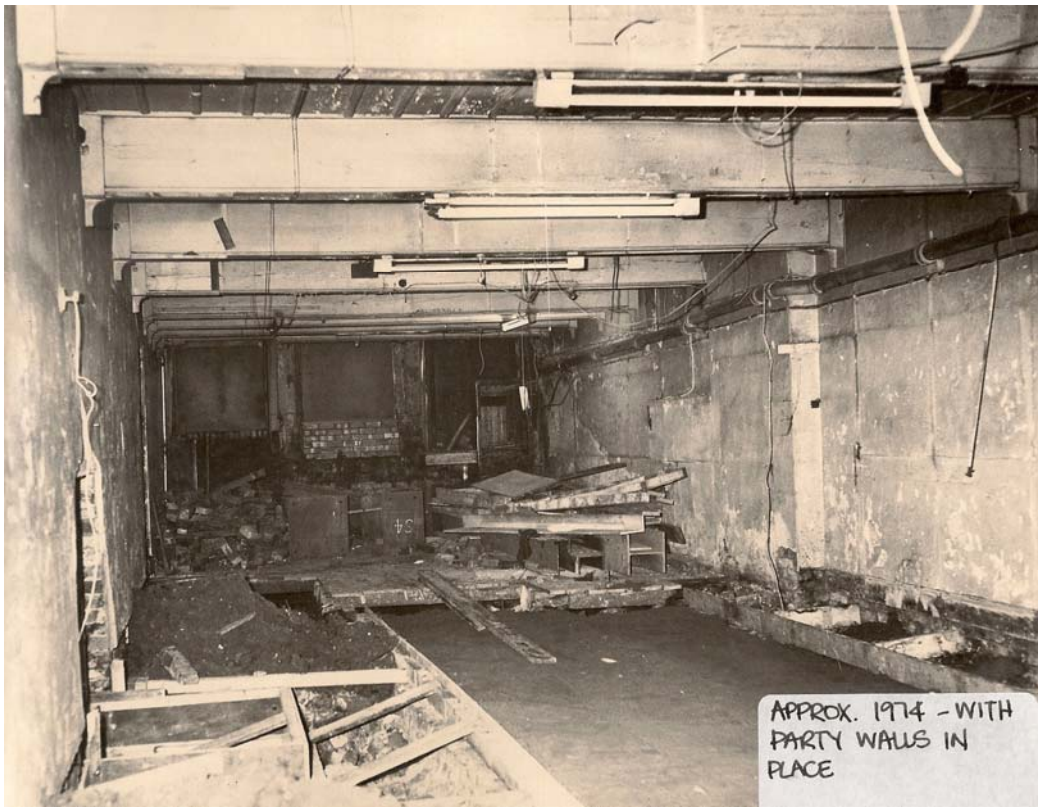
PPS5 STATEMENT and DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT
Soames Casino, 35-39a George Street, MANCHESTER, M1 4HQ

INTRODUCTION and HISTORY OF THE PREMISES TO DATE
This PPS5 Statement is submitted in support of the Listed Building and Planning Application for the proposed minor external works at Soames Casino, 35-39a George Street, Manchester.

