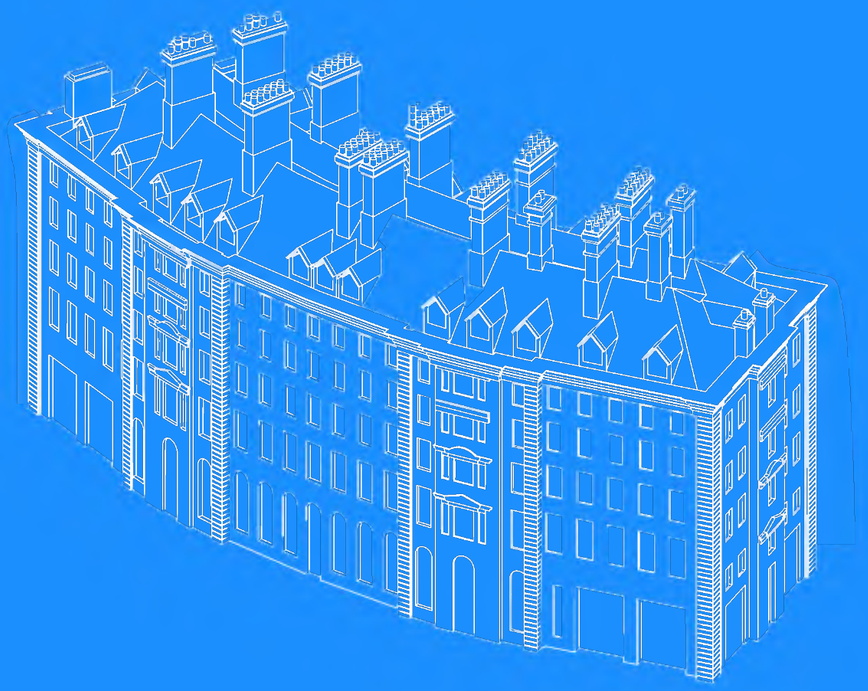
Great Northern Hotel Arcade

Planning and Listed Building Consent Applications
Intermediate Conservation Plan



Argent (King's Cross),
London and Continental Railways
and **Exel**

July 2006

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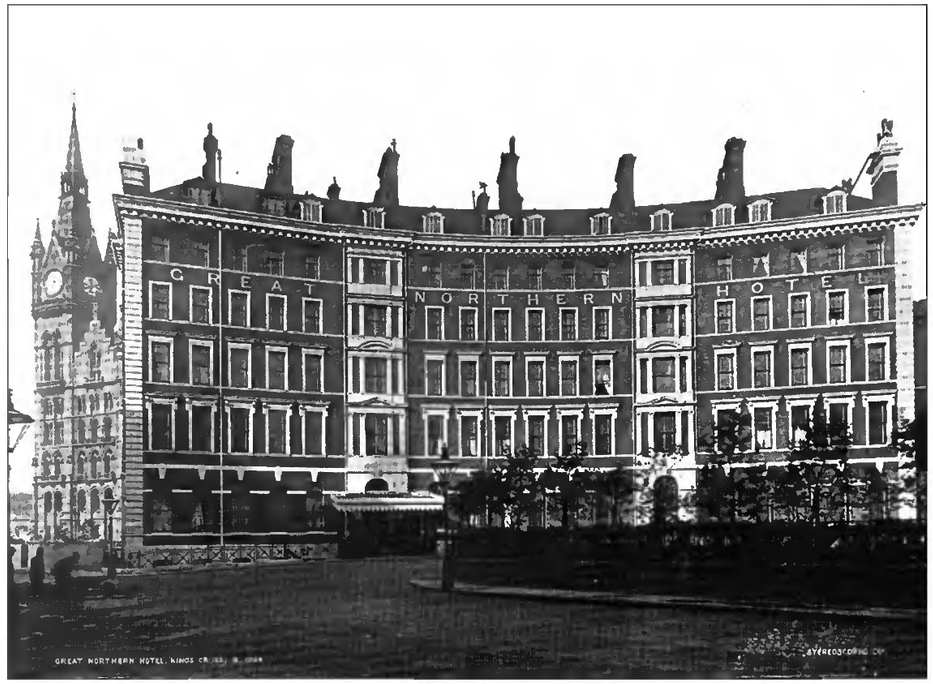

Great Northern Hotel c. 1900

Aerial view showing the Great Northern Hotel in context

Introduction

This Intermediate Conservation Plan has been written to support the planning and Listed Building consent applications, prepared by Argent (King's Cross), LCR and Exel, for the creation of a new, pedestrian arcade at street level within the Great Northern Hotel. The works being applied for are complimentary and consequential to the planning and Listed Building consent applications being prepared by Network Rail for the King's Cross Station Western Concourse.

This Plan builds upon the historical research and refurbishment parameters set out in the Initial Conservation Plan for this building, submitted in support of the King's Cross Central Main Site applications in May 2004. It has been updated from an 'Initial' to 'Intermediate' status to reflect the pedestrian arcade proposals, which take the building one step closer to economic re-use and viability. Future applications would be made for the hotel's re-use and upper floor refurbishment. At that stage, a 'Full' Conservation Plan would be prepared.

The main intentions of this Plan are to:

- Provide a summary of the history of the building and its significance;
- Give an overview of proposed works to facilitate future uses;
- Identify factors which may have a bearing on the future conservation of the building; and
- Present refurbishment parameters showing how these factors would be addressed.

