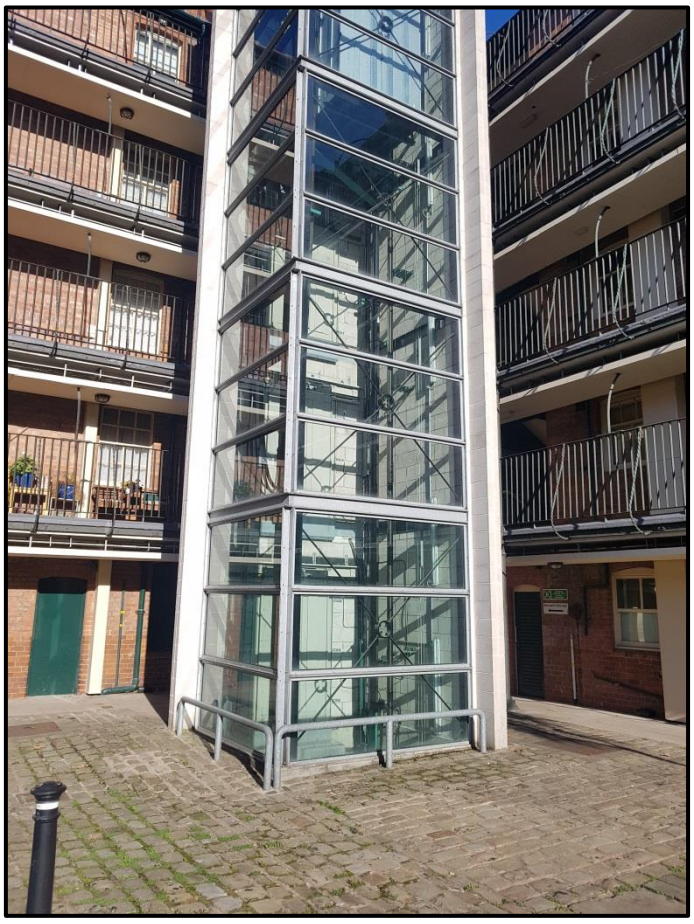
2018/19

Northwards Housing
North Manchester's Council Homes

Design and access statement for the installation of new MRL lifts Victoria Square, Manchester, M4 5DX



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Victoria Square

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This report has been compiled in support of an application for Listed Building Consent for the replacement of the two pedestrian lifts located in the courtyard, associated structural repairs to the lift shaft block work and the installation of a movement joint at Victoria Square, Manchester.

1.2 Included within this report are all elements necessary to allow the application to be determined, including:

• Justification Statement in terms of PPG15
• Design & Access Statement
• Summary of pre-consultations

1.3 Should the Local Authority believe that additional information is required to either register or determine the application, and then Northwards Housing will be happy to provide this and request that they are made aware of any information requests at the earliest opportunity.

1.4 Included with the application, apart from this report, are:

- Site location plan, edged in red as appropriate.
- Existing plans and elevations.
- Performance specification of the new MRL lift.
- Structural assessment report.
- Lift expansion joint detail

2.0 Background & Context

2.1 Background

2.1.1 Victoria Square is a Grade II Listed building, being the first example of social housing constructed in Manchester and continuing to successfully fulfil that role to this date.

2.1.2 It is located within the Ancoats area of the City, bounded by Oldham Road to the north, Bengal Street to the east, George Leigh Street to the south and Sherratt Street to the west.

2.1.3 The building occupies an entire block, with flats arranged over five floors around a central courtyard, being just off square in plan.

2.1.4 The ground floor to Oldham Road has retail uses.

2.1.5 The elevations are predominantly of brick construction but with decorative terracotta dressings, particularly to the Oldham Road elevation.

2.1.6 The internal courtyard elevations are predominantly brick, some glazed, although now over painted.

2.1.7 Access to the building is via Sherratt Street, through a tunnel and into the courtyard. Pedestrians are able to gain access through pedestrian entrances to each of the four corners, directly onto the stairwells. Access to the upper floors can be gained by a staircase located in each corner or by two lifts located diagonal of each other in the courtyard

2.2 History

2.2.1 The construction of Victoria Square can be set against the growing concern through the mid to later years of the 19th Century that industrial expansion and the migration into the towns and cities was creating incredibly poor housing conditions for the workers.

