TOTAL ARCHITECTURE

Fraser House

36 Charlotte Street, Manchester

Design & Access Statement

To Support Planning & Listed Building Consent Application for Internal Refurbishment as Offices and Restaurant



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1.0 CONTEXT

Physical

The development site is Fraser House, a five storey brick and stone former textile warehouse in Manchester City Centre that was listed Grade ll in 1974.

It was constructed in the 'Palazzo' style between 1855 and 1860 and has impressive frontages to Portland Street and Charlotte Street with a plainer façade to the rear (Reyner Street)

It is one of several warehouses on Charlotte Street designed by Edward Walters, who promoted the application of the 'palazzo' architectural style to Manchester warehouses.

Further information on the history and historic significance of the building is contained in the Heritage Asset Statement that accompanies this application.

Social

The building has formed part of the Chinese community in Manchester for many years, being situated within the Chinatown district, and has housed organisations such as the Wai-Yin Chinese Women's Society.

The lower ground floor is occupied by an Italian restaurant and the upper ground floor has, until very recently, housed the Royal Orchid thai restaurant but the four upper floors have been vacant for many years.

Economic

The current economic climate makes any commercial development of the building difficult in the medium term, particularly given the risk of expending substantial sums of money for no commercial return.

However, there is a willingness and commitment from the the owners to create a viable use for the building and make a substantial long-term investment as, once completed, the development will be fully retained and managed by the current owners.

Planning

The building is Grade ll listed and has been the subject of a number of Listed Building Consent applications over the last few years and there is an ongoing dialogue with Manchester City Council over development works.

These works to date have followed the strategy of a soft strip out of internal partitions and ceilings plus works of repair and maintenance to the existing envelope including roofing works, brick and stone cleaning and repair and refurbishment of the windows.

Concurrent with these applications and works the proposals for the interior refurbishment have been developed and these form the basis of this application.

2.0 DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

Use

The building has been predominately empty for many years despite it's prominent position in the heart of the city centre and it is the owners intention to bring this attractive building back to beneficial use through redevelopment.

Total Architecture were approached in January 2011 to carry out an initial feasibility report into the options for redevelopment and this determined that the two primary options available were for the existing uses to continue with office space above a restaurant use or for the upper floors to be residential.

These options were complicated, however, by the issue of access as there are severe restrictions imposed by the historic fabric and it's relationship to the street and street levels, which have an impact on the suitability of a proposed use.

Much development work was carried out on the residential option but due to a number of technical issues, not least of which was the acoustic requirements required of a residential development, plus the change in market conditions during this process it was decided that this was not a viable option.

During this period, the owners of the building stated their desire to develop a restaurant use to complement their existing restaurant on George Street and to maximise the amount of space that can be provided for this use.

Consequently, it is intended to retain the existing, separate, restaurant use at lower ground floor level, provide additional restaurant space at 1st floor that will be linked to the existing restaurant use at upper ground floor and then redevelop the upper floors into office accommodation accessed from a new entrance on Portland Street.

Amount

The amount of accommodation is primarily governed by the constraints of the existing building and the natural lines of sub-division created by the existing structure. The desire to respond positively to the existing building has been integral to the design process from the outset and this determined where internal sub-division can occur.

The primary driver of the split is the desire to maximise the restaurant space by extending the restaurant use to the upper floors where possible.

The lack of two means of escape from the upper floors effectively limits this to the upper ground and 1st floor, with related storage and ancillary functions located on the lower ground and 2nd floors, with the remainder of the building continuing the existing office use.

3.0 CHARACTER

Design Concept

The development seeks to respond to and enhance the character and quality of the historic fabric, retaining and revealing as much of it as possible and integrating it into the proposals to create a development of distinctive character.

Layout

The layout is significantly constrained by the existing envelope and staircase and window positions, which dictate many of the fundamental issues. The aim is to achieve the most efficient layout whilst complying with regulations. and working with the existing building and the restrictions that imposes.

Scale
As outlined above the scale of the development and the elements within it are determined by the constraints of the existing envelope and the desire to work with them.

Appearance
There are no significant alterations to the brick facade other than tidying up by removing disused pipework and cleaning the brickwork and stone and these issues are dealt with in previous applications.

Internally, the appearance is largely governed by the desire to reveal the historic fabric, which will form the primary distinctive features within the internal spaces. Existing timber beams and cast iron columns will be revealed, existing windows will be refurbished and the main circulation areas will be stripped of modern accretions and returned to their original materials.

