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John Rylands Research Institute and Library

Draft Heritage Impact Assessment

For The University of Manchester



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1.0 Summary of Heritage Impact Assessment

1.1 Introduction

Donald Insall Associates was commissioned by the John Rylands Research Institute and Library and the University of Manchester in March 2022 to lead designs for their 'Next Chapter' project – an aspirational scheme to better connect visitors with their fantastic Special Collections, pioneering research and public events. Insall were subsequently appointed to advise on the implementation of the University's Network Transformation Project (WLAN) within the building.

This report has been informed by '*A Conservation Plan for The John Rylands Library, Deansgate*,' July 2015, a revision of the first Conservation Plan written in 2000 – 2002. The 2002 Plan was written by Stella Butler, then Head of Special Collections and John Hodgson (Manuscripts and Archives Manager), with advice from Marion Barter and Sandy Roy then of English Heritage North West and from John Prichard of Lloyd Evans Prichard. The revised text for the 2015 Plan were written by Clare Hartwell and Marion Barter of the Architectural History Practice Ltd, and by Rebecca Mills of Lloyd Evans Prichard, who also produced an accompanying condition report. An updated condition report on the building by Insalls has now been drafted.

The 2015 Gazetteer has been reviewed, with new images and any changes undertaken since that that time highlighted red; this is contained in Appendix III. The Assessment of Significance contained within the 2015 Conservation Plan is reproduced in Section 2, with updates to the text reflective of recent site inspections

and further targeted historical research in italics. This assessment is accompanied by a series of significance plans.

The specific constraints for this building are summarised below and Section 3 provides a justification of the scheme according to the relevant legislation, planning policy and guidance.

1.2 The Building its Legal Status and Policy Context

The John Rylands Library is a Grade I listed building located in the Deansgate/Peter Street Conservation Area in the City of Manchester. Alterations to a listed building generally require listed building consent; development in conservation areas requires local authorities to assess the implications of proposals on built heritage.

The statutory list description of the listed building is included in Appendix I and a summary of guidance on the Deansgate Conservation Area provided by the local planning authority is in Appendix IV, along with extracts from the relevant legislation and planning policy documents.

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 is the legislative basis for decision-making on applications that relate to the historic environment. Sections 16, 66 and 72 of the Act impose statutory duties upon local planning authorities which, with regard to listed buildings, require the planning authority to have 'special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses'

and, in respect of conservation areas, that ‘special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area’. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The development plan applicable to the Site is the Manchester City Council Core Strategy (2012). The Core Strategy has policies that deal with development affecting the historic environment, and these require that all development in Manchester City Centre should preserve or enhance heritage assets and reinforce and enhance the local character of the City Centre Character Area.

The courts have held that following the approach set out in the policies on the historic environment in the National Planning Policy Framework 2023 will effectively result in a decision-maker complying with its statutory duties. The Framework forms a material consideration for the purposes of section 38(6). At the heart of the Framework is ‘a presumption in favour of sustainable development’ and there are also specific policies relating to the historic environment. The Framework states that heritage assets are ‘an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life

of existing and future generations’. The Glossary to the National Planning Policy Framework defines a heritage asset as:

A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).

The Framework, in paragraph 194, states that:

In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.

Section 2 of this report – the assessment of significance – meets this requirement and is based on the research and site surveys undertaken to produce the 2002 and 2015 Conservation Plans as well as the additional site surveys undertaken as part of the updated gazetteer contained within this report.

The Framework also, in paragraph 199, requires that:

When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation (and the more important

the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

The Framework goes on to state at paragraph 200 that:

Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting) should require clear and convincing justification.

Section 3 of this report provides this clear and convincing justification.

The Framework requires that local planning authorities categorise harm as either ‘substantial’ or ‘less than substantial’. Where a proposed development will lead to ‘substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset’, the Framework states, in paragraph 201, that:

...local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:

- a) the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and*
- b) no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and*

- c) conservation by grant-funding or some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and
- d) the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use

The Framework requires local planning authorities to look for opportunities for new development within conservation areas and within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance. Paragraph 206 states that:

Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably.

- Grade II Listed Buildings
- Grade I Listed Buildings
- Deansgate/Peter Street Conservation Area Boundary



1.3 Summary Assessment of Significance

A detailed assessment of significance with guidance on the relative significance of elements of fabric and plan form and the extent to which these elements are sensitive to alteration is included in Section 2 of this report. The following paragraphs are taken from the 2015 Conservation Plan.

