 'it's a bit of bizarre irony that — those streets around it [*the prison*] are probably some of the safest streets in Manchester, because they're heavily monitored by CCTV by the prison and police as well', which showed a distinct difference in their perspectives on the area.

However, after we talked about Horner's protest, he began to elaborate on some of the more pressing fears that it had evoked for him:

Dev: I don't want the prisoners to be rowdy, that's an even worse fear, like, "Oh my God they're going to break out and riot and set fire to the whole building"

ES: Like a rerun of 1990?

Dev: Yes. You think, what if they suddenly managed to set fire and it catches hold, what the hell are they going to do with 1000 prisoners?

Similarly, towards the end of our interview, Nadir said that he didn't mind living in the Green Quarter while he was single, but that if he had a partner or a baby, he would rethink his living arrangements for their safety. He said:

When I said I didn't mind living next to — I had only thought about it for half an hour. Had I had a girlfriend, especially with a young baby, then I probably wouldn't be as comfortable with it. Me on my own, I could defend myself, I'm not in most of the day. There's nothing expensive in my apartment. For me on my own, I'm completely happy, but a young family? I'd probably move them.

Both men had initially started our conversation detailing how little they felt they were affected by the proximity of the prison — however, as the conversation progressed, fears about prison escapes, specifically, began to foment in both instances. For Dev, the inability to protect himself from a huge uproar at the prison is what is frightening; for Nadir, it is his inability to protect someone he loves from

the perceived threat of an escaped inmate. These are fears touched on in the literature on NIMBYism explored in Chapter 2 — although fear of escape featured less heavily in American literature than it did amongst my participants (Hayman, 2002, for example). I interviewed Laura, who worked on Swan Street and saw the prison each day on her way to and from her office, prior to Horner’s protest. She, too, had fears surrounding escape though she maintained that they didn’t bother her too much, as she did not live close to the prison. She said:

I wouldn’t think it, but I could understand how other people could, like if I lived close to like, Strangeways, I would think — can people get out of there? You know, like these really high risk prisons, because there are some really high risk prisoners, in Strangeways? Can they get out? Can they escape? If there’s another riot [laughs].

Even prior to Stuart Horner’s protest, Laura had an abiding memory of the scale and destruction of the previous Strangeways riot. Of course, people do get out of the prison; people are regularly *let* out of the prison. Josh and Sophie live in a renovated pub that Sophie informed me had previously served prison officers and ex inmates alike, but which has now been renovated into a seven bedroom dwelling for young professionals and artists. It is now probably the closest dwelling to the prison; for a long time it was the closest pub to it, too. Josh described the previous ‘two Saturdays in a row, half past five in the morning, there was a guy shouting for Jimmy, banging on the door, saying ‘Jimmy, let me in.’ He assumed that ‘Jimmy’ was the landlord (it is painted above the front door that someone with the first name ‘James’ was once licensed to sell alcohol on the premises). He also assumed that

the man looking for Jimmy was an ex prisoner who had last visited the now-defunct pub for a drink before he went to prison. Recollections of events like these allow us to examine how the carceral extends beyond the prison wall and touches those with very little relation to the institution. The man looking for Jimmy acted as a reminder to Sophie and Josh that they were living in a building with historic links to the prison — and in fact, for some people, the link still exists.

6.3 Fear of Dirt and Dereliction

Jewitt (2011) notes the ‘great distaste’ we feel towards our own waste and that of others, and what is simultaneously an inadequate, almost paralysed, response to lack of sanitation. She claims that the perceived link between crime, immorality and unsanitary conditions led to British sanitary reform in the nineteenth century (Jewitt, 2011: 609). As Jewitt’s focus is not on dirt in prison, she neglects to acknowledge that there, the link between crime and unsanitary conditions is enforced not by the criminals themselves, but by those who govern them. We are minded of Kristeva’s theory of abjection; the idea that ‘fecal matter signifies [...] the price the body must pay if it is to become clean and proper’ (1980: 108). These links between excrement, propriety and price paying (for crime) are all present in the discourse around the practice of ‘slopping out’.

Further, in studies of dirt, there is a division between ‘real’ pollution and ‘symbolic’ pollution (Douglas, 1966; Hacking, 2003) something that is evidenced

by my participants. Hacking notes that,

of course there is a difference between incest, on the one hand, where the 'pollution' is figurative', and the literally polluting residues of industrial mercury in the drinking water available to some Japanese or Canadian Native peoples. But after reading Douglas, we can begin to notice that the literal pollution of mercury can be invested with symbolic content. (2003: 23)

Some participants lit upon 'real' dirt — the Council's neglect of the area, for example, apparent in great swathes of uncleared rubbish on the streets around the prison — whilst others chose to focus on 'symbolic' dirt, dirt that they conjured up out of a loose understanding of the building's age and the idea that it was unfit for purpose. What was interesting, particularly in Manchester, but also in Wrexham, was that themes of dirt, the fear of dirt — and conversely, cleanliness — appeared in many of the interviews.

Similarly, fear of dereliction also appeared in multiple interviews. Ruins have been romanticised since the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. To some people they can be fascinating, spellbinding; to others they can be terrifying, representative of ghosts and decay (Woodward, 2001). From early childhood, abandoned buildings represent danger; Hart (1979) lists abandoned places as those most likely to frighten children. One idea focussed on by Vidler (1992: 19) is the idea that a building need not be ruined to give the impression, or hold a *reputation*, of ruination. This was certainly prevalent in some of the data; though Strangeways

continues to function as a prison there was much speculation amongst participants about whether or not the building was fit for purpose, based predominantly on its external appearance. (Internally, it is certainly debatable how fit it is for purpose, according to the senior source at NOMS I interviewed, detailed further in 7.3.)

Dereliction and fear of the consequences of dereliction was also a point of focus in Wrexham, but in this instance, the prison was deemed to have improved what was a derelict brownfield site that had previously posed a danger to local children.

Laura mentioned that she had worked delivering education programmes in prison before. She was preoccupied with what she perceived to be the dirtiness of the visible prison buildings in Manchester, because she thought this belied the conditions within. We began talking about Manchester's architecture in general, and she brought up the prison as an example herself. At first, she began to describe the city's mill buildings, saying

I think kind of like, the old, kind of like Victorian buildings, like all the old mills that are here, I think when they are renovated, they don't — they look lovely, and they look really, like, well cared for, and they look like they're very much part of the city's heritage. When they're kind of like, left, I think they look very barren, and very, like, I actually think they look frightening, I think they look quite scary.

For Laura, Manchester's dereliction is avoidable, yet pervasive. I asked her to elaborate on the feeling of fear that the derelict mill buildings inspired in her and

she continued, lighting on the prison building as an example herself, in a quote that represents the extension of the carceral well:

Laura: It just feels kind of like desolate and ... I think it — it's intimidating, more than frightening. And I think for me, especially when you talk about the prison in general, it's that tower, like, it's horrid — it's like a watchtower, like ... It's really horrid and obviously, I understand the rationale for it being there, for the prison, but it kind of feels like — it extends beyond the prison, do you know what I mean, that it's kind of this — cause it kind of like sticks out so much and it is like something that's on like, the city landscape, you know, like you've got the lovely Hilton, that's part of the city landscape, and then you've got the prison tower and you're like...

ES: It's like, looming isn't it

Laura: It is! And it's kind of like — it looks like it's like — almost like this permanent reminder — that there's this prison there, and it kind of like makes you think — cause it looks like — cause it looks old, and it looks... like it's not well cared for, it kind of makes you think — what goes on? In there?

Interestingly, in Wrexham, dereliction was also a worry — but for different reasons. Brigitte lives in the Pentre Maelor housing estate, directly opposite Berwyn. Her fears around dereliction focussed on the original brownfield site, which according

to her, the development of the prison had eradicated. Brigitte has four children and noted

Before, it had been wasteland for a long time. It was the Firestone factory. And actually, it was dangerous, because the kids used to go and play on it and there were sinkholes and things, and kids could get stuck; so actually, in that way, it's better, because they've spent a lot of money sort of landscaping it, I suppose... there were one or two accidents I believe, with kids on that land. It was dangerous.

For Brigitte, the fear of dereliction was alleviated by the construction of the new prison, as the fact that the land was now in use removed the danger it once posed to her children and others. For Laura, the fear of dereliction can't be relieved by the fact that the prison is in use and is not derelict, per se, because the visual messages she takes from what she perceives to be a building that is uncared for are connected to the other buildings that she thinks are uncared for in Manchester — mills and old factory buildings which actually *are* derelict by definition. She continued to explain what the prison's external appearance made her think about later in our interview when I asked her if she would rather not be able to see the prison from work, embellishing upon her initial exploration:

I've never really thought of that before, but no, I don't really want to see it. And it's not because I think that — “oh I don't want to — oh those people who are in prison, I don't wanna see them, I don't wanna have to think about it” — I don't — but I don't wanna think that there are people — and I make assumptions on what it's like

inside there based on what I can see from the outside — and I think it looks — I think it looks, like, dirty [laughs] and it would be dirty, and it would be dirty inside, I think it looks uncared for, and the people inside would be uncared for — and I don't want — I don't really like to think about that, because I don't think that's what prison should be.

Laura's worry about the external building conditions being mirrored internally in the way that prisoners are forced to live links in some ways to Waterhouse's initial intentions for the building's effect on its viewers. Yet while Waterhouse foresaw local wrongdoers cowering in the splendour of his pseudo cathedral, daring them to imagine the religious retribution within, the result for Laura, who has delivered workshops in prison and believes strongly in the institution's rehabilitative capabilities, is different. For Laura, the building has not aged well; rather, externally it is dirty and uncared for, and so the people inside must be, too. In fact, the Woolf Report lighted on the internal squalor of Strangeways prior to the 1990 riots as the main reason for unrest amongst the inmates, citing the 'dehumanising effects of the insanitary and unsatisfactory physical conditions within the prison' (Prison Reform Trust, 1991: 3), and it is possible that there is a lingering memory of this idea amongst people like Laura, who have worked in prison and have perhaps a higher than average understanding of the British penal system. In fact, Laura's opinions of the prison buildings I showed her — in terms of their safety, their security and their ability to rehabilitate — were intrinsic to her ideas about the building's cleanliness. When I showed her a photograph of Oakwood and an architect's drawing of Wrexham, though she described the buildings as 'stark', she

said, ‘it does look more secure and it does look — it looks much more modern and it looks much more, it just looks a bit more well cared for, well kept, and clean — it looks clean.’ A senior source at NOMS corroborated many of Laura’s theories; that Wrexham was cleaner, that *something* was ‘going on in there’ (in Strangeways). He said that:

NOMS Source: *I’d rather be going to work in Wrexham, than I would in Manchester.*

ES: *Why?*

NOMS Source: *Because it’s now designed, it’s clean, it’s clear lines, you can see, you feel safe. Manchester, the Victorian — not just Manchester, they’re all the same, they’re a radial prison with lots of little hidey holes, that’s where all the word gets, that’s where all the business gets sorted out, it’s not safe for staff, there’s no proper office accommodation, it’s very difficult to upgrade because often the walls in there are so thick — you know, these are thick [Wrexham], but you know, we’ve built into these conjured routes and all sorts of stuff so we can upgrade technology, we can change the wiring, all sorts of stuff. In there — you try to retro-fit, it’s a nightmare. It’s dirty, they’re... they’re past their life.*

In many ways, the interviews I conducted with experts on prison were extremely different from those I conducted with non-experts. The language employed by

experts was more terse, less emotional and less evocative; it often seemed more scripted, and unlike the non-experts, there were certain topics that those employed by NOMS or Lendlease were unable or unwilling to discuss. As Brigitte described it, when I asked her about the communication that she as a resident of Pentre Maelor had received: ‘I think they obviously had that... conversation... and thought, right, this is the line we’re gonna give and actually it’s just rubbish, isn’t it.’

In the above quote, though, the NOMS source uses language that is almost identical to Laura’s. Strangeways is ‘dirty’, Wrexham is ‘clean’, and what’s more, Strangeways has ‘hidey holes’, ‘where the business gets sorted out’ — just as some of the other participants suspected, the warren-like prison building lends itself to criminal activity.

For Liam, however, the cleanliness was actually a detrimental factor when he examined the photographs of the two prisons side by side. He maintained that he would rather live opposite Strangeways and when he saw Oakwood, he said:

It looks dead sterile and yeah, I imagine... I don’t know, I was thinking about this last night. I was thinking, if you were in a really sterile environment, how would it work on your mind? Not saying — I mean, inmates are in there for punishment, but erm, I’m trying to think how to word it. It almost would send you a little bit mad, being in such a sterile environment, you know, and I think that the justice system would want them — to almost cure them, as such, by putting them in prison, and I

think... well what sort of effect would it have on your mind, being in such an environment all along, would it cleanse you as such, or would it turn you a little bit madder?

Here, Liam makes a link between in/sanity, cleanliness (or ‘sterility’) and dirt. Given Strangeways’ previously mentioned historic relationship with dirt — specifically, that dirt, or defecation, was what led to the 1990 riots — Liam’s argument has two strands. The actions of the rioters who wanted more hygienic conditions within the prison were sane. Liam is not advocating for filthy conditions in prisons. When he talks about the prison environment as ‘sterile’ I believe he is referring to spaces in total institutions becoming ‘disinfected of identifications’ (Goffman 1961: 19) which Goffman believes contributes to dehumanisation.

At Strangeways, these conversations around dirt, cleanliness and sterility seemed inseparable to me from the cultural history of Manchester; its historic industrial grime, its once seedy Victorian underbelly, and the prison’s own concrete link to tragic, inhumane geographies of shit. At Wrexham, meanwhile, there was tension around the filth of the former Firestone factory site and the danger its dereliction posed to children, so much so that the introduction of the prison to the site was deemed cleansing; an overall positive. This was compounded by the NOMS source, who claimed that Strangeways’ layout lent itself to dirt, rendering it, and prisons like it, as ‘past their life’.

6.4 Synopticism, panopticism and the public being watched

The use of ‘synopticism’ in this context is mine; its appearance in my data was unexpected, and provides one of the significant contributions of the thesis. As I explored in Chapters 2 and 3, the prison has long been considered a spectacle (Foucault, 1975; Wacquant, 2010). A surprising commonality between participant responses, then, was the idea that someone inside the prison — guards, or prisoners — could be watching *them*.

As touched on in the previous section, Laura’s interview was particularly interesting with regards to the fear of the prison building. It seemed that during the interview she was able to convince herself that the tower she had initially described as looking ‘like a watchtower’, *was* a watchtower. It is, in fact, still operative in its original purpose of a cooling tower; at various points in the day, it is possible to see steam pouring out of the vents at the top. However, when I showed Laura the photographs of Wrexham and Strangeways and asked her to choose which she’d rather live opposite, she looked at Strangeways and said:

That picture — the one where it looks like... [laughs] it does look a bit like a castle — I’d be like yeah, I’d quite happily live next to that — that would be quite nice. But then when you bear in mind the rest of it, I’m like no, I don’t wanna live near that, and I certainly don’t want that tower, because I would feel like the people — are people still in that tower? Are they like, looking into my house?

