

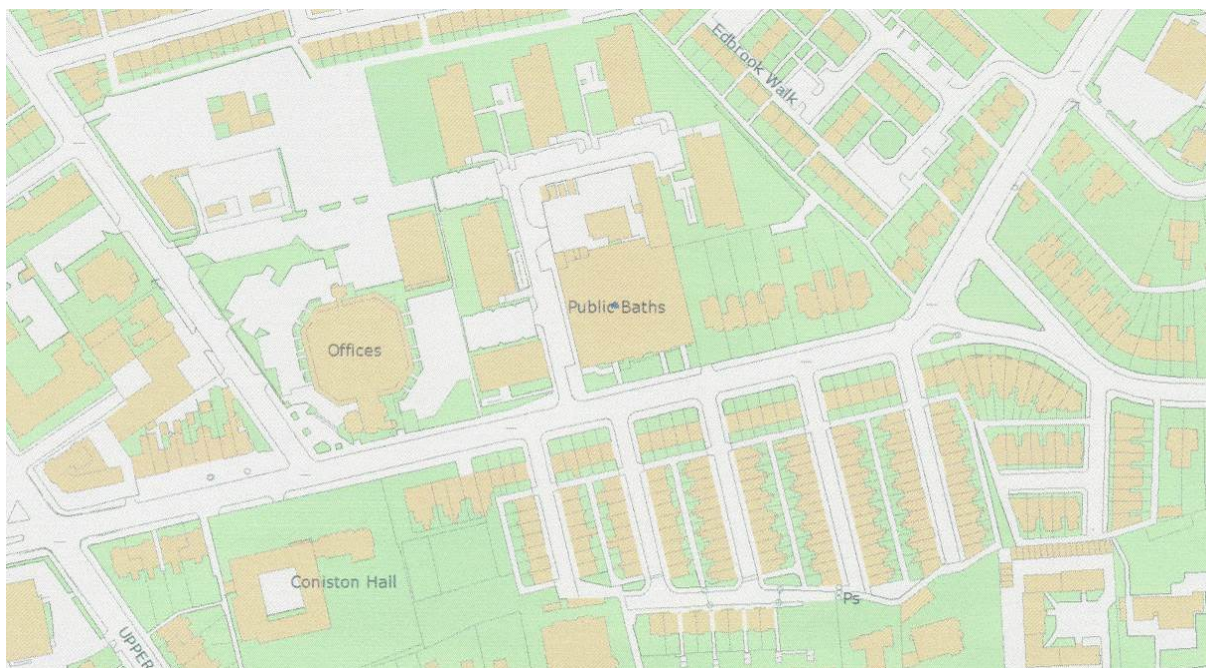
Victoria Baths
Proposed Fire Alarm Installation
Design and Access Statement
April 2023

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

1.01 Layout

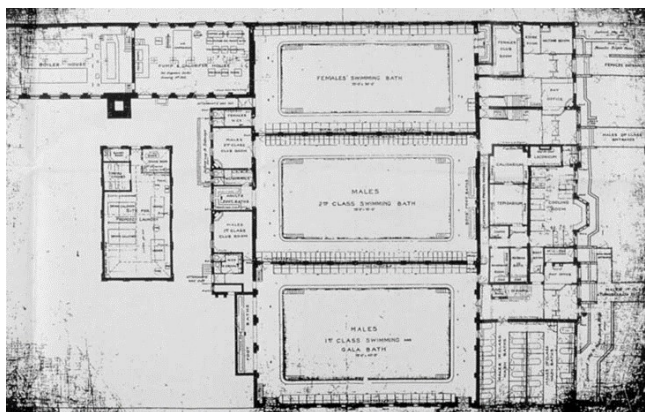
Victoria Baths is located on a rectangular site which fronts onto Hathersage Road in the Victoria Park area of Manchester, which lies approximately 1.5 miles south-east of the city centre. In strict geographic terms the axis of the building is slightly north-west to south-east, but for the purpose of descriptions in this statement the Hathersage Road frontage is deemed to be the south elevation of an assumed north-south orientation.