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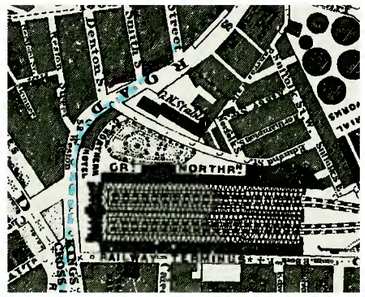
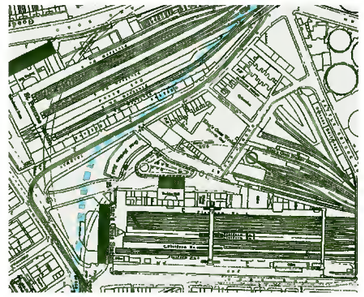
1.0 Site Context

Site 1766

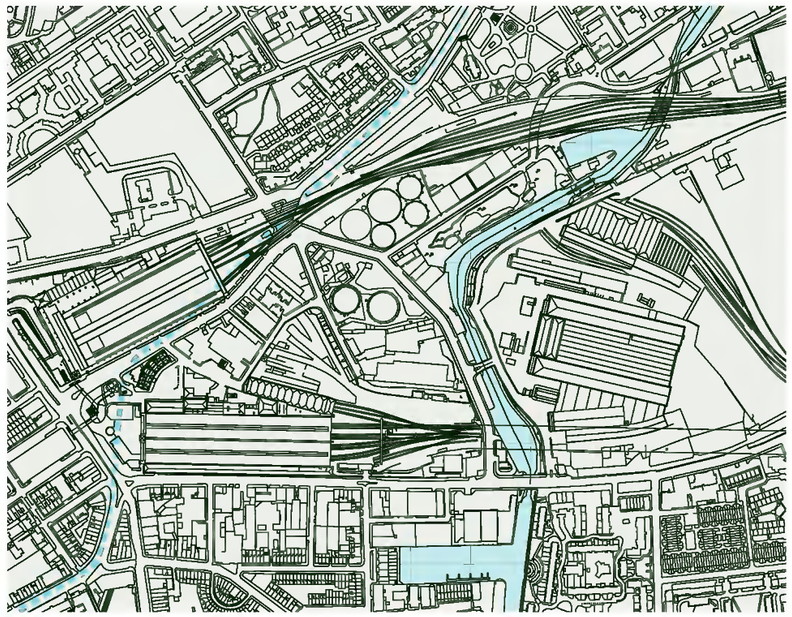
Site 1834



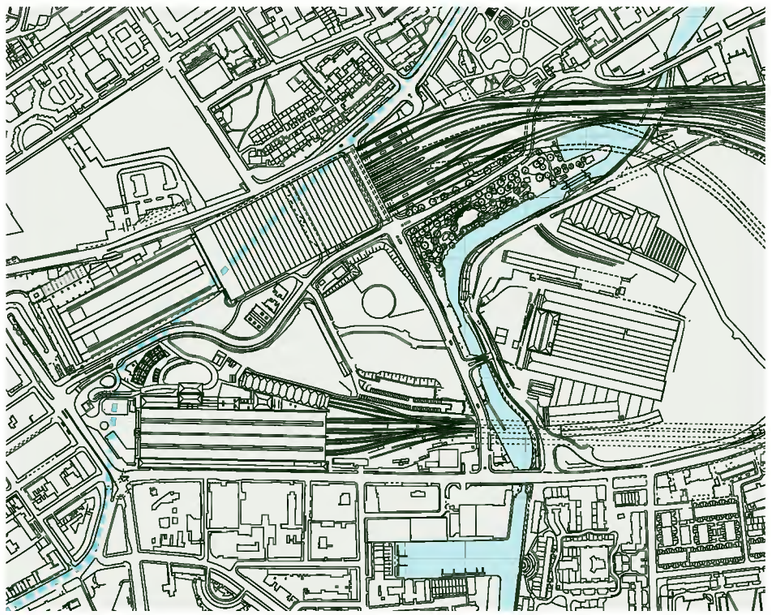
Site 1862



Site 1894



Site 1999



Site 2007

Key

Course of the river Fleet (1766)

Regent's Canal

1.1 Site History

The Great Northern Hotel was constructed during 1853-4 on the site of a Smallpox Hospital, as part of the development of the Great Northern Railway's King's Cross Station. Its curved geometry indicates the former alignment of Pancras Road and the course of the River Fleet. In 1868, the Midland Railway Company completed St Pancras Station and Pancras Road was re-aligned. Since this date, the relationship between the hotel and King's Cross Station has remained, although the formal gardens have been lost. The hotel appears to turn its back on St Pancras and its relationship with Pancras Road is diminished, with extensions for cloakroom and kitchen facilities occupying the available space.

1.2 Site Context in 2007

The land between the hotel and King's Cross Station is currently a construction site for the London Underground Northern Ticket Hall. On completion of these works, new taxi facilities will be provided for the station. Since 1999, construction has also been underway for the new Channel Tunnel Rail Link and the refurbishment of St Pancras Station.

