



OUR TOWN HALL
MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL
AIR RAID PRECAUTION CENTRE:
Heritage Impact Assessment
June 2020
OTH-PUR-XX-XX-RPT-A-0120

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Issue Details

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Introduction

At its heart, the 'Our Town Hall' project is a heritage-led project which seeks to achieve the following principal objectives outlined in document OTH-PUR-XX-XX-RPT-0007;

- To secure the long-term future of Manchester Town Hall, its civic role and its external setting
- To retain and enhance the building as a functioning and efficient Town Hall
- Restore and celebrate this significant heritage asset for Manchester
- To enhance the use of the building, as a visitor destination and increase access to Mancunians
- To transform users' and visitors' experiences
- To reduce carbon footprint and energy costs

- To maximise commercial opportunities and offset costs to the public purse
- To deliver economic and social value for Manchester

Manchester Town Hall is Grade I Listed and sits within the Albert Square Conservation Area. The significance of Manchester Town Hall was explored in detail for the Listed Building Consent for the main body of work and this is not replicated in full here.

This document relates to the condition 5a (vi) of the Listed Building Consent application 125553/LO/2019

5a Full details of the safe storage and repair, reuse, reinstatement, display or disposal of all portable heritage items that are to be removed from their current location shall be submitted to and formally agreed in writing with Manchester City Council as Local Planning Authority ahead of works commencing as per the hereby approved Control Procedure Hierarchy

prepared by Purcell (document ref: OTH-PUR-TH-ZZPRO-A-0005).

5a(vi) basement bomb shelter infrastructure including air filtration and supply equipment.

The removal of the air raid shelter and equipment was detailed in the main listed building consent and heritage impact assessment along with a assessment of significance and impact, this is not replicated in full here but is summarised below with some additional information regarding the historical background and national context as requested by the Local Planning Authority. The proposed LG level plan from LBC stage is within appendix A. The full list of items to be retained or removed are within the 'Building Assets Schedule' attached separately.

Historical Background and National Context

The necessity of civil defence, for the purpose of protecting the civilian population, had been realised following German bombing raids during the First World War, and was brought into harsh relief by the 1937 bombing of Guernica during the Spanish Civil War. Following the passing of the Air Raid Precautions Act in 1938 and the Civil Defence Act in 1939, local authorities were required to establish air raid precaution schemes for their areas. This included the creation of communal and domestic shelters, installation of warning systems, distribution of gasmasks and other equipment and for the organisation and running of an ARP Warden service.

Historic England's guidance on establishing the significance of military structures suggests -

*'Twentieth-century defensive structures survive in very considerable numbers, especially from the Second World War. Discretion is thus required when assessing them for designation: designs were often standardised; construction was often rushed, and materials were often not intended to be durable.'*¹

The example found at Manchester Town Hall referred to by the condition as a 'bomb shelter' is an air raid control centre which would have formed part of a wider network to coordinate the response to bombing raids during the blitz. It is not believed that they were used as a wider shelter for the general public or municipal workers during air raids such as the shelter at Stockport (now a museum) or parts of the Manchester underground canal

network that was adapted during this period.

Historic England's listing criteria states –

Air Raid Precaution (ARP) centres were built to co-ordinate local government responses to air raids and contained control centres, air filtration plants and other features: sometimes located within municipal buildings, these can be of particular interest when survival is good, and warrant serious consideration for designation.

A search of designated assets highlights eight listed Air Raid Precaution centres nationally. Establishing the rarity and survival of this specific installation within a building is difficult as it is highly likely that most municipal buildings had ARP installations such as this and many are likely to remain unrecorded in basements. Surviving examples of ARP installations in municipal buildings can

be found in Hackney Town Hall and Hampsted Town Hall amongst others.



Figure 1 Signage to be retained

¹ ¹ Military Structures Listing Selection Guides, Historic England

Significance

- The ARP equipment would have been the hub for Manchester's coordinated response to air raids during World War Two.
- The ephemera such as signs and telephones all add to the significance and context of the installation.
- Materials and designs used for ARP installations are not unique and are generally from a series of standardised templates.
- An ARP hub in a municipal building is of high local significance to the city of Manchester, however, nationally they are not uncommon or rare.