Specific Interventions
There are a number of interventions to the existing fabric that make up the development proposals and these are discussed in more detail below;

- Entrances

  The configuration of entrances and the provision of level access to the various parts of the development is a complex issue. There is currently one main entrance off Charlotte Street that gives access to the restaurant space and also to a secondary staircase between upper ground and first floor levels.

  This entrance is dark and of poor quality, creating a shabby appearance and a poor impression that is not befitting of the primary entrance to a fine building. The double door arrangement and split entrances create confusion, particularly as there is no direct access to the main staircase core from this entrance.

  This separation from the main core, together with the presence of steps directly from the pavement creates a significant problem for disabled access and so a strategy has been adopted to provide a new entrance for the offices in the former loading bay accessed off Portland Street with the entrance off Charlotte Street retained for restaurant use only.

  The intention with the Charlotte Street entrance is to create a new coherent and welcoming entrance to the restaurant that maximises visibility from the street and reveals details of the historic fabric. This involves removing some of the later additions, such as the stud wall separating the staircase from the lobby, and replacing the solid wall between the entrance and the restaurant with a glazed screen to allow views in to the main space.

  These alterations will allow the original columns and beams to be revealed and, together with the removal of the existing lowered ceiling, will increase the legibility of the existing construction.

  The new office entrance will make use of the existing loading bay, which is currently used for parking and has a solid metal roller shutter in the double height opening to Portland Street. This opening is to be fitted with a glazed screen system providing views in and access to the office entrance lobby.

We believe these alterations will provide clear and legible entrances for different uses within the building and will enhance the special qualities of the historic fabric.

- Loading Chute to Rear Elevation

The vertical loading slot to the rear elevation is currently concealed by a large galvanised steel extract duct and features timber cladding forming a boxing to service pipes behind. This arrangement creates a poor visual impression and only serves to conceal the original loading slot doors that are still in place behind. These doors are also mostly concealed on the inside face with overboarding and other obstructions.

The intention is to retain and reveal these existing doors and integrate them into the design proposals by re-locating the extract duct internally and removing the timber cladding. This allows the doors to form part of the office space at upper floors and offer the potential for fresh air intake and daylight.

The base of this loading chute features a concrete infill with a felt roof and it is proposed to create an opening in this to provide a loading position for the lower ground floor bar storage area, giving direct delivery access from the street.

- Staircases

The existing staircase that runs throughout the building is constructed from stone steps within a brick shaft. The steps are currently covered in a thin carpet whilst the brickwork has been painted and the intention is to remove these and create a distinctive space that utilises the existing historic features.

The carpet will be removed from the stairs and the underside will be stripped of it's paint finish to reveal the stone beneath, whilst the walls will be stripped of paint to reveal the brickwork beneath. The refurbishment of the balustrading and the introduction of feature lighting will all enhance the quality of this main circulation space.

There is one new staircases proposed for the development in the office entrance lobby and this gives access from the street level entrance up to the main circulation core at upper ground floor level. This is supplemented by a small platform lift to allow the office entrance to be fully accessible.

The existing staircase from the Charlotte Street entrance to the 1st floor will be retained with all existing features and will form the primary circulation between the two restaurant spaces, providing a logical and coherent use for this feature stair.

- Plaster & Internal Walls

The conversion of the upper floors to a restaurant and office use demands a number of new internal partitions and it is important that these are integrated in a manner that enhances, rather than detracts from, the quality of the existing fabric.

The main features in the current space are the cast iron columns and deep timber beams of the structure and all new partitions have been carefully positioned to ensure that these are fully exposed.

The new partitions will all be lightweight metal studs to delineate them as clearly new construction whilst the existing plaster to the inside face of the external walls will be repaired or replaced with a new lime-based plaster and any modern plasterboard linings will be removed.

- Floors & Ceilings

The existing floors are 70mm thick timber planks spanning between beams with an overlay generally of thin screed to a depth of approximately 25mm. This construction will be fully retained but the floors will be overlaid with a new levelling screed to provide a smooth and level surface for subsequent floor finishes..

The intention is to leave the underside of the timber planks exposed as the sofft finish below to reveal the nature of the construction. The boards, and the timber beams that support them will be treated with Danish Oil to enhance the richness of the timber.

- Secondary Glazing

The existing timber sash windows have been fully refurbished with new seals, weights, etc but to improve thermal and acoustic performance it is intended to provide an additional layer of secondary glazing.

This will be aluminium framed, sliding sash type glazing with very slim sightlines. The sub-division of frames will match that of the existing sash window behind so as to reduce the visual impact of the secondary glazing.