The John Rylands Library is one of the finest neo-Gothic buildings in Europe, housing internationally important collections of rare books, manuscripts and archives. It is a legacy of the commercial prosperity and confidence which characterized Manchester in the late nineteenth century, and it is the product of two remarkable personalities: Mrs Enriqueta Augustina Rylands and her architect, Basil Champneys.

The Library has survived the vicissitudes of the twentieth century, remarkably unscathed by two world wars, the disappearance of the Lancashire cotton industry, the zeal of post-war town planners, and the changing fortunes of the city. The Library looks forward with confidence to the challenges and opportunities presented by the new century.

The 2002 and the 2015 assessment confirms that the 1890s Building, taken as a whole, is of exceptional international significance. Individual elements such as the heating and ventilation system, the electric lighting, the decorative metalwork, stonework and the bookcases also have exceptional significance. Other elements such as the statuary, the windows and the woodwork are of

high or national significance. Most of the rooms and areas on the ground floor and Reading Room levels of the 1890s Building are of exceptional significance.

The 1920 Extension, which was also designed by Basil Champneys, is considered to be of high or national importance. Notable features include the Stone Corridor, the panelled offices on the top two floors, and the remarkable glass-floored stack area beneath which are of exceptional significance for the glass and steel stacks. The Wolfson Building (1957-1962) has medium heritage significance.



2.0 Assessment of Significance

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this section is to provide an assessment of significance of the Library so that the proposals for change to the building are fully informed as to its significance and so that the effect of the proposals on that significance can be evaluated. This assessment of the building is taken from the 2015 Conservation Plan which updated the 2002 description to reflect changes in policy during that period – most critically the implementation of the National Planning Policy Framework in 2012. It responds to its requirement to ‘recognise that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and conserve them in a manner appropriate to their significance’. The NPPF defines significance as;

‘The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological (potential to yield evidence about the past), architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting’.

An assessment of the significance of the collections is contained within the 2015 Conservation Plan at Appendix V.

2.2 Assessment of Significance

The Grade I listing of the John Rylands Library reflects the exceptional importance of the building, in particular its high level of architectural and historical value. The building is of national and international significance and is mentioned in general accounts of British architecture

of the period, as well as in the international context of Sir Banister Fletcher's History of Architecture, rev. J.C. Palmes, 1975.

The library building incorporates four principal phases which represent the main building of 1899 and three later phases of extensions. Different areas, while all covered by the current Grade I designation, are of differing levels of significance and in some cases significance varies within the same phase of building.

2.2.1 The 1899 Building

Historical value

The John Rylands Library is of exceptional historical significance for several reasons. This includes association with The Rylands family as a reflection of the philanthropy and patronage on the part of a leading industrialist family in Manchester. The city lacked significant aristocratic patronage and the contributions of figures such as John Rylands, Joseph Whitworth, patron of the Whitworth Art Gallery and the merchants and businessmen who founded institutions such as the Portico Library and Royal Manchester Institution is an important strand in Manchester history and national history.

Also relevant is the association with Basil Champneys, an architect of national repute and with Charles Eamer Kempe, who was one of the best known and most accomplished stained glass artists of the day. Another artist of repute associated with the building is the sculptor John Cassidy.

Also relevant is the fact that the Library has been appreciated as a work of architecture and a cultural resource in an enduring way. It was added to the statutory list of listed buildings in 1952, which can be regarded as exceptionally early for a building of this date, at a time when Victorian architecture was generally unappreciated and widely reviled. Cecil Stewart, writing in 1956 described it as 'undoubtedly the most important architectural event in Manchester during the last decade of the century. In some respects this Library was the most significant undertaking in England, for it marked the culmination of the Gothic Revival so far as secular architecture was concerned.'¹ The building was one of a tiny handful of Victorian buildings (which did not include the town hall) earmarked for retention in the 1945 City of Manchester Plan.²

There is also exceptional historical value for the collections, which include loose furnishings designed for the building as well as books, manuscripts and works of art.

Aesthetic value

The Library is of exceptional significance as arguably the most elaborate architectural expression of Art-for-Arts sake secular architecture of its day in Britain. Few other buildings of this type exhibit the freedom and imagination which characterises the Library which has amongst the most interesting and memorable secular Gothic spaces of nineteenth century Europe,

freely embellished by sculpture, stained glass and art metalwork and stylistically expressive of Gothic Revival infused with Art Nouveau freedom.