The air raid equipment was deemed to be of 'high to medium significance' within the initial Heritage Impact Assessment (OTH-PUR-XX-XX-RPT-A-0066). The ARP installation does

contribute to the established key values of 'civic pride and collective memory' and 'continued use and functionality', however, equally they contribute little and detract from the key values of 'architectural form', 'plan form' and 'built fabric and construction techniques'.



Figure 2 Detail of the steelwork supports (to be removed)

The proposal

The proposal comprises:

- The removal of the steel frames and crash decks retaining example sections.
- The removal of the internal dividing walls of the office spaces.
- The removal of most of the service and ventilation systems leaving examples.
- A full list of items retained and proposed for removal is contained within the Building Assets Schedule attached separately.

The proposal is to accommodate the installation of necessary plant and functional facilities, leaving a control room and elements of the gas extraction plant as a representative example of this layer of history.

Any items to be stored will initially go to the store in Lowry Mill and either be reinstated, stored on perpetuity on site

in the heritage store or other dedicated area, such as roof spaces, or disposed of as agreed.

Justification

The significance of the air raid control equipment is deemed to be less than that of features of Waterhouse's original design and for this reason the level LG area is deemed to be an area of the building with a higher capacity for change. By using this area for plant and MEP equipment it enables the removal of equipment that are currently insensitively installed in areas of higher significance.

Due to the intended temporary nature of the ARP installations they are built upon the existing timber floor joists and should they be retained they would require considerable interventions to both the original Waterhouse fabric and the World War Two fabric to make them structurally stable.



Figure 3 The steel supports (proposed for removal)

Although the steel frames and crash decks will be removed, the air raid control centre will be retained allowing interpretation of this phase of the building's history. Those sections of steelwork to be removed with identification stamps and insignias are being photographed and an example section will be retained as loose objects. Services strips associated with the bomb shelters are also identified for removal as per the Building Assets Schedule, retaining some samples of the service types.

The proposed floor layout in appendix B demonstrates that in each section where the ARP centre is located the floor structure is due to be replaced to take additional loading for MEP or storage, this in itself will require removal of the crash deck, frames and any partition walls as part of laying the new floor.

Room LG27, LG28a-d

Rooms LG27 and LG28a-d require the replacement of the floor and will be subdivided for the installation of dedicated plant rooms. The installation

of the plant and the floor replacement in these spaces will necessitate the removal of the ARP equipment.

Room LG-L05

Room LG-L05 will contain the Cooper Street lift and will require the removal of the steel frame and crash deck to facilitate the creation of the lift shaft.

Rooms LG-032, LG-033 and LG-L06

Rooms LG-032, LG-033 and LG-L06 are all identified for high load storage spaces requiring replacement of the floor necessitating the removal of the steel crash deck and frames in the process.

LG-C04

The former corridor along these rooms (LG-C04) requires lifting and replacement of the floor slab with a concrete slab again facilitating the removal of the crash deck and frame

and the subdividing rooms. Although there is harm through the loss of these rooms and spaces (identified as 'medium' significance on the significance plans) the restoration of the original corridor layout brings benefits to significance as the original planform is considered one of the key values that contribute to significance and this is currently obscured by the various dividing walls of the ARP centre (see Waterhouse's original layout in appendix C).

Cooper Street Spiral

As per the strategy regarding restoration, 'the heritage values of the elements to be restored will decisively outweigh the values of those that would be lost.'² the Waterhouse design of the Cooper Street spiral staircase and its restoration are deemed to outweigh the value of the service trunking that

runs vertically through its entire length, therefore it is proposed to remove the air extraction systems from the ground floor and above restoring the spiral staircase to its original form. In the LG floor the air extraction system will be retained as an example.