The baths occupy a well-defined site, with the back of pavement to Bax Road forming the boundaries to the west and north, and the footpath to Hathersage Road defining the site to the south. To the east the site directly abuts land in adjacent ownership, but the boundary is largely demarcated by the building line, to the south of which a low brick wall with terracotta embellishment returns to the south and west enclosing an area of lawn and basement lightwells between the front block and Hathersage Road. The remainder of the west and north boundaries are defined by the west wall of the building and a high brick wall enclosing the service yard north of the pool halls, which abuts the north wall of the plant room in the north-east corner of the site.



Site Plan with the building labelled 'Public Baths' and Hathersage Road to the south.

A more detailed history of the building is contained in the 'Heritage Impact Assessment' submitted in support of this application, but, in brief summary, the Baths, which opened in 1906, was built to serve the 3 no. wards of Longsight, St Luke's and Rusholme. Henry Price, who was appointed as the first City Architect of Manchester in 1902, was responsible for delivering the project, the completed form of which largely reflects plans previously prepared by the City Surveyor, Mr T. de Courcy Meade, and his assistant, Arthur Davies.



Original Plan, north to left side of drawing.

The building is listed Grade II*, and a copy of the Listing Description can be found in Section 1.04 of the Heritage Impact Assessment. Apart from the free-standing laundry building in the service yard, a late addition to the scheme but constructed at the same time, Victoria Baths, as originally designed, comprised a single block with 3 no. distinct elements as follows:

- 4 no. storey front block (including basement) with separate entrances to each pool, and housing a Turkish Baths suite, changing and administration facilities for the main pool halls, and, on the upper floors, the Superintendent's flat
- Central area of 3 no. pool halls, each with basements and galleries, Males First Class (Gala) Pool, Males Second Class Pool (now Sports Hall), and Females Pool.
- Abutting low level ancillary accommodation (with basements) to the north, and, in the north-east of the site attached to the north of the Females Pool, a single-storey block of plant rooms serving the Baths, with storage tanks over flanking a central, towering, chimney



The front (Hathersage Road) block from the south-east.

The principal elevations of the building are constructed of smooth red 'Ruabon' facing brickwork with contrasting buff terracotta features. A less expensive common brick was used for the rear elevations, ancillary buildings, and those areas of the facades visually shaded from public view, although even in these locations smooth red engineering brickwork, masonry, and terracotta was used for contrasting features.

Each of the pools, Males First Class, Males Second Class and Females, had their own

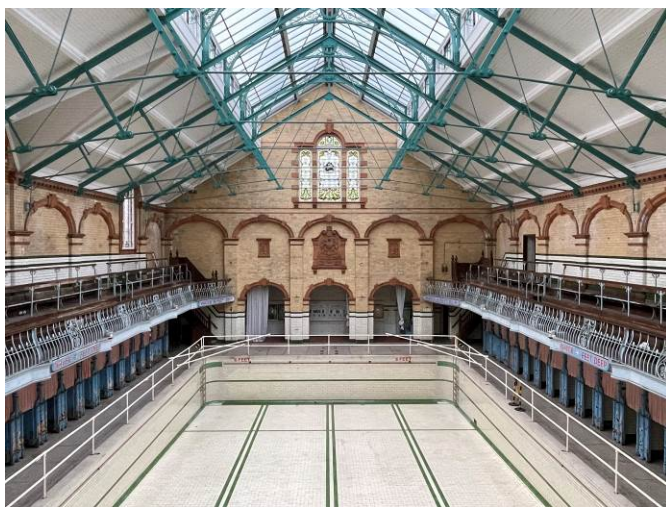
designated entrances through the front block, consistent with the bathing protocol of the

age.