It is clear that there are differences in the treatment of different parts of the building and a hierarchy is expressed in the level of architectural and decorative elaboration. In general the public areas enjoy the most elaboration and decoration, while secondary areas such as staff rooms and cloakrooms are less decorative. It is argued here that in general terms this hierarchy is strictly reflective of the status of different areas and thus exceptional historic and aesthetic significance can be attributed to both types of area.

The exception is with reference to the basement areas and a group of service rooms and access on the second floor (former kitchen, etc.). The latter are utilitarian in character and have been altered. There has been significant alteration of some basements, largely associated with the insertion and upgrading of services and plant, as highlighted in the gazetteer. Those areas with lesser degrees of alteration are utilitarian in character and in some cases incorporate book presses or shelving of plain character and low aesthetic value. The basements are therefore generally considered to be of medium significance for aesthetic and historical values.

Communal value

The building and the site is considered to have high communal value as a Manchester institution used as a resource by generations of scholars, with value for the relationship with the University of Manchester.

¹ The Stones of Manchester, p.129

² R. Nicholas, City of Manchester Plan, 1945

The building has exceptional communal value for its contribution to the street scene, and to the diversity of architecture in Manchester city centre.

Evidential value

This value relates to how the fabric of a heritage asset can yield information about the past. The building exhibits several different phases demonstrating change over a period of over a century. Evidential value may also be present in historic fabric such as wall finishes where layers of paint may be analysed to reveal the original colours of different spaces, to inform future re-decoration. The building has high significance for evidential value.

2.2.2 The 1913-24 Extension

This extension was built to provide additional office and storage space to designs by Basil Champneys and his son Amien Champneys. The 1920 extension is an almost seamless enlargement of the original building, although a change of style is clear both to the exterior and in the interior. The extension is visible from Wood Street, from the rear of the building and within the atrium. The materials used were consistent with those used in the original structure and its style, although less elaborate, is similar.

This part of the library is considered to be generally of high significance for historic and aesthetic values.

Historical value

High significance for this value resides in the fact that the extension is a design by the architect of the original building, Basil Champneys, with Amien Champneys. The design of the bookstacks with glass floors is of an innovative type, for which Amien Champneys was responsible. These areas have also been ascribed high historical significance. The exact degree of rarity, innovation and relative importance of these stacks has not been pinpointed.

Aesthetic value

The design, detail and finish of the extension is of high significance. The work in the office areas, in particular the Stone Corridor and associated rooms, joins almost seamlessly with the older work. Original fixtures such as lamps, panelling and bookcases contribute to this.

The service stair and lift are, with the exception of the decorative metalwork associated with the lift, very utilitarian in design and these areas are considered to be of medium-low significance.

The exposed Wood Street elevation of the extension is considered to be of high historical and aesthetic significance, as the work of the two architects and because it exhibits great care in the design with functional expression of the interior appropriate for the date and position as a lesser elevation. The rear elevation, on the other hand is simply finished in rendered brick. This reflects an unrealised intention to continue building in this direction and it is therefore considered to be a temporary treatment which has a negative impact aesthetically.

2.2.3 The 1957-62 Extension

The 1950s extension lies to the west end of the building and is now largely hidden by the 2007 extension, but partly visible from Wood Street. Designed by Francis Jones & Sons, it is an undistinguished three-storey structure with a flat roof and faced in brick. Its façade can be clearly differentiated from the original building.

Historical value

The extension is considered to be of medium significance, principally for its association with Sir Isaac Wolfson, the patron, who had acquired a controlling interest in Ryland & Son in 1957 and became the chairman of the company. This demonstrated the continuing connection with the company founded by John Rylands.