Figure 4 The air filtration equipment (proposed for removal and partially retained in LG)

² SIGNIFICANCE PLANS:
ACCOMPANYING STATEMENT OTH-
PUR-XX-XX-RPT-A-0033

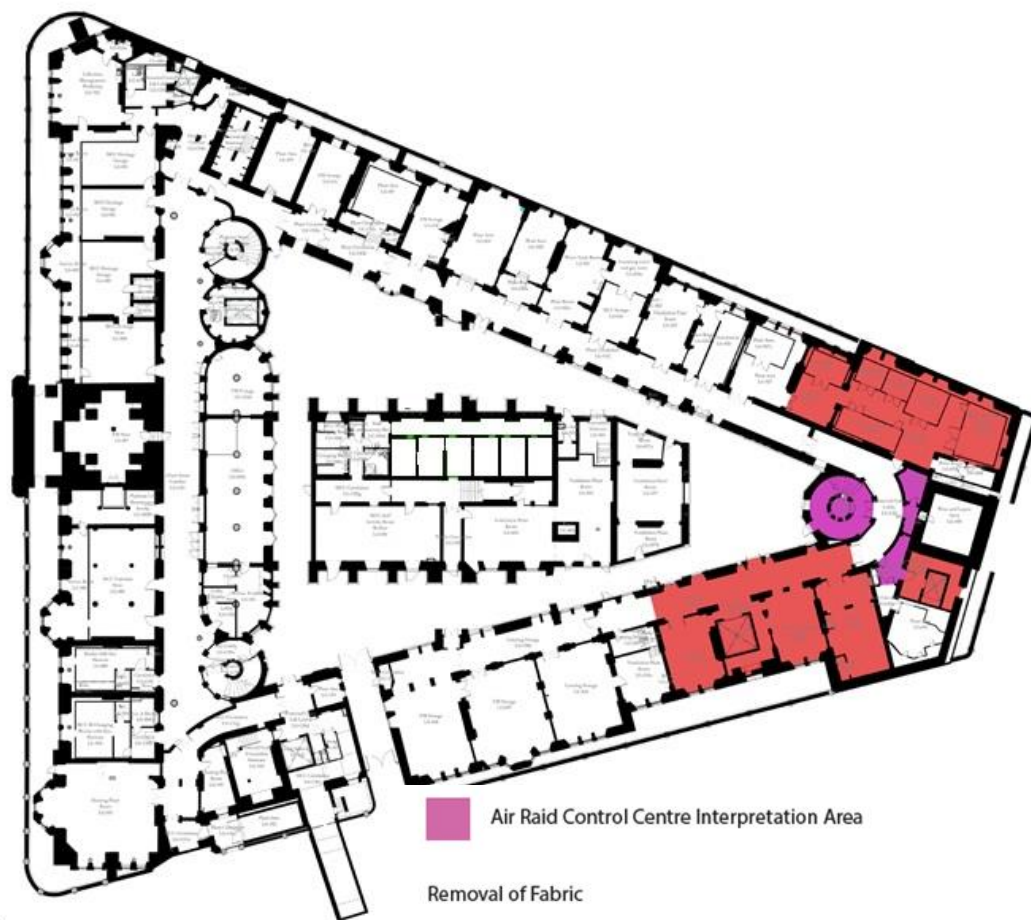


Heritage Significance Legend

Very High	Purple
High	Red
Medium	Yellow
Low	Green
Neutral	Blue
Detrimental	Brown

Level LG

LG level - Areas of retention with interpretation



Air Raid Control Centre Interpretation Area

Removal of Fabric

Areas of air raid control centre steelwork and crash deck. This is proposed to be dismantled, with some key sections of steel with identification insignia retained in a dismantled state and stored for reference or reinstalled on site for service support frames

Heritage impact

This assessment of impact criteria has been designed to comply with the requirements and recommendations of the National Planning Policy Framework (2019), the associated Planning Policy Guidance, British Standard 7913 (2013) and Manchester Town Hall Heritage Management Plan (2015). This integrated approach ensures that the relevant issues for both planning considerations and wider good conservation practice are considered as an integrated part of the assessment. The following categories are referred to throughout this report and the wider Our Town Hall project when referring to heritage impact.