2.2.2 Pressure on housing areas was increased through the loss of housing brought about through major railway and public projects.

2.2.3 The area around Victoria Square was regarded as such a slum and on 4th February 1885, the Manchester Corporation appointed 'The Unhealthy Dwellings Committee' to look into the issue and report back.

2.2.4 Their findings resulted in areas of property being purchased by the Corporation, but this was limited by those owners who did not wish to sell.

2.2.5 The next step was to use the provisions of the 1875 Labourers' Dwellings Improvement Act. The area in which Victoria Square was constructed was declared on 2nd October 1889 as an 'Unhealthy Area,' by the Medical Officer of Health, with his report being put to the Unhealthy Dwellings Committee for review.

2.2.6 The Committee had an improvement scheme drawn up and sought powers from the Local Government Board to acquire the remaining property, under the title 'The Manchester Labourers' Dwellings Scheme, 1890.'

2.2.7 A total of 1250 people living in 239 houses were displaced by this action at a cost of almost £100, 000.

2.2.8 Competitive designs were sought for the design of 'Oldham Road Block No. 2' with the Architects Spalding and Cross of London being selected.

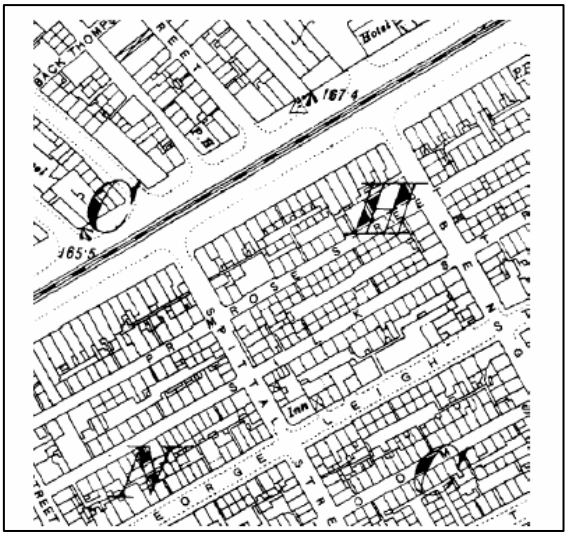


Figure 1 - 1893 OS Extract - Victoria Square not yet shown

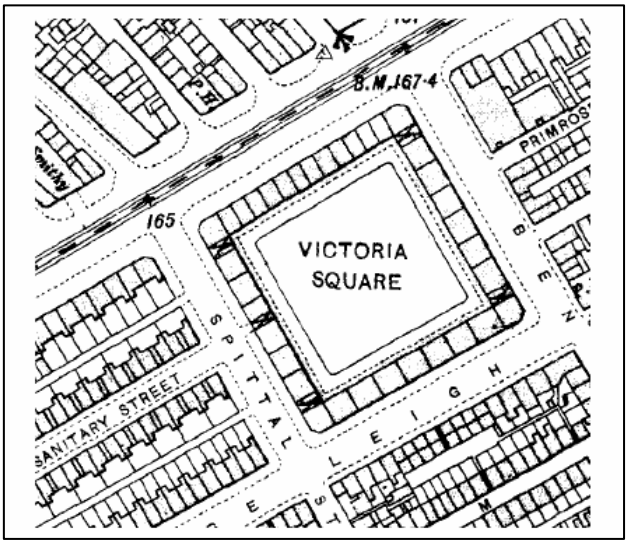


Figure 2 - OS Extract - Victoria Square now shown

2.2.9 The building was completed by 1894 (which conflicts with the date of 1899 referred to in the List Description) for the sum of £60, 577 7s 11d and formed part of a phased development of Corporation housing in the area, with its completion being followed by the clearance of other parts of the wider site and the construction of further dwellings (Fig 2).

2.2.10 With respect to the comment above on the date conflict, the Ordnance Survey extracts (Figs 1 & 2) support a date of 1894 for completion of the building, as well as an almost contemporary pamphlet published in 1904 by Henry Blacklock & Co on behalf of the City of Manchester Sanitary Committee, who were closely linked to the scheme, as a history and description of the project.