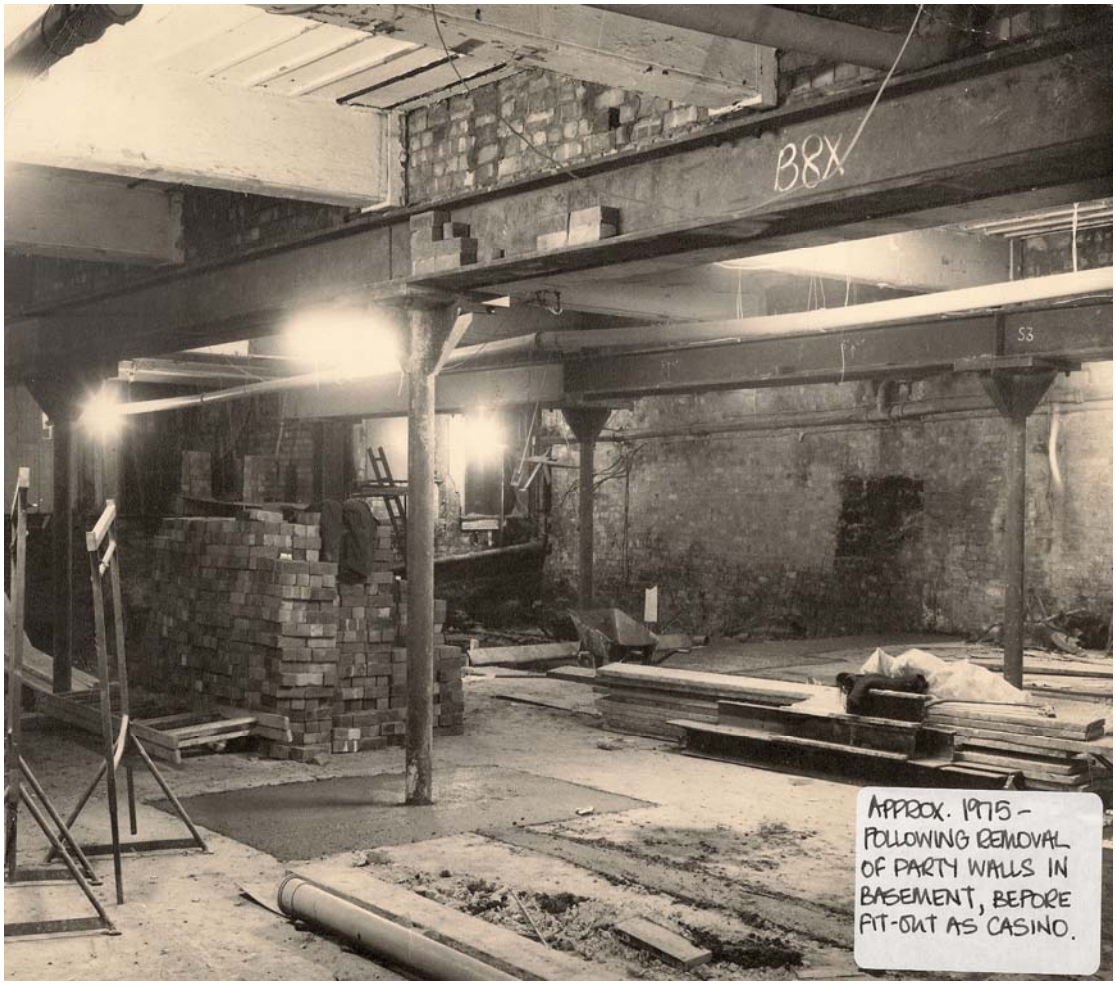
Details below relate to the description used for the previous Listed Building applications for this property:-

SJ8497NW GEORGE STREET
698-1/32/139 (South East side)
Nos.37 AND 39A
GV II
Cotton manufacturers' warehouse, now restaurants, etc. Probably 1840s; altered. Sandstone ashlar, with rear of red brick in Flemish bond (roof not visible). Rectangular plan parallel to street, with loading at rear. Basement and 3 storeys, a 9-window range, the basement and ground floor rusticated (with alternate blocks punch-dressed), a deep modillioned cornice, and parapet. The basement and ground floor together form a 9-bay "arcade" of square-headed openings between narrow rusticated piers with a continuous lintel dressed as voussoirs over the openings, the 3rd and 6th bays containing doorways and the others divided almost equally by linked sills (altered glazing to the windows); the 1st floor has segmental-headed sashed windows with keystones and small ornamental iron balconies, and the 2nd floor round-headed sashes with linked imposts, raised sills, and moulded heads with keystones. Rear: small gables over the outer bays linked by a parapet over the centre, sashed windows with flat-arched heads; and various very large inserted metal extractor ducts. Interior not inspected. An early example of this type of building in Manchester.