Similarly, Josh and Dev both talked about the idea that people from within the prison could see into their houses. Josh said:

J: There has been a few times when I've woken up and I've looked out the window and seen it and I've just thought to myself like... I get to wake up out of bed today, and leave my front door, and go where I want whereas they probably... there could be someone doing the exact same thing every morning, looking at my window thinking, I wonder where they're going today, whereas they just stay in the same room or same walls and that... that were a freaky thought.

ES: *Yeah. Do you think people can see in? Can you see anybody's window?*

J: I haven't really looked too much, I can see the building, I can see the windows, but what's behind those windows I have no idea. There could be people, it could be offices, or a kitchen or a cafeteria, could be, anything. But I — I don't — no — I know I've thought that, so it just made me think — is somebody else doing the same back, it's like a.... Bit of a parallel, not a parallel universe, but...

For both Laura and Josh, the prison has the capacity to be an invasive presence. For Josh, he wakes up and the thought of it is *forced* upon him, by the sight of it. In both of their minds, it is a possibility that the building allows prisoners or guards to watch *them*. This in turn makes them feel very uncomfortable — the idea of a

faceless person that they'll never meet, acting as a surveillant over them. While the senior NOMS source I interviewed explained that it was impossible to conduct adequate surveillance *internally* at Strangeways, there are some *imagined* forms of surveillance here that cross the prison boundary.

As previously explored, Dev was particularly preoccupied with the prison's effect on the regeneration of the Cheetham Hill area. He was concerned about the way that a perception of prisoners' ability to see out of the prison could be off putting for prospective buyers in the area.

If a brand new block of flats went up, and you went and stood outside and you saw the view, and the first thing you could see when you looked down was the prison... and if you were on the lower floor of that building, you definitely wouldn't want to be there. I guess it's prejudice, but you wouldn't want prisoners looking in on your daily business sort of thing.

This links back to Josh's statement — he is in a lower-level apartment, much closer to the prison than Dev, and Dev is right — he doesn't like the idea that a prisoner could be looking into his room; he calls it 'a freaky thought'. It's implied by Josh that the static nature of imprisonment is part of what makes him uncomfortable; whereas he can leave his room and go about his day, the prisoner who may or may not be able to see into his room is bound to stay in one place, looking out of their window, possibly into his room. Josh is not concerned out of prejudice, as Dev

asserts, but more the disparity between his life and the one of the man who might be watching him.

This feeling of being watched from within the prison was replicated in Wrexham, when I undertook a walked interview with Brigitte. We conducted our interview at around 6pm and as we walked past the entrance to the construction site for Berwyn, Brigitte noticed a security guard on the gate. Both of us felt nervous about this, as I had asked her to take photographs. She moved to take one saying, ‘he’ll probably ask us what the hell we’re doing’, and I am heard on the transcript saying he ‘might tell us off’. There was nothing inappropriate about what we were doing, but the sight of someone tasked with guarding the entrance to the prison inspired a nervousness in us, as if we were doing something wrong. Adey (2008, 2009) describes the ways in which airport security environments are designed to exert pressure on those that move through them to behave in certain ways; this was replicated at the gates of Berwyn as we quickly scurried past the security guard, hoping we wouldn’t get into trouble — for walking along a public road — the road Brigitte lives on, in fact. This walked interview will be discussed in depth in Chapter 7.

6.5 Conclusion

Chapter 6 focused on the emotions elicited amongst the host communities by the close proximity of the prison, with specific focus on *fear*. Some of these fears were explicit — the fear of escape at Strangeways, for example, was bound up with the

1990 riots and the protest of Stuart Horner, which happened at the time my fieldwork took place. This fear had been proven to be based in some reality, and perhaps exacerbated by that, as the escaped prisoner was still fresh in the minds of participants. Other fears — of dirt and dereliction — initially seemed to be more abstract, and yet they, too, had grounding in reality. The final fear was of panopticism, or synopticism. Multiple participants felt that the prison afforded someone — perhaps a prisoner — the ability to watch *them*. This was an interesting and unexpected finding, one that I feel broadens the discourse on community fear around prison.

Chapter 7: Scale, Sadness and Fear: The Prison at Close Proximity

7.1 Introduction

As I detailed in Chapter 4, whilst collecting data, I decided that the inclusion of walking interviews around the prison grounds might add further depth to the quality of data I was assimilating. I asked two of my participants — Carl in Manchester, and Brigitte in Wrexham — to meet me at their local prison site so that we could walk around the site together. I chose to ask these specific participants because they both gave what I deemed to be very measured, considered and, specifically, non-emotive responses to my questions about the prisons in their first interviews. This in turn made me wonder whether the distance from the buildings at the time of interviewing might have affected their responses, for as Kraftl notes, meanings are in part given to buildings through human interaction with them (2010). I wanted to see whether or not their attitudes towards the prisons would change when they were physically met with them, as despite both participants' regular close proximity to the buildings, neither had spent very much time directly examining them.

I first interviewed Brigitte in Starbucks in Wrexham city centre — several miles from the prison — although her house is five minutes walk from it. Her only view of the prison during the interview was an image I had taken from Google (Figure 4.1) which I asked her to refer back to. I interviewed Carl in his top floor office in a

brand new building. I also had a photograph of Strangeways for reference in this interview, but Carl's office's wraparound, fourteenth floor windows showed me Strangeways from an entirely new angle — from up there, the prison looked 'puny' as Carl put it. This is clearly not how Waterhouse, the architect, intended the prison to be viewed when he designed it in the 1860s; it was a commanding neo-Gothic structure attached to the even more illustrious Assize Courts (Figure 7.1), meant to be viewed, and preferably quaked at, by passers by on foot. Prison buildings at this time were highly representative physical incarnations of state power (Jewkes, 2013). Now, for example, the Co-op's 1 Angel Square towers, extraterrestrial-like, over much of Manchester's Victorian architecture (Figure 7.2), its walls composed almost entirely of windows, providing 'well-housed' occupants and users with designed-in empowerment-by-elevation (Jacobs et al, 2008: 182), giving them an aspect which Waterhouse did not imagine during the construction of Strangeways.



Fig 7.1 An image of Manchester Assize Courts taken 1900 (Manchester Libraries)



Fig 7.2 The Co-op's new flagship building, 1 Angel Square

Both participants saw their local prison daily. Brigitte drove past Berwyn several times a day, on her way to work, taking her children to and from school and to their dad's house, whilst Carl had a view of Strangeways from his living room window, walked past it on his way to work, and could then see it from his window at work. Affective geographers explore the way that external focuses can undermine a large building's affective materiality (Rose et al, 2010). Rose et al note the example of caring for a child whilst shopping, marking the way that activities associated with parenting, for instance, can 'erode the (shopping) centre's light, geometry and extent' (2010: 344). I wondered whether their descriptions of the prisons, and of their feelings about the prisons — relayed from memories of these passing moments that were triggered by an onscreen image — might be affected by the fact that more often than not, when they see the prison, they are busy: changing gear, talking to children, typing at a desk. These are all things that could 'enfeeble' the

affective properties of a building, according to Rose et al, so I wanted to see what effect, if any, the immediacy of the prison had on Carl and Brigitte, who had respectively expressed pleasure and indifference towards the prison buildings near them. Interviews was the most effective way of exploring this. During the interviews, I gave both participants my mobile phone and encouraged them to take photographs of anything that they found particularly interesting as we walked along. Some of these photographs are included throughout the chapter.

7.2 The participants

Carl loves Manchester. As mentioned earlier, he was born there. His parents are ‘born and bred Mancunians’, but while they have settled in Cornwall, he chose to return to Manchester as a student and has made his life there, buying a flat with his partner and taking a job at a national business based in the city centre. He has a deep affection for Manchester’s Victorian architecture, citing the John Rylands Library as his favourite of Manchester’s buildings. He also saw merit in the prison building’s architecture, saying:

Strangeways... it is beautiful. And it's a prison. And I love that about some of our Victorian — particularly our Victorian architectural stock in the city is — it adds something else to the story; it's not just another row of terraced houses or another mill, we've got those, loads of cities have got those, but we've got these hidden gems as well, and I think, yeah, I think we should probably hold on to those specific hidden gems more than others.

Brigitte lives directly opposite the prison site in Wrexham, on the Pentre Maelor housing estate. Her sitting room looks out over the plot of land purchased by the Ministry of Justice to build on — although at the time of the interview, her view remained relatively unscathed. She has spent time in prisons due to her work with young offenders. In our initial interview, Brigitte gave a level response when I asked her how she felt about the prison being built opposite her house. She highlighted a societal need for prison, and countered the fact that nobody actually ‘wants’ a prison with the idea that it might have positive outcomes for Wrexham:

Well, I think it could potentially be a good thing, for the area and for the town, and you know, I mean nobody wants a prison, do they, but you gotta have them, I suppose, so I don't see why it shouldn't be here, any more than anywhere else, if somebody's got to have it, why shouldn't we have it, you know?

From my own perspective, the first time I visited the sites I found what felt like the behemoth footprint of each breathtaking, perhaps because up to those moments I had been engaging with a very abstract concept of the buildings, forging a two dimensional understanding of them using maps and photographs sourced on the internet. No photograph can really explain the scale — nor the atmosphere — of either place. In my field notes, too, I attempt to describe what was really an indescribable, intangible atmosphere, particularly at Strangeways. One description details a sunny day shortly after Stuart Horner's protest. My best friend had come

to visit. She voiced an interest in seeing the prison that I had talked so much about.

I wrote:

We took the dog for a walk, and as Hannah was interested in how my research was progressing, took the opportunity to walk up towards Strangeways. It is now five days since the end of Stuart Horner's protest, news which has spread to America, as we found out when we Skyped Jeremy [her boyfriend] later. As we approached the prison from the top of the hill into which it is nestled, we could see workmen on a crane, who appeared to be taking note of the damage caused by Horner. The tangible dereliction that I had always previously noticed in visits to the area seemed to have been ruffled somewhat; there was a palpable feeling of fresh interest, in spite of the fact that the streets were empty. A hastily hand-painted banner lay abandoned on the floor, reading 'HMP Manchester prisoners are getting beat up. One man died in July 2015. Ur not getting away with this'. As we walked around the prison, I explained the history of the place to Hannah, who, in hushed tones, asked me if I thought the prisoners could hear me.

In many years of friendship, I have rarely known Hannah to speak in 'hushed tones', which is probably why I included that detail in my field diary. I feel that this summarises the effect that the prison seems to have on people who are otherwise disconnected from it once they enter its realm.

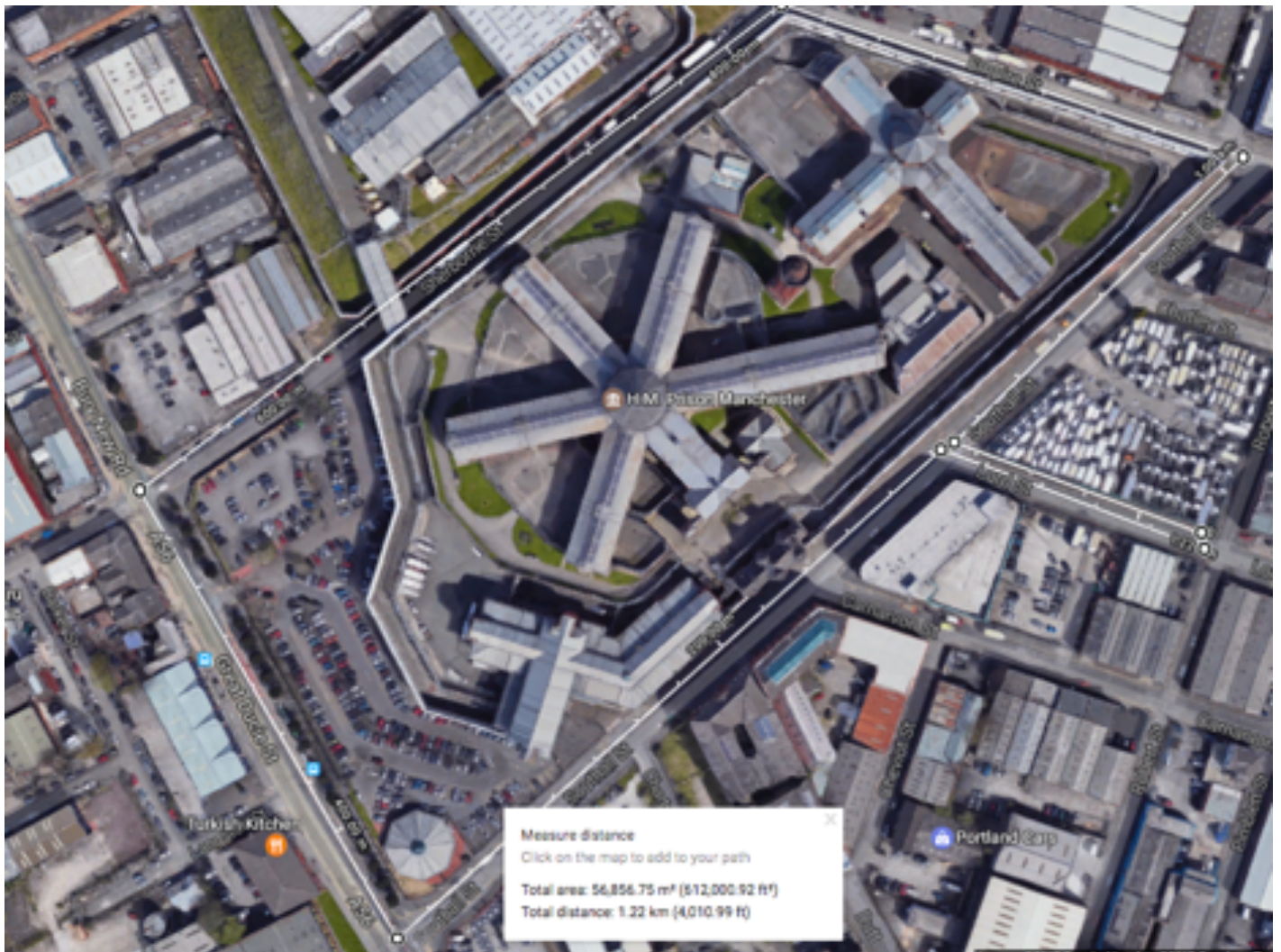


Fig 7.3 A map of the path that Carl and I took around Strangeways - approximately 1.2km

One difference between the two sites is evident simply from the length of our recorded interviews on each. Carl and I parked on Lord Street and had completed our walk around the prison in 19 minutes and 58 seconds, whilst Brigitte and I walked from Pentre Maelor Post Office (a similar distance from the edge of the prison grounds as the parking space on Lord Street was to Strangeways) to the back of the prison site — halfway round — and back again, after we were unable to get

any further due to obstructive fencing. Our walk took 47 minutes, 17 seconds. I have plotted the paths of each walk in Figures 7.3 and 7.4 on Google Maps, which tells me in Strangeways, the loop of the prison was 1.2km, and that in Wrexham, where a full loop was not possible due to ongoing construction, the walk almost halfway round the prison and back was 2.18km. Each prison was the biggest ever built in Britain at the time of its construction, with Strangeways built for 1000 inmates and Berwyn able to hold 2106. The enormity of Berwyn, in particular, is certainly felt once one makes the decision to start walking around it, and I will start



there, with a focus on scale in Brigitte's interview.