2.2.11 The OS extracts clearly illustrate the dense ‘slum’ development that preceded Victoria Square as well as the social housing scheme that emerged.

2.2.12 The building has been in continuous use and occupation since that time and has required relatively little adaptation due to the quality of its original design.

2.2.13 As originally built, Victoria Square contained:

- 16 shops, each with a cellar
- 4 laundries and drying rooms, located within the roof space
- 237 double tenements, approximately 300ft² in area, having a living room and a bedroom, arranged in pairs and accessed from a common lobby which contained a shared WC and sink.
- 48 single room tenements, approximately 130ft²

2.2.14 The building could accommodate 848 people.



Figure 3 - Clearance and new works following completion of Victoria Square 1898

2.2.15 However, the building has been the subject of change over time and although it has proven difficult to accurately date these changes, evidence clearly exists for the nature of the changes.

2.2.16 There have been a number of significant changes to the building:
• The change from single and double tenements to self-contained flats, which impacted on the courtyard elevation to Oldham Road in particular, being significantly altered to suit the new flat configuration. The internal layouts are also much altered to accommodate self-contained bathrooms etc.

- The addition of modern kitchens, which necessitated the raising of cill heights to a significant proportion of the windows, resulting is a loss of uniformity to the courtyard elevations.
- The replacement of the vast majority of the windows to the external elevations of the building. (post 1968)

- The part replacement of the vast majority of the windows to the courtyard elevations.
- The removal of the laundry and drying rooms from the roof void, with the consequential loss of the dormer roof windows over. (circa 1985)
- The creation of car parking and gardens within the previously entirely hard landscaped courtyard. (1998)
- The conversion of parts of the ground floor to communal facilities. (2004)
- The addition of the two lifts cores within the courtyard. (2005)
- The conversion of the retail unit on the corner of Sherratt Street and George Leigh
- Street to provide a new accessible laundry facility. (2005)

2.2.17 Despite these changes, the outward appearance of the building remains little altered.

2.3 Current Context

2.3.1 The building continues to fulfil its original purpose of providing social housing, although now with those over the age of 60 as residents.

2.3.2 It has a total of 165 flats, predominantly with a single bedroom, lounge, kitchen and bathroom, but with a small number of larger units.

2.3.3 The building is in the care of Northwards Housing, a company set up to look after Council homes in the north of Manchester on behalf on of Manchester City Council.

2.3.4 Northwards Housing are responsible for the care and maintenance of the building and instigated major programme of repairs and refurbishments, of which the pedestrian gates form a part.

2.3.5 The building continues to be a valuable and sought after part of Manchester's social housing stock and contains a very strong community.

2.3.6 Over the years, the building has undergone a number of adaptations to maintain its place in Manchester's social housing stock, but it is a testament to the quality of the original design that it is still a useful and relevant building to this date and ostensibly retains its original character despite those changes.

3.0 Design

3.1 Lift replacement

3.1.1 It is proposed to replace the existing hydraulic passenger lifts with new machine room less traction lifts including all landing doors, controls and lifting equipment. The new lifts shall be contained within the existing shafts and will not impact the original details at the block.

3.1.2 The existing hydraulic lifts are prone to breakdowns due to their design characteristics. The plant room located on the ground floor adjacent to the lift shaft has been subject to redesign and planning applications in previous years due to heat generated by the hydraulic fluid being compressed and passing underground from the lift shaft to the plant room. This resulted in the installation of louvered doors and air conditioning units to regulate the temperature in the plant rooms.

3.1.3 The most recent series of lift breakdowns has been related to corrosion of the landing doors due to exposer to the elements over a number of years. The current steel work and drainage system is not fit for the environment in which it serves. Figure 4 and 5 show the levels of corrosion on the door frame which has contributed to previous breakdowns.