Aesthetic value

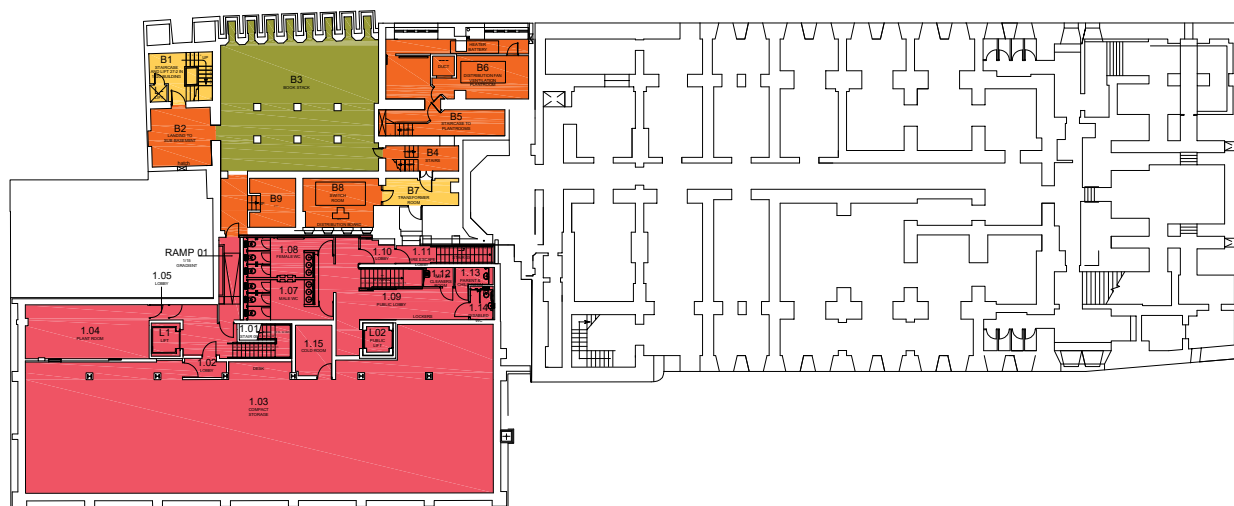
The Wolfson Building is considered to be of generally low significance for aesthetic and communal values. It is of reticent and utilitarian design, and constructed of red brick as an extension to the rear of the building. Furnishings are generally of high quality, but are not considered to be of special artistic merit.

2.2.4 The 2007 Extension

The addition by Austin Smith:Lord is considered to be of neutral significance for all heritage values.

2.3 The Deansgate/Peter Street Conservation Area

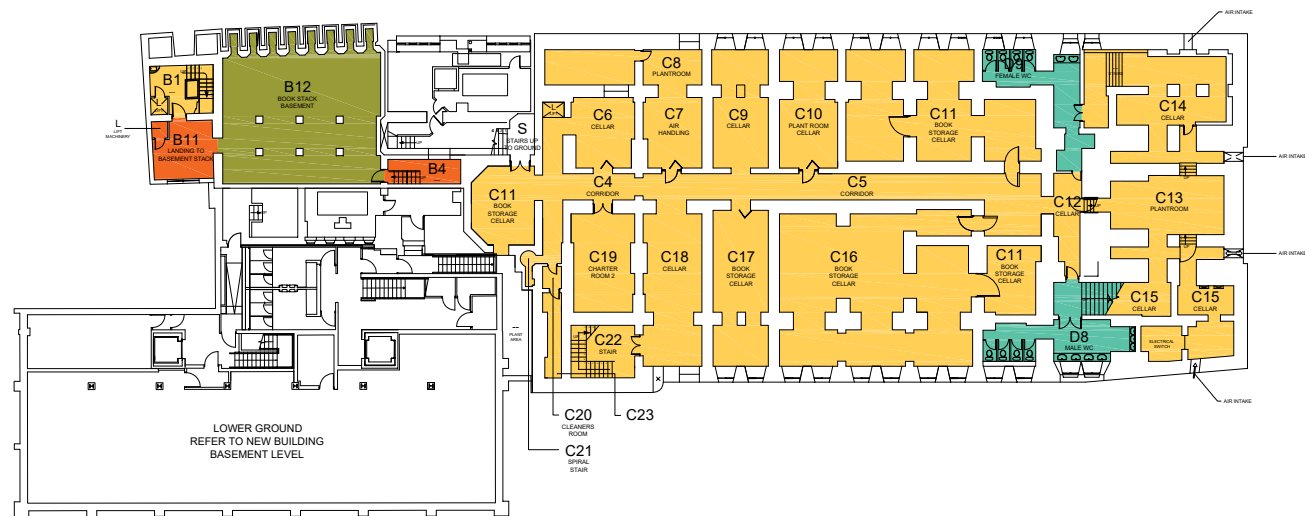
The Deansgate/Peter Street Conservation Area is significant for its townscape which contributes to Manchester's Victorian industrial identity. A predominantly commercial area its character is also derived from its places of culture and assembly – of which the John Ryland's library is a particular contributor. It forms a landmark building which the conservation area both architecturally and also for its cultural interest and the collections which it holds. The contribution of the building to the conservation area could be enhanced through increased permeability.