Fig 7.4 A map of the path that Brigitte and I took around Wrexham - approximately 2.18km

7.3 Scale

As mentioned in Chapter 3.3, in geographies of architecture, certain buildings have come to be known as ‘big things’ — yet this phrase doesn’t just denote a large building (Rose et al, 2010), rather, the ‘big thing’ that is focussed on is the way in which these things *come to be* and are experienced once they *are*. Rose et al take into account geographies of emotion and geographies of affect, noting that big things may exist within both strands. They compiled a list of buildings referred to as ‘big things’ by other geographers, including the following: residential tower blocks, airports, skyscrapers, shopping malls, office blocks, flyovers, plazas, libraries and even ships. In 2016, Moran et al went on to add prisons to this list, noting the absence from it of ‘non iconic, non utopian’ buildings. Berwyn certainly fits into Jacobs’ description of a big thing that is ‘anonymous’, ‘bureaucratized’ and ‘mass produced’ (2006: 12).

Moran et al’s paper (2016) and their definition of prison as a ‘big thing’ is of particular interest in relation to Berwyn and Brigitte. As she lives directly opposite the site, Brigitte was witness to, and sometimes a participant in, the process of ‘architectural assembly’ described by Moran et al — the ‘becoming’ of the building that takes place between the decision to construct a new prison — the ‘processes of commissioning, procurement, tendering, consortia-building and negotiation’ that come prior to construction actually beginning (2016: 416). She also witnessed the construction of the prison — ‘I’m sure there’s lots of ways out’, she told me,

confidentially, in our first interview, ‘because they’re built so quickly.’ Yet although she drove past the prison ‘all the time’, all she was afforded of it was a glimpse, and the experience of it on foot altered her understanding of the materiality of the building somewhat. It seemed to me in the walked interview that though she had experienced the architectural assembly and construction of this big thing, Brigitte had remained unaware of its scale. This became obvious when, over the course of our interview, Brigitte reiterated how big the site was six times; the size of the building was clearly a shock to her, in spite of the fact that she had lived opposite the empty site for eight years. Her shock became more prevalent the further into our walk we went. The first time she mentioned it was when I asked her:

ES: Does it feel different now you've walked up to it?

B: Er... it seems bigger, I must admit, it does seem a lot bigger. Cause when you drive past it, you don't really get much of a view, do you?

As mentioned, previously Brigitte had always passed the prison whilst driving, which distracted her. As we rounded the first corner of the site, she took in more of the scale. Brigitte said that though she drove past the site daily — sometimes more than twice daily, to and from work, taking her children to school and to various appointments — she had never really noticed certain aspects of the build, most particularly the scale. This reiterates Rose et al’s point (2010) about the diminishment of the building’s affective properties due to an interactant’s mind being elsewhere. She said:

B: *You would just drive past it, wouldn't you, you wouldn't, it wouldn't really um, be particularly noticeable I don't think. Well, I haven't really noticed it and I drive past it all the time, and it's only now cause we're walking that you actually stop and realise quite how large it is. I didn't quite realise it, to be honest.*

ES: *Why do you think that is, is it cause when you're driving you're focussed on -*

B: *Yeah, well, then you've got your eyes on the road, but it just... You know, I think it has been quite well set back, it's unobtrusive, you know, so, from that point of view, they've done quite a good job really.*

In the interview that Brigitte and I conducted in Wrexham's Starbucks, she said that she didn't mind the prison being there; she didn't 'see an issue with it', she was without 'any feeling about it, one way or another', as follows:

B: *To be honest, it's going to bring jobs and... it has brought a lot of jobs, I mean, one of, my job is working with young people trying to get them into work and we've managed to get a few young people getting work experience — building work, at the prison, which is quite nice, um, and there'll be ongoing jobs and I just... I'm not... I think it's a kind of knee jerk reaction, a sort of, Not In My Backyard thing, that people immediately said, oh no, we don't want that here, but I don't really see an issue with it, to be honest.*

ES: *Is there a feeling that it's quite different having a prison than it is a factory?*

Cause obviously there's lots of

B: *Yeah. It is. I mean it is going to be different. I think people are worried about practical things like... parking. You won't be able to park in your own street — like, whether that's true or not, obviously I don't know, but um, I really can't see that there's going to be... and I don't know whether this is going to make for instantly good research, cause I don't really have any feeling about it, one way or another.*

Yet once we had walked the length of one side of the prison site, Brigitte seemed to change her mind.

B: *This is the first time I've had a look, really.*

ES: *Do you think you'll be able to go back to just, driving past?*

B: *I think I'll probably notice it more than I did before.*

ES: *Do you? Oh no, sorry!*

B: *It's alright [laughs] ah, you know. I suppose they've got to put them somewhere, haven't they, so...*

ES: *It's just, I suppose it's... no one ever wants it to be*

B: *No*

ES: *Next door to them*

B: *I suppose no, you know, you'd like not to need it, wouldn't you, you'd like it to be that you, you don't need to have a prison for 2000 people, but... you do. So...*

ES: *What about the idea that they've got this extra land so that they can extend it?*

B: *They can extend it, yeah.*

ES: *Then they'll have a prison for -?*

B: *For 3, or 4000 people, because it's... there must be as much land again, or not quite as much, but certainly half as much again, as this... So they could have another thousand people quite easily, couldn't they? Which is... you know, quite scary, that would be housing half the criminals in the country once this is done, I think, cause this is certainly the biggest, I think, isn't it...?*

Inmates themselves, on an individual level, do not worry Brigitte; it is inmates en masse that disturb her, the idea of a large, faceless group of three or four thousand people, 'half the criminals in the country', as she puts it. The prison's scale was a cause of fascination throughout our walked interview, but also uneasiness,

particularly when Brigitte thought of the scope for further expansion. Only then does the prison become ‘quite scary’; only then does it become something more than a disconnected entity that she feels very little about, ‘one way or the other’.

Of course, the scale does not stop at the sixty acre footprint of the site; the buildings themselves and their components are all finished to a scale larger than we are generally used to, even on an industrial estate peppered with factories, warehousing and haulage facilities. At certain points in the interview, Brigitte seemed genuinely taken aback by certain aspects of the building’s scale. Once, she stopped in her tracks, and stopped me mid sentence to exclaim on it:

ES: Do you think that they’re going to just leave like, not have — that’s going to be the main fence, and they’re going to have

B: Yeah, I think that’s going to be the fence that’s going to keep them in, I think this is just a sort of decorative.... Not decorative, but you know what I mean... for effect, this is clearly not the security fence, is it, that’s the secur-

Brigitte stops walking.

ES: I was thinking -

B: I’ve never even noticed that before!

ES: *How big the fence is?*

B: *How big the fence is! Yeah. No, I've not... I've only ever seen this little fence.*

ES: *It's kind of amazing actually, how big that fence is. I hadn't, I don't think when I last visited it was up*

B: *it was up, no*

ES: *So that's huge*

B: *Yeah, actually, it is, isn't it. It must be, what, twenty feet or something?*

Carl, meanwhile, had lighted on the wall at Strangeways during our initial interview in his office as his abiding memory of the building. He had been up close to the prison once before, when he went to rent a van from Salford Van Hire. Of the other participants, three more had also mentioned Salford Van Hire and its immediate proximity to the prison. The company directly borders Strangeways, sharing a wall with the prison. As Carl explains: 'the businesses around there — for example, there's a large van hire place that I used when I moved house, and they say like, 'We're at Strangeways', cause they literally are right next door, like their wall is the prison wall'. He went on to say:

C: It is a big old imposing building, and when you get close to it as well... those walls... that takes your breath back a bit actually, cause they are, they are... like a fortress. I've never actually seen walls that thick or that high, er, solely for keeping people in. That was weird.

ES: So when did you go up close to it?

C: Um, when I went to go and hire my van, cause yeah, literally, it borders the wall. Um, and it was so weird, cause I literally turned up and went... Jesus, that is a wall and a half. No windows or anything, it was just weird having such an expanse of brickwork with no windows, and with barbed wire on top.

Carl reiterated this when we visited the prison together, as soon as we had walked down Lord Street and were met by the prison wall. He stopped and said, 'Um, god the walls are *so* high. It's ridiculous isn't it. You don't often see walls like that. So, I'll take a picture of the wall.' (Fig 7.5). The walls were a running theme throughout our walked interview. 'To see a wall like that, without windows,' he began at one point, as we walked down Southall Street, 'You don't often get brickwork... oh, actually, completely contradicting me, there's a building opposite that's exactly the same!' On the opposite side of the road is a similar (though newer) windowless brick wall (Figure 7.6), acting as something like a mirror to the prison. Carl continued anyway, musing that 'it's so unusual though, to see a wall like that with no windows...' I had not noticed the windowless wall opposite before

he pointed it out, and I said so. ‘No, well, you’re so struck by this, aren’t you,’ he said, about Strangeways itself (Here, he took another photograph: Figure 7.7).



Fig 7.5 Carl’s first photograph of Strangeways’ walls.



Fig 7.6 Carl's photograph of the dense, windowless wall opposite Strangeways.

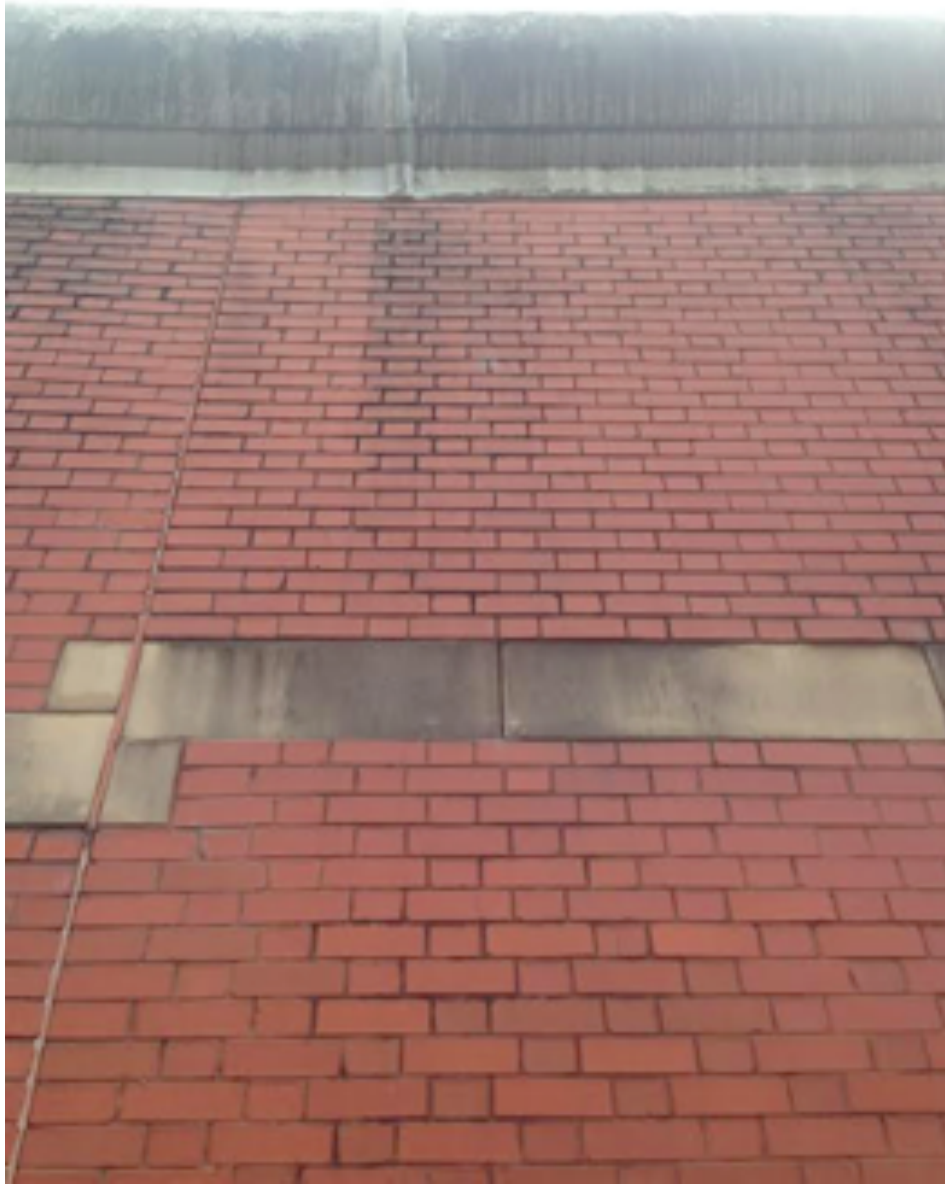


Fig 7.7 A close up Carl took of the wall at Strangeways.

Towards the end of the walked interview, I asked Carl whether he felt the building was different now that he was standing beside it. Again, he mentioned the walls:

Oh yeah, a hundred percent. Hundred. You're only looking at the lovely Victorian piece in the middle and generally only looking at the tower, which doesn't scream prison, if you didn't know what it was — you'd just think it was a relic from the mill or something like that, um. I think that's a lovely addition to the skyline, I like it. But... when you're up close and you get the addition of the newer pieces which don't really, they don't add or attract or say anything, they're just there, they — they're just kind of clumsy in their... uselessness. You know. They're not hideous, but they're not great either, and it's just a bit like... bleh. Um. And then you've got the walls which — which aren't much really aren't they?

The blankness of the walls — their deep height, their lack of windows, their uniform, featureless red brick — seemed to bother Carl, who had evidenced an affection for and understanding of historic architecture in our previous interview. He took several more photographs of them, two more of which are shown in figures 7.8 and 7.9. I think he touched on part of what it was that disturbed him as we walked along Sherborne Street. Sherborne Street is bordered either side by the prison, and a bridge belonging to the prison crosses it. Carl was surprised to see the bridge, and stopped suddenly as we passed under it, saying, 'This is bizarre, isn't it, because you're literally now in the middle of the prison — all but two walls. Inmates on either side.'

Then again, later on, he said, in passing, and unrelated to what we were talking about at the time:

C: Cause I suppose the newer ones have fences, don't they, instead of walls.

ES: Yeah, and like, several fences.

C: I wonder if they have fences inside or if the inmates can get straight to the wall.



Figs 7.8 (left), 7.9 (right) Two further images of Strangeways' walls taken by Carl. Fig 7.8 shows the wall as it has been reconstructed since the 1990 riots, whereas Fig 7.9 shows one of the remaining sections of original 1860s wall.