The removal of the ARP installations in some areas facilitates the restoration of higher significance fabric and there are significant benefits to the proposal, however, the removal of the bomb shelter steelwork and some of the office rooms associated with the ARP

centre will cause ‘moderate adverse harm’ to significance through the loss of part of the infrastructure of this later phase of the Town Hall’s history, however, this is deemed necessary for the installation of services, lifts, plant rooms and the laying of floor slabs which will all service the wider building. The harm to significance in the LG should also be weighed against the benefits of removing plant rooms in higher significance parts of the building.

Mitigation of harm

- Only the equipment that currently hinders use of the space or is deemed intrusive to the Waterhouse original design are flagged for removal. For example, in the Cooper Street entrance spiral LG level it is proposed to retain the air ventilation trunking as evidence whilst removing it on the floors above allowing this spiral staircase to be restored to the original design thereby enhancing significance.

MAGNITUDE OF IMPACT	DEFINITION	
High Beneficial	The development considerably enhances the heritage assets, views of the heritage assets, or the ability to appreciate their significance.	Enhances Significance
Moderate Beneficial	The development enhances to a clearly discernible extent the heritage assets, views of the heritage assets, or the ability to appreciate their significance.	
Minor Beneficial	The development enhances to a minor extent the heritage assets, views of the heritage assets, or the ability to appreciate their significance.	
Negligible	The development does not affect the heritage assets, views of the heritage assets, or the ability to appreciate their significance.	Preserves Significance
Minor Adverse	The development harms to a minor extent the heritage assets, views of the heritage assets, or the ability to appreciate their significance.	Less than Substantial Harm
Moderate Adverse	The development harms to a clearly discernible extent the heritage assets, views of the heritage assets, or the ability to appreciate their significance.	
High Adverse	The development severely harms the heritage assets, views of the heritage assets, or the ability to appreciate their significance.	Substantial Harm

- Any ephemera such as signs on walls or fixed telephones will be retained as per the Building Assets Schedule.
- Painted wall signs that have been overpainted will be restored by removing modern paint layers thereby enhancing significance.
- A Section of the steel crash deck that has insignias and maker's stamps shall be photographed and stored as loose items.
- Part of the air raid control centre is to be retained and interpreted.

Summary and Conclusion

The ARP installations are considered to be 'high to medium significance' as an important example of World War Two coordinated response systems within a municipal building. They have historical and evidential value; however, they are standardised designs and materials often assembled from 'flat-pack'

meaning they have little architectural or aesthetic merit and they severely detract from Waterhouse's design. In principle their partial removal is considered less harmful than installing MEP equipment in the higher significance areas of Waterhouse's design, and in some areas removing the ARP equipment will enhance significance, such as the Cooper Street entrance spiral.

The air raid control centre which is the part of the ARP installation of the highest significance, will be retained, restored and reinterpreted.

The harm primarily relates to the removal of the majority of the steel crash deck and the office dividing walls, however, this is unavoidable due to the installation of MEP equipment, a new lift shaft or floor replacements.

This harm facilitates substantial wider benefits in the provision of services for the Town Hall and offers enhancements to some parts of Waterhouse's original

