



Design and Access Statement for

Kaplan International Colleges 3-4 Southampton Place

Assessment

- We have been asked by Kaplan to carry out a number of soft internal improvements to their language college located at 3-4 Southampton Place.
- The main reason for the works is to improve security and student flow at the main entrance and reception. At present the reception area is too small for the number of students using it. At particularly busy times the reception staff are un-able to monitor who is coming in to the building. This has led to an increasing number of thefts from students.
- There is also people flow issue on the first floor landing of the main stair well. A relatively recent addition of a curved wall has created a complicated corridor arrangement that makes it difficult for students to move efficiently from one part of the building to another.
- Whilst this is being done Kaplan would like to re decorate the ground floor main student break out space and lay a new floor covering. The heritage of the building is important to Kaplan as it forms a part of the experience offered to foreign students. The drive behind the decorating elements is the wish to bring the building back to an original a state as possible; this needs to be done taking in to account the heavy traffic demands on durability.
- The scheme must also fall within a sensible budget – not costing too much either immediately or in the longer term on maintenance.

Involvement

- Kaplan International runs a number of high quality language schools across the world.
- Amber office Interiors is carrying out improvement works to many of the UK based schools.
- Both parties are working together to improve the quality of the schools by improving the experience of both the students and staff. This is being achieved in the main through a mixture of interior design both structural and visual and new technology.



Evaluation

- The long term and close working relationship that AOI has with Kaplan International has given us an in depth knowledge of Language schools and how they are run. We understand their key requirements and the expectations of the owners, staff and importantly the students. We understand that English is not the students' first language and that they are often far from home in a "foreign" environment. Our aim is to meet the needs of all parties as best as possible whilst making sure our client meets the requirements set by building control and health and safety considerations.
- In this particular case we are also mindful of the heritage of the building, its location and the associated restrictions.
- We have spent time observing the school at its peak times as well as the neighbouring schools that have very similar peak times. The pavement along the East side of Southampton Place often becomes very overcrowded at the start and finish of the day and at break times. The combined students of the schools can make it hard for other pedestrians to pass forcing them to cross the road to the opposite side. The main reason for this is the time it takes students to gain access back in to the schools. This problem is exacerbated by the relatively narrow single entrance/exit routes that have to deal with opposing flows.
- In addition to the above problems the overcrowding at the current entrance and the lack of any security access system allows unwanted visitors easy, unchallenged access to the school. They have been experiencing an increasing number of thefts by non-students.

Design

- 3-4 Southampton Place being two buildings joined as one has the benefit of two possible entrances, one of which is not used. Part of our design strategy is to utilise both of these by creating a simple one way entrance and exit system.
- We would also like to simplify the internal flow on the first floor. A curved wall has been added fairly recently that funnels students through a classroom to get to another. This is impractical and confusing. By reverting to the original layout at that location students will be able to access the classrooms from the main stair and landing.



- The internal decoration and floor finishes are to be upgraded in the ground floor communal areas as the current ones are tired and worn. We will be using Farrow and Ball estate colours to enable us to re-create as closely as possible the original feel of the building. We are proposing to install a light Amtico English Oak floor finish to replace the current out of place and worn Ash coloured vinyl floor. A carpet in this location would not wear well due to the heavy traffic through the school particularly in winter. The Amtico is a light floor covering that will be applied directly to the existing ply covering that is protecting the original floor boards. The Amtico will abut the original high skirting causing no damage.

Security and people flow.

At present the college uses a single entrance/exit. We are proposing to re open an unused door and use this as an entrance only retaining the existing entrance/exit as an exit only point. In effect creating a one way system. At this entrance point we would like to install two floor mounted access control barriers. These would be activated by students with a swipe card and can run at a rate of 1 student per second. This system will stop unwanted intruders, something that has become increasingly problematic.

From a listed building perspective we would like to remove from the entrance corridor a double door set. This is a new addition as the bulkhead is of plasterboard and is square. The other original partitions in the building are formed using deep arches. Please see the plan submitted with this application.

A second part to the improved people flow is the removal of a plasterboard curved wall on the 1st floor stair landing . This has been added when the buildings were joined and greatly reduces the flow of the 1st floor.

From a listed building perspective we would like to remove the curved wall and re instate the landing to match the floors above. This would involve matching in the damaged cornice and re decorating that corner once the curved has been removed.

Decorating.

The main area to be decorated is the communal break out space. At present this is a stripped pine panelled room with a white ceiling and large central ceiling rose. We would like to re paint the pine using muted natural colours – we can supply samples on request.



Flooring,

The present flooring is a durable vinyl pine or ash effect covering that has become worn. We would like to remove this and install an Amtico English Oak floor system that looks very similar to the real thing but lasts a great deal longer. We will supply a sample of this.

Access

We have already dealt with the general access and egress issues of the school as well as the internal flow. It is very hard to make the school fully accessible for wheelchair users as the two sets of entrance steps are too steep for a ramp. Once in the building there is a lift but the lift serves each half landing on the stairwell making the use of stairs at each floor unavoidable. Kaplan has addressed this by having a modern fully accessible school available in Leicester Square with a priority admissions policy for any who may need it.

Contact,

For any further information or to request a site visit please contact

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Kindest Regards

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