In Carl's mind, it seems that all that stands between him and the inmates are these *thick, high* walls, unlike any he's ever seen before, designed *solely for keeping*

people in. In our first interview he showed himself to be rational, even altruistic, in his attitude to prison; he spoke eloquently about the rehabilitative capabilities of architecture, questioning whether or not these could be employed in prisons. When he found himself sandwiched between two prison walls, however, he began to consider the inmates, their agency and their possibly dangerous capabilities for escape.

In Wrexham, other aspects of the Berwyn building's scale struck Brigitte, too; the size of the windows, in particular. She noted that in many ways, the prison just looked like another generic building on the industrial estate, but that on further inspection, what set it apart was the size of its windows. She described driving past the estate, and how in that context, the building blended in with the others very well:

B: They've clearly deliberately... cause it just looks like another section of the industrial estate, really, cause they've got little... little... mini estates all the way up, so it just looks like another one, really, it's not...

ES: And what does — now that you're here, does it feel less like that?

B: [pause] You can tell that it's not... you can tell that it's not a conventional sort of estate... but it doesn't look much, I mean I think it looks just... [sighs] just looks like a box, doesn't it? Lots of big boxes with not very much windows, that's the only thing, cause all of the others have got nice big windows.

ES: *Yeah*

B: *And they've got these little, piddling letterbox type things. Which are rubbish, aren't they, really?*

Brigitte fixated further on the windows later on. She noticed something that two other participants, Louise and Anna, had expressed shock about — the bars on the windows. The bars are not instantly apparent when walking or driving past the site, as the cell blocks are shielded from view by the well positioned visitor's centre.

Louise lived in Wrexham but had never visited the prison site. When I asked her to choose from four photographs which prison (out of Halden in Norway, Berwyn, Strangeways and Oakwood in Staffordshire) she'd rather live opposite, she said:

L: *See, this one's not really nice [referring to Strangeways]... cause — are those bars on the windows?*

ES: *Yeah*

L: *See it's not nice really is it, cause have we got bars on our windows in Wrexham?*

ES: *Er... yes, potentially.*

L: *I just can't see them.*

Anna, on the other hand, had actually driven to have a look at Berwyn and told me,

I just thought they'd have windows you couldn't open... I just was not expecting bars on windows. I nearly crashed the car to be honest, I thought — what?!

In our walked interview, Brigitte noted this too:

ES: *So these are bedrooms then, these are, cells, I guess*

B: *Right, yeah, so they look more like conventional cells. Have they got bars on the window or is that...?*

E: *Yeah, think so. Well like, that's what the windows look like they're going to look like I guess*

B: *Right, right. It's depressing, isn't it?*

E: *Yeah.*

B: *Surely they could have... windows that were... unbreakable, and you didn't need bars on them?*

It was interesting that, in spite of the fact that barred windows are synonymous with prison structures, both Brigitte and Anna expected something different from a brand *new* prison; seemingly something more humane. And in fact, in a professional architectural context, Scheer and Lorne (2016) discuss frustration amongst prison architects who attempted to ‘design out’ this specific trope of prison design, only to be thwarted by regulations *demanding* bars.

7.4 Sadness

Very quickly, once she had seen the bars on the windows, the prison building became *depressing* to Brigitte. Whereas in our Starbucks interview and earlier on in the walked interview, she had repeated the idea that the prison looked like a conference centre — even that it looked nicer than a specific conference centre she had visited in Milton Keynes, or, jokingly, that that specific conference centre ‘could have been a prison’ — after seeing the bars on the windows, she said:

It’s just... a constant reminder, isn’t it, every time you look at the window. And I’m sure they don’t need actual bars. They just need non-opening windows, with toughened glass...

So they, they’ve put this bit at the back cause this is obviously a cell. If you see all the bits at the front, you know, glass and... and you know, brickwork and that sort

of stuff, it looks like a conference centre. This doesn't look like a conference centre, does it, really? No, not when you get to the bit with the bars on the windows.

I reminded her that from the road, she couldn't see any bars. She countered me, repeating that it was depressing:

B: But once you get down here... and you'd only really come down here — well I imagine to go to one of these, um... factories [there are soft drinks factories to the left hand side of where we were standing] but... you know, other than that, you're going to the prison, aren't you?

ES: Yeah.

B: Yeah, that's slightly depressing, there.

Here, I think Brigitte teases out some of the ways in which the *view* of the prison is sanitised. We know, from the interview with Simon Caron that 'the biggest thing they [the community] wanted was screening'. He offers the 'bund' as screening, but for Brigitte, prior to our walked interview, the screening has been more complex. In a way, the architectural blurring that we know exists -- between public and private buildings, between once visually discernible institutions that have come to look the same -- has enabled a sort of screening all of its own. The homogeneity of standardised building blueprints has, up until now, allowed Brigitte to be screened from the realities of living opposite a prison. It looks 'like a conference centre' --

it's *nicer* that a conference centre! -- until she sees the bars on the windows, something so intrinsically linked to imprisonment that she can no longer maintain the *mental* screening that she has allowed herself.

Carl, too, found the prison depressing as we walked around it. Having worked in the area during the construction of the Co-op's flagship 1 Angel Square building, he had witnessed excavations in Angel Meadows and has an extensive knowledge of the area's history. I asked him to imagine how he might have felt as a young man living in Victorian Angel Meadows, looking at the prison.

I suppose it would've been really interesting especially if I was in Angel Meadows, cause the living conditions in the prison would've been better. Guaranteed. Guaranteed hot meal, shelter, sanitary conditions, and that was not guaranteed in Angel Meadows whatsoever, so. I remember telling you about Kilmainham Gaol in Dublin, and how they had trouble with people committing petty crimes just to get a bed for the night, which... you laugh and think 'that's ridiculous', but it happens now... In a more extreme way because you get people that — they're not committing petty crime to get away from it all, they are unable to function in our society... They're the product of a system like that. That's what's sad. Really sad.

Though his concept of what nineteenth century prison was like is skewed — for example, McConville wrote a book entitled *English Local Prisons, 1860 -1900: Next Only to Death* (1994) detailing the brutality of imprisonment in this period — Carl uses it to begin thinking about the institutionalisation suffered by some

inmates and it saddens him. The prison was much more abstract to Carl in our initial interview — a quaint, faintly beautiful building he could see from his office window with a tall, mill-like spire. His proximity to inmates as we walked around the prison seemed to create a more emotive response in him.

7.5 Fear

The concept of fear ran throughout my interviews with people from the host communities, and I have detailed these responses in Chapter 6; however, as anticipated, the walked interviews elicited different, more intense emotions. While in the seated interviews, fear was predominantly abstract, in the walked interviews it happened around more *practical* realities.

In our seated interviews, Brigitte and Carl were both reassured that the prison posed no direct danger to them. In fact, Brigitte believed the prison development had already had a positive effect on the area she lived in by removing the danger the brownfield site had posed to her children (full quote in 6.3). She had experienced specific fears surrounding the dereliction of the original brownfield site and these were eradicated by the construction of the new prison, as the fact that the land was now in use removed the danger it once posed to her children and others. Any fears that she might have had about the prison were outweighed by her belief that it had removed a tangible danger from the lives of her children.

Carl dissected the question — ‘is this area safe?’ carefully and gave a considered answer:

Is this area a safe one? I... never feel.... Unsafe. Walking to or from work at night, and I work quite late, often. Um... having said that, now you've asked the question, I wouldn't necessarily call it a safe place, just because I know there is some crime that happens, because a lot of the space right now is like... wasteland, because it's brownfield site, ready for development. As a result of hoarding that space up in the middle of a city, things have happened behind those hoardings that shouldn't — so we've got a birds eye view from this office, so we can see what people are doing — doing drug deals in like hoarding, cordoned off areas, you know, and that does happen, which I've seen. So that's a really interesting question. I'd probably say... it's not a place that I would dwell. It's a place that I walk to and from, in and out, I don't feel unsafe when I'm doing it, but at the same time, I'm not gonna pitch up and have a picnic outside on a Saturday. You know? I just wouldn't be here, really. There are safer, nicer places to be.

When directly faced with the prison, though, both participants seemed to want to test their theories about the safety of the buildings. Unlike Carl, who theorised about unseen fences behind the walls at Strangeways, Brigitte was able to see the fences that would prevent outbreaks, and she initially made calculations, out loud, of how a prisoner might try to break out of Berwyn, concluding — contrary to her previously mentioned belief at Starbucks that there might be ‘lots of ways out’ — that they had ‘no chance’.

This is sort of a moat, really, cause you've got this ditch here, and then they've built it up there, so you've got no chance, really, if you scaled that fence, say, you've still gotta get over this one...

Later on, she repeated herself, only this time she had constructed a new escape plan for the inmates:

B: So they'd have to get over the first lot. Then run to the next lot and climb the second lot... you've got no chance, have you?

E: No. So that's quite... I mean, that's intense, isn't it?

B: So you'd have to get under it, the only way you could get out is to get under it, you couldn't climb over it, you've gotta get under it.

Towards the end of the walked interview, Brigitte spoke about a prospective breakout again, saying:

I thought they'd have... do they not have lights, or anything? Presumably they must have, you know, in the films, they've always got searchlights up there, if people make a desperate break for it... but they haven't, have they?

In the space of forty minutes as we walked around it, Brigitte had gone from indifference towards the prison — she had said to me in Starbucks that she ‘wasn’t bothered at all’ about it — to wondering, three times, about breakouts. How could inmates break out, and how would a breakout be managed, if they did? She had never confronted these questions before, seemingly because she had never really looked directly at the building until we began to walk around it.

In Manchester, Carl retracted his initial statement about not minding being in the Cheetham Hill area at night once he was beside the prison. He said:

ES: How do you think it feels to be on foot? Here?

C: Um, I wouldn't wanna be here at night. And I'm not one of those people that says that a lot, because I live in the middle of a city centre and I get around it quite happily at night and I'm not one of those people that would avoid certain areas at night cause you can't do that when you live in the city, er, if you want to actually get around and do things that you need to do to live. But, yeah, I wouldn't wanna be round here at night. Which is, again, daft, cause... they're all locked up! [laughter] So what do you think's going to happen?!

It seems, from these interactions, that the true extent of the affective capabilities of the prison building can only really be experienced at proximity. Close up, the prison is altered; it is no longer ‘puny’, in the way that it is from the fourteenth floor of an office building, or able to appear, innocuously, like a conference centre once visited

in Milton Keynes. In both places, at close proximity, the intangibly osmosis-like possibilities of the buildings (Turner, 2016) were instantly and intrinsically felt by Carl and Brigitte. ‘They’re all locked up!’ Carl exclaimed, and yet he wondered why he was nervous; ‘they’ve got no chance really,’ Brigitte whispered as she plotted an imaginary prisoner’s escape.

7.6 Conclusion

In undertaking walked interviews at the sites of two prisons with participants I had already interviewed elsewhere, I aimed to establish whether or not the responses of people who are generally disconnected from prison would change. Given Jones et al’s (2008) assertion that a ‘more honest’ set of interview data could be created simply by mobilising the interview, it seemed likely. I selected two participants who had given very level responses about their local prisons in our initial interviews, during which I had questioned them about an image of the prison on a screen. Sure enough, once the prisons moved from the imagination to the physical, both participants experienced a marked shift in feeling towards them; they noted their scale, and that, involuntarily, they were made to feel sad or scared by them.

Existing literature on ‘big things’ notes the myriad processes that give these things their meaning. Kraftl notes ‘bodily practices’ as an important means of meaning-giving to buildings; he claims that the way people move through a building is what ‘gives life’ to it (2010: 407). In relation to prisons specifically, this

notion of meaning-giving is furthered by Turner, who explores how the prison boundary itself, as well as its meaning, is ‘constructed through practice, performance and materiality’ (2016: 50). In a 2015 article, Turner and Peters explore ‘carceral atmospherics’, saying that ‘visuality, materiality, performance, sociality, technology and so on are not singular categories that are employed and engaged with. They come to produce – in assemblage with bodies, in time and space – something larger and more encompassing: atmospheres’ (2015: 314). In relation to carceral *atmospheres*, then, walked interviews *around* the prison — bringing what was abstract in our initial interviews forward into the immediate — are perhaps vital if we are to understand its affective capabilities on outsiders, those with a less established link to the prison than, for example, inmates, officers or architects. Brigitte and Carl were without the implicit understanding of Berwyn and Strangeways held by the aforementioned people, and walking around the buildings provided them with an additional aspect of comprehension of the building. What I retrieved were maybe not so much what Jones et al described as ‘more honest’ answers, but rather less considered answers, and more specifically answers more laden with *feeling* and *understanding*.

Chapter 8: The Prison's Appearance

8.1 Introduction

This final chapter, *The Prison's Appearance*, draws together the data that explicitly explores the prison's appearance. Establishing what local residents' felt about the prison's aesthetic is a huge motivation behind the PhD project, and the data I collected around this is rich and interesting; sometimes surprising, too. I will link the work on intentional architectural symbolism and iconography that I explored in Chapter 3 with other literatures on use, inhabitation and perception, exploring the prison as a site traditionally imbued heavily with architectural symbolism, that can now be read in many different ways.

One of the questions that I asked all interview participants was, 'What do you think prison should look like?' Their opinions tended to be well established — they knew what their mental image of 'the prison' was, and usually they were able to link it back to either Strangeways or Berwyn. When I showed them photographs of the two prisons, either Strangeways looked how a prison 'should' look, or Berwyn did, and all participants had clear reasons as to why. By examining the influential design philosophies which informed the construction of each building, these opinions are in part able to be understood. Contemporary responses from the time of Strangeways' construction will also be used to establish whether or not attitudes towards the building have changed.

In section 8.2 I explore the shift in the architecture of 'institutional' buildings from the time of Strangeways' construction, in 1865, to the time of Berwyn's, now. As I

mentioned in Chapter 1, the nineteenth century these buildings were bound not only by their named architects, but by architectural tropes representing power and importance. Recently, there has been a deliberate movement towards deinstitutionalising the appearance of buildings that house prisons, hospitals and schools, whilst maintaining power through the physical control of building users via architecture, as discussed in the section on neoliberal policy and its influence on architecture in Chapter 2. This aroused feelings of mistrust in some participants. It also results in an aesthetic blankness that was noted by several participants.

In 8.3, I examine the decentring of architects after buildings are constructed in the context of Strangeways, looking at Waterhouse's initial vision for the courts and attached prison, the subsequent changes that have affected the materiality of the building, and the way that the building is viewed today, as evidenced in the data collected. As we have been prepared for in discussions of Brown's (2009) work on how we must use our imaginations to read the prison building, elements of the imaginary do come into the data on both sites, whilst some participants also grappled with their preconceptions of what constitutes attractive architecture.

8.2: 'Deinstitutionalising' institutional architecture

Goffman defined the 'total institution' as 'a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life' (1968, xiii). Subsequently Foucault asked, 'is it surprising that prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons?' (1977:

228), and indeed there tended to be a commonality between the physical buildings that traditionally held total institutions; in the 19th century European context, they typically evidenced external splendour and remained internally barren (Aleszewski, 1986; Jewkes, 2013, 2016). The buildings Foucault lists are bound by their unmistakably ‘institutional’ appearance, linked by their affective properties, by their size, by their very smell, perhaps.

