Atelier MB
Urban Architects

Design Access and Historical Statement to support a Listed Building Application for The 9th Floor Bridgewater House, Manchester

Client:
Bruntwood
May 2014
Job 1557



Introduction

Atelier MB have been commissioned by Bruntwood to oversee the design of the part refurbishment to floor 9 of Bridgewater House, Whitworth Street Manchester. Accompanying this application and this report is a set of drawings describing the works and how they relate to the listed building. The Historic Building Appraisal is also included along with a brief schedule of works for demolition and new build elements.

History

Bridgewater House Listing

Manchester SJ8497NW Whitworth Street 698-1/32/438 (North Side) Nos. 58 and 60 Bridgewater House GV11 Shipping Warehouse, now offices. 1912, by Harry S. Fairhurst. Steel frame with cladding of Sandstone Ashlar and White Glazed Terracotta (roof concealed). Large rectangular plan, with loading bar at rear. Eclectic style.

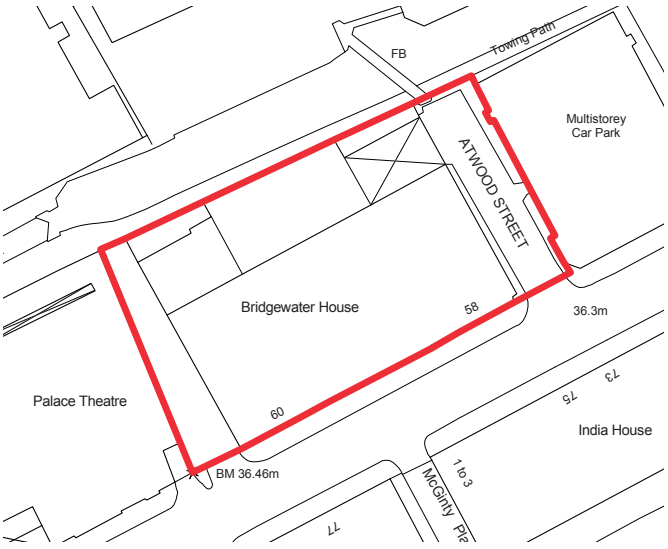
Eight storeys with basement, 19 bays, symmetrical, with strong horizontal division, the first 2 floors of stone, treated as rustic with channelled rusticated piers, moulded frieze and prominent modillioned cornice, the upper floors of White Glazed Terracotta, the 2nd floor with a prominent panelled cornice on coupled brackets, the next 4 floors with tiered canted bay windows in alternate bays, and modillioned main cornice interrupted in the centre by a 5-bay penthouse with pilastered end bays and a parapet with upstand. The ground floor has a massive sill-band (over rock-faced piers at basement level), interrupted between the 6th and 9th and the 14th and 17th bays by square-headed entrances with doorways which have profile medallions of the Duke of Bridgewater on the lintels and 3-light overlights at 1st floor level; otherwise, each bay has metal-framed windows to the ground and 1st floors and bronze panels between these. The upper floors have square windows (except the canted bays) and various forms of enrichment including geometric panels, fasces, wreaths and corrupt-leaf pendants. Return sides have 2 bays in matching style (with monogram at 6th floor level) and continue in plain rectilinear grid form. Interior not inspected. Forms group with Palace Theatre to left (q.v) and Refuge Assurance Building (q.v) and India House opposite (q.v).



Bridgewater House as seen from Whitworth Street.



Bridgewater House as seen from the rear



Site location plan

As is the case with many 'listings', the above is not exactly accurate. The plan for instance, is 'U' shaped rather than rectangular and the stone plinth is granite rather than sandstone. There are two goods entrances, one at the West end of the Whitworth Street façade and the other at the North end of Atwood Street. Correctly attributed as the work of Harry S. Fairhurst, who had earlier designed nearby Asia House (1900-10), India House (1905) and Lancaster House (1909), this building was constructed as a packing and shipping warehouse with the offices located on the Whitworth Street Elevation and the goods handling etc. taking place at the rear. Two goods lifts were located at the junction of the main building with the rear 'legs' though the one in the West wing has been removed through much of the building.

With the decline of the cotton trade the building became offices and by 1974 was in the ownership of Standard Life Assurance of Edinburgh. In 1975 a major refurbishment of the building took place during which the building had the terracotta and stonework cleaned and repaired, as well as the unfortunate replacement of 631 steel windows by Kawneer "Satin Bronze" Aluminium units. Only at the upper level do any of the original windows remain. The Edwardian Lavatory accommodation at the topmost level was removed and a flat created. Only some of the glazed brickwork remains at this level and the flat itself is now office accommodation. The building was scaffolded to do this work and, such is the size of the building, it is claimed that it was the greatest length of scaffold tube ever used on a project to that date.

