

14th August 2024

Design and Access Statement

Highgate Branch Library, Chester Road, London N19 5DH – Accessible WC and tea room.

1. INTRODUCTION

This Design and Access Statement outlines the proposed project for the Highgate Branch Library which comprises the remodelling of the existing WC and store room to form a new accessible WC and kitchen. It is structured under the following, four headings:

- Response to the Context
- Use
- Amount
- Layout Access and Appearance

2. RESPONSE TO CONTEXT

2.1 The Existing Building

- 2.1.1 The building was designed to be a Public Library and its use has not changed since it was erected in 1906. Named, The Highgate Branch Library, it is an embodiment of William Nisbet Blair's architectural vision, who served as the St Pancras Borough Engineer. This building stands as a single-storey structure, fashioned from red brick and intricate terracotta embellishments. Its design reflects symmetry, encompassing three bays. The central bay features a distyle-in-antis arcaded stone loggia, adorned with Corinthian capitals and terracotta keystones. Brick pilasters on either side of the loggia support a dentil pediment. At the centre of this pediment, a Diocletian window is framed by a terracotta architrave and keystone. The adjacent bays replicate this layout, with brick arcading featuring terracotta keystones, and each bay accommodating three windows. Above the arcading, terracotta balustrades are flanked by brick dies.
- 2.1.2 It was the first public library in St Pancras and is now a Grade II listed building. A single storey extension was added to the rear (south end) of the library in 1936 and this was used as a Children's Library. Nowadays it is used as a community space, housing fitness classes, yoga classes and the like.
- 2.1.3 The interior is simple. The central isle is barrel vaulted and flanking bays are flat; both painted lath and plaster. Internal walls to the main library have feature round-arched recesses in painted plaster. Covering a total gross internal floor area (GIFA) of 494m² it is arranged over two floors with a Basement Plant Room, Ground Floor and Attic space over the central bay which has vaulted ceilings.
- 2.1.4 The external walls are solid red brick with terracotta dressings, windows are timber painted, the flat roofs are all mineral felt and the pitched roof to the central isle is natural slate. There are carved Buff and Portland stone dressings and balustrades, columns and loggia to the front elevation. Internally, walls and ceilings are painted plaster. Roof windows are uPVC with single polycarbonate sheeting.

2.2 Proposed works

- 2.2.1 The proposed works would be completed alongside the ongoing decarbonisation work to the Library (Work previously approved under Planning Application - 2023/3328/L) and are required to create an accessible WC and tea room area to allow the Community Hall area to be used independently from the main library.
- 2.2.2 The work area is located in the Community Hall area which is the 1936 extension referred to in the listing. The proposed WC and tea room area is currently occupied by a small WC and store rooms. Part of the area has been previously refurbished, including the construction of plasterboard partitions and ceilings.
- 2.2.3 The work associated with this application includes forming a new door opening into the proposed WC, widening the doorway into the proposed tea room, removing the existing block work partitions, timber stud partitions and doors.
- 2.2.4 The new installation will include a metal stud partitions finished in plasterboard and plaster skim, installation of new lintels over the widened door areas, installation of new paint grade plywood flush doors and softwood door linings, installation of a new suspended ceiling, making good of the existing floor and new safety flooring laid over.
- 2.2.5 The fit out will include new Howdens Greenwich kitchen units and Howdens laminated worktop, installation of a new DOC M toilet suite and mechanical and electrical alterations.
- 2.2.6 The existing cast concrete steps that lead up to the fire escape will be broken out and a new set of aluminium steps will be provided to the new fire exit location.

3. USE

- 3.1 The building was originally designed as a Public Library in 1906 and has not changed use since.
- 3.2 The Community Hall area is used for fitness classes, yoga classes and other community activities. Wheelchair users currently have to use a ramp to access the library accessible toilet; the aim of the work is to provide a an accessible toilet for the community hall users.
- 3.3 The Community Hall is regularly used when the library is not in use. This causes issues with power usage and heating with a lack of zones between the two. The decarbonisation of the library includes a new heating system with zones. The heating can therefore be operated for the Community Hall independently which enables the Community Hall to “stand alone” but there is now a requirement for a tea room in the Community Hall.

4. AMOUNT

- 4.1 The front face of the existing brickwork partition to the store and WC will not move, the Community Hall will therefore not reduce in size. A new door way will be formed in this partition to allow access to the accessible WC.

5. LAYOUT ACCESS AND APPEARANCE

- 5.1 The layout of the Community Hall will remain unchanged. Visually, looking from the entrance doors of the Community Hall to the rear of the Hall, the difference seen will include a wider doorway and an additional doorway to the face of the brickwork partition.
- 5.2 The work is not visible from the main library or from the Public Highway.
- 5.3 The work will enable to facilities to be used for a wider range of community clubs and will ensure that the Community Hall is accessible to all potential users.