When comparing institutions from Foucault’s list built at around the same time, they are noticeably aesthetically similar to Strangeways. Many had the same architects. Waterhouse was already beginning to design Owens College, Manchester, while Strangeways was being erected and in figures 8.1 and 8.2, aesthetic similarities in the sketches for both buildings are evident. It is likely that, appropriate to the era (detailed in Jewkes, 2012, and Moran and Jewkes, 2015), in the geometric tracery at the windows, colonnades, and gabled roofs, in these buildings from Foucault’s list of total institutions, Waterhouse was deliberately employing architectural symbols of the *church*. This is a known architectural trope of prison building in the mid-nineteenth century, but, as mentioned briefly in Section 5.3.1, we are given more insight into the direct links between the two as Waterhouse’s wife, Mary, details in her diaries his visit while on holiday in Germany to Cologne cathedral, the largest Gothic cathedral in Europe. Waterhouse was allied to the Gothic Revival before designing the Assize Courts, but he had a deep fascination with original medieval architecture, and also visited Belgium to examine it further (this time civic architecture, in the form of medieval Flemish town halls) before committing his design to paper (Smith, 1977). Gothic architecture itself is imbued with extensive religious metaphor and symbolism.

Grunenfelder (1976: 2) goes so far as to say that the cathedral is representative of the Gothic era, and describes the 'theological-rationalistic' criteria that led to architectural symbolisms represented in the number of buttresses on a church, for example. Grunenfelder's work on cathedrals ties neatly into the concept of prison being designed to look like a church: cathedral architecture, Grunenfelder says, is designed to create a 'celestial drama,' in which 'the believer can only stand in devout wonder, his responsiveness depending upon a certain sense of individual and sensuous surrender' (3). Gothic cathedral architecture is therefore an early example of the building as an emotional manipulator, or as a form of physical bodily government; something we see more widely employed in other types of architecture, including prison design..

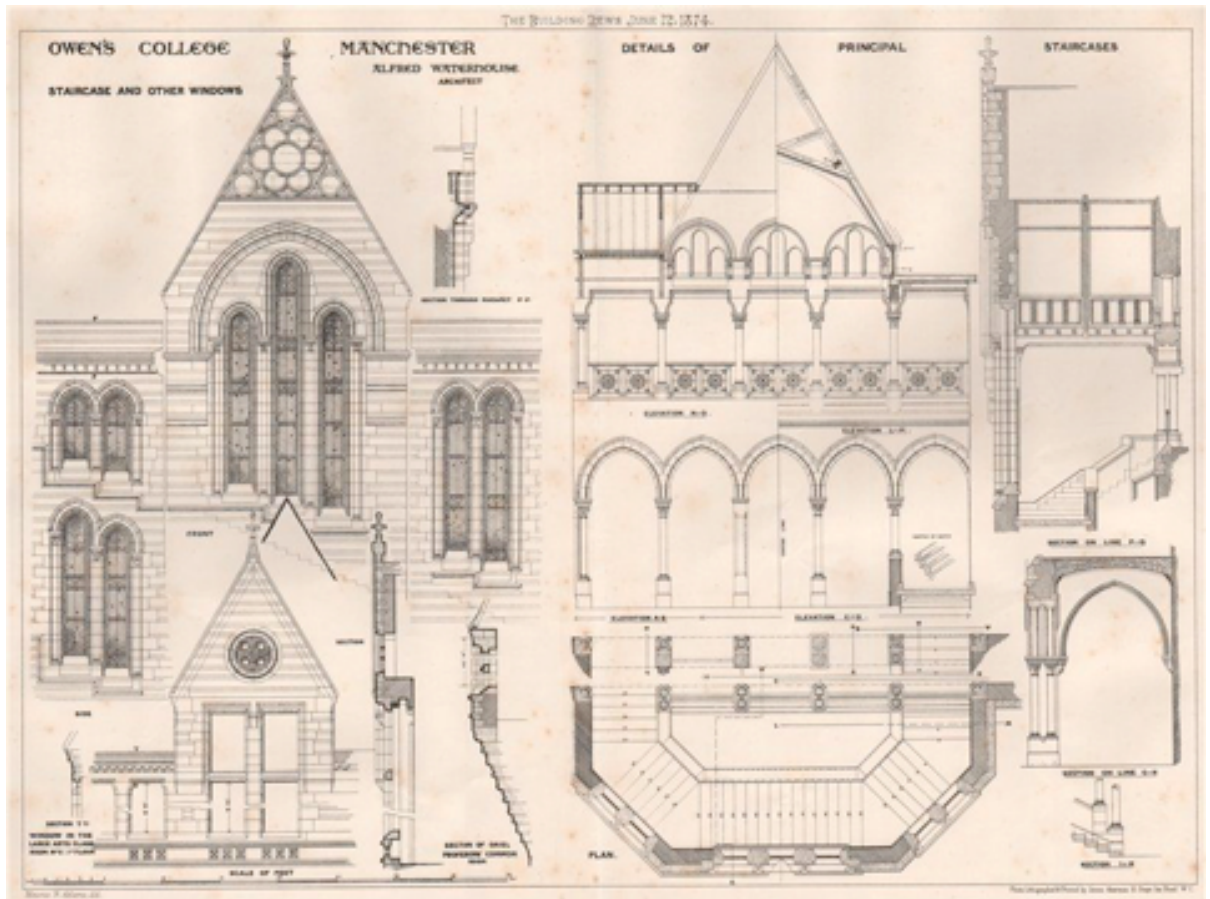
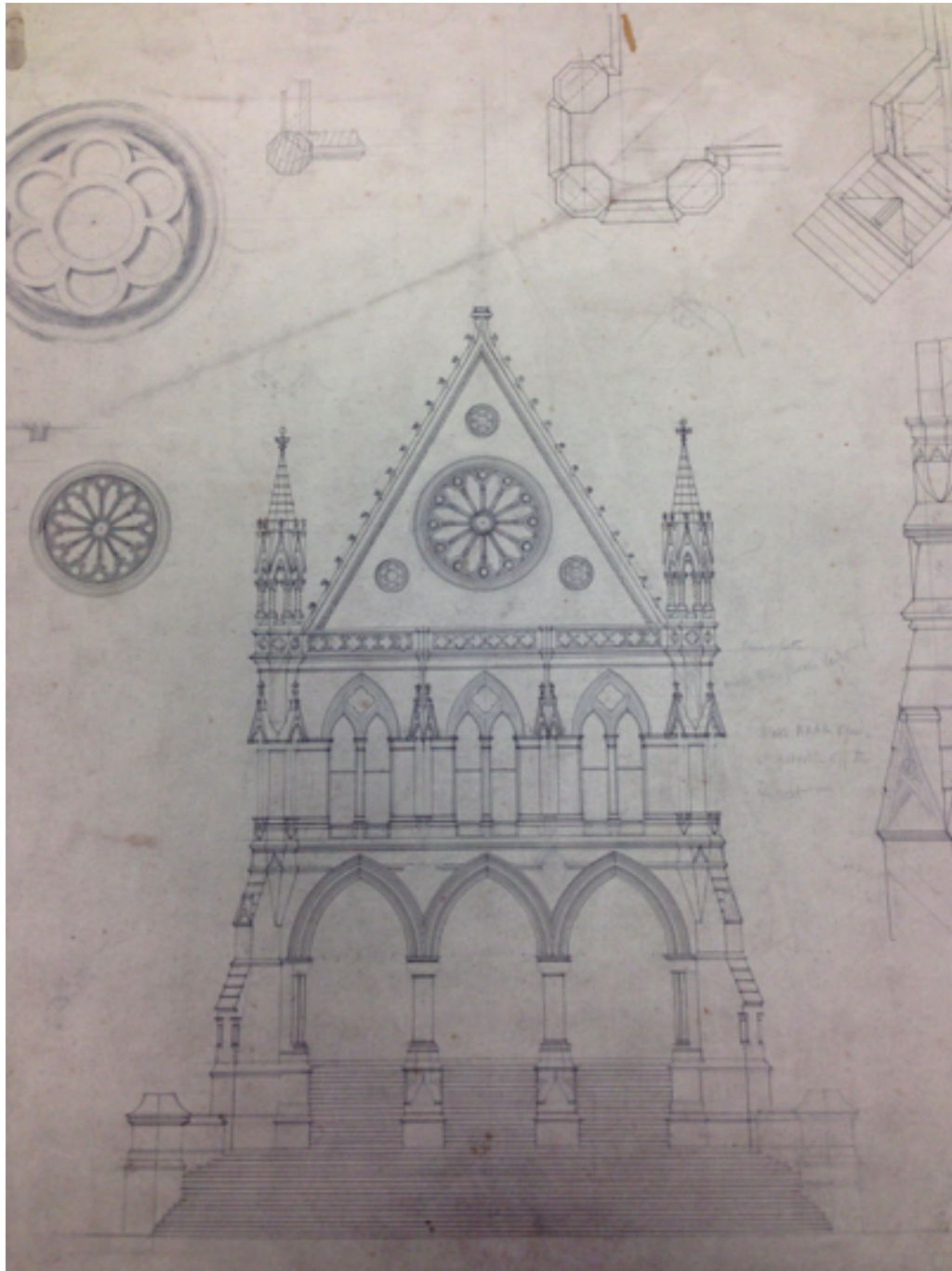


Fig 8.1: Waterhouse's sketch for Owen's College, Manchester. Lithographed by James Akerman.



8.2: One of Waterhouse's sketches for the front of the Assizes. (RIBA Archive.)

Waterhouse also famously designed Balliol College, Oxford, the Oxford and Cambridge Unions, the Natural History Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum. The employment of the same architect for all of these buildings seems to imply that at this time, prison was revered on the same level as education, or at least that it functioned as part of the Victorian idea that Victorian society existed at a pinnacle of human civilisation.

In the nineteenth century, there were efforts to design surveillance measures into the fabric of prison buildings and an unspoken architectural dialogue began amongst those constructing prisons, where a ‘fortress mentality’ pervaded. Any deviations from what were fairly standardised carceral blueprints — prisons in snowflake formations, for example — tended to be in the implementation of higher security (Andrzejewski, 2008). In the United States, Wormwood Scrubs and the Seine Departmental Prison at Fresnes-les-Rungis were influential in prison architecture innovation (Andrzejewski, 2008: 37). In fact, a discourse was developed between prison architecture in the United States and Britain. The blueprint of the American Penitentiary proved extremely influential over subsequent British prison architecture in the 1850s and 60s. This relationship between the two countries — the pattern of Britain borrowing ideas on prison from America — has begun to be revisited recently, beginning in the 1980s when a group of British civil servants visited a series of ‘New Generation’ prisons in the US and described them in a glossy, image heavy report (Home Office, 1985). At this point, neoliberalism and the concept of profit from punishment were deeply ingrained in

the American prison system; the report signifies a British intention of moving the same way.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, Hatherley (2010) — who is notably opposed to this shift towards neoliberal architecture — notes that the neoliberal New Labour government created a precedent for ‘lumpish’, homogenous constructions; he lists shopping centres, playschools, hospitals, supermarkets and prisons as all looking markedly similar. In his Deleuzian reading of neoliberal architecture, Spencer states that,

everything is to be processed, blended, in an operation in which difference is valued on condition that it goes with the flow, that is renounces all antagonism... the very possibility of contradiction is smoothed out of existence... it can only endorse what ‘works well within the framework of existing relations’, and only find its validation in making these function more effectively through the managerial ‘cunning’ of organisational complexity (2016: 56)

The buildings on Hatherley’s list are bound by many things. They are bound in the somewhat sinister ‘blending’ and ‘smoothing’ mentioned by Spencer, the way that their homogenisation provides them with power and control. They are bound by the fact that, quite at odds with their nineteenth century counterparts, their architects have tried to ‘*design out*’ risk (Moran et al, 2016) a dramatic development of the previously mentioned designing *in* of surveillance (which still exists — see Davis, 1990). And they are bound by the *new* institutional architectural tropes that places like prisons and schools are known for, creating a different type of architectural

homogeneity; the deliberate blurring between the ‘public’ and the ‘institution’ (Spencer, 2016: 135). Laura explains:

[Berwyn] could be like a warehouse, it could be like some kind of like call centre — it could be anything, it doesn't look like a prison — whereas that [Strangeways], it looks like an institution.

On Berwyn, Nadir agreed:

Well, the new one — if I had to guess, I would guess it was a warehouse. So, again, they've gone for efficiency, a large kind of box to contain prisoners — obviously, a closer look, you can see the barbed wire on the fence around it. Comparing the two, I would have to say that Strangeways has more character, has the tower, obviously, in the past you needed someone high up to actually see what people were doing, nowadays, it's all electronic, and you don't need that. Um, but I — like most architecture, I would say they're getting more efficient but also more boring.

Nicole, too, said that, ‘first, I'd look and think it looks like a warehouse, but then when you see the fencing here, you just know it's a prison.’ Wener (2012) has claimed that prisons ought to represent more than what Wacquant refers to as criminal warehousing for the ‘rejects of the labour market’ (2010, 2011).

Nevertheless, the siting of prisons in the UK has now come to industrial estates, amongst warehouses, and that the architectural direction taken in the UK is towards

a building aesthetic very similar to warehousing. I was surprised when the senior NOMS source interviewed said that Berwyn,

doesn't stick out madly from the area. Because it fits with the heritage and all that sort of stuff... The actual design replaced the warehouses, look like warehouses, and they will match the surrounding area, you know they're big, steel frame, clad buildings, functional, fit for workshop and educational spaces, the house blocks are big, cell house blocks with wrought windows, there is no hiding that.

My surprise stemmed from the fact that the architectural makeup of 'the local area' is warehousing, and that the NOMS source did not seem concerned about articulating the similarities between the light industrial buildings and the prison, a site of inhabitation. Irrespective of the area's 'heritage', the purpose of the prison building *is*, objectively, different to the warehousing that surrounds it. This deliberate appropriation of a warehouse aesthetic is a way of deinstitutionalising the appearance of the prison architecture, and links back to Armstrong's 2014 metaphor that the prison is a 'box of jobs'. Elsewhere, Joan mentioned that Halden in Norway (Fig 4.4) looked like 'a storage container', which again, compares prison to warehousing.

Nadir attempted to explain the lack of architectural élan at Wrexham by saying that efficiency is probably behind it. This focus on money leads on to prevalent themes that arose in the data on cost efficiency. It was widely recognised amongst

participants that Wrexham was built to adhere to strict economic standards. I asked Liam why he thought Wrexham *looked* the way it did:

Liam: I think it's cost. When they're building like that — will it actually stand the test of the time? It's supposed to be keeping these prisoners from escaping. I mean — a solid structure like this, OK, they have gotten out onto the roof before, but they've never actually got out of the walls, and you see so many buildings go up now, and they're prefabricated and they go up and they'll come down again in twenty years, because they're not built to last.

ES: So it's actually not cost efficient?

L: Yeah. Probably not, no. False economy.