The building fronts George Street to the front and St James Street to the rear and is in the middle of a terraced row of properties. The original premises were in fact three separate buildings, with mass masonry on front and rear elevations and 75mm thick timber floors (with metal tongues) on large timber beams at approximately 3 metre centres, spanning between the party walls.



In the mid-Seventies these load-bearing party walls were removed at basement level (to create Soames Casino operated by Pleasurama Casinos) and a system of beams and columns was installed. These beams are generally 356 x 368 x 177 UC sections, spanning 5.2 metres approximately, onto 152mm dia SHS with 203 x 133 UB ties at column head positions. At the time, the beams and columns supported the existing timber construction and original party walls at Ground Floor level.



Applications to the Local Authority (Building Control) in 1975 and 1976 show schemes to remove some of the party walls at Ground Floor level, using twin 305 x 165 UBs straddling either 152 x 152 or 203 x 203 UCs. The beams supported original timber beams and additional steel beams.


Soames Casino, Basement Gaming Floor

When originally opened as Soames Casino, the entrance was immediately to the right of the door leading to the first floor offices, with a small solid canopy above and a double-sided fin sign (see photo). The windows and doors were all in hardwood, stained medium mahogany.



Soames Casino entrance and signage

The alterations proposed in this Planning/Listed Building application consist of a small, transparent canopy which would be to the same size as this solid canopy, but simply fixed to the non-original window frames.

Shortly after the conversion to a casino, there was an Italian restaurant (the Via Veneto) at Ground Floor and then the Leen Hong Chinese Restaurant (shown on the photo below); however by the early 1990s the Ground Floor was vacant.



In 1993, there was a major refurbishment scheme to the casino, with a circus theme. The casino was rebranded to remove the Soames name and a new ‘canopy’ and fin sign were installed. The entrance location remained the same. The Ground Floor was still vacant.



1993 external photograph

Further external alterations occurred in 1995 where Rank rebranded all its casinos to GROSVENOR CASINO and a new canopy and roundel sign were installed, with enamelled panels (with Grosvenor logos) over the lower Ground Floor windows.



1996 external photograph

In November 1996, there was a major fire in the casino, which completely destroyed everything at Basement level leaving just the shell. During the works in the immediate aftermath to assess any structural damage, it was discovered that all the beams were encased in asbestos which was also found in evidence on the upper floors. The building was therefore closed down for several months for asbestos removal and Grosvenor Casinos took the opportunity to replan the whole interior and to extend into the Ground Floor using one of the existing doors and steps up, to form their new Ground Floor entrance and Reception.

All the finishes had to be stripped right back before the fit-out works could commence. The original timber beams and flooring remained, although the steelwork, as previously stated, was not original.

The works were granted Listed Building Consent (ref. 051206/LO/CITY2/96) and Advertisement Consent (ref. 051521/AO/CITY2/97) on 12th May 1997 following extensive discussions with Manchester City Council Planning Department. There were further applications in October 1997 for a goods hoist and air-conditioning condensers both to be located on the rear wall.

The 1997 scheme was Chinese-themed with Reception, Bar and Restaurant at Ground Floor level, with a large opening in the floor and a viewing gallery over the Basement Gaming Area. A new passenger lift was installed and a new staircase linking the floors was located at the front of the building between both entrance doors.

All wall, floor and ceiling finishes were new including all fixtures and fittings, doors, frames, cornices, dado rails and skirtings. There was a new mechanical and electrical installation and new customers' toilets on both floors.

Externally, an ‘open’ canopy structure was fitted over the main entrance with a GROSVENOR CASINO sign and exposed neon (long since removed). In addition, the timber windows to both lower and upper Ground Floor were replaced with new, powder-coated aluminium windows in red and black, with louvres at lower level and, at the far right, upper level. In three cases, these provide the facility for supply and extract ventilation to the Ground Floor Toilets.



1997 external photograph

On 12th December 2000, Grosvenor Casinos were granted Advertisement Consent (ref. 060596/AO/CITY2/00) to install a vertical fin sign, reading CASINO both sides. This sign is still in place but was upgraded in 2012 to the new black and white corporate colours.