King's Cross Central

King's Cross Station Western Concourse

1.3 King's Cross Central

Camden has resolved to grant planning permission for King's Cross Central, which would regenerate the land around the Great Northern Hotel (nearly 27 hectares) over the next 20 years. Argent (King's Cross), LCR and Exel propose to transform this long-neglected 'backland' into a vibrant urban quarter through the provision of a new urban framework, high quality public realm and new buildings, whilst preserving the many existing, heritage structures on the site. The Great Northern Hotel is located at the southern and narrowest end of the site and will form a key gateway to the new places beyond.

1.4 King's Cross Station Enhancement

Network Rail's proposals for King's Cross Station include the removal of the 'temporary' ticket hall accommodation to the south of the station and the provision of a new western concourse adjoining the station's Western Range. A new public square would be created to the south of the station and taxi facilities relocated, significantly improving the Grade I Listed Building's setting. The new western concourse would reinforce the formal connection between the Great Northern Hotel and King's Cross Station, but would significantly alter the hotel's setting.

2.0 Understanding the Asset

South-west extension to convex elevation

South-west elevation (convex)

Stucco detail

Central corridor

The Great Northern Hotel is the southernmost building of King's Cross Central, located between King's Cross and St Pancras train stations. Built during 1853-54, it was designed by Lewis Cubitt for the Great Northern Railways terminus at King's Cross.

The setting of the building, including the Old St Pancras Road that defined its curved shape and the Garden that sat between the entrance to the hotel and the Western Range of King's Cross Station, has now been lost and the hotel is the last remnant of the urban structure of this time.

As part of the King's Cross Central development, the Grade II listed hotel would form a significant part of the southern gateway to the area. It would play a substantial part in the way pedestrians in particular would move through the site and offers the opportunity to provide ground floor uses that could be associated with the two stations.

2.1 Building Description

1.The hotel is curved on plan, and is approximately 55 m long on its central curved axis by some 15 m wide. The longer, convex, south-west elevation reflects the original curving alignment of Old St Pancras Road immediately to the west. A range of houses across the road, called Weston Place, was demolished when Pancras Road was realigned in the early 1870s. As a result, the Great Northern Hotel could appear, mistakenly, to have been designed arbitrarily in both siting and plan form, as if to shield the station's Booking Office from the adjacent Pancras Road and the competing Midland Railway.

2. In fact, the building footprint responded to the existing street plan - now lost - but was clearly related to its role as an adjunct to the station itself. The shorter, concave, north-east elevation faces directly towards the original station Booking Office in the Western Range Buildings. Indeed, the now-blocked central doorway of the Booking Office would appear from plans to be the very geometric focus of the curved hotel elevation, although this has not been verified by survey.

3. The hotel and station entrance were originally enclosed from the surrounding streets wihin a gated precinct that incorporated ornamental gardens.

4. The hotel has seven floors, including a basement and an attic floor within the double-pile hipped slated roof of moderate pitch.

5. The internal plan form is reflected in the external elevations. Public rooms at ground floor level and bedrooms on upper floors are naturally lit by windows on the long elevations. These rooms open off a central longitudinal corridor at each floor level, lit at its ends by windows on the north-west and south-east elevations.

6. Elevations are of yellow stock brick, decorated with stucco in the form of string courses, pilasters, window mouldings, and a large cornice at eaves level with dentils. The elevational treatment echoes the tall residential terrace style adopted by Cubitt in his design for the south side of Lowndes Square in Knightsbridge. His use of Italianate style in both the hotel and the station also drew on his previous experience in designing the passenger station at Bricklayers' Arms in south-east London, opened in 1844.

7. The concave north-east elevation is virtually symmetrical, with six bays of windows centrally. These are flanked by wider stuccoed bays, marking the location of the two staircases on the opposite elevation, beyond which are six further bays of windows. Only in the central section of this elevation between the stuccoed bays is the brickwork actually curved on plan. The main entrance to the hotel is within the southern 'staircase' bay, on the left as seen from the station. This has a short flight of encaustic-tiled steps up to the reception area, sheltered by a small glazed canopy and enclosed porch of cast and wrought iron and timber. The canopy and porch have been partially dismantled to enable work on the Underground Station Redevelopment; the Network Rail applications for the King's Cross Station Enhancement would apply for their permanent removal. The doorway here is spanned by a round-headed stuccoed arch, as is the window in the other staircase bay symmetrical with it. The other ground floor windows have rounded arches in plain brickwork, with stucco keystones. All upper floor windows are framed by rectangular openings.

8. The staircase bays project slightly forward of the general line of the elevation. Their first and second floor windows have three lights framed with pilasters and pedimented heads, while the third and fourth floor windows are similar but with plainer heads. Other windows have stuccoed surrounds on first, second, and third floor levels, and the elevation corners are formed in stucco as pilaster strips decorated with rustication. The stucco treatment around windows and of the string courses at intermediate floors has been simplified since the hotel was built.

9. The hotel's name is displayed prominently on this elevation between the third floor window head and the fourth floor window sills, in crisp sans-serif lettering (which already appears in an early 20th century photograph).

10. The convex south-west elevation is longer than the concave north-east elevation, but resembles it. There are seven bays of windows in the central section. These are flanked by the staircase bays, which project beyond the general line of the elevation with their corners formed in stucco as pilaster strips decorated with rustication. The projections incorporate the three-light stair windows similar to those on the north-east elevation, but include also a single bay of windows from adjacent rooms on either side. Five further bays of windows extend to the ends of the elevation, whose corners are again formed with stucco pilaster strips.