Magnus, who works opposite Berwyn, agreed with both Nadir and the NOMS source, saying 'it fits in well with the surroundings'. He said:

It doesn't have to be grand architecture, it's a prison at the end of the day. You're going to use fabricated steel and so forth, and concrete, great big wire fence round the outside, I mean, they, you know, it's designed for economics not aesthetics. It's gotta work in a certain way...

I asked him if he thought that introducing beauty into the surroundings of inmates could be rehabilitative and he said, 'it's a factor. But I would think things like

overcrowding is probably a bigger issue at the moment.’ He also said that Berwyn, ‘looks no different from any of the prefab offices round here. From an aesthetic point of view... it really doesn’t make a difference around here.’ The aesthetic ‘blending’ is present again here, and it is appreciated by Magnus, who as a result considers the prison aesthetically apt for its surroundings. Although in itself aesthetic blending does not constitute a deinstitutionalisation of prison architecture, it is a factor in the wider shift towards prison buildings that are indiscernible on Hatherley’s list of supermarkets, hospitals and their ilk.

Like Magnus and Liam, Brigitte and Joan also focussed on the idea of Berwyn looking like a ‘prefab’ building. This is important, not only because it *is* a prefab building, but because the use of prefabricated buildings in prison was part of a huge change in the British prison estate. Brigitte said:

These (Wrexham and Oakwood) they look like boxes, it’s just a box, isn’t it. It could be.... I mean I know that the prison they’ve built, they’ve erected it in record time, and it’s just all prefabricated, you know, girders, and you think — bloody hell, that building’s gone up in a week, and it’s gone really quick. So there’s no, there’s no character to it, there’s nothing, is there, you know.

Joan echoed this:

Joan: *The Wrexham one looks a bit... almost Americanized. From what I've seen on the TV. ... It does kind of strike me as they've looked at America.*

ES: *Can you expand on that a little bit? What is it about them that makes them look American?*

J: *I think... It's the prefab look. The concrete, prefab look, and the height of the fencing. I don't — it just looks very clinical as well.*

Brigitte, Joan, Magnus and Liam are correct in their assertion that the buildings look prefabricated: they are prefabricated. As previously mentioned, in the 1980s the then Conservative government began to explore the possibility of importing private prisons to the UK and the aforementioned transatlantic 'dialogue' that had existed in prison design began to flow again — ultimately becoming realised (in part) because of the Strangeways riots (James et al, 1997). In 1987 a House of Commons Select Committee visited four private US prisons (James and Bottomley, 1998). It was claimed by British think tank the Adam Smith Institute that privatisation of prisons in the US had dramatically improved the living conditions of prisoners as well as presenting no negative consequences for those employed in public-sector prisons (Young, 1987) — this was refuted by Jenkins (1993) who claimed that for the staunchly neoliberal Institute, 'the idea of private prisons had a symbolic political importance... if you could persuade government to privatise prisons, you could get them to privatise anything' (Jenkins, 1993: 19).

Nevertheless, in the coming years, internally, UK prisons began to look structurally more like US institutions, with the implementation of the US strategy of ‘Direct Supervision’ first being tried in remand prison HM Wolds (opened 1992) (James and Bottomley, 1998). By 1995, with the advent of PFI contracts in prison construction, British prisons also began to take on a very ‘American’ appearance, conforming to what is known as the American New Generation design (Brodie et al, 2002: 239-240). Brodie et al (2002) confirm Joan’s idea that the ‘prefab look’ she describes came from America — specifically, that it was first used in Britain at Buckley Hall, which was rebuilt in the early 1990s and reopened in 1995, as well as her feeling that the ‘height of the fences’ was somehow American. Elsewhere in the prison estate, light, collapsible, inner security fences were an idea borrowed from America and first used at HMP Parc (opened 1997) (Brodie et al, 2002: 240). Berwyn’s fences aren’t collapsible — this became apparent during the archival research I did on the Berwyn site, which took me to a blog post by Binns Fencing, the company that supplied them. This means they do not function in this way, but they are aesthetically similar. According to Cass et al (2018), this kind of homogenisation is a common factor in architecture that has come to be globally standardised, as ‘standards coordinate by homogenising: defining what is standard and conversely, nonstandard and to be avoided’ (2018: 3 [Online]).

Liam echoed Hatherley almost exactly in our interview, when describing Wrexham. Hatherley (2010: 11) describes institutions as being housed in ‘barn-like’ buildings,

not dissimilar to branches of the supermarket chain Asda. Looking at a photograph of Berwyn, Liam said, laughing to himself,

It could be a supermarket or something or a... You know, if people didn't know it was a prison, you know, they would just think it was something like that — but then again, they might — thinking it was a supermarket — “oh, there's a supermarket over there, let's go over” and then they can't get into the gate, and, whoah, what is this place?

The generic nature of the building in Wrexham was heavily focussed on by other participants. I personally noticed distinct similarities when I was completing my fieldwork in Wrexham between the architecture town's shopping precinct, Eagles Meadow, and Berwyn. The mall features many contemporary architectural tropes such as an open-air curved plaza, a water feature and a covered mezzanine level, and it is topped with 'city style' apartments with small square windows and grey juliet balconies. It looks very like other, similar developments, and has been designed with very little in the way of individual architectural identity. When comparing Figures 8.3 and 8.4, I believe it is possible to see a resemblance between the city style apartments at Eagles Meadow and the visitor centre at HMP Berwyn. The brick used is the same colour; the evenly spaced little windows a similar size.



Fig 8.3 Eagles Meadow complex, Wrexham.



Fig 8.4 Berwyn under construction, 2016.

Augé's assertion that 'the city, as such, is disappearing' (xv second ed) is embodied by the similarities that occur in the architectural stock of Wrexham. Rem Koolhaas has written about what he terms the Generic City (1995) and was quoted as saying:

‘these days, we're building assembly-line cities and assembly-line buildings, standardised buildings and cities’ (Der Spiegel, 2011). The assembly-line buildings and their typically generic appearance are, I think, a contemporary rendering of what Jenkins refers to when he talks about the lack of a contribution to the history of stylistic development (2002: 223); Wrexham is composed largely of these buildings.



Fig 8.5 Slide from Indicative 3D view of Design Model of North Wales Prison, October 2014

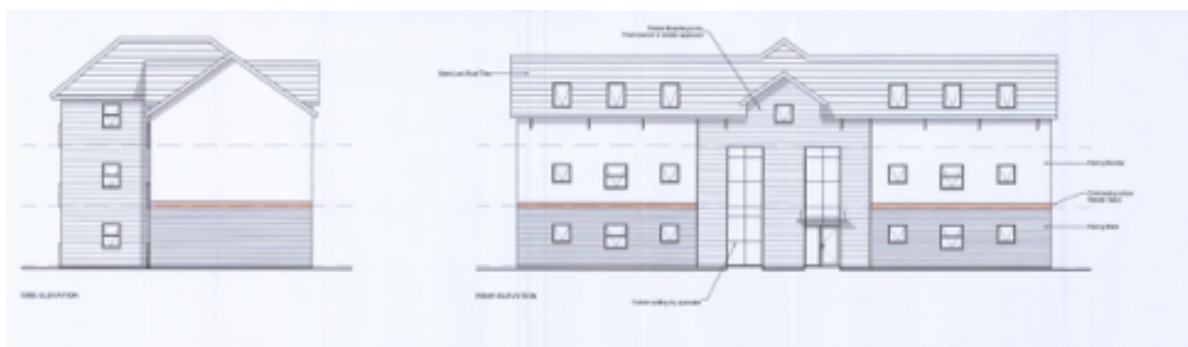


Fig 8.6 Architect's drawing of Hightown flats, rear elevation, March 2012

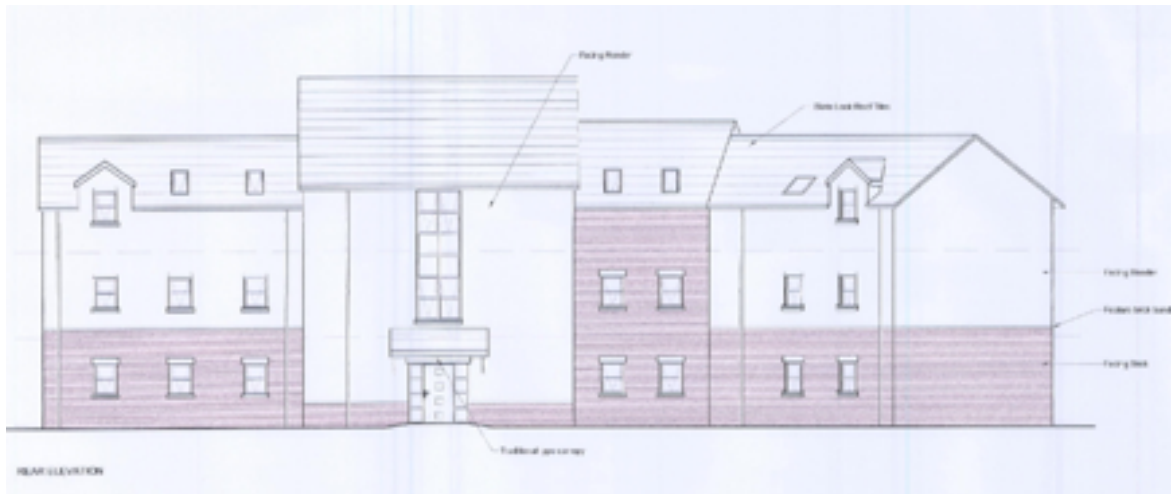


Fig 8.7 Architect's drawing of Hightown flats, rear elevation, March 2012



Fig 8.8 Community Centre, 2016. (Wales & West Housing website, accessed 2017)

A further example of architectural ‘blending’, and Wrexham’s architectural homogeneity, was evidenced when Louise said:

We've got some new houses — well, some new builds have gone up in Hightown in Wrexham and they kind of look like that. I think that there's a community health centre with this kind of... what would you call that, like that grey colour at the side...?

ES: Cladding

L: Cladding. And the houses around it are sort of that sort of orangey-red brick.

ES: Yeah

L: It looks quite cheap doesn't it?

Just as Louise says, the two buildings share many similarities — the expanses of grey cladding and the 'orangey-red' brick she mentions, but also the pitched roofs, many small windows and the larger floor to ceiling windows (Figs 8.5, 8.6, 8.7, 8.8). They also both have typical 'wave formed paths' that 'ripple out across the terrain or course between buildings,' and 'woven into these are the green spaces, the turfed areas that have come to stand for 'the environment'' (Spencer, 2016: 159) in neoliberal landscaping.

It is interesting to see how closely the prison building resembles the council flats and community centre that Louise mentions in Hightown, as this similarity to

housing was something that disturbed Sophie when she looked at a photograph of Berwyn. She said,

I think... that looks more scary than Strangeways [...] They just look really like... isolated.[...] the new prisons are like... it's like a, like a chicken coop. It's weird. It's just like, 'get in'. 'Get into this. It looks like a house. It's not a house.' [laughs] yeah.

Sophie's response implies that she, at least, does not approve of the deinstitutionalised aesthetic of Berwyn, and would prefer prison buildings to be more aesthetically indicative of their purpose than those being built currently are. This, too, applied to Nicole, who lives in the Green Quarter. She said when she saw Berwyn,

They probably weren't thinking about high security, and they're probably just going to put all petty offenders in there anyway. They're not going to put murderers in there, and rapists, and it will literally just be odd petty things. Whereas this [Strangeways] is more of a 'if you're in here, you're not getting out' scenario. That [Wrexham] is more of a 'you're here for a little bit', a bit of a rehabilitation centre, and off you pop.

The Wrexham building is innocuous to Nicole; it represents none of the tropes of prison design that she expects, perhaps given that she has lived so close to

Strangeways for several years. To her, the towers and the turrets of Strangeways make up what a Category A prison looks like; so Berwyn (functioning at Category C, but ‘future-proofed’ [Moran et al, 2015] to be able to hold Category B prisoners) looks more like something else entirely — a rehabilitation centre, for example. In itself, this comparison is interesting, because rehabilitation centres have many purposes — to rehabilitate residents suffering from anything from trauma or exhaustion to drug addiction and eating disorders — and often repurpose former residences, for example, so like prison architecture, there is no specific ‘look’ to rehabilitation centres. Sometimes, they can be LULU facilities, too, although their connotations are altogether more positive. Recent purpose built rehabilitation centre developments, such as Delamere in Northwich, evidence Hatherley’s ‘barn-like’ argument again (Fig 8.9), only this time, the word ‘barn’ is used to evoke luxury. In a 2019 article for Cheshire Live, David Holmes wrote that ‘the building is designed to replicate a modern barn conversion with high ceilings and huge glass panel walls. It will have the feel of a boutique hotel, with an emphasis on home comforts and away from institutionalism’ (14 August, 2019).



Fig 8.9 Delamere Rehab Clinic, Cheshire (Artist's impression, 2019)

8.3: Viewpoints and vistas, sightlines and scale

Hatherley is not the first architectural critic to make accusations of bland monotony towards contemporary architectural styles; Victorian architecture received the same treatment by critics at the time of its construction. In the June 1871 edition of the *Building News*, a British architectural periodical, the Assize Courts were described amongst a scathing review of the rest of Manchester's architecture:

The result of the whole [of Manchester] is monotonous, and the mind longs for something fresh, unexpected, original. There is too much uniformity in these streets of factories and warehouses; they are all too much alike in general effect, however they may differ in details. (The Building News, June 9, 1871).

On the Assizes, the magazine went on to say:

The lover of architecture [...] when he first visits Manchester, will naturally give his chief attention to the public buildings. And of the recent ones he may probably be most anxious to see [...] the new Assize Courts. If he is familiar with Mr. Waterhouse's later work, he may [...] be disappointed. He will see a building of no very great size and of no very striking effect [...] Why is it, the stranger naturally asks, that a design of such average quality attracted such unusual notice? Possibly because architecture of any merit was rare in Manchester...

I am aware that it is possible I am clouded by my affection for the building in thinking this is an unfair review of what was Waterhouse's competition-winning design for the Assizes. For me and many of my participants, the prison building (the one remaining part of the Assizes, as mentioned in Chapter 4) continues to pack affective clout, though I'm aware that my view — and theirs — is affected by context, understanding and cultural capital. Below is an expansion on the comparison between the way in which we see the prison now, and the way it was seen by the writer at *The Building News* in 1871, and others living in this era.

The city centre of Manchester was heavily bombed during the Second World War and the architectural portfolio of the city has changed dramatically since. It is currently undergoing rapid economic expansion and has seen a spike in apartment building since the 1990s. It now evidences a very different architectural landscape from the one described above, of uniformity and monotonous likeness. Carl said *our Victorian architectural stock in the city is — it adds something else to the story; it's not just another row of terraced houses or another mill, we've got those, loads of cities have got those, but we've got these hidden gems as well, and I think, yeah, I think we should probably hold on to those specific hidden gems more than others.*

For Carl, Strangeways is an important part of Manchester's cultural history. It is precious; it is one of the many buildings that set his much beloved hometown apart from other towns. For Katie, too, it is an important part of the city's history; but the

history that she associates with it weighs heavy on the building when she looks at it:

I guess it does look quite um, imposing, but I don't know if that's just in all the stuff in the riots before, so you kind of automatically link it to that and you've always got that image in your head of what they were protesting about, so it's kind of like you've got a skewed, almost biased version where you think oh, that's a bit of a dodgy... not a dodgy place, but maybe it's, I dunno, I think just so big and just so kind of... what's the word... almost like a bit Gothic looking, I think, so I guess, I dunno, it's hard though, because you can't just like assume that happened because of how a place looks.