In 2003, Grosvenor Casinos decided to undertake another major refurbishment scheme to modernise the interior, and wanted customers to access the gaming floor via the Ground Floor machines area. The hole in the floor was partly infilled with this providing the location for the new stairs down to the Basement. The stairs installed in 1997 were removed and a new Lounge Area formed at Ground Floor.

As part of this scheme, a new disabled entrance door with an internal platform lift was installed, immediately to the left of the main entrance.


2011 external photograph

This was a full refurbishment scheme with a new layout and new finishes throughout, and was granted Listed Building Consent (ref. 067377/LO/CITY2/03) on 2nd May 2003. As was the case in 1997, all wall, floor and ceiling finishes were new including all fixtures and fittings, doors, frames, cornices, dado rails and skirtings. There were major mechanical and electrical works and the existing customer toilets to both floors were fully refurbished.

Finally, in 2012 there was a further refurbishment scheme which created a new bar and restaurant area in the Basement, a Dispense area at Ground Floor and the front elevation was also enhanced with new signage, reverting to the original name of Soames (ref. 098835/LO/2012/C2).



Current external photograph following 2012 refurbishment

DESIGN & ACCESS

DESIGN

SITE ANALYSIS

The casino is located within the Chinatown area of Manchester, on George Street, which is a one-way street, opposite the rear of the Manchester Art Gallery.

The casino itself occupies two floors (Ground and Basement) with offices and staff accommodation on the First Floor and plant and maintenance areas on the Second Floor.

The main entrance still has the metal ‘canopy’ structure above which was installed in 1997 and now has the original name SOAMES mounted on the top with a new Grosvenor Casino roundel on each side.

There are uplighters mounted below the First Floor windows and traditional lanterns on the piers between the upper Ground Floor windows. The upper and lower Ground Floor windows were replaced during the refurbishment scheme in 1997 (and resprayed black in 2003) and generally these windows house the signage, with louvres at the lowest level and with visibility only into the current Mahjong Area (located between both entrances).

The casino is open 24 hours a day and 364 days a year so the main entrance doors remain open. There are stainless steel handrails to each side to assist customers entering via the very steep steps.

The front elevation of the casino currently has an unprepossessing appearance and particularly on approach from the North, it is dominated by the signage and projecting white canopy of the adjacent restaurants.

PROPOSED MINOR EXTERNAL WORKS
The proposal is simply to install a small, cantilevered canopy which will provide a sheltered area for those customers who wish to smoke.

The proposed canopy is drawn to span across two bays (see the photo and note in italics on page 3) and has been designed to avoid any fixings into the original fabric of the building. The curved 'arms' are cranked to follow the step in the stone lintels and will be fixed into two of the non-original aluminium window frames. The covering will be lightweight, in transparent polycarbonate.

LAYOUT
There are no changes required to the layout.

SCALE
The scale of the alterations is the same as existing and this small canopy will not detract from the main entrance to the building.

APPEARANCE
The canopy structure will be aluminium, powder-coated in black to match all the existing black metalwork. The canopy 'roof' will be transparent and thus still allow visibility through it.

ACCESS

INCLUSIVE ACCESS
There will be no change to the current arrangements for access to the premises. There is dedicated disabled access immediately to the left of the main entrance, a platform lift within the Foyer and another lift down to the Basement Gaming Area. The proposed smoking shelter will be able to be used by all customers.

The proposed canopy will not affect current pedestrian, cycle or traffic routes.

SUMMARY

Under PPS5 Policy HE6.2, Grosvenor Casinos believe that the proposed minor works will not affect the existing historical, technical and architectural significance of the building in any way.

Careful consideration has been given to the existing site conditions and the heritage assets of this building will remain unaffected.

Catherine A.Dore
CAD DESIGN
April 2014

CADdesign
architectural and interior design consultancy

73 Framingham Road
Brooklands
Sale
Cheshire
M33 3RH
Tel. 0161 973 2635