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1751/SSR/rc

Emily Booth
Planning Department
Manchester City Council
PO Box 532
Town Hall
Manchester
M60 2LA

27 November 2017

Dear Emily Booth,

Access issue 4 as noted in 117601/FO/2017: Full Planning Application Action tracker.

David Bonnett Associates (DBA) are the appointed Access Consultants on the Atrium Hotel project. We set out below the responses to access issue item 4 as noted in the action tracker.

DBA understands that the step-free access to retail unit 4 in the basement has been queried by MCC.

The Applicants initial response was:

'Step-free route to retail unit 4 is not possible due to site constraints externally and internally. As the bar offer is not unique therefore, step-free access is not critical. Guests seeking food and beverage offerings, that require step-free access, can obtain service from either the atrium bar and retail units 1 / 2 & 3. All of which are step-free'

MCC comments follows:

'Please explain why 'step free' access cannot be provided to Retail Unit 4 and what the site constraints that you refer to are.'

1. Standards applied

Please refer to the access statement submitted for details or standards applied, provisions and responsibilities of the Equality Act 2010 and general access strategy, aims and objectives.

inclusive design consultancy & research

Dr David Bonnett	**Director**	Richard Cohen	Access Auditor and Technical Support
Stuart Schlindwein-Robinson	Practice Director | Snr. Inclusive Design Consultant	Paloma Huesca	Access Auditor and Technical Support
Francois Van Staden	Director of Operations	Shannon Keys	Access Auditor and Technical Support
John Darvill	Snr. Inclusive Design Consultant	Kelda Lyons	Access Auditor and Technical Support
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Alan Pottinger	Inclusive Design Consultant	Struan Cameron	Graphic Designer

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2. Key issues for resolution

DBA suggest that there are two key issues to clarify;

(a) Justification on the constraints in relation to providing step-free access via vertical circulation and the evacuation implications thereof, and

(b) SACO's response under the Equality Act 2010 to provide the same level of service within the hotel.

(a) Building constraints

The entrance to retail unit 4 is stepped from Princess Street with only a staircase accessing the basement level – there is no existing lift access at all to this block to basement level.

There are retail units 1 & 2 at ground floor with a total area of 393.5m2 and units 3 & 5 at the basement floor with a total area of 350.1m2 that are fully accessible and can offer step-free access to equivalent facilities. The area for unit 4 that is not step-free accessible is 119.5m2. Therefore 86% of the equivalent retail area is accessible.

Initial investigations suggest that to provide step-free access to the retail unit 4 would involve structural alterations, a new lift shaft, new power supplies, lift equipment and treatment to the existing stairwell to acceptable front of house standards. The estimated cost of £250,000 would make the retail unit not viable.

DBA understand that the existing building constraints noted above have been considered and that structurally a platform lift to link ground floor to retail unit 4 would be difficult to achieve.

The reasons given for this are as follows:

To provide a platform lift from ground floor to the basement would involve quite a substantial amount of structural demolition work (see above).

- Any platform lift access would need to be accessed externally in front of the entrance façade / doors in the open via a modified window opening. This would be a security risk and potential vandalism issue.

- Additionally both reception and retail unit staff will not have control of the lift use unless this is physically managed at all times the unit is open.

- The design team assume any structural demolition works externally and internally would require Listed Building Consent.

- The retail 4 space is quite small and providing a new lift with all necessary F.R lobby enclosures may affect viability in terms of letting.

- In addition the fire risks are such that a safe refuge would be difficult to provide and take up a substantial area of the retail space.

- However the new stairs will be designed to meet Approved Document K in all other respects.

(b) SACO's Equality Act responsibilities

DBA understand that there are no unique provisions in the basement that will mean a disabled person would not be treated less favourably if step-free access cannot be achieved.

SACO have confirmed that an alternative accessible bar provision to retail unit 4 can be provided at the ground floor atrium bar and retail units 1, 2 and 3 all of which have step-free access and offer the same level of service to that in retail unit 4.

Any management policies, practices and procedures will be in place to ensure that no one will be discriminated against. This would include the following:

- Booking procedures such as the web site and front of house will be planning that anyone booking an event in the basement (if this is an offer in the future) will be alerted to the lack of step-free access and that the accessible areas can be booked as an alternative.

- If individuals or groups with persons unable to use the stairs arrive at the hotel and are unable to access the retail unit, then the alternative accessible provision will be offered.

- As with existing practices, if table service is required for people unable to use the bar then this will be offered. See 4 below.

- All front of house staff will be trained to ensure that disabled people are treated with the same level of service when using all of the hotel facilities not just the bar areas. This will include table service, knowing alternative locations, using correct terminology etc.

- SACO acknowledge visitor expectations of accessible facilities within the hotel and wish to allow potential users to recognise that the hotel is user friendly and able to accommodate their needs. To this end DBA will consult with the hotel operator to ensure that the access strategy is developed to include detailed reference to the availability of suitable facilities.

3. Summary

In reality the retail unit 4 space accounts for approximately 14% of the floor space allocated for similar provisions. Therefore as a whole offer throughout the hotel, 86% of the retail space will be accessible.

A cost and design analysis indicates that step-free access to the basement retail unit 4 would require substantial building works and would have implications on other areas such as security, fire evacuation risk and less important viability of the space use.

DBA understand that there are no unique provisions in the basement that will mean a disabled person would not be treated less favourably if step-free access cannot be achieved. Any alternative service will be made known on the hotel web site, booking procedures and staff trained accordingly.

Therefore in DBA's opinion, not providing step-free access to the basement retail unit 4 would not put the client at risk under the Equality Act as long as all the points above are taken on board and implemented and that the detail design development considers the appropriate standards and guidance.

Yours sincerely,



Stuart Schlindwein-Robinson NRAC

On behalf of David Bonnett Associates Ltd