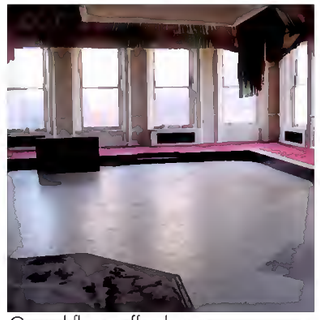
11. The later supplementary toilet facilities have been added to this elevation at basement and ground floor levels, centred on the southern staircase bay. Their external walls are of brick with plain rectangular window openings and stucco mouldings, topped by a flat roof. An external steel fire escape stair is located in this bay.

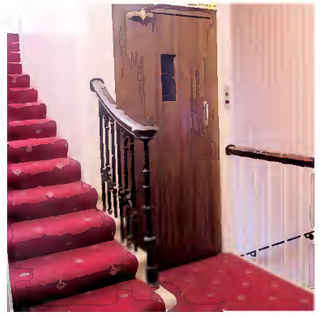
12. The north-west end elevation is pierced by only the single line of central corridor windows which, at first floor level, enlarges into a small glazed and louvred 'conservatory'. A small two-storey block along its eastern half was added to provide supplementary ladies' facilities. Like the larger extension on the south-west elevation, this block is walled in brick with plain rectangular window openings and stucco mouldings, topped by a flat roof. A later short steel stair case leads out of the ground floor central corridor here, and currently forms the only means of access into the building, as the main entrance is temporarily closed off by the hoardings of a work site for the Underground Station Redevelopment.

13. The south-east end elevation has two bays of windows either side of the central corridor windows, which are themselves contained within a projecting bay formed and flanked by large pilasters containing chimney flues. These windows are treated at ground, first, and second floor levels similarly to the windows of the staircase bays on the north-east elevation, as described above. Here again, a later steel fire escape stair leads out of the ground floor,

Brick chimney stacks

Dormer windows


Ground floor coffee lounge


Northern staircase with hydraulic lift

which at this end of the hotel comprises the full-width dining room (originally the coffee room).

14. Some vertical cracking is visible in the pilasters of the projecting bay of this elevation. This is surmised to be a result of cyclic thermal movements across changes in thickness of the brickwork, which here encloses chimney flues. The cracking is made more conspicuous by mortar pointing that follows the lines of the cracks.

15. Within the roof space, the attic (fifth) floor has fewer windows than the lower floors, in the form of dormers with plain rectangular openings beneath shallow gables.

16. The hipped slated roof resembles a double-pile construction in that it has twin ridges, with a central valley section now covered by duckboards. A substantial number of large brick chimney stacks remain, reflecting the many fireplaces burning coal that were originally provided to heat every bedroom, sitting room, and public room, as well as the kitchens. Some stacks have been modified, impairing the symmetry of the roofline which has been further marred by the addition of items of plant.

17. Numerous rainwater, soil, and vent pipes are present on the external elevations. They detract from the appearance of the building.

18. Door and window joinery is generally of timber, in need of some local repair or replacement. Windows are generally vertical sliding sashes.

19. The internal layout of the hotel essentially comprises a single long, curved, corridor at each floor level, serving rooms on either side. The upper floors, comprising mainly bedrooms, sitting rooms, and toilets, have crosswalls at fairly close and regular spacings. The cellular pattern of this structural layout is largely continued down through ground floor and basement level except where larger rooms here have required the use of beams to pick up walls from the upper floors.

20. The main entrance into the hotel is up a short flight of steps in the southern staircase bay. This leads into a small lobby from where the hotel reception desk and the southern staircase can be reached. Public rooms on this ground floor level originally included a smoking room and reading room, as well as lounges and the coffee room (later known as the dining room). This latter room was the largest in the hotel, occupying four bays and the full width of the southern end of the building - a space of some 9 m by 14 m. It reportedly "rivalled that of the Great Western Royal Hotel as the finest in London" (quoted in Hunter and Thorne). It has a higher ceiling than other ground floor rooms, which resulted in the first floor rooms above having reduced ceiling heights and being approached up a short flight of steps in the central corridor.

21. Two staircases were originally provided within the building. A hydraulic lift was inserted in the well of the northern staircase in the 1880s.

22. Bedrooms on upper floors were originally not provided with integral private toilets but, as this became expected of superior hotel accommodation, en suite facilities were introduced in some bedrooms by adding private facilities inside an enclosing partition. This has inevitably impaired the original simple room proportions.

23. The north-west, convex, elevation of the hotel is longer than the south-west elevation, and advantage was taken of this in the original design to provide toilets in the additional space available.

24. Services for the hotel were concentrated in the basement. The main kitchen was sited under the coffee (dining) room with a dumb waiter linking the two. The basement rooms to the north of this included a servants' hall, staff rooms, storage for groceries, wine, linen, and plate, and a large linen drying room. Further storage was provided in cellars entered off the basement level area around the hotel.

25. The internal construction was noted at the time by the Great Northern Railway as being 'fireproof', with stair landings and treads of stone (rather than timber), and masonry walls between rooms, rather than timber studding. These masonry walls also offered superior sound insulation and privacy.