- Lower Ground Floor

The lower ground floor currently features a self-contained Italian restaurant that is in use plus vacant space that formed the kitchen and WCs for the former Royal Orchid restaurant above, with a modern staircase connecting these areas.

The area affected is currently formed from a collection of stud partitions and suspended ceilings and is of very low quality and the intention is to fully remove these. This reconfiguration allows the existing stair to this area to be removed and the restaurant floor above to be returned to it's original levels.

The existing Italian restaurant is approaching the end of it's lease and the intention is that this area will be subject to a soft strip out of all modern interventions once the area becomes available. This space will be subject to a future listed building consent application once full access can be obtained and the extent of the interventions determined.

- Roof Level

The majority of work at roof level is the repair of the existing slate coverings and lead flashings and much of this has already been carried out in consultation with MCC. The remaining works include the provision of new windows in the vertical parts of the roof and the underdrawing of the ceiling with insulated plasterboard to improve thermal efficiency.

The insertion of new roof windows involves the removal of several small dormer projections in the roof that are fitted with aluminium framed louvred windows. These are not original windows but appear to be a late 20th century addition and are of low quality.

The works at roof level also include the upgrading of the north light glazing with double glazed panels. The existing frames are of substantial depth and simple detailing and will be routered out to provide for the increased depth of the glazed units.

4.0 ACCESSIBILITY

Access Links
Being in the city centre the site has very good access links with a full range of public transport options available within 100m and major highways directly outside the entrance.

Parking
There is no option for parking on site as the footprint of the building occupies all of the site area at ground floor level. Parking is available on-street and at six NCP car parks within 100m of the site to meet any short term parking needs..

Inclusive Access
It is inevitable that there will be compromises when developing an existing building and this building in particular poses a unique set of problems due to it's listed status and the constraints of floor levels related to the street and the different uses to be accommodated.

The provision for inclusive access is fundamental to the redevelopment of the building and the following sections outline the provisions made for disabled access into and throughout the property.

Access Routes & Entrances
The main issue relating to access is that main restaurant floor and the office circulation core are at upper ground floor level, some 1.6m above street level. In addition, the main circulation core is remote from the principal entrance on Charlotte Street and provides no opportunities for providing level access due to steps into the building being at back of pavement.

The solution is to provide a new office entrance on Portland Street that is at street level and contains a platform lift to provide wheelchair access between this entrance level and the upper ground floor, from where the main lift can be accessed.

The restaurant entrance off Charlotte Street will remain stepped but a management policy will be implemented that allows wheelchair users to be accompanied through the office entrance, using the platform lift to access the restaurant at upper ground floor level.

This is not an ideal option but represents an improvement over the current arrangement.

Internal Circulation
Access between floors is achieved through the reuse of the existing lift, which will provide a car dimension of at least 1400 x 1100mm.

