NEW CENTURY HALL

Hanover Street, Manchester I Manchester City Council

Design and Access Statement
May 2026



NEW CENTURY

Edwards. Property Consultants

sheilabird

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PROJECT 3 architects

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New Century Hall, Manchester

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1.1 THE LISTED BUILDING CONSENT APPLICATION

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared to support the Listed Building Consent submitted on behalf of the applicant New Century Hall Ltd for the internal alterations to the ground floor of the Grade II listed New Century Hall located in Manchester City Centre.

The proposals seek to adapt and reconfigure the existing ground floor food hall arrangement previously approved (124348FO2019 consent). The current operator has identified that the existing large open-plan food hall model has not proven commercially viable in its current form. While the venue has successfully hosted events and performances, the day-to-day food hall operation has struggled due to the scale and character of the space and the building's location slightly removed from the primary retail and leisure core of the city centre.

The proposed works seek to create a more flexible and commercially sustainable arrangement while preserving the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building.

The proposals involve subdividing the ground floor into two complementary interconnected spaces:

- A bar and pizza venue
- A live music venue with associated ancillary accommodation

The works have been carefully designed to minimise impact upon the historic fabric and retain the character of the original building while supporting the long-term viable use of the building as a cultural and entertainment venue.

1.2 STATEMENT

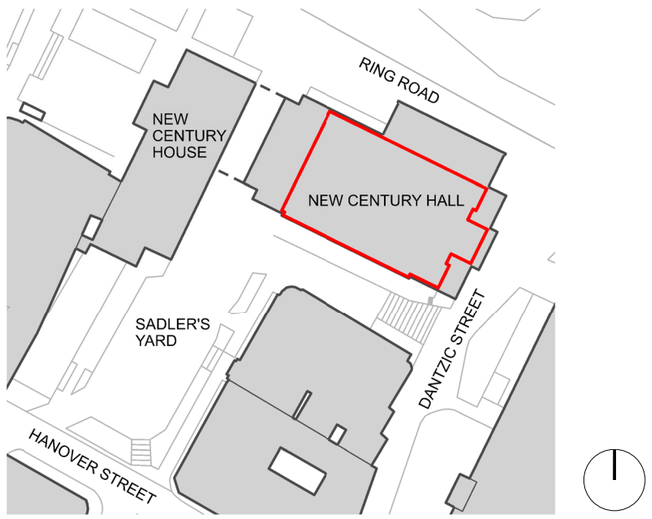
This report has been written in accordance with CABE's guide 'Design and Access Statements – How to write read and use them.'

It demonstrates the design principles and concepts that have been employed to revive the building and positively contribute to the development of the area.

This document should be read in conjunction with the submitted architectural drawings, heritage statement and all other supporting documents forming part of this application.



Aerial view



Location Plan

2.1 SITE LOCATION AND DEVELOPMENT BRIEF

New Century Hall is located on Hanover Street within the NOMA district on the northern edge of Manchester city centre.