26. Recent investigations by STATS Limited have confirmed that floors (other than in corridors) are generally timber boards and joists over brick arching, supported on loadbearing brick walls and on iron beams and girders, with timber joists supporting plaster ceilings. The use of structural iron is to be expected in a building of this period, particularly for the longer span beams over the public rooms at ground floor level and elsewhere, which were obliged to support the weight of walls and floors above. The beams are oriented on plan so that the brick arches are limited to a modest span, typically 1.8-2.5 m. In lower floors their layout also takes account of the need to support upper floor construction over public rooms of larger size than the rooms above. In a typical upper floor bedroom, some 4.5-5 m wide, a central cast iron I-beam spans from the corridor spine wall to the front or rear elevation, with the brick arches spanning between the beam and the walls between adjacent rooms. On lower floors over larger rooms the brick arches generally span the other way, onto cast iron I-beams at about 1.8-2 m spacing and spanning parallel to the corridor, which in turn are carried on deeper cast iron beams or on twin riveted plate girders. (These girders appear to be original wrought iron, which makes them quite early examples of such riveted construction.) The girders are supported on cast iron columns built into the brick walls. The arrangement of beams is different over the largest room in the hotel, the coffee room (later the dining room), which occupies the full width of the building and the southernmost four bays of the front and rear elevations on the ground floor. Here the brick arches of the first floor are carried on cast iron I-beams spanning from the front and back elevations onto deeper cast iron beams on the lines of the corridor spine walls. The corridors are floored with sandstone slabs, typically about 0.12 m deep, spanning some 2.2-2.4 m between the corridor spine walls. Stair landings and flights are also of stone.

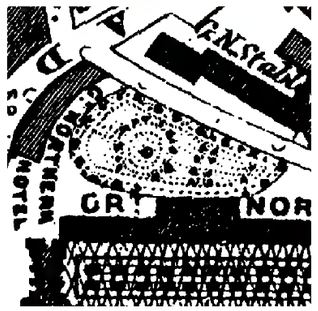
27. No original information on foundation construction is to hand, but it is probable that the building was founded on spread brick strip footings, similar to those adopted for the main line station. This has been confirmed locally by limited trial pitting.

28. Internal finishes today are typically of plaster and wallpaper with painted joinery. It seems evident that original finishes have been removed or affected in the course of later works, such as the installation of private bathrooms within bedrooms. Accounts suggest that the original decoration of the public rooms was more ostentatious than can be seen today.

29. The later extensions at basement and ground floor levels on the south-west and north-west elevations provided additional baths, dressing rooms, toilets, a barber's saloon, and storage. These extensions were provided for the benefit of passengers arriving at King's Cross on sleeping-car services.

Railings (south-west elevation)

North-west elevation


Former garden

Basement

30. The hotel is enclosed by a basement area, with external brick vaults serving as cellars. These were extensively used for storage of coal, beer, foodstuffs, and other essential supplies. Some of these vaults have recently been removed or infilled with concrete as part of the Underground works for the construction of the new Northern Ticket Hall.

31. An underground ice-house to the north of the hotel, known from plans of the hotel, was linked by a short alley into the hotel cellars. The ice-house and part of the alley, and the incomplete remains of a previously-unknown second ice-house (described below), have now been removed during excavations for the new Underground Station Northern Ticket Hall. Previously, there was speculation that the known ice-house had been originally associated with the Smallpox Hospital or Fever Hospital that had previously occupied the site. However, observations and recording by the Museum of London Archaeology Service (MoLAS) during its removal indicate that the ice-house was built with, or shortly after, the hotel. At this time, before refrigeration was developed, ice would be brought in bulk during the winter from Scandinavia, Canada, or elsewhere, and stored for use in the kitchens over the next months in underground structures, such as this ice-house.

32. The ice-house comprised a circular, roughly cylindrical, brick structure about 8 m deep and 4 m in diameter, with a hemispherical roof. The crown of this roof was just below ground level, and had a covered opening (later sealed) through which ice could be delivered.

33. At a later period in its life, presumably when the availability of refrigeration eliminated the need to store ice, the ice-house was filled with rubble up to the floor level of the alley that linked to the hotel cellars, and apparently used for storage. Subsequently, the ice-house was abandoned completely, and the hotel end of the alley was sealed off by a concrete blockwork wall.

34. The incomplete remains of a second ice-house, not previously known to exist, were discovered during excavations for the Northern Ticket Hall. It also was built of brick with a circular plan. It lay closer to the hotel, and immediately above the Hotel Curve Tunnel. It is dated at about the time of the hotel's construction or shortly after, but almost certainly pre-dates the ice-house described above, as the alley leading to the latter was curved on plan to pass around the second ice-house. It is unclear whether this incomplete ice-house was built before the tunnel (which opened in 1863, nine years after the hotel was opened), or was abandoned to allow construction of the tunnel.

35. A MoLAS report on the two ice-houses was issued in September 2003.

36. The edge of the area around the hotel is protected by cast iron railings of simple pattern. On the north-east elevation the railings are in the form of rectangular open panels similar to those at the southern end of the Western Range of the station buildings. Some of these have recently been temporarily dismantled, together with part of the hotel entrance porch, and taken into storage to protect them during the execution of the Underground works. On the west side of the hotel, along Pancras Road, the railings are of the 'spear' type, with heraldic emblems (three lions passant and a larger lion rampant) moulded onto the bosses of the principal uprights.