KEY

- Exceptional Significance
- High Significance
- Medium Significance
- Low Significance
- Neutral Significance
- Detracting Significance

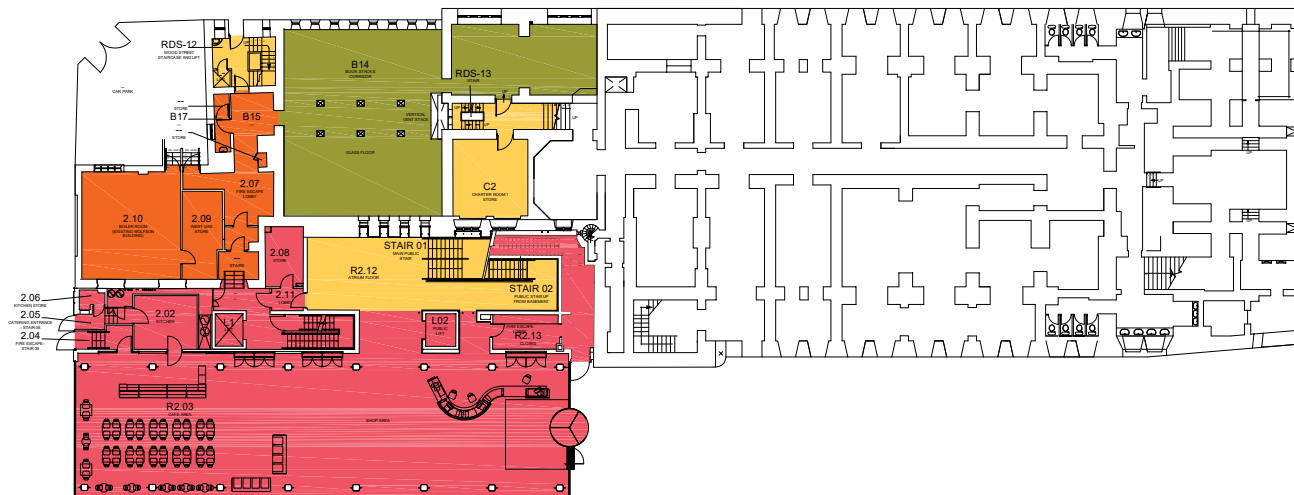
Significance Plan 1 New Building Basement and Sub Basement



KEY

- Exceptional Significance
- High Significance
- Medium Significance
- Low Significance
- Neutral Significance
- Detracting Significance

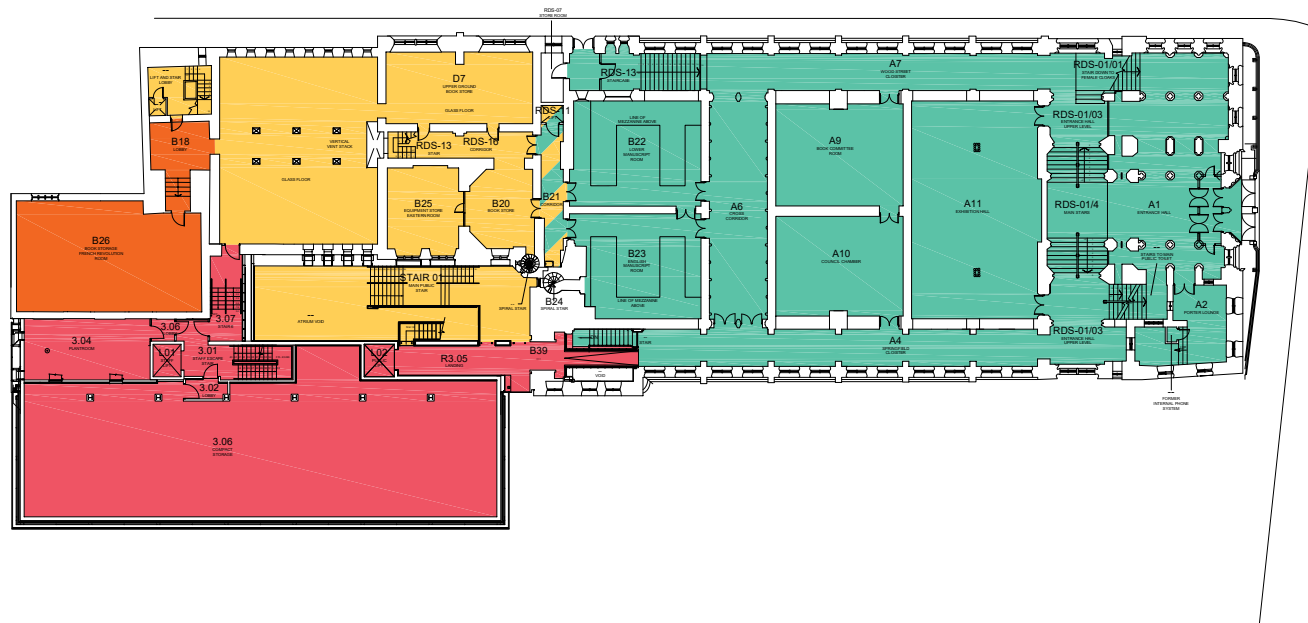
Significance Plan 2 Sub Basement Mezzanine and Basement