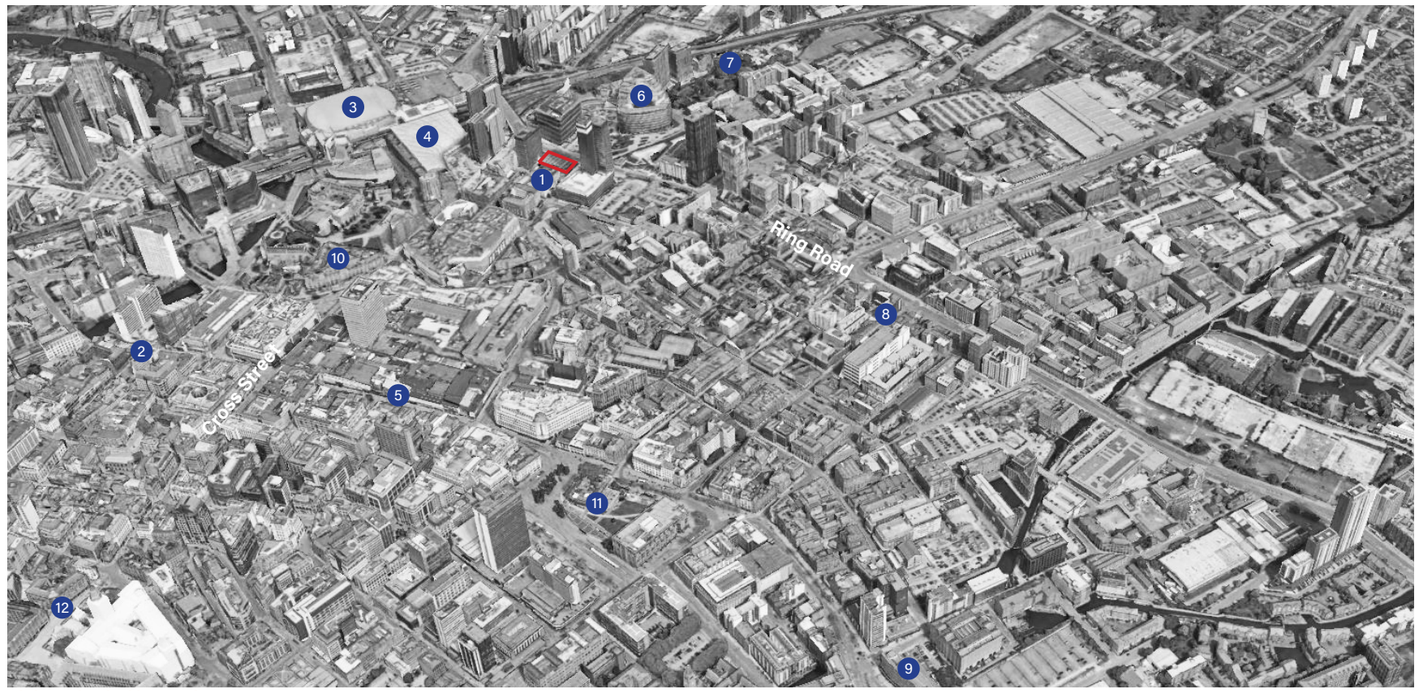
The building occupies a prominent position close to AO Arena and Victoria Station.

The surrounding area comprises a mixture of commercial, leisure, transport, office, residential, and cultural uses, with ongoing regeneration and investment within the wider NOMA and northern city centre area.

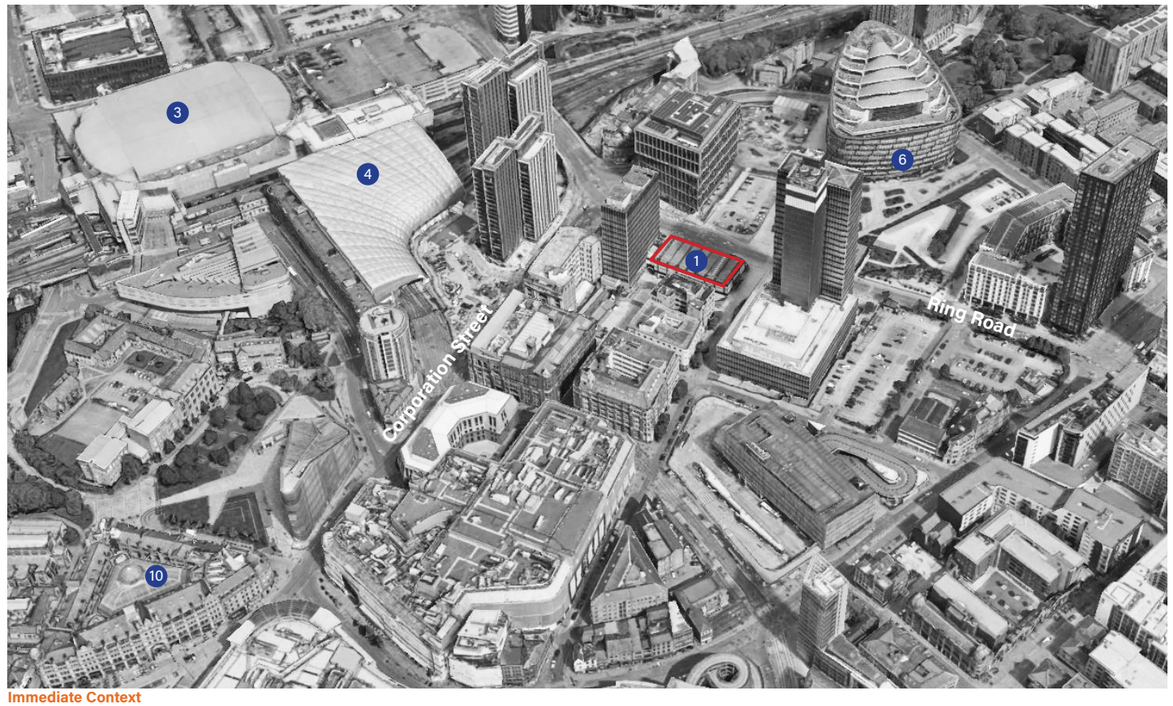
While centrally located, the site sits slightly outside Manchester's primary retail and hospitality core focused around Market Street, Exchange Square, Deansgate, and the central Northern Quarter. As a result, the venue experiences lower levels of casual footfall compared to premises located directly within the city's main retail and hospitality streets.