37. A distinctive adjunct to the hotel that has been totally lost is the gardens that were laid out to the north of the hotel. These were grubbed out in the late 1930s and replaced by the parcels (later Red Star) depot, itself recently demolished for the construction of the Underground Northern Ticket Hall. The eastern edge of the gardens flanked the porte-cochère sheltering those arriving in front of the original station Booking Office. The gardens formed an integral part of the design of the space to the west of the Booking Office. This was a triangular area defined on its south side by the line of Old St Pancras Road and the curved hotel, on its east side by the station, and on its west side by Upper Edmund Street (later Cheney Road). This space was enclosed by walls and railings - it all being railway property, and therefore private land - as is shown on the 1871 Ordnance Survey 1:1056 plan. Gates provided vehicle access immediately to the north and immediately to the south-east of the hotel, with a third access further north beyond the gardens. One brick gate pier remains beside the footpath at the northern end of the north-east elevation.

38. A further railway-related feature here in the early days of the station and hotel was the Great Northern Railway stables building shown on the north side of Upper Edmund Street, opposite the hotel gardens, in Stanford's plan of 1862. The stables had gone by 1871, when the OS plan shows a "cartridge and percussion cap manufactory" occupying the site.

39. The destruction of the gardens, and the removal of the railway precinct boundaries north and east of the hotel, have unfortunately removed evidence of what was originally a carefully-integrated urban design on a very tightly-defined site.

Great Northern Hotel, 1870-1900

The Great Western Hotel, Paddington

King's Cross Station

Digswell Viaduct, near Welwyn (also by Cubitt)

2.2 History and Function of the Building

1. The construction of the major London rail termini in the mid-19th century was accompanied by the development of hotels for use by the railway companies' patrons. These were built on a larger scale than existing hotels, and indeed were the forerunners of the many large and often luxurious hotels built in London later in the century. The first two purpose-built railway hotels were at Euston (1839). They were designed by the company's architect Philip Hardwick, and stood either side of his Doric Propylaeum, commonly known as the Euston Arch. One, the Euston, catered for the first-class trade, while the Victoria was rather more of a superior lodging-house. These hotel buildings, the Arch, and the original Euston station were all demolished in the 1960s.

2. Two railway hotels were opened in 1854, heralding the second generation of railway termini in London: the Great Northern Hotel at King's Cross, and the Great Western Royal at Paddington. The latter was designed by P C Hardwick, a son of Philip, in an extravagant French chateau style, and stood in front of the train shed (as did Scott's later Midland Grand Hotel at St Pancras). In contrast, the Great Northern Hotel was sited separately from its terminus as a consequence of existing road alignments. The concave north-east hotel elevation focussed on the station's Booking Office, which was clearly visible from the hotel's main entrance. This arguably emphasised the importance of the station more dramatically to the traveller, while better preserving the hotel's distinct function. The hotel and station entrance were originally enclosed from the surrounding streets within a gated precinct that incorporated ornamental gardens.

3. The Great Northern Hotel offered superior facilities for guests. Its 160 rooms included about 100 bedrooms and attached sitting rooms and 20 public rooms including a large coffee room. A hydraulic lift was introduced in the 1880s. Pressure on toilet and washing facilities, as a result of growing sleeping-car traffic at the station, resulted in the hotel's footprint being expanded rather uncomfortably at the beginning of the 20th century. The road alignment west of the hotel had been altered with the completion of St Pancras Station in the early 1870s, and this allowed the construction of a two-storey extension of the basement and ground floors over part of the south-west elevation. This was a polygonal block, superimposed on the area and vaults here, containing baths, toilets, dressing rooms, and a barber's shop (but all since converted to use as toilets, kitchens an offices). A smaller two-storey extension, at the north-west corner of the hotel, provided additional ladies' toilets at ground floor level and storage space in the basement below.

4. Of these two earliest surviving London railway hotels, the Great Western Royal at Paddington has been altered, both externally and internally, more drastically than has the Great Northern Hotel.

Bay with wider, three-light windows

Architrave

2.3 Architectural Analysis

1. 23 bays long on its outer south-west elevation (18 bays on its inner elevation), with five-and-a-half storey high façades rising above street level, this building was on a new scale for a hotel, and larger than the first purpose-built office blocks of the period. The architect Lewis Cubitt deployed his skills developed in designing imposing residential terraces for his developer brother Thomas in Belgravia, so as to articulate what could otherwise have been repetitive and bland façades. The result is more ornate than his adjacent passenger station, as befitted the more personal function of a hotel but far from the fussiness of much subsequent Victorian work.

2. The main façades are broken into three by expressing the two bays of wider, three-light windows that mark the internal staircase locations, picked out in stucco. These, and stucco pilaster strips at the corners - plus additional pilaster strips in the longer convex north-west elevation - support a bold classical cornice beneath the roof line. Across the heads of the ground floor windows, a stucco string course marks a classical division into plinth and piano nobile, the former in sober brickwork, the latter with the newly fashionable stucco architraves to the necessarily closely-packed window openings, graduated through several storeys. The cornice crowns these tiers of windows. With its bold dentils, the cornice simulates an eaves line for the roof. This roof, terminated laterally by hips, has a relatively shallow pitch in sympathy with the neighbouring station building, but tall chimney stacks provide a vertical termination proportionate to the building's height. In keeping with the functional Italianate styling of King's Cross Station, the architecture shuns the classical "orders", except in the pilasters of the three-light windows (where, incidentally, the usual progression from Doric upwards to Corinthian is deliberately inverted to avoid pomposity).

