

HERITAGE STATEMENT

58–60 Bridgewater House, Whitworth Street, Manchester M1 6LT

August 2020

Please read in conjunction with drawings and look & feel / design intention documentation

Introduction

This heritage statement is prepared in support of a planning and listed building application for a change of use from vacant basement accommodation into shower and cycling facilities at Bridgewater House, Whitworth Street, Manchester.

It describes the historic context of the building and the listed building status, the design proposals, and design intent.

It should be read in conjunction with the application, design and access statement, accompanying drawings, photographs and look & feel documentation.

Building Description

Original Building

Bridgewater House, Manchester was a former textile packing and shipping warehouse at 58–60 Whitworth Street, Central Manchester, a prominent example of the cotton trade legacy and remains a distinguished element in the streetscape. The building is recorded in the National Heritage List for England as a designated Grade II listed building.

Bridgewater House was built as a shipping warehouse in 1912 to a design by Harry S. Fairhurst. It is built around a steel frame with a cladding of sandstone ashlar and white glazed terracotta in a large rectangular plan, with a loading bay at the rear. Eclectic style.

Symmetrical, with strong horizontal division, the first 2 floors of stone, treated as rustic with channelled rusticated piers, moulded frieze and prominent modillioned cornice, the upper floors of White Glazed Terracotta, the 2nd floor with a prominent panelled cornice on coupled brackets, the next 4 floors with tiered canted bay windows in alternate bays, and modillioned main cornice interrupted in the centre by a 5-bay penthouse with plastered end bays and a parapet with upstand. The ground floor has a massive sill-band (over rock-faced piers at basement level), interrupted between the 6th and 9th and the 14th and 17th bays by square-headed entrances with doorways which have profile medallions of the Duke of Bridgewater on the lintels and 3-light overlights at 1st floor level; otherwise, each bay has metal-framed windows to the ground and 1st floors and bronze panels between these. The upper floors have square windows (except the canted bays) and various forms of enrichment including geometric panels, fascies, wreaths and corrupt-leaf pendants. Return sides have 2 bays in matching style (with monogram at 6th floor level) and continue in plain rectilinear grid form. Interior has a combination of glazed and decorative tiles in cream, white and green and some original walnut doors and panelling. While the communal areas and office refurbishments show a more contemporary/industrial design with exposed brick, beams and services.

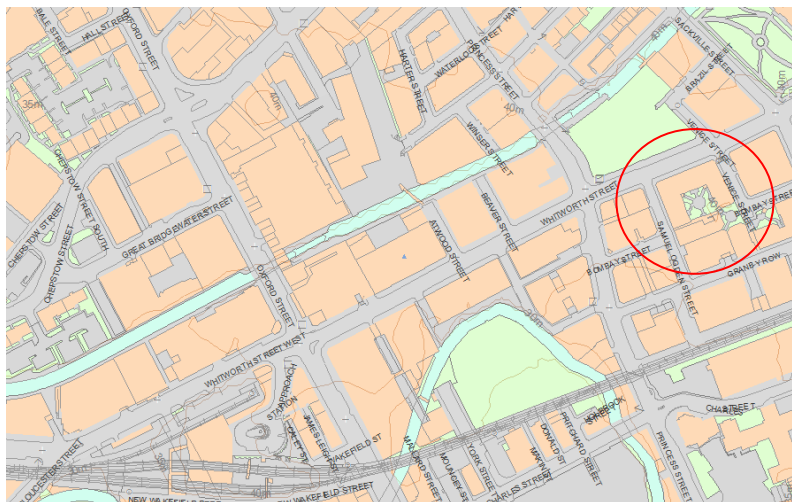
According to the architectural historian Clare Hartwell, Fairhurst's huge buildings are "steel-framed and built to high-quality fireproof specifications".

The building was constructed for Lloyd's Packing Warehouses Limited and, like many warehouses, was built to a common design with steps to a raised ground floor with showroom and offices. The first floor contained more offices, waiting rooms for clients, and sample and pattern rooms all decorated to impress customers. The working areas above were plain with large windows to allow in natural light. Orders were packed there and sent to the basement on hoists powered by Manchester's hydraulic power system and packed into bales using hydraulic presses before dispatch. The warehouse was lighted by gas.

As is the case with many 'listings; the above (rectangular plan) is not exactly accurate. The plan for instance, is 'U' shaped rather than rectangular and the stone plinth is granite rather than sandstone. There are two goods entrances, one at the West end of the Whitworth Street facade and the other at the North end of Atwood Street. Correctly attributed as the work of Harry S. Fairhurst, who had earlier designed nearby Asia House (1900- 10), Inclia House (1905) and Lancaster House (1909), this building was constructed as a packing and shipping warehouse with the offices located on the Whitworth Street Elevation and the goods handling etc taking place at the rear.

Two goods lifts were located at the junction of the main building with the rear-legs-though the one in the West wing has been removed through much of the building. With the decline of the cotton trade the building became offices and by 1974 was in the ownership of Standard Life Assurance of Edinburgh, In 1975 a major refurbishment of the building took place during which the building had the terracotta and stonework cleaned and repaired as well as the, unfortunate replacement of steel windows; Satin Bronze Aluminium units. Only at the upper level do any of the original windows remain.

Between 1975 and 1985 further works were undertaken including, according to the consultant Chris Spreckley, the installation of an additional fire escape. From other research it would seem likely that there were actually 2 fire escapes because there is no evidence of a single staircase on any floor and the building, as was often the case in buildings of this age, was actually two mirror halves. At that time the building was fully tenanted by the Post Office but current tenure is a multiplicity of tenants encompassing office and educational functions.



DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

The Proposals

The proposal is to change of use of a vacant basement room, formerly toilets to a 12 cubicle shower and changing facility.

The building's owner and asset managers are keen to promote the importance of health and wellbeing to their tenants. Therefore we propose this space to provide further changing rooms, lockers and shower facilities for cyclists that occupy the building.

This is only vacant and sufficient space in the building is located in the basement. This space has been vacant and under utilised for many years and therefore is the ideal location in the building. The room boasts windows to the north east elevation, looking onto Atwood Street, therefore natural light can penetrate the space, albeit through frosted glass panes for privacy. There is also a blocked up entrance door north of the room, which will be the ideal direct access from Atwood Street. Extra cycle storage will be located outside, around the back of the building.

Design Intent

The proposed shower/changing conversion will respect the original fabric of the building. Existing features will be retained where possible and used to advantage in developing the scheme; these are described in the paragraphs that follow.

Existing Terrazzo Flooring is in very bad repair, with cracks throughout and several bolts sitting proud of the floor finish. On this basis, we propose to add a slip resistant vinyl to cover the Terrazzo. A concrete-effect vinyl is specified to suit the proposed scheme and black simple shower trays within the cubicles. By using a vinyl this will ensure the green tiled skirting will still be visible and retained as a feature.

The glazed wall tiles will be restored and any missing or broken will be replaced, with a collection of existing tiles that are currently been stored within the building. Tiling to the corridor, WC's and the vanity space will all feature the existing glazed tiles. Vanity units have been carefully specified to ensure this space boasts as many tiles as possible – see supportive documentation.

The existing toilet cubicles are incomplete, some are damaged and have no doors. They also are not full height and the internals are too narrow, meaning they would not be sufficient to use as shower cubicles. The panels are relatively plain but feature a molded top, which suggests they have some heritage value and therefore we propose to restore and relocate them to another part of the basement. By removing these panels, it allows us to provide the tenants with 12 unisex super-showers and a further two WC's to the basement level. This is an addition to the small provision currently on the ground floor and would suit the buildings occupancy. Alongside the showers we can also provide a drying room, cleaner's cupboard and an abundance of lockers.

The existing cubicles are proposed to be made good, sanded, restored and painted, before relocating them within the ground floor corridor (doors to basement located here). The panels will be slightly short of the ceiling height and therefore the above will be painted to match the panels. Please see supporting drawings and documentation for exact locations. Painting them white will hide any areas which are damaged and give a fresh/clean aesthetic to this space whilst adding continuity throughout floors. The route through to the basement is located within this corridor.

A natural colour palette will have a contemporary twist on the existing features and will be used throughout the scheme in a tasteful style; giving the space a fresh aesthetic whilst complimenting the heritage palette. Walnut will be used throughout the scheme to provide a clear link to the dark wooden doors and paneling that permeate throughout the floors but mostly feature on the ground floor.

In conclusion, the current proposals have been prepared on the basis that, through sensitive interventions to the listed building, a further shower/changing/cycle provision represents the best prospect for bringing the vacant space back into use. The proposals are justified on that basis.

Justification

With the recent council investment in biking infrastructure across the city, we feel this is the only option for this building and for the circa 2,000 people who occupy it. Currently the ground floor has a small provision, which is too low for the now fully occupied building.

Alongside the newly formed cycle routes throughout the city and schemes like 'cycle to work' etc. It is important to provide this building with the further onsite cycle parking and further shower/changing facilities. This will bring the provision of facilities in this Grade II listed building in line with new competitor, commercial developments around the city and also help the buildings tenants attract new talent.

Ecology:

The application relates entirely to internal basement areas within the building and there is no external ecology to be considered, (accept the new access door off Atawood street, this will be formed in a historic doorway that is currently blocked up). The building is well sealed at street level and there are no eaves or roof spaces involved.

Therefore it is very unlikely to be any protected wildlife that would be affected by the proposals.

Access

Bridgewater House has had various alterations and enhancements over the years to improve the accessibility of the building. The central entrance on the ground floor allows a level access from the street and a platform lift allows for level access of the lift lobbies from the central entrance. On the floors, raised floors are ramped from the lift lobbies to provide wheelchair access to the floors. Disabled facilities are available on every floor. We propose that within our refurbishment to add a direct access into the basement shower facility from Atawood Street.

Transport

Bridgewater House is situated in Manchester city centre, just 0.4 miles of Piccadilly Station where there are nationwide rail links. It sits just 7 minutes' walk from St. Peter's Square Tram stop. Buses run down Whitworth Street with the closes stop 0.2 miles away at St. Peters Square.

It is therefore in a prime city centre location well served by public transport, however with recent circumstances around the spread of viruses, we expect more building occupants to be cycling rather than commuting on public transport. This also promotes economic benefits and health and wellbeing for the building businesses and occupants.

In conclusion the premises are exceptionally well situated within the city centre and is expected that the ease of cycle storage and facilities will prove beneficial for the office accommodation.

Conclusion and Heritage Statement

The lack of these back-up facilities will be detrimental to the City, and similar historic buildings. Many other commercial office buildings have these facilities in Manchester City Centre. And in order to attract high quality tenants, we feel this is essential for this building.

By refurbishing the space in the basement of this building it brings huge benefits and thus secures a long term future for Bridgewater House as a class-A office accommodation. We conclude that the application should be permitted as it will enable the building to function in-line with competitor developments far into the future.

