T&G Associates Limited
Architects & Urban Designers

Change of use at 26 – 30 Princess Street, Manchester, M1 4LB

ACCESS STATEMENT
17 August 2009

1.0 APPROACHING THE BUILDING

The proposal is for the change of use from residential to A1 shops / B1 office space. The premises are located on the ground floor of 26-30 Princess Street

The principal entrance into the premises is located on the site boundary, at the junction of Princess Street and George Street.

2.0 ENTRANCE TO THE BUILDING

This property has two entrances. One is situated on the junction of Princess Street and George Street, the other is situated to the rear of the property on George Street. These are the only points of access into these premises.

As the building is grade II listed, we are not proposing to create a new entrance to access the unit. It is possible to achieve disabled access into this building without compromising the building's fabric or special interest.

The principal entrance door is to be retained, thus, will not affect the external appearance of the property. This door can be opened manually. The location of the door in the elevation and the handles on the door are evident – contrasting in colours. There are three steps set in the door opening, up to the doors. This application does not propose to change this.

The premises can be accessed by the disabled at the entrance directly on George Street. This entrance has a level threshold and through this is access to an existing disabled platform lift. Therefore, this development proposes to utilize this existing access. A bell is to be installed at the principal entrance at street level. This bell will inform a member of staff within the unit that a disabled person requires assistance. The disabled person will then be shown to the entrance on George Street where they can use the platform lift. Use of this lift will then provide level access throughout the rest of the ground floor space.

Although this access proposal for the disabled is not ideal, as it does not provide access for all through the same entrance, it is felt that this provides the best possible balance between protection of the listed building and access for the disabled.

Various other options have been explored in order to create disabled access into the office space from the principal entrance, these included:

1. Creating a similar entrance to that at the Wong Wong Bakery at 32 Princess Street, i.e. open up the original doorway and have the main entrance to the office at the front of the building. Create a ramp internally to the office floor level. This would not be viable as to reinstate the original doorway, a step of around 150mm would remain (see figure 1). This same step is at every entrance to this elevation, therefore, without compromising the external character of the building and changing the proportions of this single entrance, this would not be suitable for wheelchair users as the threshold would not be flush.

   This option would also require a ramp internally of a minimum 1.8m wide and 20m in length to comply with Manchester City Councils Design for Access 2. This would drastically reduce the amount of usable space within the building, thus making the internal space not fit for purpose.



Figure 1

2. Creating a ramp up to the corner entrance door and installing a platform lift inside the entrance, to enable wheelchair users to get to office level. - A platform lift would be needed in the main entrance as well as the external ramp as there is around a 1000mm height difference between street level and ground floor level.

   The option to have a platform lift and a ramp would impose too much on the public footpath which the building line sits upon, as well as having a negative impact on the elevation.

3. Lower the main entrance on the junction of Princess Street and George Street and have a platform lift internally. - As you can see in figure 2, the main entrance also has three steps within it. It would not be possible to alter the principal doorway to create a level access – leading to a platform lift, as this would mean lowering the internal floor level in the entrance. Due to the fact there is a restaurant operating in the basement of this building, this would not be possible.



Figure 2

3.0 PRINCIPAL ENTRANCE AREA

Reception counter, all hearing enhancement, special colour contrast and information signs are to comply with Approved Document M / BS8300 / MCC Design for Access 2.

4.0 TRAVEL WITHIN THE BUILDING

It is proposed that the unit have a separate entrance lobby before entering the main office/shop from the principal entrance. From the accessible entrance, access into the office/retail space is via the disabled platform lift then through the lightwell. The benefit of this is that it provides access for all, including wheelchair users and ambulant disabled people. If a person needs any assistance they can push the call button at the principal entrance and a member of staff from the office will be available to assist. All staff will be adequately trained in using the platform lift, and the ramp that will be provided. In the event of the lift breaking down, a portable ramp will be available and can be used at the steps situated next to the platform lift. A member of staff will already be there to assist should it be required.

It is not possible to create a new entrance to provide level access in the listed building due to the significant difference in street level and existing ground floor level.

All routes throughout the building are to comply with Approved Document M and Manchester City Council's Design for Access 2, in respect of corridor and door widths. All manually openable doors are fitted with a self-closing device which requires a force of less than 20N to open. All doors contrast with the surrounding walls.

5.0 FACILITIES WITHIN THE BUILDING

Two unisex WCs are provided for staff. One of these is to be a fully accessible WC.

All switches and sockets are sited in accordance with the Approved Document M and suitably contrasting in colours.