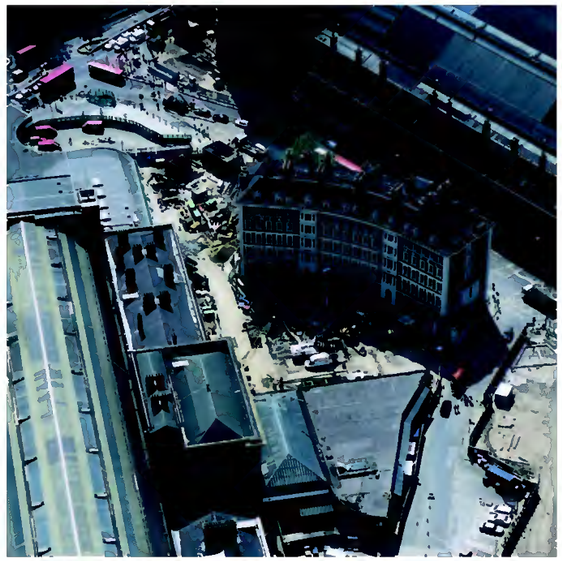
3. Some details of the stucco architraves and the gradated depths of successive string courses have been emasculated in twentieth-century renovation works, and soil and rainwater stacks have proliferated unattractively, but the general principles of this composition have remained unscathed.

4. The asymmetry of the north-east elevation, with the main hotel entrance placed 'off-centre' in the southern of the two staircase bays, can be seen, in part at least, as a response to the asymmetry of the Western Range of the station. This in turn is weighted towards the Euston Road - the principal road serving the station - and reflects the concentration of passenger facilities towards the southern end of the range, while the more mundane facilities such as the Parcel Office were sited further north in the range.

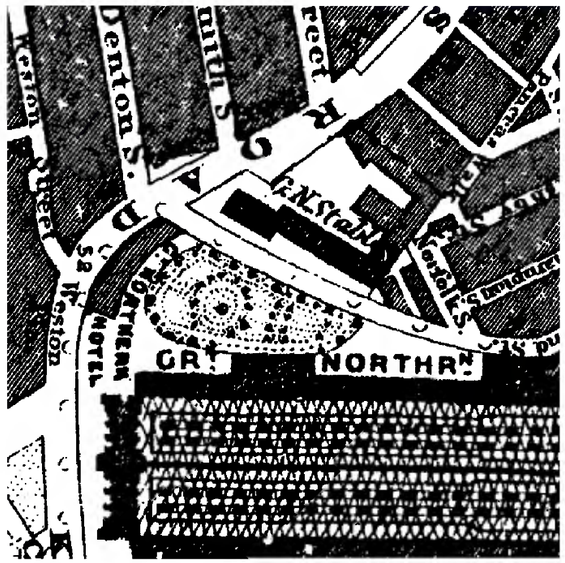
5. More practically, the siting of the hotel entrance made it immediately visible from the Booking Office entrance (and vice versa), whereas this clear line of sight would have been obscured by the trees and shrubbery in the hotel gardens had the entrance been sited in the centre of the hotel elevation.

6. A further practical aspect of the hotel entrance location was that it lay at the intersection of the roads within the enclosed railway property, allowing carriages to manoeuvre easily when setting down and picking up.

7. Not least, the gardens, sited as they were, helped to screen the less salubrious terraced streets to the north from the hotel. Together with the siting of the hotel - enfolding this gated and secure area - this helped to create an impression of privacy that would have been familiar to, and welcomed by, the more wealthy patrons of the railway and the hotel.



Setting prior to LUL construction works



Historic map, 1862 showing the triangular shaped gardens between the hotel and King's Cross Station

3.0 Assessment of Significance

3.1 The Heritage Importance of the Great Northern Hotel

Architecture and Fabric

The Great Northern Hotel is an early surviving example of a purpose-built railway hotel. Italianate in its design in yellow stock brick and stucco, and only slightly altered, it resonates with other designs by its architect, Lewis Cubitt - the nearby King's Cross terminus, and his large-scale residential elevations in Belgravia.

The building was on a new scale for a hotel in both length and height, but Cubitt successfully articulated what could otherwise have been repetitive and bland façades, through the restrained but considered use of stucco for string courses, pilaster strips, and as mouldings around door and window openings.

The result, although more ornate than his adjacent station, has none of the fussiness of much subsequent Victorian work. As such, it is a well-balanced and original composition.

The pronounced asymmetry of the building, with its off-centre main entrance, is a response to the asymmetry of the Western Range Buildings, both weighted towards the Euston Road and the passenger facilities at the southern end of the station. It also provides a direct line of sight between the hotel entrance and the Booking Office entrance, which would have been obscured by the gardens had the hotel entrance been sited centrally.

Recent investigations of the floor construction have revealed both cast iron I-beams (to be expected in a large building of the early 1850s), and what appear to be quite early examples of riveted wrought iron plate girders.