This positioning has contributed to operational challenges associated with the current large-scale food hall arrangement, particularly during daytime and quieter periods.

The proposed subdivision and revised operational model seek to respond directly to this context by creating a more flexible and commercially resilient arrangement capable of operating successfully with varying levels of occupancy and activity throughout the week.



Bird eye view looking North



Immediate Context

1. New Century Hall
2. Deansgate
3. Manchester Arena
4. Manchester Victoria Station
5. Market Street
6. 1 Angel Square
7. Angel Meadow Park
8. Northern Quarter
9. Manchester Piccadilly
10. Corn Exchange
11. Piccadilly Gardens
12. Albert Square

2.2 SITE CHARACTER

New Century Hall is a Grade II listed mid-century modern building of considerable architectural and cultural significance within Manchester. It was completed alongside New Century House in 1963 and the upper floors have been in use as a conference venue and concert hall.

The 2019 approved scheme changed the use of the basement and ground floor levels to facilitate the delivery of a creative college, music and events space and a food hall.

These lower levels of the building retain significant elements of the original architectural character, including exposed concrete soffits, sculptural structural columns, and distinctive splayed concrete column heads that contribute strongly to the rhythm and visual expression of the interior spaces.

Historically, the ground floor operated as a banqueting and dining facility associated with the wider entertainment use of the building. Archive material and historic survey information demonstrate that the ground floor was originally designed with operational flexibility and could be subdivided into a series of smaller dining and function rooms when required depending on the nature of events and occupancy requirements.

This historic arrangement demonstrates that subdivision and flexibility formed part of the original design intent of the building rather than the space existing solely as one uninterrupted open-plan hall.

The current proposals build upon this and the previously approved use and continue the active cultural and leisure function of the building.

The proposals are therefore considered to reflect and reinterpret aspects of the building's earlier spatial arrangement while remaining clearly contemporary and reversible in design.

The proposals are limited to internal alterations at ground floor level only, with no significant changes proposed to the principal external elevations or the primary structural form of the building.

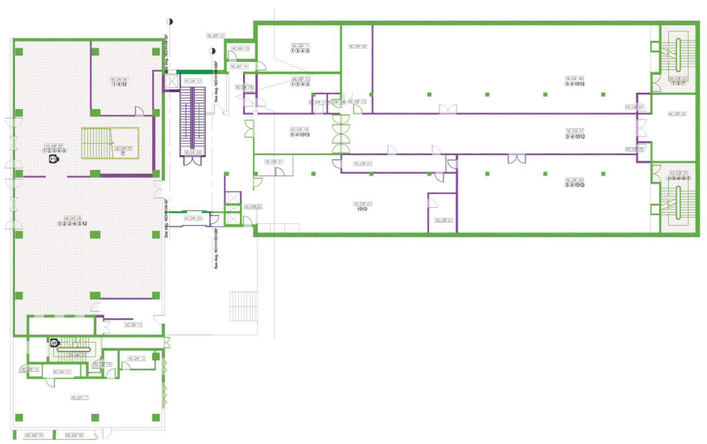
For full information, archive material, and photographic information, see Levrant Heritage Report.


Ring Road


Sadler's Yard


Ground floor bar


Ground floor seating


Ground floor plan survey undertaken prior to soft strip (2019)


Ground floor booth


Splayed concrete column head

3.1 USE

The ground floor currently operates as a single large food hall venue. While successful during programmed events and busy periods, the venue has experienced ongoing operational and commercial difficulties.
The current arrangement creates a number of challenges as the space is overly large for day-to-day food hall trading and the venue lacks flexibility for simultaneous operation of different uses. The location slightly outside the city's main retail and hospitality core reduces casual footfall.

As a result, the current operational model has not generated sufficient activity or commercial sustainability.

The proposed reconfiguration seeks to address these issues by creating two independently operable yet connected venues capable of supporting a wider range of activities throughout the week.

3.2 AMOUNT

The proposals are limited to internal alterations at ground floor level and do not involve any extension to the building footprint or changes to the overall scale or height of the building.

