1. Outline of Proposed Works

Introduction

52 Princess Street does not currently provide any access to people who use wheelchairs. The internal ground floor level is approximately 1.5m above the level of the external pavements which surround the building.

To comply with the Equality Act and to provide suitable, safe and dignified access for the disabled the introduction of a platform lift is necessary as there is no other means of accessing the building in a wheelchair. The most suitable location to receive the lift is the side entrance of the building accessed off Bloom Street.

We have considered other options for the location of the lift as part of the development of these proposals as set out below in Section 2.

The Bloom Street entrance is located adjacent to the main reception area so will provide good access to the main reception desk and the lift core which provides access to the upper floors of the building.

Platform Lift Access System

To provide a suitable level threshold access off the Bloom Street elevation removal of two external steps will be required and the internal suspended timber floor to the entrance corridor will need to be lowered by approximately 330mm in height.

To provide an open and accessible lift lobby area the modern stud partition forming the kitchenette adjacent to the Bloom Street entrance will need to be removed and the area remodelled to accommodate the new lift and a smaller kitchenette.

Summary

There is no current wheelchair access into the building from the principal entrance facing onto Princess Street or any of the side elevations.

Working with the building owner we have identified a means of adapting the building in a sympathetic manner in order to install a new wheelchair access lift into the Bloom Street entrance, providing a reasonable means of wheelchair access to the whole building, while causing minimal damage to the original building fabric and retaining the existing means of emergency escape.

2. Proposed Location of the New Disabled Lift

As part of the design process we have considered several options and locations for the proposed disabled lift.

The side entrance on Bloom Street was selected as the preferred location as it provides the most accessible entrance in respect of reception, access to WC's and the widest public pavement area.

As part of the design process options including installing the lift to the Waterloo Street elevation and to the Main Entrance to Princess Street have been considered. Table 1, on the next page sets out the key considerations from a review of the options available.

The photographs below show the locations considered for the installation of the new lift



Overview of Waterloo Street elevation, the proposed entrance for the lift would be to the left-hand side of the existing entrance to the basement car park.



Overview of the Bloom Street elevation which is the preferred location for the lift using the existing door opening.

Table 1: Options Considered

Proposed Location for Lift	Advantages	Disadvantages
Main entrance facing Princess Street.	Access provided onto main reception area;	Detrimental to the main/front elevation of the building; Limited space to the main entrance means that adding a lift here would compromise existing access to the extent that major structural alterations would be necessary.
Waterloo Street elevation adjacent the existing vehicle access to the basement car park.	Minimal loss of external historic fabric by removing part of the modern brick panel/infill.	Loss of original timber floor structure, joinery and plaster to reduce levels sufficiently to provide level access from street; Loss of basement parking space; The public pavement to the Waterloo Street elevation is very narrow and not suitable for wheelchair access, unless widened; Health and Safety risk cars entering and exiting the very close proximity to a pedestrian / wheelchair access; The lift would be located within an occupied tenant's demise and not a common area meaning access would be difficult out of hours due to the tenanted location of the lift; Works to install and day to day operation of the lift would be highly disruptive to the current occupier.
Bloom Street elevation to the existing side access / escape door	The lift would provide access to the common parts near to WC facilities, reception and lifts; Minimal loss of original fabric; Original stone steps to be incorporated into the design of the lowered access floor; Visually the elevation will be largely unchanged as the existing door will be used.	Loss of some original timber floor structure.

Conclusion and Summary

The preferred option is to locate the lift within the existing Bloom Street entrance. While a small amount of the older building fabric requires removing for the installation of the lift, potentially more of the original timber floor structure would have to be removed if the lift was installed to the Waterloo Street elevation.

In respect of the Waterloo Street proposal, whilst the original bay adjacent to the car park entrance has been bricked up in relatively modern brickwork the internal floor structure to the Waterloo Street side would need to be removed / dropped to allow for a level access to be provided for wheelchair access meaning, there would also be a risk to original joinery and plaster in the Waterloo Street area.

The public pavement to Waterloo Street is currently too narrow to safely accommodate wheelchair access, particularly when considering that users would have to turn through 90 degrees to gain access to a new door to the elevation. There is also the health and safety issue of the vehicle access to the basement car park which is adjacent to the proposed location of the lift entrance.

The area required to form the lift is also in a tenanted office area meaning there would be significant disruption to the tenant who occupies the space. It would also mean that when users of the lift came into the building they would have to travel through the occupied office, it is unfair for the tenant to be expected to manage access to the building generally. This may also mean that during out of hours periods the lift is not accessible as the tenant's demise may be locked / unmanned.

Installing the lift to the Waterloo Street elevation would have a more detrimental effect to the building both in terms of removal of the original floor structure to accommodate the reduced floor levels for access and in terms of the negative impact on the tenant of the ground floor demise and the building management generally.