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John Owens Building – Proposed Door Automation
Accessibility Statement

As part of the pre-application consultation related to the proposed works, Buttress Fuller Alsop Williams visited site with University of Manchester Directorate of Estates staff and Dr Hamied Haroon, who is chair of the University's Disabled Staff Network. This was done in order to assess the most desirable positions for the wireless push pads which will power the automated doors.

Hamied is a wheelchair user and as such is well placed to advise on the operation and usability of automated doors. In discussion with Hamied it became clear that the minimum dimensions for push pad locations as set out in Approved Document M of the Building Regulations are not always adequate in practice. This was especially the case with doors that open outwards, where the wheelchair still needs to be reversed in order to manoeuvre through the door. With this in mind, the push pad locations have been positioned slightly further away from the doors than in the guidance, as shown in the application visuals. This follows a general rule of thumb of 2.0m from 'push' opening swings and 2.5m from 'pull' swings (with a 900mm height deemed satisfactory). However it should be noted that dependent on the positions around existing openings or historic details, there is some variation in this in order to balance the accessibility alongside the impact on the character of the listed building.

It was evident from moving through the corridors that, especially with the ground floor doorsets, it is particularly difficult for a wheelchair user to navigate the existing doors without assistance, given the width and weight of the doors. This is made more of an issue when it is considered that wheelchairs are generally of different sizes/designs and require different modes of operation. In buildings such as the John Owens, which does not have staff available to assist, users such as Hamied require a system in place to allow them to access the same University facilities as others, and to do so in an independent manner. Given Hamied's assistance in recommending push pad positions (based on his experience of buildings across campus), and the considerations of the existing fabric of the listed building, it is anticipated that the spaces are made accessible while minimising the impact of the interventions.