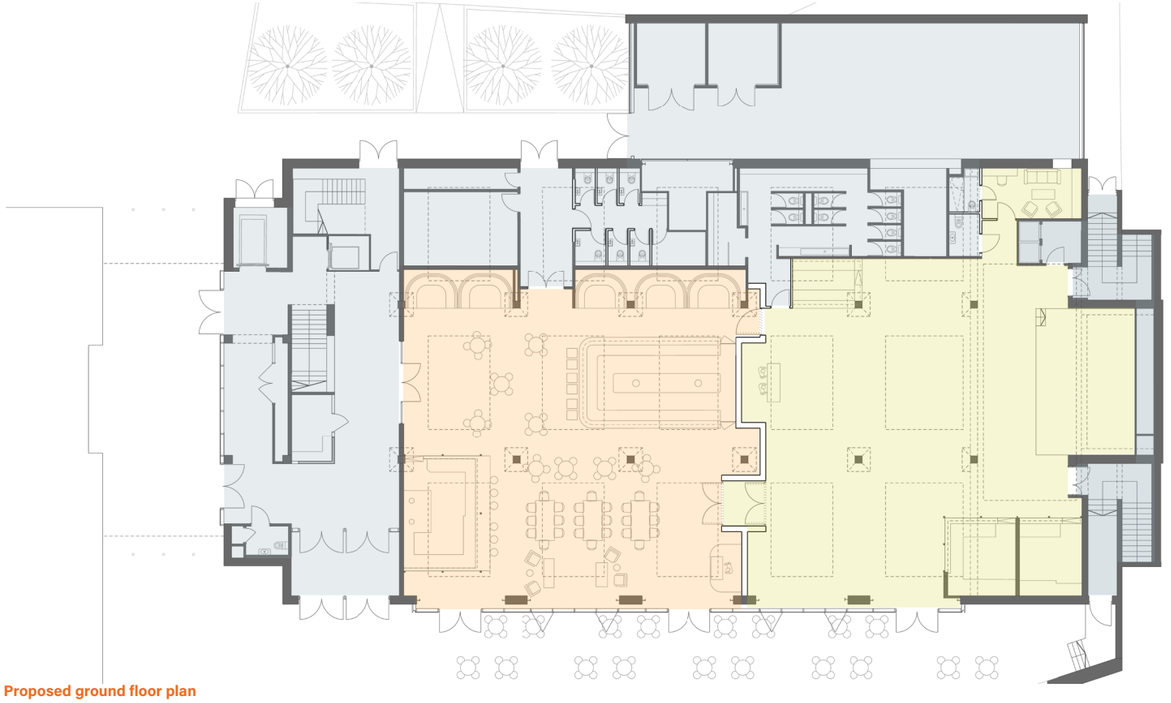
The works comprise:

- Lightweight internal subdivision;
- Additional WC accommodation to suit the increased capacity within the existing pot wash area
- Mechanical and electrical alterations to suit the new layout of the space
- Associated operational improvements

The scale of intervention has been intentionally minimised in order to preserve the character and significance of the listed building.



Existing ground floor plan



Proposed ground floor plan

Key

- Ancillary spaces
- Food hall
- Music venue

3.3 LAYOUT AND APPEARANCE

The proposals adopt a contemporary design approach that respects the industrial and mid-century character of the building.

New interventions will remain visually secondary to the original exposed concrete structure and existing architectural elements.

Materials and finishes will be selected to complement the retained fabric, with lightweight partitions, acoustic treatments to new elements only, lighting installations, and servicing coordinated to minimise visual clutter and intervention into the historic structure.

The proposed separating wall has been carefully configured in response to the geometry of the existing concrete frame. Rather than intersecting with the original splayed concrete column heads, the wall subtly shifts and “dances” around them, allowing the sculptural quality and rhythm of the original structure to remain visible and legible within the space.

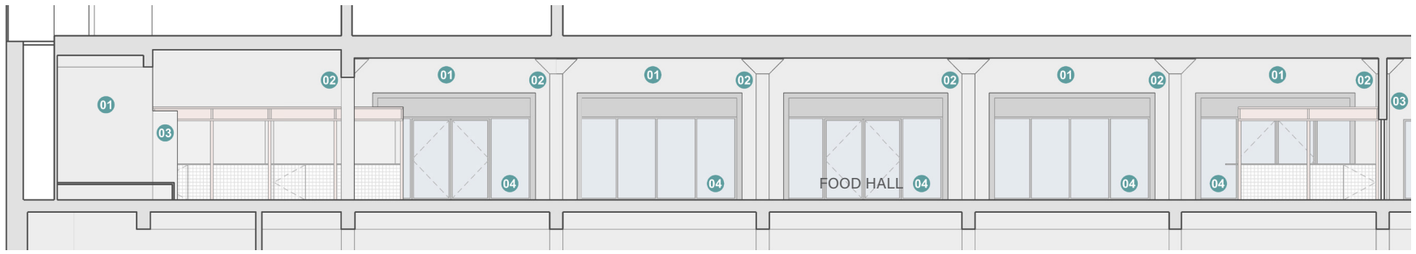
Wherever possible, the proposed works have been designed to be reversible. Lightweight partition construction ensures that future removal could take place with minimal impact upon the original building fabric.