The Males First Class pool also doubled as an event, or 'Gala' pool, with a gallery of tiered spectator seating introduced for this purpose. The galleries around the other pools are level and formerly contained 'slipper' baths.

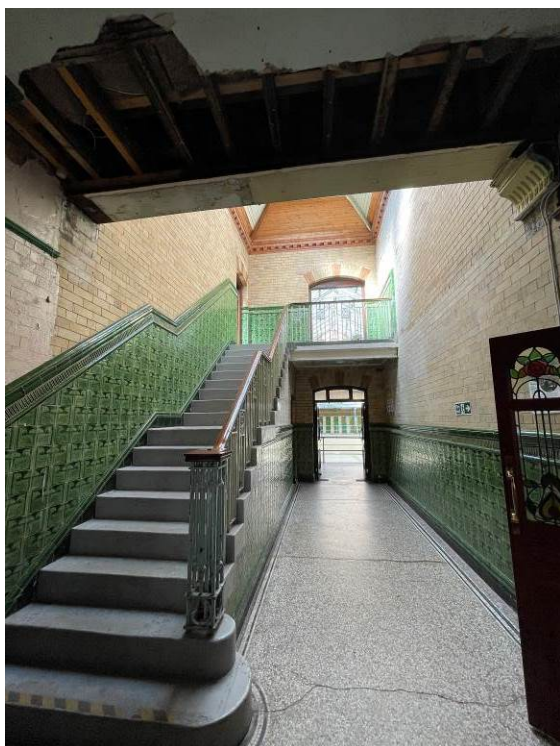
The Baths were subject to much change in function over the years, although the form of the building survives largely unaltered. Mixed bathing was first introduced at the Baths in 1914, and by the 1920s family bathing was commonplace.

Water chlorination plant was installed in the 1930s, and in the 1950s the Males First Class / Gala Pool was covered over in the winter months for use as a venue for bowling and dances, the latter particularly popular during the war years. In 1952 Victoria Baths installed the first public Aeratone (jacuzzi) in the country. Later, in 1986, the Males Second Class pool was floored over and converted to sports hall use.



The Males First Class (Gala) pool.

Finally, having served the people of central Manchester for 87 years, and despite the efforts of local residents to keep the building open, Manchester City Council could no longer justify the expense of running Victoria Baths, and the building closed on 13th March 1993.



The Females Pool Stairwell.

The Friends and the Trust were formally constituted later that year, and since then the building has hosted several events to raise funds aimed at preventing further deterioration of the building fabric. In September 2003 the Baths won the first series of the BBC's 'Restoration' programme, with the first phase of HLF funded works completed between 2007 and 2008. Little work of significance has been undertaken since, except for minor internal alterations, the most noteworthy of which being the removal of partitions from the Females Pool foyer and stairwell which formerly enclosed sauna accommodation connected to the aeratone, thus returning the area to its original form.

The Baths continue to be used for an increasing variety of events, including as a location set for a number of television and film productions, and periodically the Gala pool is filled and used for its original purpose. Current feasibility works aimed at addressing the Trust's aspirations for the future use of Victoria Baths as a venue capable of accommodating several activities at the same time are on-going at the time of this submission.

1.02 Scale of the Proposal

Whilst Victoria Baths is operated and managed by the Trust, the building remains in Manchester City Council's ownership, and the Council contributes to its upkeep. In order to meet the Trust's wishes to increase revenue by being able to offer multiple self-contained venues for hire, due respect needed to be given to the health and safety of users and staff in the event of fire. In consideration of this a Fire Risk Assessment was commissioned which identified defects in the current system which required addressing to maintain the validity of the building's insurance.

A subsequent report prepared by Manchester City Council's in house Electrical Team, submitted in support of this application, identifies the key failings of the system as follows:

- The current system is only part working
- The main panel shows faults to the system
- Coverage does not extend to all areas
- Wiring has not been installed to recommended standards, nor is it particularly well hidden from view, and some runs are fixed with standard plastic cable clips



Plastic clips to poorly fixed cabling in the basement



A wireless solution is proposed for historically sensitive areas with surviving finishes.