KEY

- Exceptional Significance
- High Significance
- Medium Significance
- Low Significance
- Neutral Significance
- Detracting Significance

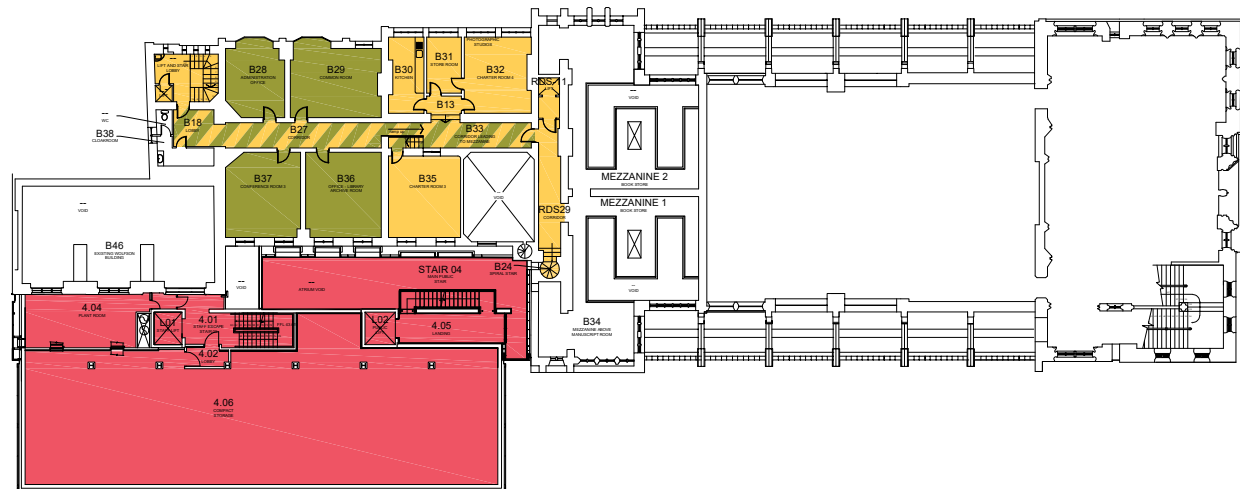
Significance Plan 3 New Building Level G and Ground Floor



KEY

- Exceptional Significance
- High Significance
- Medium Significance
- Low Significance
- Neutral Significance
- Detracting Significance

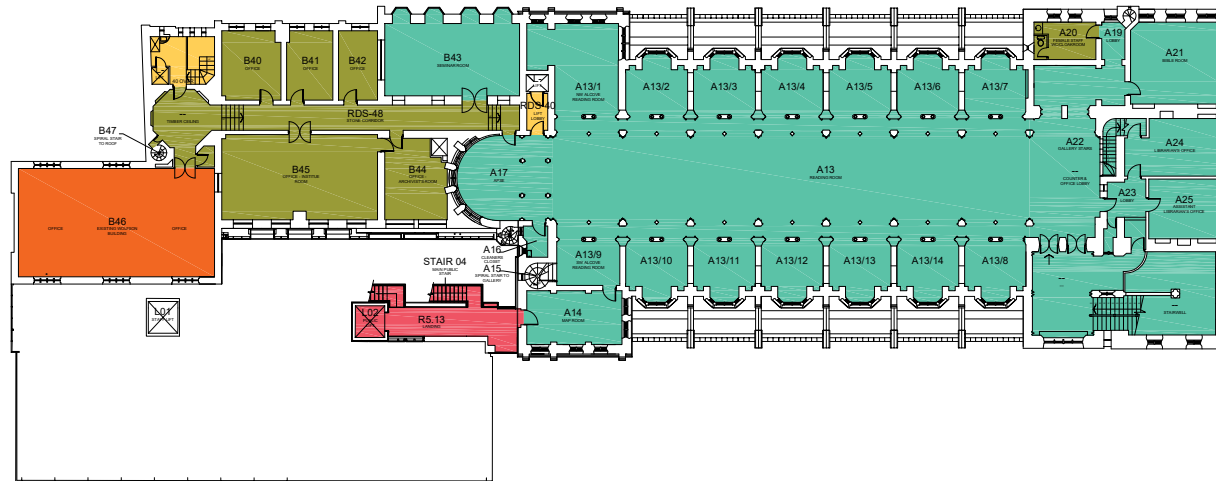
Significance Plan 4 New Building Level 1 and First Floor