A new acoustic lobby containing double doors will be introduced between the two venues. This arrangement allows controlled movement between spaces during events while maintaining acoustic separation.

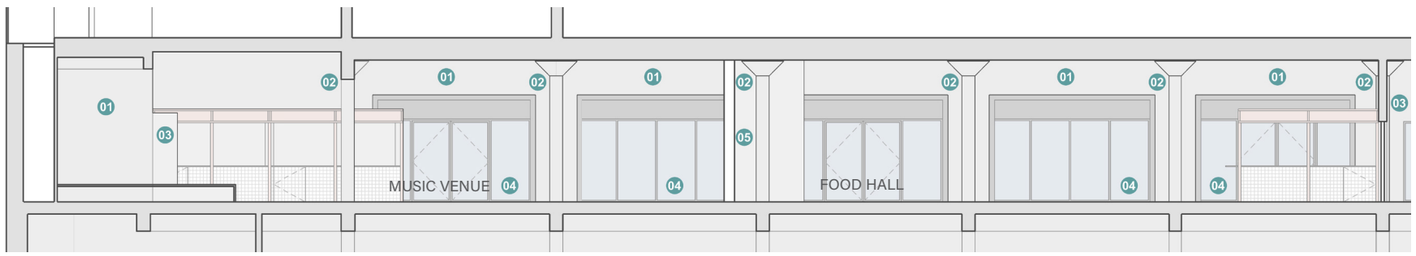
An additional acoustic door will also be provided for maintenance purposes and emergency escape use only.

Additional self-contained WC accommodation is proposed including additional accessible WC provision within the music venue and customer WC facilities within the existing redundant pot wash. New artist green room facilities with shower room accommodation is proposed within the existing private bar.

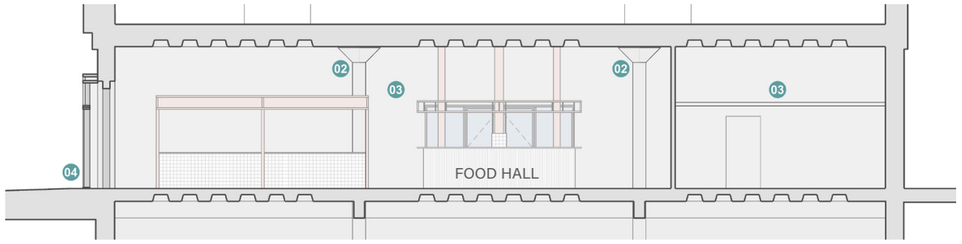
These interventions are necessary to support the revised operational arrangement.



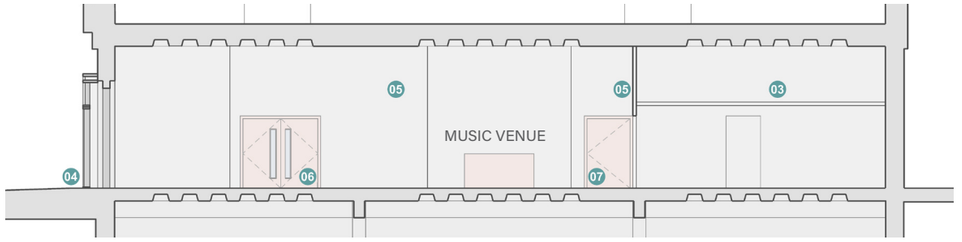
Existing Section AA



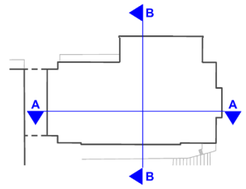
Proposed Section AA



Existing Section BB



Proposed Section BB



Key plan

- Original concrete wall
- Original concrete column
- Later addition wall
- Later addition window / door
- New partition
- New access door
- New maintenance door

Key

3.4 MECHANICAL AND ELECTRICAL ALTERATIONS

Mechanical and electrical systems will be altered and extended to suit the revised internal layout, including drainage, ventilation, lighting and fire alarm alterations and also installation of new sound infrastructure and stage lighting.