In light of the above this application is for the installation of a completely new fire alarm system capable of providing L2 coverage to all areas and voids within the building, including all necessary devices and panels. To maintain a degree of cover during the proposed works it is intended that the current system will remain operational during installation, then stripped out when the new system is operational.

As the proposals do not involve any additions or alterations to the Listed Building, other than siting of new fittings and extending fire alarm coverage to all areas, the proposals are considered minor in terms of impact on the historic fabric. Careful consideration has been given to the siting of fittings and wiring routes, with wireless solutions proposed for the more historically sensitive areas of the building, about which more will be said in Section 1.06 of this document and the Heritage Impact Assessment which supports this submission.

The scope and extent of works deem that Planning Permission will not be required, but this statement supports an application for Listed Building Consent.

1.03 Previous Planning History

As there have been no significant changes to the form and layout of the building since it is unlikely that there will be any recent Planning history. Listed Building Consent, however, has been granted for more recent works to the building, including 2 no. phases of HLF funded works, the first of which was to the Males First Class Pool, in 2007-8, following on from the building's success in BBC's 'Restoration' programme.

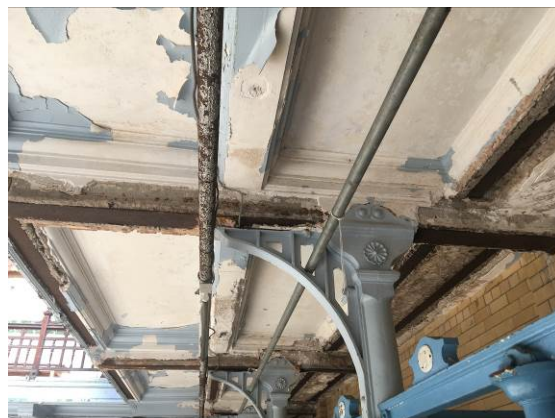
1.04 Pre-Application Consultation

At the works are essential, relatively minor in nature, and have little or no impact on the historic fabric of the building, a pre-application with Paul Mason, Manchester City Council's Conservation Officer, was not considered necessary prior to this submission.

1.05 Structural Condition.

Whilst the structural condition of the listed building is reasonably sound, the nature of construction of the baths make it vulnerable to further, accelerated, decay if the issues associated with some elements of the fabric are not addressed. The building is essentially a steel framed, brick clad structure, with large areas of concrete 'filler joist' floors, and, as such, all primary elements of structure, except those to the roofs, is tightly encased by the brickwork of the walls, or concrete of the floors.

A history of water ingress from defective roofs and parapet and 'inner' gutters, and the damp atmosphere within the building due to lack of heating and ventilating regimes, has resulted in corrosion of the steelwork.



Corroded, encased steelwork and spalled finishes to underside of Females Pool gallery.



Cracks in terrazzo finished filler joist floors around the edge of the Females Pool

Oxidisation and subsequent corrosion expansion of the steelwork manifests in cracking noted through the wall finishes and spalling of concrete from the underside of floors, exposing the corroded steelwork behind. Hairline cracks in the terrazzo finished walkways around the pool edges can also be attributable to corrosion of the steelwork embedded deep in the floor construction beneath.

Similarly, the failure of the gutters to transfer run off from the roofs effectively to ground, and difficulties in accessing critical areas for maintenance, have led to outbreaks of rot in timber joists, roof boarding, and gutter bases, in addition to the timber structure of the Gala pool gallery, which has raked seating for spectators.

All these issues leave the fabric vulnerable and should be constantly monitored by staff, with any noticeable progression of symptoms reported.

1.06 Design Parameters

Prior to this submission 2 no. meetings were arranged involving the system designer, Andrew Fyfe of Manchester City Council's Capital Programmes department, Victoria Baths' Facilities Manager, Abel Clarke, and Duncan Sanderson of KPS Architects, conservation accredited architect and author of this document and the Heritage Impact Assessment supporting this application.

