

Listed Building Consent Application

Changes to the internal layout of Canada House, Manchester, Historic England

Canada House, 3 Chepstow Street, Greater Manchester, M1 5FW

December 2021

1.0 Introduction - Design and Access Statement

Historic England would like to propose changes to the internal layout of their North West Office; Suite 3.6 (formerly 3.3), Canada House, 3 Chepstow Street, Manchester, M1 5FW.

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared by C. Gilbert, Historic England to document the scope and detail of the internal refurbishment works in conjunction with detailed designs by Construction Group Consultancy. The designs have been developed in conjunction with Historic England staff members alongside discussions with a local Historic England Building Inspector.

2.0 The Site

Canada House is a Grade II Listed building (no. 1208597) dating from 1905 to 1909. It is a six storey, ten bay structure, built in the Art Nouveau style. It was originally a packing warehouse built by W.G. Higginbottom. It has a cast-iron frame building with a steel truss roof. The north, south and west elevations are clad in buff glazed terracotta (Figure 1).

The exact location of the building is shown in Figure 2.

The application site is known as suite 3.6 and is located on the third floor, occupying the southern half of the building and runs from east to west.

No work will be done to alter the external façade of the building. The work intended for the internal layout aims to have a minimal effect on the original existing architectural features, leaving very little visual impact upon the existing structure.

3.0 Statement of Significance

The property in question is located in the heart of Greater Manchester on the junction between Great Bridgewater Street and Chepstow Street. The main area under discussion is located on the third floor and will be referred to throughout this statement as suite 3.6.

Canada House is a six-storey, ten bay, single-phase structure with a cast-iron frame, a steel truss roof and a terracotta façade on all external faces apart from the eastern elevation, which is a glazed screen with octagonal piers that run the full height of the building. It was designed and built by W.G. Higginbottom from 1905-09 for H S Booth and Others Ltd (EH 2002, 39). It is of Art Nouveau architectural style, which is emphasised through the wrought-iron front gates, reception floor tiles and staircase banister (Figure 3). It is Grade II listed and sits just outside the Whitworth Street Conservation Area (Kellie 2010, 163).

Internally, the original function of the structure resulted in every floor having its own office divisions which are accessed by a main central staircase.

It is believed that suite 3.6 was always designed to be open-plan as the circular columns on the eastern side would not have been able to hold thick timber partitioning. This is the part of the building that Historic England have occupied as a tenant within the building for a number of years.

However, the style of iron columns varies throughout the floor; those on the eastern side are slender and circular where as those to the west are octagonal in shape and much sturdier. However, all are located on the iron-frame structural grid. A cutting/inspection bench runs along the full length of the east side and this is believed to be original to the building (Figure 7). The image of one existing in Asia House, Princess Street, depicts its original form (Figure 8). The large windows that run the length of the office still contain the original glazing.

It is believed that it is a combination of the iron-frame, the architectural style and the surviving features, such as the cutting/inspection bench, timber and glass partitioning, as well as industrial equipment in the basement, that are the reasons behind its listing.

Industrial History of the Building

Canada House was designed to be a packing warehouse for the booming textile industry that dominated Manchester's industrial commerce from the early nineteenth century.

The cast iron-frame and steel truss roof enabled the building to take the great weight associated with the textile industry, while the large windows allowed maximum levels of daylight to permeate the internal space.

Post Industrial History

Suite 3.6 was successfully converted into offices by Roger Stephenson Architects in 1996. All the original fixtures and fittings were retained and restored (Roger Stephenson Architects).

More recently, many of the demises have been refurbished in to contemporary and exciting office spaces, whilst remaining sympathetic to the original distinguishing features of the building. Figures 3, 4 and 5 are an example of this.

4.0 Scope of Works

The scope of works is to comprise of the following:

- Removal of some of the existing CAT A and CAT B installation
- Retention of existing ceiling, fire alarm and sprinkler system
- Retention of existing heating system
- Retention of cutting bench
- Retention of existing doors and windows
- Retention of most modern partition walls
- Adjustment of existing lighting positions
- Installation of new partition walls
- Installation of new electrics, access control and intruder alarm
- Installation of new data provisions
- Installation of localised heating control by means of TRVs
- Refurbishment of existing sash windows
- Relocation of the distribution board from outside to inside the HE demise
- New decoration to existing walls, columns and timber work, ceilings and pipework
- New floor coverings
- New kitchen facilities in existing location

Floor Plan

The new floor plan will be as per drawing 60(03)00.

Mechanical and Electrical Installation

As detailed in the M&E Employer's Requirements documentation compiled by Historic England, the mechanical and electrical scope of works has been carefully considered.

In order to achieve an office that is both fit for purpose, with minimal interventions, robust modelling of the thermal conditions within the office have been undertaken.

To resolve the significant overheating issues within the demise, the solutions are twofold:

- Enable localised control of the existing heating system through the installation of TRVs and
- Ensure that all openable windows can be opened

Currently, all casement windows within the demise are in good working order. However, the sash windows require considerable refurbishment to be operational. Once works are undertaken and the windows can open, there should be a significant reduction in air temperature and improvement in air circulation, this will improve office working conditions during the warmer months of the year.

Secondly, once restored, in order to mitigate both the health and safety risk of accessing the windows (which are situated behind the original cutting bench which is encased in further boxing) and the risk on opening of falling from height, window actuators are the preferred solution to achieve openable windows.

We are also required to have a constant supply of fresh air in to our demise in light of covid-19 guidelines. In order to do this, we must be able to safely open all windows.

By undertaking these works, we also mitigate the requirement for mechanical ventilation which would only increase the level of intervention into the space and disturbance to the historical fabric of the building.

As per drawing 25 (03) 004, the actuators would be located at the bottom of the windows frame. There will be 5 in total installed to the existing sash windows. The mechanical fixings will need to be connected to the frame whilst the power will be surface mounted to the boxing out, as per the drawing.

As per drawing 40(03)001, the new distribution board will be relocated into Historic England's demise.

Material Specification and Technical Information

Finishes and Materials as per the Schedule of Works and Finishing Schedule.

Conclusion

If these works are taken:

- The impact upon the historical and architectural significance of the site will be minimal
- The working environment will be greatly improved for all who use the Historic England Office
- The Historic England Office will be in-keeping with other demises within Canada House that have also been recently refurbished