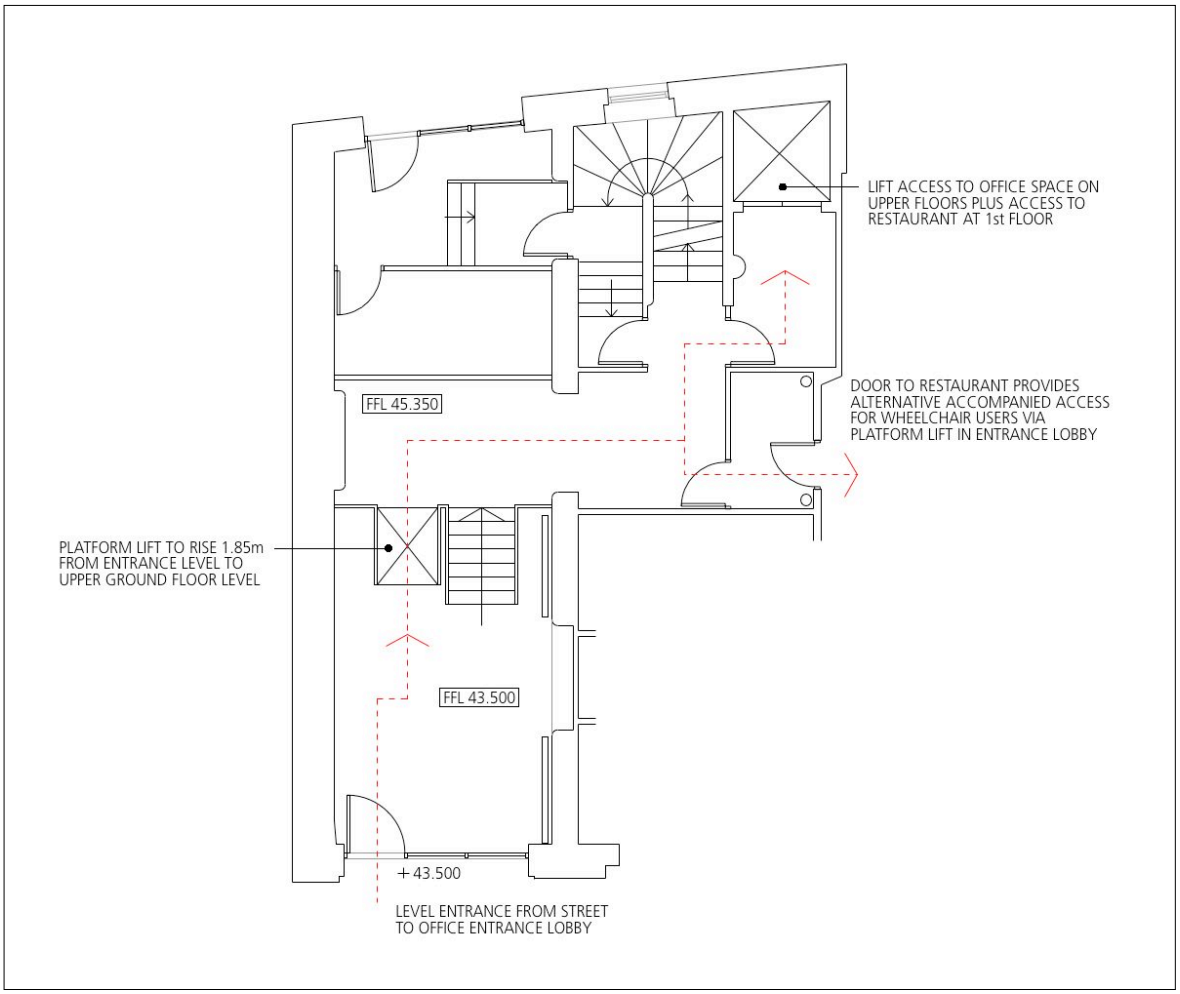


Diagram showing disabled access provision

5.0 ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability Strategy

The most significant contribution to environmental sustainability comes from the re-use and adaption of an existing building rather than demolition and new-build but because it is an existing building plus the restrictions of the tight urban site there are limited opportunities to incorporate the full range of sustainability measures that might be expected of a new building.

However, the aspiration is to produce as sustainable development as possible within necessary physical and financial restrictions and the constraints of the historic fabric. A full BREEAM pre-assessment has not been carried out but listed below are the basic measures to be adopted with reference to the categories contained in a BREEAM assessment.

- Energy

  Due to the listed status of the building it is not intended to upgrade the thermal insulation of the external walls as this would require the application of insulation over the existing plaster finish. However, the existing roof will be underdrawn with insulated plasterboard to improve thermal efficiency. Similarly, the existing single glazed timber sash windows are to be retained and supplemented with new secondary glazing to improve thermal and acoustic performance.

- Transport

  The building is located on a major thoroughfare, Portland Street, in Manchester city centre and is approximately 100m from the major public transport interchange of Piccadilly Gardens.

  There are many local amenities, including supermarkets, within 100m of the building

- Pollution

  All insulation specified will be low GWP and zero ODP.

  There will be no NOX emissions due to the use of electric heating systems ?????

  There is no change in the surface water run-off from the building

- Materials

  Due to the existing fabric and structure being retained the only new materials will be internal partitions plus floor and ceiling linings, secondary glazing and services installations and there is a commitment that these will be responsibly sourced.

  Recycling facilities are provided for the storage and segregation of waste. Refer to the accompanying Waste Management Strategy for details.

- Water

  Dual flush WC's and flow restricted taps, etc will be provided to limit potable water consumption as much as possible.

- Ecology

  The development will have no impact on the ecological value of the site due to the re-use of the existing building.

- Health & Wellbeing

  The large existing sash windows allow very high levels of natural light to be provided to all habitable rooms and also make high levels of natural ventilation possible.

- Security

  A Crime Impact Statement has been provided as part of this application and the recommendations of the report will be implemented in the development.

  The occupation of the building will significantly enhance the natural surveillance levels of the street thereby reducing the risk and perception of crime.