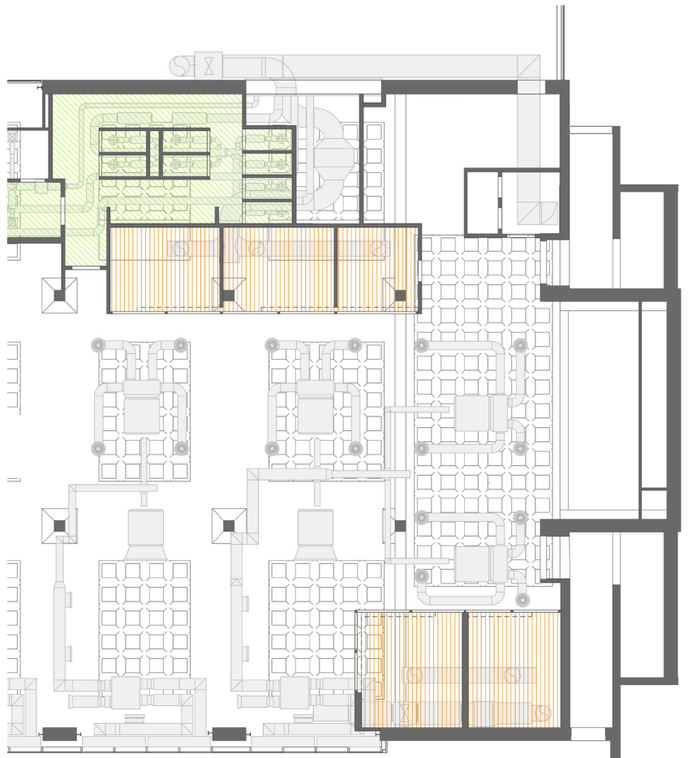
New fan coil and MVHR units will be installed using the same approach and fixing methodology as the existing installations within the building. This strategy has been developed to carefully interface with the original concrete waffle slab structure through the use of threaded drop rods and cable suspension arrangements fixed in coordination with the structural geometry of the soffit. The existing AC unit positioned in front of the stage will be relocated as part of the proposals in order to free up space for the new PA system and stage lighting arrangement. The relocation of this unit will also allow a greater area of the original waffle soffit structure in front of the stage to remain visible, which is considered to enhance appreciation of the historic architectural fabric.

Electrical additions and alterations to fire alarm components will largely utilise the existing containment strategy already present within the venue. New cabling will be routed within the existing network of cable trays and containment systems, making use of the established unistrut framework where possible in order to minimise additional intervention into the listed fabric.

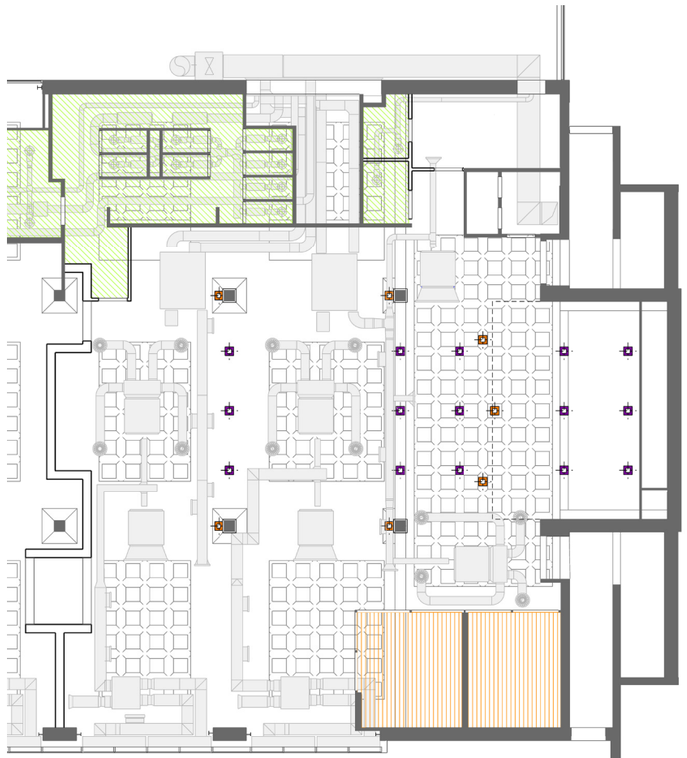
The new proposed PA system and stage lighting arrangement have been carefully designed with the technical team both to satisfy the technical and operational requirements of the performance venue and to respond sensitively to the original concrete structure. Particular care has been taken with the positioning and fixing of lighting and speaker installations in relation to the waffle slab soffit. Wherever possible lighting and speaker fixings will be centred in alignment with the waffle ribs rather than within the recessed coffers and new support arrangements will avoid unnecessary penetrations into the waffle coffers. Where sound equipment must be positioned within the coffer zone for operational reasons, this will instead be supported from unistrut spanning between and fixed back to the waffle ribs rather than directly into the coffers themselves. The proposed fixing methodology is intended to minimise physical impact upon the historic concrete structure while maintaining the operational requirements of the venue. Fixings are anticipated to comprise threaded bars resin-fixed into the concrete structure using chemical anchor systems.

