

Rylands – Staircase Reinstatement Feasibility Study

1 Introduction and Purpose

The purpose of the note is to provide details relating to the options for the relocation of heritage stair features within the Ryland's Building, formerly occupied by Debenhams. The options explored in this note have been based on an assessment of heritage significance, the proposals for the refurbishment of the building overall, and technical challenges with relocating the stairs in a meaningful way, set out under the subheadings below. It has been prepared with contractor, specialist heritage, fire risk, architectural and commercial inputs.

This note helps to address the requirements of condition 5f attached to Listed Building Consent (127882/LO/2020) to give comfort that their reinstatement has been carefully considered during the works and would best reflect the prominence of this feature within the building.

The final position of the stair will ultimately be decided once AM Alpha and prospective tenants enter a detailed design stage, balancing their proposed needs against the constraints of the building and any emerging commercial deal. Currently, the stairs have been sensitively dismantled and are safely stored off site ready to be reinstated when the internal fit out commences.

2 Stair summary

Full details of the stairs referenced are set out in the Heritage Architecture Heritage Assessment, dated September 2020, which was submitted and approved as part of Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent for Rylands.

In summary, the two sets of stairs are bespoke, designed to fit their current location on the 6th and 7th floors, so any unavoidable relocation to another area of the building will involve an element of alteration. The level of alteration is reduced if located within similar structural grids and floor to floor dimensions, such as levels 01 to 06. Additional alterations would be needed if they are relocated within the ground floor and basement areas due to the floor-to-floor dimensions being different.

Generally, it is considered that the relocation of the stairs to levels 1, 2 or 3 is preferable, due to the smaller atrium and larger open floor plate size at these levels. The relocation is not appropriate within the extension given the size of the floor plates. It is noted the staircase may not need to function as a staircase linking floors. It could function as a feature piece within a given space creating small pockets of open or enclosed space. This could apply to both an office and leisure environment.

The rest of this note sets out the heritage, construction, fire risk and commercial considerations that refine the list of potential locations that the stairs could be best located, and alternative locations if these areas become genuinely unfeasible.

3 Heritage

The original timber stair and lift shaft enclosure structure is an element of high significance to the special interest and understanding of the Rylands Building as a Grade II listed building. The current location of the staircase/lift enclosure to the centre of the building's plan allowed for vertical access between the fifth and sixth floors for customers visiting the sales rooms at these floor levels and would have originally been replicated on all other lower floor levels (now all removed).

In relocating the staircase structure, consideration should be given to the staircase being utilised on floors levels that have the same floor-to-ceiling height as this will enable it to be reinstated without alteration, and with the aim of bringing the staircase back into its full original use of connecting two floors of the building. Additionally, as the staircase was an element designed to be seen by visitors to the Rylands Building, consideration should also be given to ensure that it is not located in a back of house or subsidiary space.

4 Construction and Fire Risk

The proposed options for the relocation also need to consider the built form of the building.

There is an element of MEP co-ordination, as the stairs will be relocated away from main service riser entrance and exit points. Existing high-level services and services running in the floor void that will require diversions when re-installing the stairs.

The reuse of the stair is likely to span structural floor to structural floor, with the bottom riser being set of the raised access floor, and as such, the stair case/ flight will potentially interrupt the service distribution, sprinklers, lighting, acoustic baffles etc. in the floor and or suspended below the upper ceiling.

To retain the 'open' feel of the floor plates, a glass stair enclosure would be preferred however, providing a glazed system achieving for fire integrity and insulation may not be possible and in such a case a semi-solid enclosure would need to be provided.

If the final staircase position physically links two floors, it will pass through compartment floors. Therefore, further fire engineering analysis will be needed to understand if this would work within the current fire strategy. If not, a fire engineering solution would be needed to maintain the fire compartment separation between floors.

For compliance with Building Regulations guidance the building should have compartment floors due to its height therefore any linked floors that don't maintain the floor-to-floor compartmentation will need agreement with Building Control.

An external fire spread assessment will need to be carried out to consider a potential fire involving multiple floors. This could potentially result in the need for fire resisting glazing on the elevations to prevent fire spread to neighbouring properties.

This can generally be avoided by installing fire shutters or fire curtains around the stair to maintain the building's compartmentation. This can be challenging to agree with approving authorities as fire curtain manufacturers can't specify fire curtains with insulation ratings. With sprinklers it may be possible to demonstrate that this isn't an issue.

Another option to avoid this could be to design the accommodation stair as an atrium and provide a smoke shutter on the top floor plus smoke control.

In addition, sprinklers will need to be diverted and re-instated to accommodate the stairs.

5 Commercial

OBI has outlined how the stair feature will be incorporated into the marketing and disposal of the building, when engaging with prospective occupiers looking to take space. Listed buildings, which make up the blueprint of Manchester city centre, have always been well received in the occupational market with occupiers drawn to the history and heritage of these landmark buildings and the character features they possess.

Rylands is the most high-profile listed refurbishment taking place in the city and the occupiers who are looking at the building will be attracted to the quality of the working environments they can deliver, that celebrate the history of the building. The original features, including the feature stair, provide an opportunity to provide a dynamic and engaging feature of their fit out, as well as adding additional vertical circulation between floors.

6 Options and summary

A floorplan has been produced for the lower floors of Rylands that identify potential locations for the original staircase to be reinstated. When engaging with occupiers looking to take multiple floors in the building, we will review these plans and as a part of the space planning process agree on the best and most effective location of the staircase, based on their CAT B fit out works.

In summary, due care and attention is to be taken with regards to the relocation of the stair. It is considered an appropriate and sensitive approach can be taken to limit harm to the staircase

itself and the wider building. Following detailed design with tenants, full detail will be submitted to Manchester City Council.