Between 1975 and 1985 further works were undertaken including, according to the consultant Chris Spreckley, the installation of an additional fire escape. From other research it would seem likely that there were actually 2 fire escapes because there is no evidence of a single staircase on any floor and the building, as was often the case in buildings of this age, was actually two mirror halves. At that time the building was fully tenanted by the Post Office but current tenure is a multiplicity of tenants encompassing office and educational functions.

Proposals

The 9th floor is currently vacant apart from one tenant on the South side of the building. The works proposed are for the refurbishment of the suites in preparation for new tenancies and it will be carried out in stages leaving the occupied suite for last.

The proposals do not affect the exterior of the building. A previous approved application (ref 100453/LO/2012/C2) on part of floor 9th has been partly executed.

In the previous application a large mf ceiling was approved. This stopped short of the windows to reveal the true ceiling height and express the windows and structure at the edge of the space.

This application is an improvement on the previous approval in that the mf ceiling will be replaced with smaller rafts containing services. This is shown and described in the accompanying drawings. The original ceiling will thus be more prominent in the space. It is proposed that this mare sympathetic approach is adopted throughout the floor plate.

The existing non original partitions remaining on the west side of the building will be removed and the existing raised access floor will be retained to enable the services from below. The existing non original suspended ceiling will be removed to reveal the floor slab soffit and the ceiling rafts and track lighting will be installed at 2.4m above finished floor level, leaving the floor slab soffit mainly exposed. No original fabric will be removed, and the additions proposed are fully reversible, continuing the practical evolution of the space to meet modern space requirements.

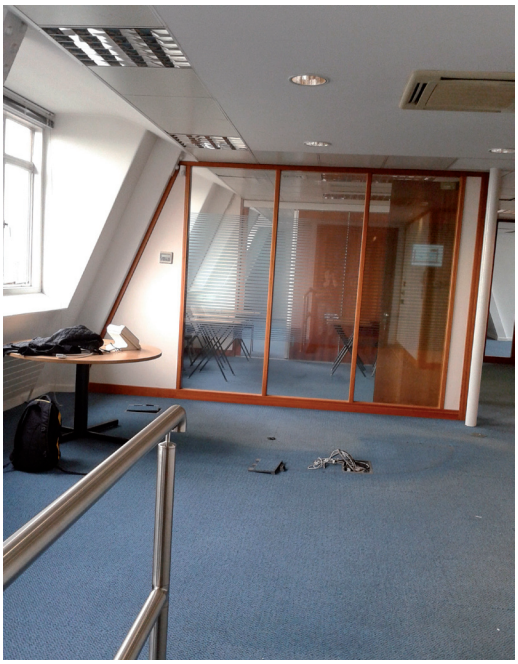
Briefly the works shown on the enclosed drawings are as follows:

Floors

New and existing raised access floor to 9th floor with associated ramps similar to those elsewhere within the building.

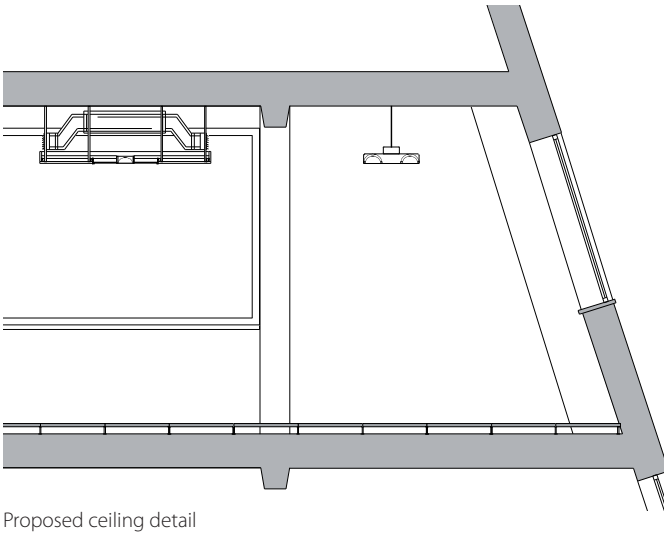
Ceilings:

The existing suspended ceiling is to be completely





Existing ceiling relationship with inclined columns



Proposed ceiling detail

removed and replaced with ceiling rafts to accommodate cables and track lighting installed at 2.4m above finished floor level, leaving the floor slab soffit mainly exposed.

As the details show, this will not affect the relationship between window and structure.

Partitions

All existing partitions will be removed, and the floorplate left as open plan ready for layout by future tenants.
This will be subject to a further listed building application.

Access Statement

Bridgewater House has had various alterations and enhancements over the years to improve the accessibility of the building. The central entrance on the ground floor allows a level access from the street and a platform lift allows for level access of the lift lobbies from the central entrance. On the floors, raised floors are ramped from the lift lobbies to provide wheelchair access to the floors. Disabled facilities are available on every floor.