In addition, four speaker installations are proposed to be supported from the existing concrete columns through a clamped unistrut arrangement that encircles the column and supports the speakers without requiring direct mechanical fixing into the concrete columns themselves. This approach avoids unnecessary penetrations into significant structural elements while allowing the technical requirements of the venue to be achieved.

For full information see MEP Technical Note.



Existing Ground Floor Reflected Ceiling Plan



Proposed Ground Floor Reflected Ceiling Plan



Clamped unistrut arrangement around column supporting equipment

Key

- Existing
- Ceiling mounted ventilation
- MF plasterboard ceiling
- Slats on MF plasterboard ceiling
- Speaker
- Light

4.1 GENERAL ACCESS

The proposals seek to improve accessibility and operational functionality throughout the venue while maintaining the established access arrangements currently serving the building.

The project has been developed to ensure that accessibility throughout the venue is maintained and enhanced where possible as part of the revised operational arrangement.

Level access is currently provided via Sadler's Yard to the ground floor food hall and main lobby serving the venue hall and creative college, and these arrangements will remain unchanged as part of the proposals. Secondary level access is also currently provided to the main lobby via the link cut-through between Sadler's Yard and Miller Street.

This existing accessible route will be retained and maintained as part of the proposed development.

Key accessibility improvements include additional accessible self contained WC provision. improved internal circulation, clear routes between venue spaces, improved facilities for artists and staff and enhanced operational flexibility during events.

The proposed acoustic lobby arrangement between the two spaces has been designed to maintain accessible circulation between venues while also providing the necessary acoustic separation during events.

Escape arrangements will remain in use, with upgraded fire safety measures incorporated into the revised layout.

4.2 WASTE MANAGEMENT

Waste management arrangements will remain consistent with the existing approved servicing strategy for the building.

The proposed operational model is anticipated to significantly reduce food-related waste compared to the existing multi-vendor food hall arrangement, as the venue will primarily comprise a bar use with a single pizza offering.

As a result, food preparation waste, packaging, and servicing requirements will all be reduced.

Existing waste collection and servicing arrangements will continue to be utilised with no significant changes proposed.



5.0 SUSTAINABILITY
New Century Hall, Manchester

The proposed alterations have been developed with careful consideration given to the long-term sustainable use, adaptation, and conservation of the existing listed building.

The most significant sustainable aspect of the proposal is the continued reuse and adaptation of the existing Grade II listed building.
The retention of the existing structure, concrete frame, floors, soffits, and the majority of internal fabric significantly reduces the environmental impact associated with demolition and new construction.

The proposed internal subdivision wall has been designed as a lightweight and reversible intervention that Reduces material use, minimises structural intervention, allows future adaptation or removal and limits unnecessary impact upon existing building fabric

The current single food hall arrangement has not proven commercially viable. The proposed subdivision introduces a more flexible operational model capable of supporting daytime and evening activity, smaller-scale trading during quieter periods and continued live music and cultural uses.

Ensuring the building remains occupied, maintained, and commercially active is considered fundamental to the long-term conservation of the listed asset.

Mechanical and electrical systems will be altered and rationalised to improve operational efficiency and support the revised layout.

Where feasible, new lighting installations will utilise energy-efficient LED fittings and controls to reduce operational energy consumption.

The subdivision of the ground floor into independently operable areas also allows for more efficient environmental control and reduced energy use during quieter operational periods.



6.0 SUMMARY
New Century Hall, Manchester

The proposals will support the continued active use of the building as a cultural and leisure destination.

Securing the long-term economic viability of the venue is considered essential to the ongoing conservation and maintenance of the listed building.