But perhaps that is possible. According to Spencer, one of the apparent benefits of neoliberal architecture is its perceived ability to govern space and those who move through space, remembering that, 'while sensation remains uncharted, it threatens power' (2016: 153). In incorporating that 'see and beware' function mentioned by Jewkes (2012), Victorian prison architects aimed to do the same thing, and yet many of the legacies woven into the fabric of Strangeways *subsequent* to its design — those of deep seated unrest, political action and violence — are also felt by those who exist around it, and are evidenced to still exist within, and perhaps wield more control and power than the imposing architecture, though it remains the key visual articulation of this power.

Sophie, whose bedroom looked out over the prison, had dreamed about it.

Sophie: *I've been having really funny dreams about it as well.*

ES: *Have you really?*

S: *Yeah. Where I've been like — my dreams, where I've just been sat at the window. And you can't — you, like — this doesn't exist in real life, but I can see, like, the yard, and I can see all the prisoners walking round. And I just, like, have this dream where I sit at the window and just watch them walking around? [...] I mean obviously... it's... it's strange isn't it, it's just come out of nowhere?*

When I asked her to describe the prison to me, she revealed that she had looked it up on Google when she moved into her flat.

Sophie: *I think it's like a star shape, isn't it? Or like a... cause you can kind of see that from my room, you can see two of the points and then there's a big... there's that really tall tower and then two smaller ones. Um, but I don't really know... I think when I Googled it, it looked different to how I imagined it.*

ES: *Why did you Google it?*

S: *Why? Because I wanted to know more about it.*

ES: *Because you live near it?*

S: *Yeah.*

In a way, Sophie is partaking in a sort of ‘architectural blurring’ of her own — though I don’t use Spencer’s definition here; it is more what Brown (2009) describes, of bystanders filling in elements of the prison that they can’t see. When she looked up the prison on Google, she altered her memory of what the prison actually looks like from her window; as Trigg says, ‘the kinesthetic, cognitive, and affective dimensions of recall delineate a division between perception and recollection’ (2012: 44). It is not possible, from the ground or first floor levels of Sophie’s house, to see that the prison is built in a snowflake configuration, yet now, she *knows* it is, and in her dreams, she can see the exercise yards. These are things that are visible on Google but that are not obvious to Sophie’s naked eye; she has blurred what she knows of the prison from sight with what she knows from Google to make a composite image of it. The prison was never *meant* to be viewed in the aerial way made possible by Google Maps; it was designed to be covered at from below when faced with it from the ground, but also to sit in relative obscurity contrasting, in comparative plainness, with the flamboyant frontage of the Assizes building. It was very much an annexe; a hidden ugly sister behind the overt splendour of the courts. It was not supposed to stand alone on its plot as it does today. It was built before the existence of high rise flats — and the subsequent power afforded to their occupants by the views from their windows (Jacobs et al,

2008) — and never meant to be neighboured by a sky-high development like the Green Quarter.

When viewed from above — whether from Google Maps, the higher-level Green Quarter apartments, or from the vista afforded by a brand new office block, from which Carl said it looked ‘puny’, its architectural message is further lost in translation. As I explored in section 5.2, the Strangeways prison building is an architectural palimpsest, a layered architectural patchwork. So, too, is the architectural fabric of Manchester city centre, and the aerial ways we can view the city — from planes, from drones, from fifteen storey buildings, from the comfort of our sitting rooms, through the interface of our phones — adds to this layering, further altering the original meaning of the architecture.



Fig 8.6: Google Maps ‘3D View’ of Strangeways, with Manchester’s taller buildings in the background

Waterhouse could never have foreseen the multiple extensions and alterations the building has undergone, or the architectural developments that cause it to be dwarfed on the Mancunian skyline. Strangeways is an interesting embodiment and perhaps extension of Krafl's concept of 'de-centring' the architect (2010), or the way that Jacobs and Merriman say designed architecture is a 'many handed effort' (2011: 216-217). Strangeways — and Manchester — have moved to a point where celebrity architect Waterhouse's initial intent is almost completely lost, overwritten by the palimpsest of the upwards growth of the city. This was represented in many of the interviews, where rather than covering in the intended fear, participants described the building as 'cute' (Sophie), 'beautiful' (Liam, Anne, Carl), 'interesting' (Carl) and 'human' (Brigitte).

Josh described it as looking like 'a shit Disney', a phrase I found striking in its simplicity but also in its powerful evocation (see Figs 8.7 and 8.8 for a

comparison).



Fig 8.7: Strangeways' gatehouse, with the cooling tower in the background (HeatherBurnside.com)



Fig 8.8: Sleeping Beauty's Castle, Disneyland Florida (BlogMickey.com)

In my interview with Sophie, I asked her:

ES: *If it could talk, what would it say? The building?*

Josh [in background]: *I'm too old for this shit, me.*

Sophie: *it just — yeah it does actually look quite tired. And like [...] It looks bored.*

[later]

S: *It looks really shit when it's raining. Like, it looks really sad.*

ES: *How does it look sad?*

S: *I dunno. Maybe it's cause I know what it is, and what's in there, when the weather's crap it's probably just a bit — yeah, it's not very nice. Yeah, a bit depressing.*

For both Sophie and Josh the age of the building makes it look tired. This is what also lead Brigitte to say it looked 'human':

Brigitte: *Well to be quite honest, the one that I would like most would be Strangeways... cause it's sort of red brick and Victorian*

ES: *The history factor?*

B: *Yeah... just seems more human, than... I mean, the Norwegian thing doesn't look human to me, and neither does the factory-type one.*

ES: *Can you think about that a bit more, what is it about it that is human, I suppose?*

B: *Well, there's colour in it, isn't there, it's colour and it's shabby and it's used, I suppose. Um, I, I think I like that anyway as a sort of architectural thing, you know?*

These feelings -- where participants feel affection, or attraction to the building, or they think it looks 'sad' or 'shabby' or 'too old for this shit' -- were not Waterhouse's intention when he sketched the Assizes and their adjoining prison. The intended power of the building is somehow lost in translation, in part due to its age and the way it has aged; in part because of the angles we can now see it from; in part because Victorian architecture is celebrated, appreciated and understood as a relic of the era. We view Strangeways through different eyes now; eyes that Waterhouse did not anticipate. Eyes belonging to people who work in high-rise buildings, and live in repurposed pubs, and have walked through the candy pink castles of Disneyland.

8.4: Conclusion

This final empirics chapter brought together the different strands of data that looked specifically at the prison's appearance, separate from its site, and in relation to other prisons. It explored the ways in which architectural blurring occurs, and has *always* in fact occurred, and how these often homogeneous buildings are read by the people who live around them. It also looked at the way in which the way we *see* prison -- through our window, whether that's on the ground floor or the eighth floor,

through Google Maps -- can skew the building's inscribed messages and alter perceptions of it.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

9.1 In Conclusion

This PhD project began as an effort to expand the conversation on prison architecture and aesthetics by including the opinions and emotions of those who live and work around the prison, without ever entering it. Early on in the reading and research that underpins the thesis, I realised that there was a distinct lack of qualitative data on this group of people in literatures focusing on the carceral, whether these were from planning, law, criminology or geography. I wanted to provide representation for these communities in an academic context, because I believed that their opinions and understanding of the prison — its boundary, its symbolism, its architecture — could open and progress discourse on the affective properties of prison buildings and how prisons fit into the architectural fabric of England and Wales.

As mentioned, there is intentional diversity in the literatures that inform this thesis, and the empirics that resulted from its line of inquiry were equally wide ranging. I chose my two field sites, Strangeways and Berwyn, with the hope of reaching a wider group of respondents with expansive opinions on prison, and believed that I could achieve this due to the disparate natures of the two sites. My research required reading across a breadth of material, and travelling the length of the country to read in archives, from RIBA's Waterhouse collection to Reading's, Manchester City Council's archives to Abenbury Community Council's meeting minutes. These strands often felt disparate and difficult to maintain. When I arrived at participant recruitment, a multi-stage process was required due to what seemed

like the niche subject matter and general disinterest in it. Yet what felt hard at the time resulted in a rewarding complexity in the study's empirics; those who were willing to talk to me brought nuanced, interesting and important insight into what it means to live near a prison, meeting my objective to further the discourse on prison building in the UK by engaging with an under-researched group. As a result, the thesis serves as an illustration of how prisons exist — and have existed in history — as part of the socio-psychological fabric of their host communities.

As I conducted fieldwork and archival research, I came to realise that there were other unattended aspects of the topic that my thesis could reasonably meet. I will revisit each chapter in section 9.2, discussing the contributions of my thesis throughout, while in section 9.3, I will incorporate a call for further research with my concluding remarks.

9.2 Chapter Summary

The initial aim of this thesis was to add a fresh perspective to the ever-developing discourse on prison building. The freshness of the perspective would be twofold. Firstly, I would be asking host community members to engage with the appearance of the prison they live near to; this is a perspective that has not been extensively explored in existing literatures on prison appearance. Secondly, in the fact that both field sites were British, when many existing literatures on community response to prison building come from America. Using qualitative methods of data collection would provide rich complexity to the contribution, and using this, I aimed to further existing discourse in carceral and architectural geographies on affect and

institutional boundaries. Early on, I highlighted the links between the prevailing philosophy of punishment, the policy it inspires and the prison designs that result. Existing literature established this link for Victorian buildings, but this thesis goes some way to highlighting how the relationship replicates in a current context, with global neoliberal policy, prison privatisation and the prison design that has emerged in the UK from the 1990s onwards. I also thought that, within this context, it was important to provide articulation on whether or not prison buildings are understood and ‘read’, in the geographical sense, as architecturally intended.

In reflection of the many different disciplines preoccupied with prisons and punishment in a wider sense, the literatures underpinning the thesis comes from a broad group of subjects. I began the literature chapters with a focus on the sub discipline of carceral geography, the topic that I feel the thesis most strongly links to. I explored the fact that, in itself, carceral geography borrows from many disciplines, not just geography, and that, partly as an extension of that, and partly out of necessity, due to the subject matter, this thesis would do the same.

I then went on to discuss literatures that surround siting and decision-making in the prison building process, as well as those focusing on NIMBY and YIMBYism. Many of these literatures were American, as they centre on topics that have not been broached as extensively in the context of British prisons, a gap that my empirics go towards bridging. The ways in which neoliberal politics and policies have shaped public architecture in the UK, including the prison estate, was also discussed. The reasons behind prison siting decisions are often political, and often sites are chosen to negate the NIMBY, or even encourage a YIMBY response.

These literatures — on siting, N/YIMBYism and politics — were grouped together in one chapter to reinforce the interconnected nature of the topics.

Other, more theoretical literatures hailed from the field of geography. In particular, I gave focus to geographies of architecture and affect and the points at which these texts intersect with carceral geography. I also explored criminology and the principles behind reading the prison, highlighting the theory, from visual criminology, that to some extent, laypeople require imagination to develop their impressions of prison. This was expanded upon in my empirics. One key contribution of the thesis is the depth with which participants spoke about the architectural aesthetics of prison. Insofar as their relationship with the prison was not either professional or as prisoners, my participants were a group of the ‘laypeople’ mentioned in visual criminology literatures. They provided insight into what these imagined impressions of prison actually *look* like, which was important to me; I wanted to re-engage with the visual and symbolic, to bring these things back into geographic discourse on buildings. Through choosing the prison host community as a group of participants, I also raised questions of inhabitation; of living-with, or living-outside, rather than living-in.

Chapter 4 explored the research methodologies I used, including a breakdown of how I recruited participants — through email captures at the end of online questionnaires, targeted social media advertising and letterbox posting — and the interviews I subsequently conducted with them, both stationary and walked. I also introduced the archival research I undertook, which included visiting collections

around the country, spending time at local libraries and council buildings in both Manchester and Wrexham, and undertaking social media data mining online. The ethics of these methods was explored, too.

It was important to acknowledge the ways in which my two field site communities ‘understood’ the prison, and this wasn’t always straightforward, because ‘understanding’ the prison meant different things to different participants. I devoted Chapter 5 to the multiple layers of understanding, touching on the appearance of NIMBY and YIMBYism at both sites, but also on the ways in which the prison is mythologised, and the ways in which it is imagined in relation to cultural representations of prison as an abstract, but also cultural representations, in the case of Strangeways, of the prison itself. This chapter also looked at how the prison can become a part of the fabric of a town and the way it becomes an innocuous landmark to some. One of the key contributions of this chapter was my discovery of what can be described as NIMBYism at the Strangeways site at the time of its construction. The acronym ‘NIMBY’ was established in America in the 1970s, yet in my archival research, I found evidence of public rejection of the Strangeways site in 1862, when a Letter to the Editor of the Manchester Guardian noted that the prison would prove ‘a social evil and a public nuisance of the most enormous kind’ to the residents of the surrounding area. This evidence of the existence of proto-NIMBYism may add a new dynamic to the way we understand and read Victorian prison buildings.

Key to extending the understanding of the prison was to unlock *feelings* about the prison, so three specific facets of *fear* of the prison that emerged in the empirics were explored, too. These were the fear of escape, the fear of dereliction and the fear of being watched, which I referred to as synopticism in this context. Prior literatures have traditionally cast the prison as *spectacle*, but what we gained from section 6.4 of this thesis was a fear of synopticism amongst those outside of the prison, at both sites, but particularly at Strangeways, who believed that the prison — its elevation, its architecture — gave prisoners the ability to *see* them. This belief elicited fear, leaving participants wondering about whether or not they could be seen. Laura’s belief that Strangeways’ cooling tower was a watchtower provoked the question, ‘Are they like, looking into my house?’, while Josh felt that it was possible that prisoners could see him leaving for work, and might draw conclusions about him from their ‘view’ of him. These imagined forms of surveillance allow the ‘carceral atmosphere’ to cross the prison boundary and give a new meaning to the term ‘synopticism’, pulling it into a specifically carceral context.

As well as the more abstract feelings of fear that were explored in seated interviews, the way that fear manifested at close range was also explored through walked interviews I conducted with two of the participants. Though the sites were different, parallel themes arose, so I analysed the similarities between these two on-site responses. Chapter 7 featured sections on emotion — not just fear, but sadness, too — and a strong emergent focus on the prisons’ scale, which was less prevalent in the seated interviews, but seemed to come to the fore when participants

were faced with the prison's physicality. This elicitation of new focus provides a strong case for further walked interviews in a prison-community context.