Figure 4 - Rust on the door frame due to water ingress

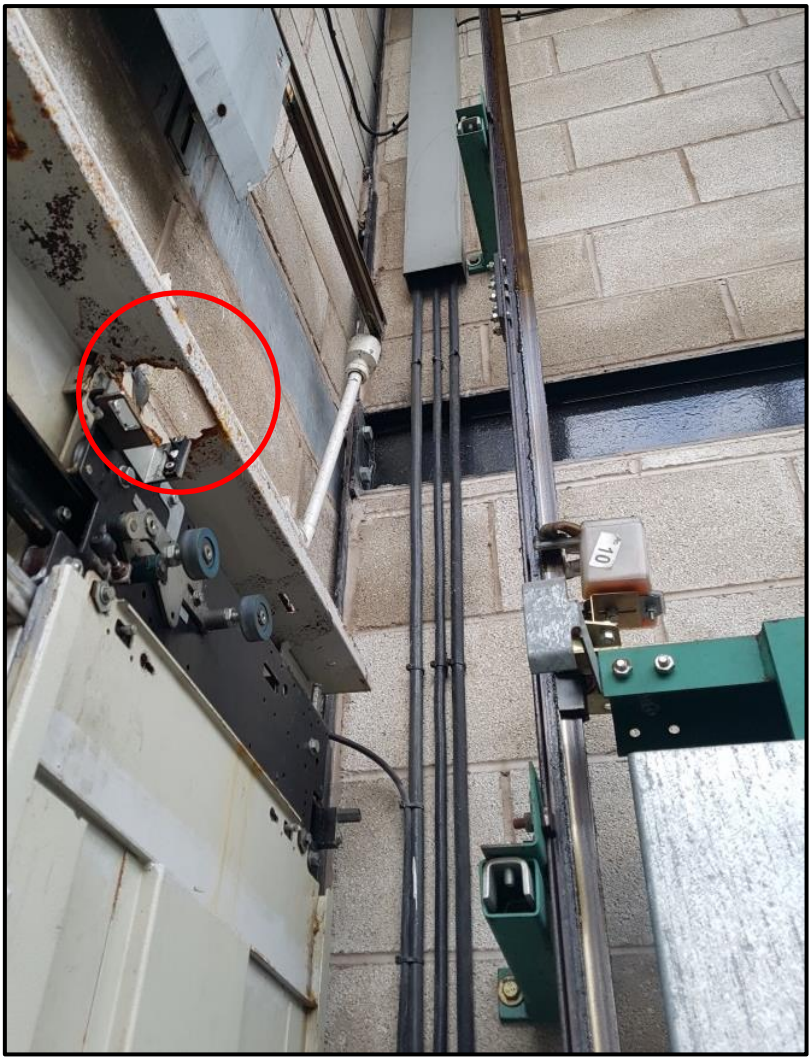


Figure 5 - Corrosion of lift door plate inner lift shaft

3.1.4 The lift shaft has undergone a visual structural assessment due to signs of movement on the outer block work. The structural report identified stepped cracking within both lift shafts on the second, third and fourth storey levels. It has therefore been recommended that a full height movement joint is introduced along with wall ties with de-bonding sleeves (please see Structural assessment report and movement joint proposal for detailed report and drawings).

3.1.5 The full height movement joint shall penetrate both courses of block work with the wall ties being drilled from the lift shaft out. The location of the recommended movement joint sits perfectly in line with the hydraulic ram in the shaft. The movement joint can only be installed once existing lift has been completely removed. Figure 6 shows the location of the movement joint on the internal wall of the shaft. The location is impeded by the hydraulic ram on the internal wall of the lift shaft.