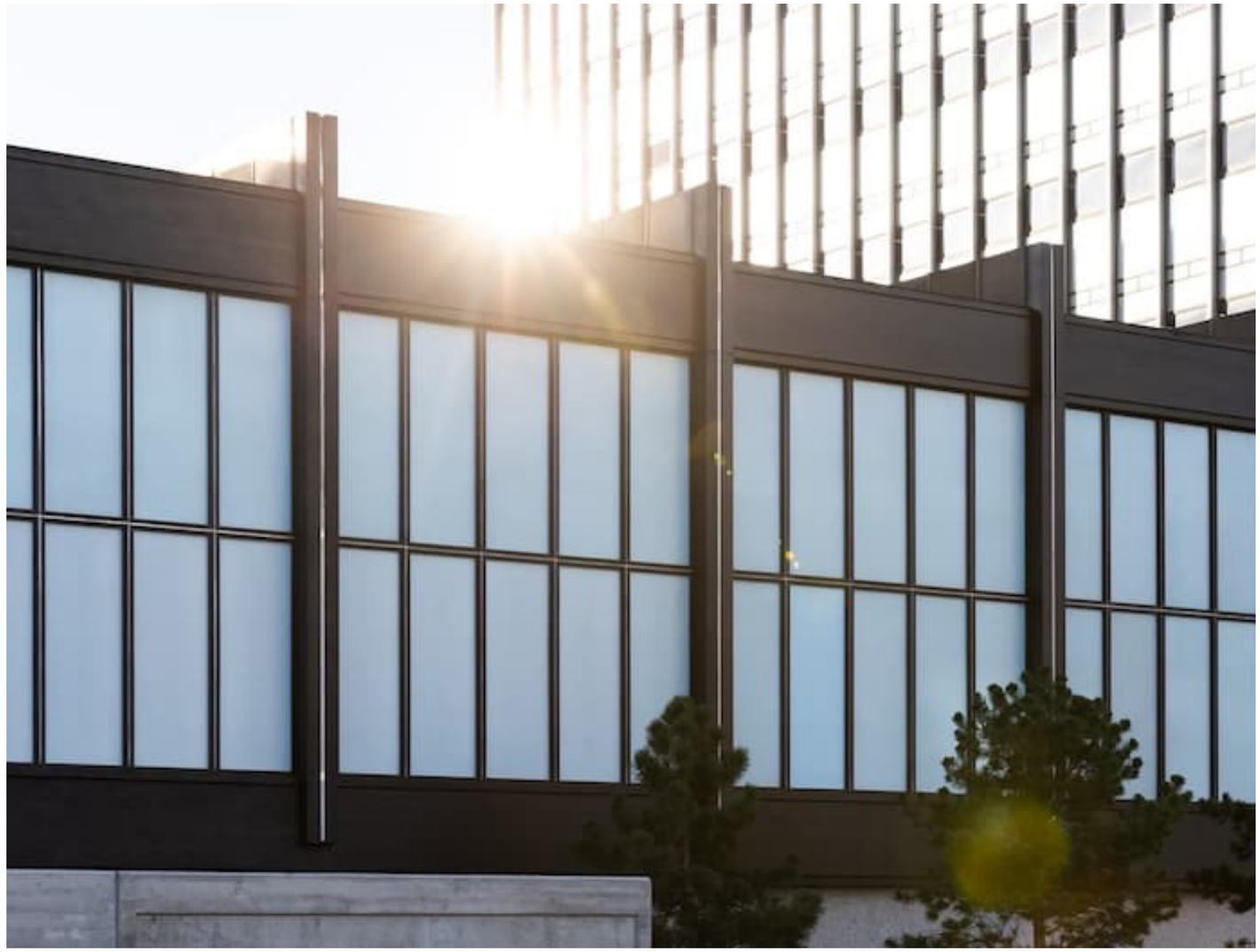
The revised operational model will allow greater flexibility of use, improved commercial sustainability, increased activation throughout the day and evening and continued support for live music and cultural activity

The proposed alterations to the ground floor of New Century Hall represent a sensitive and carefully considered response to the operational challenges experienced under the current approved arrangement.

The proposals have been developed to preserve the special architectural and historic interest of the Grade II listed building minimise intervention into historic fabric and ensuring reversibility wherever possible

The proposals will improve accessibility and operational flexibility supporting the continued cultural and entertainment use of the building to secure the long-term commercially viable use of the venue

The scheme is therefore considered appropriate and justified in heritage, design, sustainability, and planning terms, and approval is respectfully requested from Manchester City Council.



Project 3 Architects Ltd

Unit 2a, Post Office Street
Altrincham

WA14 1QA
0161 233 0575

project3architects.com

PROJECT 3
architects