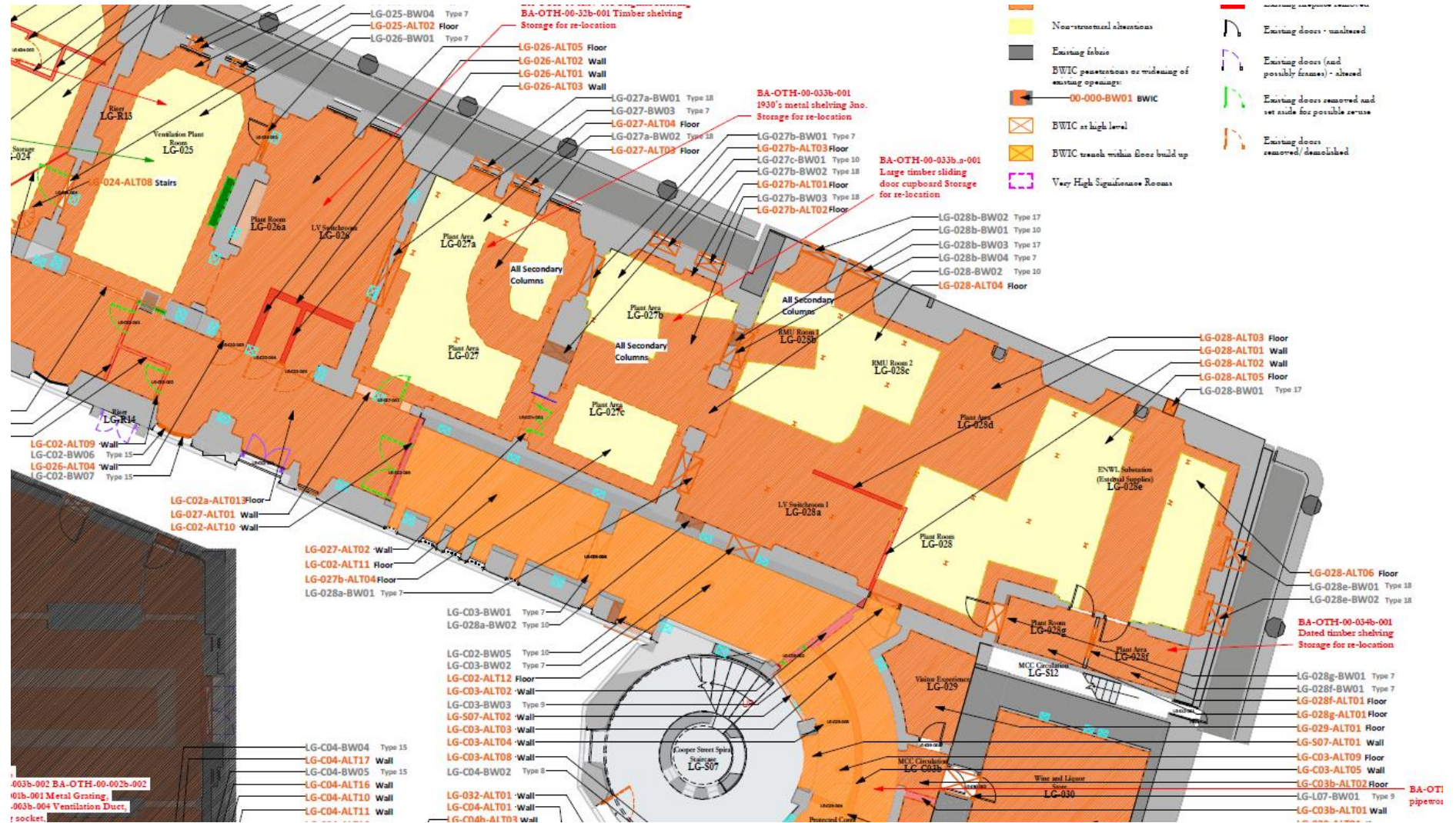
design. This heritage impact assessment has been produced in line with the methodology for assessing impact as set out in the Heritage Assessment and Engagement Strategy for Our Town Hall (OTH-PUR-XX-XXRPT-A-0007). It complies with the legislation and guidance of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the Manchester Town Hall Heritage Management Plan (2015), National Planning Policy Framework (2018) and the associated Planning Policy Guidance (2014), British Standard 7913 (2013) and Historic England's Conservation Principles (2008). In line with legislation, this impact assessment demonstrates 'special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest (Act, 1990, sections 16 & 66). The clear and convincing justification for elements of harm, and weighing of such harm against the public benefits of the proposal (including heritage benefits) is in direct reference to the requirements

in paragraphs 194 and 196 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

As per the NPPF the proposal is compliant with policy as the low level of harm would be 'less than substantial' and is outweighed by the wider public benefits of service provision for the building.