Although all of the empirics chapters drew in data on aesthetics, the final chapter was directly concerned with the appearance of the prison itself. The data on this aspect of the thesis was particularly rich, and provided scope for analysis of the deinstitutionalisation of prison architecture, and the ways in which the architectural meaning of prison buildings changes over time. I included a section on viewpoints and vistas which highlighted the many places that we can view prison from. Many of these are subsequent to the prison's construction, so not necessarily intended, and therefore alter the way the prison is understood.

The participants I was lucky enough to interview gave me a wealth of incredibly rich data to work with; so much that it was difficult to decide which angles to take it in. Some of the quotes I was given were genuinely exquisite and provided, in a sentence or two, fresh perspectives on aspects of prison design and aesthetics that already have established discourses around them. There is a huge amount of data that I have not included in the thesis, which I think could be incorporated into further research; similarly, there are alternative angles that I think the data included here could be looked at to benefit and further existing discourse. I will discuss these possibilities in section 9.3.

9.3 My Calls

Eliciting qualitative data on the prison's architecture from its host community brings a fresh perspective to carceral geography and the other disciplines that

intersect with it. My study is very particular in its UK-based focus — or rather, English and Welsh focus — so the initial call is an obvious one: these interactions, between carceral geographers and prison host communities, should be expanded upon, because of the complex, interesting data that they create, and the ways in which they can expand our understanding of prison within a societal context.

As I was researching, collecting and analysing my data, I naturally began to see themes running through the archival material and interviews. One of the abiding themes, which I did not focus on in the thesis, was the way that respondents struggled to describe the prison as a standalone entity; rather, they felt they needed to liken the appearance of the prison to something else in order to contextualise what they could see. Of course, I incorporated the quotes where this happened; Strangeways was ‘like a castle’, ‘like [a shit] Disney’, while Berwyn and Oakwood were, according to Liam, like supermarkets, and, according to Brigitte and Nadir, ‘like boxes’. Though they described different things, a running theme was the use of simile.

Carceral geographers light on the use of metaphor by architects — the prison is designed ‘like a village’ (*pers comm*, 2017, Dominique Moran), for example; its buildings likened to ‘walled bungalows’, its cells ‘apartments’ (Scheer and Lorne, 2017: 124). As noted by Scheer and Lorne, these are not accidental metaphors — more likely, they are used to justify and legitimise prison projects by reimagining them, in line with the city, as utopian. The prison has also been contextualised using metaphor within geography — Wilson Gilmore’s book *Golden Gulag* (2007) is even titled with one. Alongside metaphors for prison, the prison *as* a metaphor is

explored by Mike Davis (1990; 2006) in his description of contemporary Los Angeles as a ‘fortress’.

Metaphor itself is designated in cognitive linguistics as a form of ‘mental mapping’. Through the discipline, metaphor and simile have come to be understood as subconscious tools of understanding affecting patterns of thought, reasoning and imagination (Chapéton-Castro and Verdaguer-Clavera, 2010). Along this line, and in the spirit of continuing the dialogues on imagination that I drew from Brown (2009) in the thesis, I propose an in depth analysis of the language used to describe prison buildings, combining literatures from carceral geography and cognitive linguistics, in order to attempt an understanding of the realities and reasons for participants’ use of specific types of language.

One of the ways that I achieved this rich data was through a multifaceted research framework. Photo elicitation and walked interviews added to the depth and scope of the study. Though walked interviews in and around the prison have been used in carceral geography and criminology before (Moran & Turner, 2018; Natali et al, 2020), I think carceral geographers could continue to use these methods more regularly when encouraging participants to examine and interact with prison architecture. These methods could be used with many different groups outside of the host community; I anticipate that using either method in future interviews with architects and designers could create fascinating data, as could employing them with students or even former prisoners. The lenses through which we examine the prison building continue to develop, and with those new perspectives, our articulations about prisons continue to grow.

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Appendix A

Surveys designed for Strangeways and Wrexham

The aesthetics of Strangeways

1. How old are you?

- 18-25
- 26-35
- 36-45
- 46-55
- 56-65
- 66+

Next

The aesthetics of Strangeways

2. What are the first three digits of your postcode? For example, M60.

Prev

Next

The aesthetics of Strangeways

3. Did you know that there is a prison in Manchester?

- Yes
- No

The aesthetics of Strangeways

4. Can you see the prison from your house?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

The aesthetics of Strangeways

This is a photograph of HM Manchester Prison - also known as Strangeways.



5. What statements best describe how you feel about the way the prison looks? You may choose more than one :

- I find it beautiful
- It looks frightening
- I find it ugly
- The architecture is decorative
- It looks how a prison should look
- A prison should not look like this
- It looks blank
- It makes me feel safe
- It makes me feel unsafe
- It's big
- It is imposing
- It's old
- It's new
- It spoils my view
- It is dominant
- It fits in with the architecture or landscape around it

Other (please specify)

Prev

Next

The aesthetics of Strangeways

6. What are your feelings about the prison? You may select more than one answer.

- I wish it wasn't there.
- I'm glad it is there.
- It makes me feel unsafe.
- It makes me feel safe.
- It affects the area around it in a negative way.
- It affects the area around it in a positive way.
- The infrastructure around the prison is better because it is there (roads, etc)
- It brings jobs to the area
- It means that house prices are lower in the area
- There is higher crime in the area because of it
- It brings undesirable people to the area
- It is good for local prisoners
- I like its architecture.
- I dislike its architecture.
- Other (please specify)

Prev

Next

The aesthetics of Strangeways

7. Do you think the appearance of a prison matters to the local community?

- Yes
- No

8. Please explain your answer.

Prev

Next

The aesthetics of Strangeways

9. Would you be happy for me to contact you at a later date for an interview? If so, please provide your email address here:

Prev

Done

The aesthetics of Wrexham Prison

1. How old are you?

- 18-25
- 26-35
- 36-45
- 46-55
- 56-64
- 65+

Next

The aesthetics of Wrexham Prison

2. What are the first four digits of your postcode? For example, LL13.

Prev

Next

The aesthetics of Wrexham Prison

3. Do you know that there is a prison being built in Wrexham?

- Yes
- No

Prev

Next

The aesthetics of Wrexham Prison

4. Will you be able to see the new prison from your house?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Prev

Next

The aesthetics of Wrexham Prison

5. Which statements describe your feelings about the new prison? You may select as many as you like.

- I wish it wasn't going to be there
- I'm glad it is going to be there
- It makes me feel safe
- It makes me feel unsafe
- It will affect the local area in a positive way
- It will affect the local area in a negative way
- It will increase crime in my area
- It will cause house prices to drop
- It will bring jobs to the area
- It will spoil my view
- It will improve infrastructure (local roads, etc).
- It will be good for Welsh prisoners
- It will bring undesirable people to the area
- I like its architecture
- I dislike its architecture

Other (please specify)

Prev

Next

The aesthetics of Wrexham Prison

This is an artist's impression of what the prison will look like.



6. In your opinion, which of the following statements best describes how you feel about this building? You may choose more than

- I find it beautiful
- It is frightening
- It looks how a prison should look
- Prisons should not look like this
- It is decorative
- It makes me feel safe
- It makes me feel unsafe
- I find it ugly
- It is ornate
- It looks blank
- It looks old
- It looks new
- It's big
- It is imposing
- It is dominant
- It fits in with the architecture or landscape around it
- Other (please specify)

Prev

Next

Appendix B

Interview Schedules

WREXHAM INTERVIEW SCHEDULE – LOCAL RESIDENTS

Introduction: Thank you very much for meeting with me and agreeing to participate in my doctoral research. I would like to begin by assuring you that your responses to these questions will be kept anonymous. I would also like to ask you for your permission to audio record the interview so that the data I use is as accurate as possible. As you know, my research involves the reactions of local communities to prison buildings, so that will be the focus of this interview. Do you have any further questions before we begin?

About the participant

Could we start with you telling me how long you have lived in Wrexham?

And how long have you lived in the area you live in now?

What were the factors that lead you to choosing a property in this area?

Can you describe the area for me a bit – positives, negatives?

About this part of Wrexham

How long have you lived in the house you live in now?

Do you intend to stay in your house?

How do you find living here? What are the positives/negatives? Why did you decide to move here?

Is there anything you would change about the area if you could?

The prison site is on the site of a former factory. Do you anticipate any differences between there being a factory there and a prison? What are they?

About the prison

What was your reaction when you found out a prison was going to be built in your area? What were your main concerns?

How much involvement have you had during the planning process? Did the council contact you at all?

What are you expecting your experience of the prison to be like? What do you think it will look like? Do you anticipate any new smells, sounds, any new sights that you're not used to at this point?

Will you be able to see the prison from your house? Which room will you be able to see it from? Do you anticipate changing your daily routine because of this?

Visual methods

As you know, my research focuses on the external appearances of prisons. I'm really interested in what you think about the prison that is about to be built opposite your home. I have some images of prisons with me and was hoping you wouldn't mind looking at them and telling me what you think about the architecture.

At this point in the interview I will produce images of Oakwood and Strangeways. I will explain to the participant that I am also studying communities around Strangeways. I will tell them that the prison at Wrexham will look almost identical to Oakwood and ask them to talk a little bit about what they see in each picture. As in Manchester, I will ask the following questions:

Which one looks most like a 'prison' to you?

Based purely on aesthetic, which one would you rather live near?

Which architecture do you like the best?

Could you give me some adjectives to describe what you think summarises these two buildings?

Then:

Do you feel any differently towards the prison being built opposite your house now that you have seen these images? Can you describe how you feel about the aesthetic of Oakwood?

MANCHESTER INTERVIEW SCHEDULE – LOCAL RESIDENTS

Introduction: Thank you very much for meeting with me and agreeing to participate in my doctoral research. I would like to begin by assuring you that your responses to these questions will be kept anonymous. I would also like to ask you for your permission to audio record the interview so that the data I use is as accurate as possible. I will provide you with a disposable camera so you can take photographs of your view [or if we are walking together, of things you find interesting about the building] - these photographs will be used in my research. Sometimes I might repeat back what you've said in order to ensure I've understood it properly. As you know, my research involves the reactions of local communities to prison buildings, so that will be the focus of this interview. Do you have any further questions before we begin?

Manchester in general

Could we start with you telling me how long you have lived in Manchester?

What is it like as a place to live?

If you could pick a 'Manchester landmark' – something that reminds you of Manchester – what would it be?

What do you think about the Victorian Gothic architecture in the city?

Saint simons church

About the participant

How long have you lived in the house you live in now?

What were the factors that lead you to choosing a property in this area?

Can you describe the area for me a bit – positives, negatives?

here, I anticipate there being things that I can highlight upon and we can unpack together with further questions and answers, for example:

Is the area safe? If not, why not? Is the area beautiful?

Is the area close to the centre of town?

Is it cheap to rent and buy here? Why do you think that is?

Is there anything you would change about the area if you could?

Do you anticipate staying here? Why/ why not?

What is the first thing you see when you look out of the window in the morning?

About the prison

Could you tell me what you think about the way Strangeways (the prison) looks?

Do you like the way the prison looks? Do you dislike it? Are you indifferent?

Are there individual aspects that you like or dislike about it?

In your opinion, if buildings could talk, what would this one be saying? What do you think the architect was trying to convey with this building? Is it successful? Do you think the meaning of the building has changed over time - for everyone, or for you?

Could you tell me what you know about the prison – and what you think of it?

What is your earliest memory of the prison?

at this point, if the participant has lived in Manchester for over 25 years, I will ask them what they remember about the prison riots and the effect of those on the city at that time and subsequently.

- Where were you when the rioting began? Could you see the fire etc. from where you were? Did you travel within Manchester to be able to get a better view?

- What was the atmosphere like around Strangeways at the time? How did this atmosphere travel through Manchester?

- Did the riots change the way you see Strangeways?

- Did the riots change the way you see prison in general?

Can you see Strangeways from your house? If so, is that something you have thought about before? Which room can you see it from - do you see it on a daily basis? How many times a day do you see it?

Is there anything you do to actively avoid your view of the prison? Or do you deliberately look at it regularly? If you look at it regularly, what are you looking for, exactly?

Do you like your view of the prison?

Do you find it interesting?

Would you rather not be able to see it, or does it not bother you?

Did you know there was going to be a view of the prison when you moved in?

Are you used to it now?

Does it look different at different times of day, or different times of year? If yes, can you describe the differences?

When you see Strangeways, do you see it as a prison, or just a building that you're used to seeing?

Have you ever thought about how the prison fits in with Manchester's other architecture? Could you maybe talk a bit about the other architecture in Manchester - other buildings that might be similar to Strangeways?

Are there any particular smells and sounds that you associate with the prison? Do you know what they are; for example, the smell of breakfast or the sound of cell doors being unlocked?

Do you have any stories to tell about the prison?

How close have you been to the prison?

HM Oxford - of a similar era to Strangeways (Strangeways is about 20 years older) - was sold several years ago and has now been turned into a Malmaison hotel. What do you think would happen to the Strangeways building if it was sold? Would you stay in a hotel in an old prison?

How do you think Strangeways fits into the area it occupies?

At the moment, the council is trying to bring new business and homes to the area - have you noticed this? How do you think this is going?

-- if they're in a high rise:

Is it strange to be able to see the inside of the prison?

Can you see, or have you ever seen, anything that you think you shouldn't have seen?

Visual methods

- I will show the participants some images of both Strangeways and Oakwood and ask them to talk about the images. I will ask them how they would feel most comfortable doing this – they can take a pen and write their thoughts on the images or just talk me through what they see. I will ask them various things:

Which one looks most like a 'prison' to you?

Which one looks the safest to you? Do they both look 'safe'? Does the appearance of the prison make a difference to how safe you think it is?

Which architecture do you like the best?

Which building do you think fits in best with its surroundings?

What would you rather look out of your window and see?

In your opinion, is it better to have prisons in the countryside or in towns?

Could you give me some adjectives to describe what you think summarises these two buildings?

Why do you think they look the way they do? What factors might influence prison design in your opinion? How would you improve it, if you were given the opportunity?

Feelings

If participants are willing, we may visit the immediate area surrounding the prison and walk around it. I believe that being closer to the prison may evoke different feelings about it. People who view the building from afar on a daily basis almost certainly perceive it differently to those who enter it or use it; but their feeling is no less valid. I am interested in unpicking the reasoning behind the ways in which local residents navigate space around the prison; where they tend to travel around the area they live, on the average day, or week. I will provide them with a camera in order to take photos of the aspects of the building they find most interesting. I will ask them to talk to me about the following:

How did you establish your route?

Is there anything you particularly enjoy seeing on your way to the shops/work?

Is this an area of Manchester that you frequent?

Are there particular streets around this area that you have never walked down? Why not?

Are you interested in this area of Manchester? What interests you about it - or if not, why not?

How does the area feel to you? What are you thinking about when you are here?

Do you come to this area (around the prison) at different times of day, or different times of the year? Is there a difference between the area around the prison at night, for example, or between summer and winter? Can you explain what the differences are?

Have you ever been this close to the prison before?

(if not) What do you think of it, now you are up close?

Is there anything that could be done to this area to make you LIKE it more? cc