KEY

- Exceptional Significance
- High Significance
- Medium Significance
- Low Significance
- Neutral Significance
- Detracting Significance

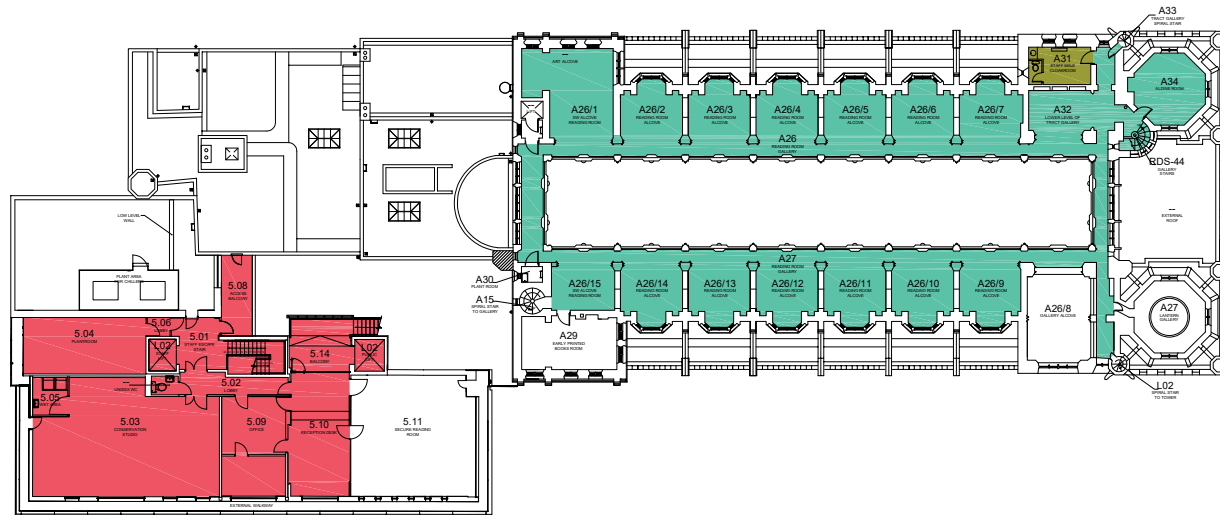
Significance Plan 5 New Building Levels 2 & 3 and
Second Floor



KEY

- Exceptional Significance
- High Significance
- Medium Significance
- Low Significance
- Neutral Significance
- Detracting Significance