Figure 6 - Lift shaft stepped cracking

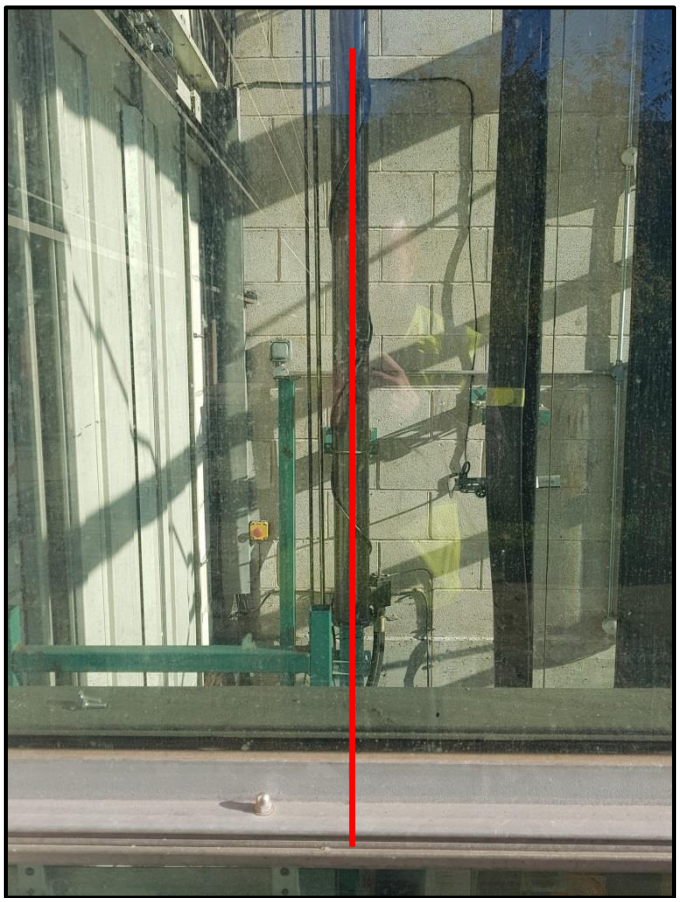


Figure 7 - The red line indicates where the movement joint will be located

4.0 Access

4.1 In respect of this application, access mainly relates to the ease of access to the upper levels via the lift, particularly given that the building is solely for the use of older residents, with a higher likelihood of mobility and other impairments.

4.2 The continuing breakdowns of the existing lifts are a great concern for residents and staff and daily checks of each lift are carried out with any anomalies reported and breakdowns recorded. The breakdown and remedial costs have a significant impact on the revenue and maintenance budgets.

4.3 The proposed MRL traction lift shall be designed for the environment it serves with anti-corrosive marine grade steel and improved drainage system within the lift shaft to prevent rain water running through the lift shaft.

4.4 The stepped cracking to the shaft block work will gradually worsen if left unchecked and potentially lead to prolonged shutdowns of the lifts. This would impact tenants who rely heavily on the lift to access their flats.

4.5 Given that many residents struggle with mobility, the lifts are essential to provide access and egress to the properties. Many residents utilise mobility scooters which can only be brought down from the upper levels using the lifts.

5.0 Justification Statement

5.1 Applicants for Listed Building Consent are asked to justify their proposals in setting out that applicant must be able to demonstrate that the proposed works are desirable and / or necessary.

5.2 Victoria Square has constantly adapted to the changing needs of its occupants, remaining relevant through these adaptations. It is believed that these proposals are the latest stage in this adaptation.

5.3 The building is used by mostly elderly occupants, who can struggle with access to and from the building when the lifts are not in operation.

5.4 From that point of view, the replacement lift can be seen as a necessary adaptation due to hydraulic lifts having a lifespan of ten years and the volume of breakdowns related to the current system. The new system will have zero impact on the character of the historic building through the design and detail of the intervention.

5.5 Further damage to the lift shaft outer block work would result in an extended shut down. The recommended structural work can’t be carried out while the shaft is occupied by the current lift.

5.6 The external elevations are less altered in terms of the masonry and structural openings. The existing lift shaft design doesn’t incorporate any of the buildings character.

5.9 Therefore, an important part of this justification is that this represents a threefold opportunity:

- To carry out the lift replacement scheme which installs a lift that is fit for purpose and is designed to work in the environment it serves.
- To carry out structural repairs that meet the recommendations set out by the structural engineer.
- To make an adaptation to the building to improve access and egress to the building for residents and visitors.

6.0 Consultation

6.1 Consultation has taken place with the Principle Planner for Victoria Square. The advice received stated that “a proposal needs to be developed which respects the character of the Listed Building in the Conservation Area”. The lift will not impact the character of the building or any original details.

7.0 Conclusions

7.1 In conclusion, these proposals are intended to improve the access to Victoria Square whilst at the same time improving the overall appearance of the building through a consistent and thorough approach. The two elements of work are required to be carried in conjunction with each other. This maximises efficiencies and downtime of the lifts along with capital expenditure.

7.2 It is hoped that the Local Authority believe the approach taken to be appropriate and see fit to grant consent to the application for both elements of work.

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