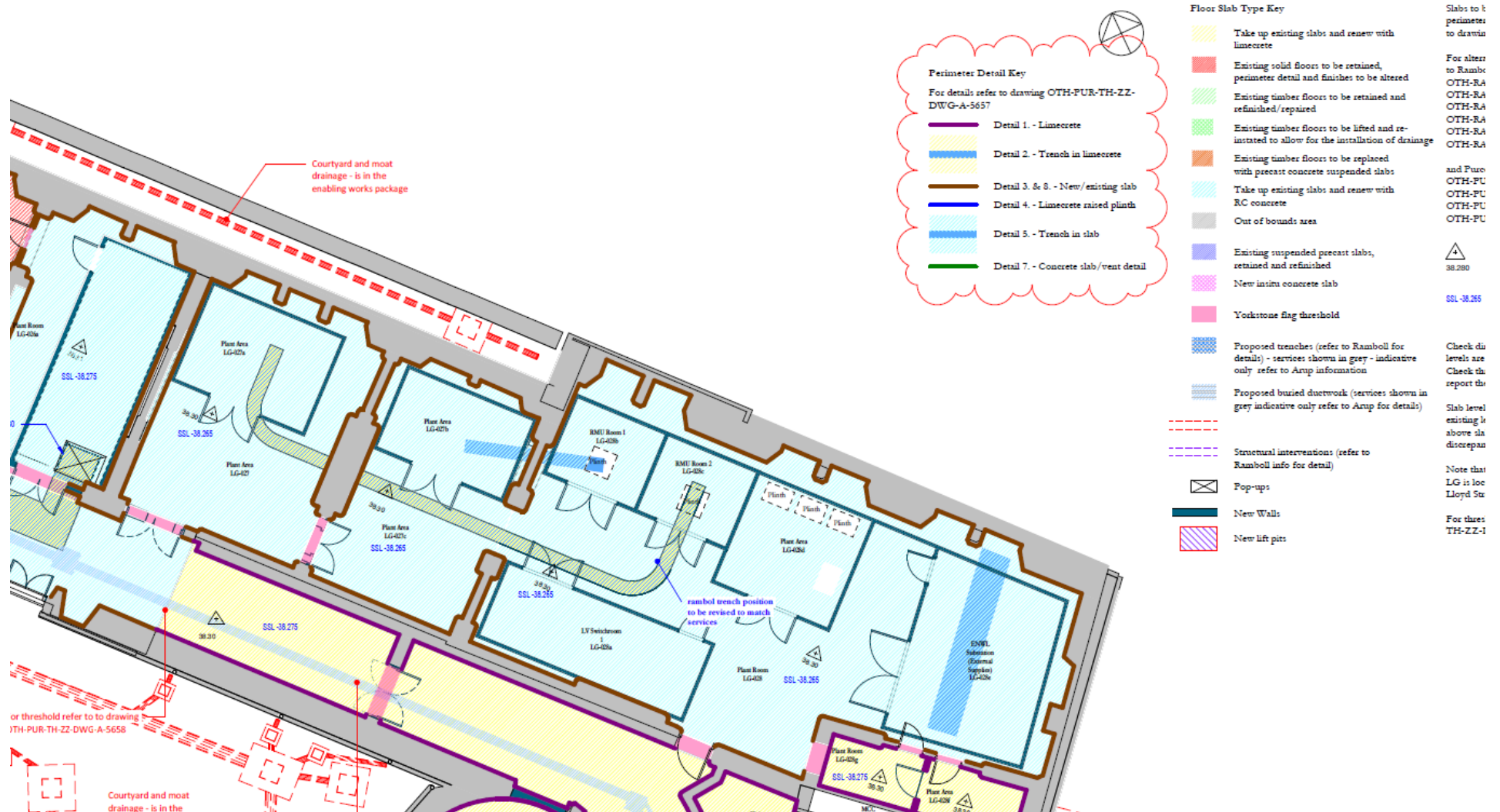
Appendix A – The proposed

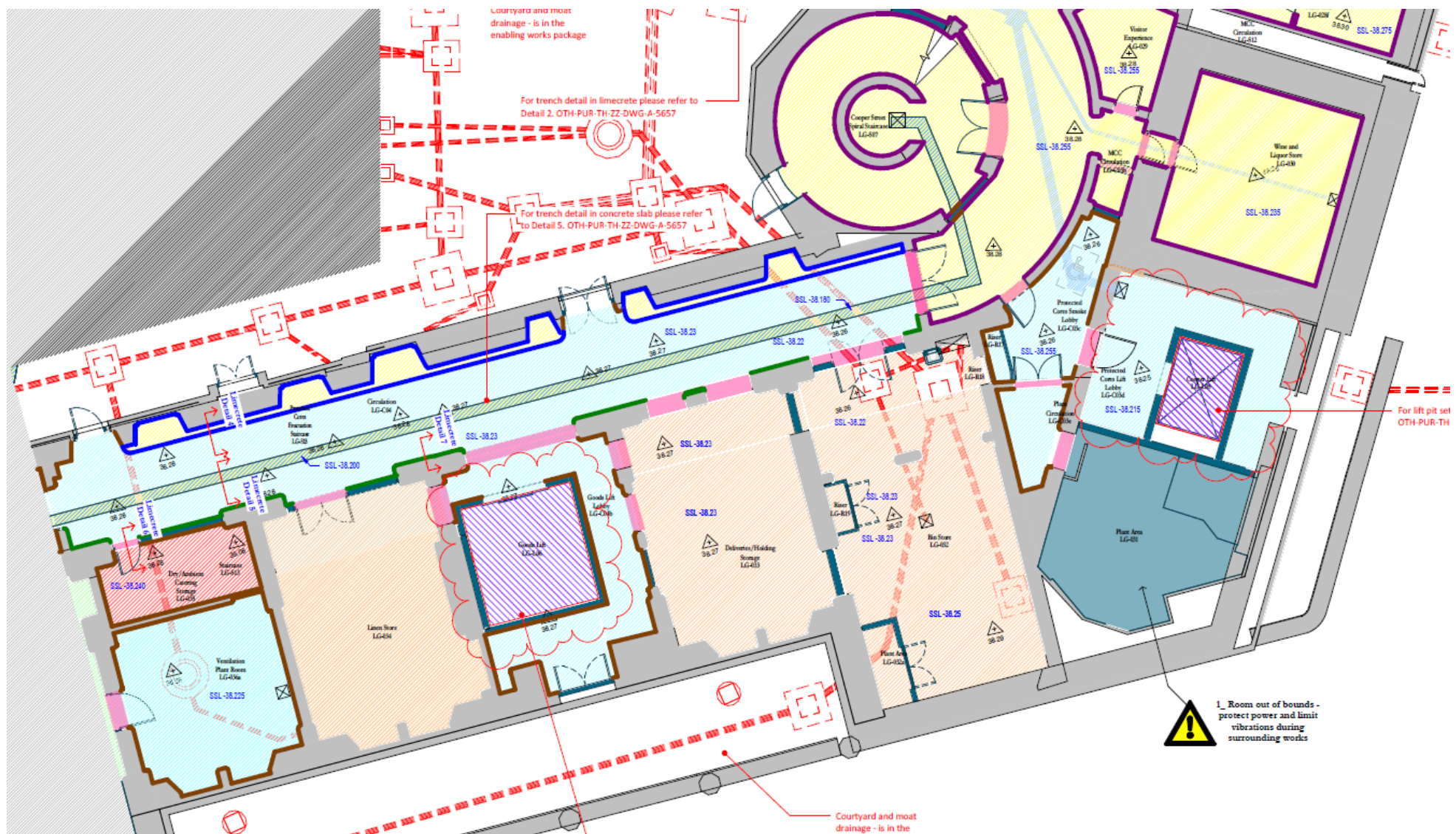
LG level at LBC stage



Appendix B – proposed LG

MEP and floor replacement





Appendix C – Extract from the 1870s

Waterhouse plan of the basement