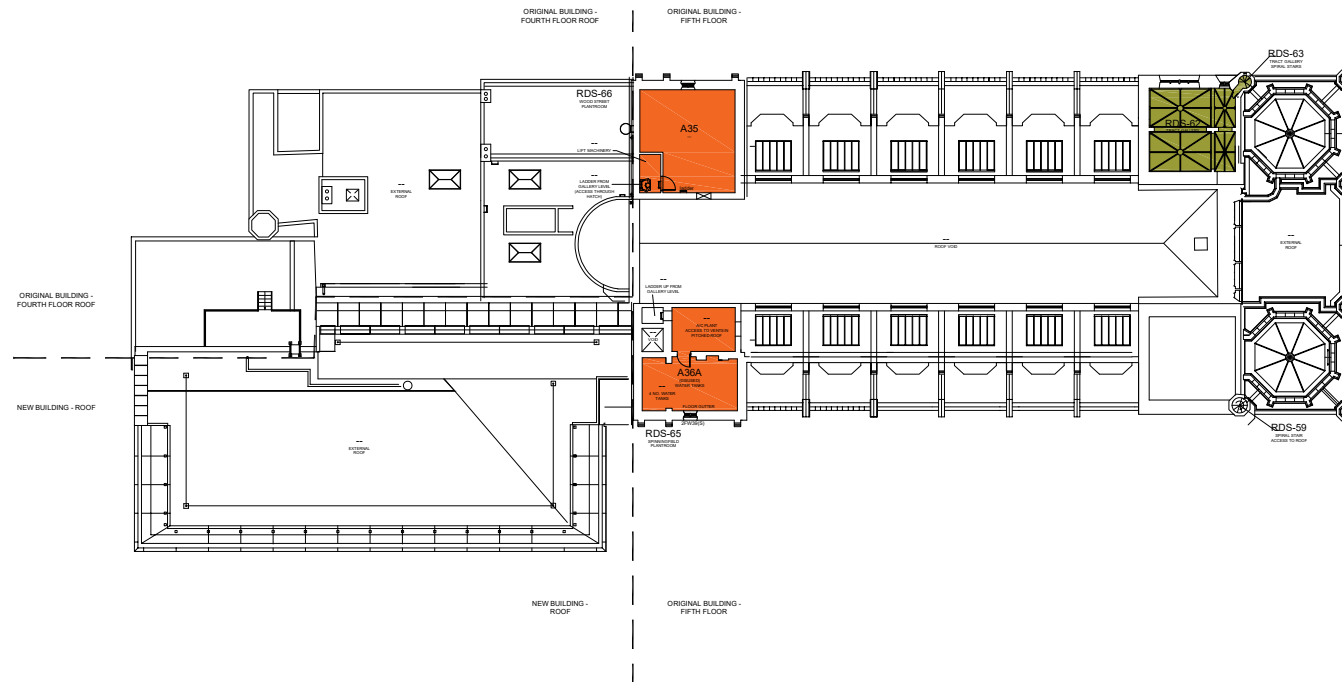
Significance Plan 6 New Building Level 3 & Level 3 Ceiling
Void and Third Floor



KEY

- Exceptional Significance
- High Significance
- Medium Significance
- Low Significance
- Neutral Significance
- Detracting Significance

Significance Plan 7 New Building Level 4 and Fourth Floor



KEY

- Exceptional Significance
- High Significance
- Medium Significance
- Low Significance
- Neutral Significance
- Detracting Significance

Significance Plan 8 New Building Roof Level and Fifth Floor



3.0 Commentary on the Proposals

3.1 Description of the Proposals

The proposals form part of the University of Manchester's Network Transformation Project to enhance IT provision across its estate to deliver the high-quality secure connectivity required of a world-leading institution. At the John Ryland's Library this requires the installation of 41 new wireless access points. The details of the locations proposed and methods of fixing and wiring are outlined in the documents submitted as part of the application.

The proposals have been subject to a review by the Insall's team leading the Next Chapter project, including a site walkaround, which led to a number of locations being revised to ensure that the impact on historic fabric and the character of internal spaces would be the minimum necessary to secure the coverage required with a focus on locations in areas of lower significance. Further clarification has also been provided in terms of the location, wiring routes and fixing methods with opportunities to align with the Next Chapter project M&E provision and existing routes now taken. As outlined in the application documents the proposed AP (access point) units would have slip-on covers, painted to reduce their visibility, with brown data cables. Where possible conduits would be concealed by existing features, such as within joinery whilst cable trays would be utilised in back-of-house areas where they already exist. In the limited locations where conduits would be exposed they would be galvanised black enamel to follow the established aesthetic for such fittings within the building.

3.2 Policy Justification

The proposals are minor in nature and have been subject to a period of design review to ensure that their impact is the minimum necessary for the scheme to be implemented with the coverage required. Any potential impacts have been mitigated through the use of coloured slip-on covers, utilising existing routes and features where possible and limited exposed conduits. The Network Transformation Project is an essential IT upgrade programme to provide the services expected of an academic institution of this standing and would sit alongside the wider ambitions of the Next Chapter project to ensure that the library continues to form a key destination for engagement and learning within a building whose exceptional significance is founded in this ethos.

As such, the proposals would sustain the significance of the John Rylands Library in accordance with paragraph 197 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Furthermore, they would preserve the special architectural and historic interest of the listed buildings in accordance with the statutory duty set out in Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Policy 19 of the Unitary Development Plan (1995) and EN3 of the Core Strategy 2012.