

## 5.0 HERITAGE IMPACTS

### 5.1 ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT

As noted above, the works proposed are largely to be applied to a large late 1980s and early 1990s extension to the original Prudential offices, but it does contain three areas identified as being older in origin, and therefore more sensitive to change. These areas, broadly, are:

- The block to the southeast of the site, fronting onto Leather Lane, part of the former Leather Lane/Ridler's Hotel Block of 1895-1901;
- The small block to the southwest of the site, within the remains of the Waterhouse works of 1885-8;
- The square block facing Waterhouse Square, consisting of the former Wood's Hotel Block of 1895-6.

#### Modern Block

With reference to the large, late 1980s block to the north of the block, it was noted by officers, following a pre-application site visit that, 'the works you propose in the modern section of the building do not affect the special interest of the building and therefore listed building consent would not be required.' These works are still included within this Listed Building Consent application, but it is clear that these works will not affect the significance of the listed building, and are therefore acceptable in policy terms.

#### Victorian and Edwardian Works

The assessment above has demonstrated that the older parts of the building have, internally, been substantially altered, as a result of at least two previous schemes designed to allow these century-old buildings to effectively operate as modern office accommodation. It is the conclusion of this assessment that the historic internal fabric of the building has been encased by suspended ceilings, raised floors and plasterboard. As a comparison between figures 4 and 5 demonstrates, these historic interiors clearly remain to an extent, but are now hidden; concealed behind modern finishes, these elements will be preserved, with the proposed alterations not affecting their fabric, or historic interest.



**Figure 33:** Internal view of the 1980s, EPR section of 2 Waterhouse Square, showing the recent modern finishes and large open spaces.



**Figure 34:** Internal view of the main office space within the 1980s, EPR section of 2 Waterhouse Square, showing the recent modern finishes and large open spaces.



**Figure 35:** Internal view of the modern office spaces within the former Ridler's Hotel block of 1895-1901, showing its modern internal finishes.



**Figure 36:** View of existing ceiling finishes within the former Ridler's Hotel block.



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It is central to the design of this scheme that the works proposed are lightweight, reversible and, vitally, will not have a material impact on the remaining historic fabric. They are, universally, intended to be either freestanding, or to affix only to the modern floors, ceiling and walling.

As such, while these works will subdivide the existing spaces, they will have no impact on the fabric of the building. Furthermore, it is strongly argued that the internal spaces, in their current, modernised state, cannot be considered to contribute noticeably to the overall significance of the heritage asset of the former Prudential Assurance Building. Indeed, as noted above, the significance of the building within 2 Waterhouse Square can be found within its external appearance, and within the largely hidden internal fabric, which concealed by modern alterations, will be protected from harm.

Clearly, the most significant remaining internal space is the panelled room, within the small section of the building remaining from the original Waterhouse Prudential building of 1885-8. While this room retains a fine, albeit simple, stone fireplace, and a substantial amount of linenfold panelling of a decent standard, it is clear that the their context and appearance has been destroyed by works elsewhere in the building, as well as by the introduction of a highly intrusive suspended ceilings. It is therefore not felt that the minor fit-out works proposed for this room, consisting purely of the introduction of furnishings, will have an impact on the significance of the building.

Overall, it is felt that these works, constituting of lightweight, reversible partitions and furnishings, will not have a material impact on the significance of the listed building, and will allow this currently unoccupied building to be returned to occupation as offices, the use for which it was originally constructed.



**Figure 37:** View of the main atrium at 2 Waterhouse Square, showing the interaction between restored historic finishes, and modern materials and detailing.



**Figure 38:** View of the modern interior finishes within the historic Wood's Hotel block, originally constructed between 1895 and 1896.



**Figure 39:** Interior view of the former Director's Rest Room, with its 1880s panelling offset by modern ceiling and floor finishes.



**Figure 40:** Further view of the former Director's Rest Room, better illustrating the difference between the original, and modern, ceiling heights.