The first of these, on 02 March 2023, looked at the general strategy adopted, the general principles of which were outlined as follows:

1. Where possible all wiring will be installed in voids, risers and ceiling spaces to be kept hidden. Where this is impractical established service routes will be followed
2. Areas where wiring is difficult or in historically sensitive areas such as the Turkish baths which are fully tiled (walls, floor and ceiling) or rooms with no void access, a wireless system will be installed. This will consist of wireless fire devices connected on a local ring.
3. The wireless devices are battery and radio operated and are intended to be installed by fixing into the grout runs to avoid damage to tiles and ceilings
4. Beam detection will be used above gallery level in the pool halls to cater for difficulties of maintenance
5. Programming of cause and effect and area isolations are to be provided to generally provide maximum coverage, with flexibility for events or filming which may use smoke machines or other equipment likely to activate the fire system.
6. The new fire installation will be fully addressable providing information on the panels for the state or fault of individual devices and their location.

The second visit, on 18 April 2023, after all parties had opportunity to view the scheme documents in more detail, included a full walk round of the building to discuss the application of this criteria, including the specific siting of fittings to avoid potential damage to surviving sensitive finishes. The drawings submitted in support of the application include minor amendments to the strategy and position of fittings following discussions on site. It is, however, accepted that there will need to be a degree of flexibility required in the final positioning and fixing of the appliances, which will be agreed with the Engineer on site whilst conforming to the aforementioned principles. Taking each in turn it was established that:

1. Due to the number of 'filler joist' floors in the building some areas assumed to have ceiling voids for routing cables will need surface mounted runs (notably to the underside of the gallery floors around the Males Second Class and Females Pools
2. In addition to the Turkish Baths suite the whole of the ground floor of the front (Hathersage Road) block has sensitive areas (entrance foyers and stairwells) which retain original tiling, screens, and other features which contribute to this part of the building having a medium to high significance rating. Consequently, coverage for the full ground floor of the front block will be by wireless devices. As the radio range is limited by the amount of sub-division coverage will be split into 2 no. sections, each utilising a loop powered expander unit.
3. It was noted that some of the grout runs are tightly spaced between tiles, so difficult provide fixings for fittings without damaging tile edges. In such instances fittings are either to be fixed to timber screens / door surrounds, or to utilise redundant fixing holes, damaged tiles, or fixed to conceal redundant openings previously formed through the walls for service runs.
4. Beam detection in the pool halls will make it easier to service appliances and replace batteries where necessary as opposed to having fittings mounted on roof boarding / structures over the pools
5. It will be possible to designate areas for isolation determined by the client in the programming of the system, to allow for flexibility for events or filming which may use equipment likely to trigger the alarm.
6. The information shown on the panels will show the status of each individual device, including location.

Successful completion of this work will afford greater protection to the historic asset with minimal impact on the fabric, whilst allowing flexibility capable of adapting to the needs of the events hosted by the client.

1.07 Access Arrangements

The proposals do not impact on any of the existing access arrangements. The listed building is entered via a series of doors in the south wall of the front, Hathersage Road, block which, at ground floor level, formerly gave access to the individual pool halls and superintendent's flat. A further door, into the basement at the west end of the wall is now, perhaps, the most frequently used access point, as this opens into the area currently used by the staff offices. Public access to the ground floor is largely via the Males First Class pool entrance.

There is no dedicated, wheelchair compliant, ramp to any of the main doors except that to the lesser used Females Pool entrance, from where all ground floor areas are accessible to wheelchair users (except the Gala and Females pool basins), and a temporary ramp to the rear of the Females Pool also affords access and egress from the service yard. There is no provision within the building for wheelchair transfer between floors, although this is currently being explored as part of a design study.



The ramp to the Females Pool entrance