Pressure on toilet and washing facilities in the station resulted in the hotel's footprint being expanded rather uncomfortably at the beginning of the 20th century by the construction of two-storey extensions on both the south west and north west elevations. The prominent steel fire escape on the south west elevation is a further uncomfortable addition.

Setting

The curved plan form and the orientation of the building offer the sole remaining evidence of the street pattern at the time of construction, before Pancras Road was realigned as a straight thoroughfare down the east side of St Pancras Station.

The north-east elevation of the hotel focuses onto the entrance of the former Station Booking Office - possibly a unique feature.

The enclosure of the triangular space to the west of the station, including the hotel together with gardens to the north (now lost), was originally a clearly integrated whole. It offered an efficient layout for road vehicles, and also a sense of privacy.

The setting of Cubitt's relatively plain Italianate terminus and hotel, immediately alongside the exuberant neo-Gothic St Pancras Station and its hotel by Scott and Barlow, is a juxtaposition possibly without comparison in early railway architecture.

The hotel makes an important contribution to the Kings's Cross Conservation Area, particularly in its association with the main line stations, both evoking 19th century railway development.

Significance Relating to Type

The Great Northern Hotel is among the earliest surviving purpose-built railway hotels, contemporary with the Great Western Royal Hotel at Paddington but retaining more of its original character both externally and internally.

Significance Relating to Intangibles

The hotel retains a close relationship with King's Cross terminus, particularly the former Station Booking Office, and effectively enfolds the space between this and the hotel.

3.2 Notable Features

The notable features of the Great Northern Hotel and its history are:

1. The Great Northern Hotel is an early (1854) surviving example of a purpose-built railway hotel;

2. The hotel was of a new scale for such a building of this period;

3. The hotel is competently articulated in Italianate neo-Classical style, as adopted for the adjacent mainline terminus, by the architect of both buildings, Lewis Cubitt, but is more domestic in feeling;

4. The hotel's position is relatively unusual for a terminus station hotel in not being sited across the head of the railway tracks (as for example St Pancras);

5. The building is symmetrical and its form is made up of three parts; a central radial section and two orthogonal sections at either end;

6. The actual siting and partly curved plan form is dictated by the former street pattern (now vanished);

7. The original layout of hotel, gardens to north (now lost), and carriage roads serving the station and hotel were an integrated whole contained within the railway company's available triangular site, immediately west of the station;

8. The station's former Booking Office was used as the focus of the curved hotel layout;

9. The asymmetry of the station's Western Range Buildings is echoed by the off-centre main entrance to hotel, in part ensuring a clear line of sight between the Hotel entrance and the Western Range, unimpeded by trees and shrubbery of the gardens;

10. The hotel is a tall, relatively slender block topped by numerous tall chimney stacks (some later modified);

11. The building's structure is primarily load bearing masonry external walls and internal long and cross walls;

12. Floors would appear to be constructed from iron girders supporting brick arches, with timber boards over;

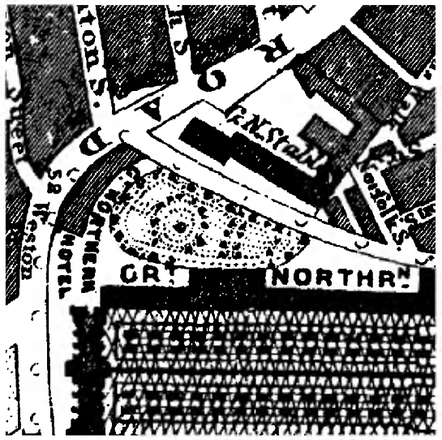
13. Elevational treatment is of yellow stock brick relieved by restrained but considered use of stucco string courses, pilaster strips and architraves (some later modified);

14. Two original stone staircases provide vertical circulation. These make a significant contribution to the building's internal character; and

15. The juxtaposition of Cubitt's soberly dressed hotel and station (in plain style) with the neo-Gothic exuberance of St Pancras Station and its Midland Grand Hotel, provides an unrivalled contrast in Victorian railway architectural styles.

These notable features are shown on the photographs opposite and plans and elevations overleaf.

3



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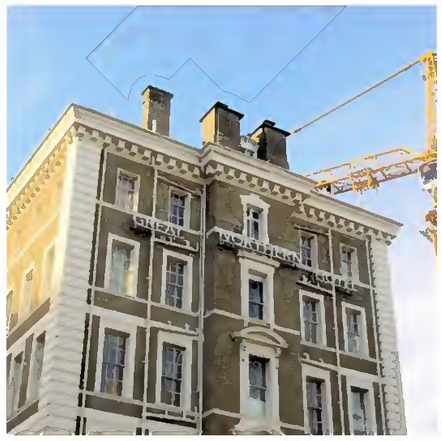

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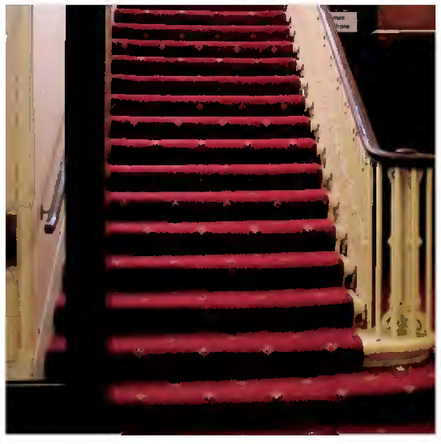
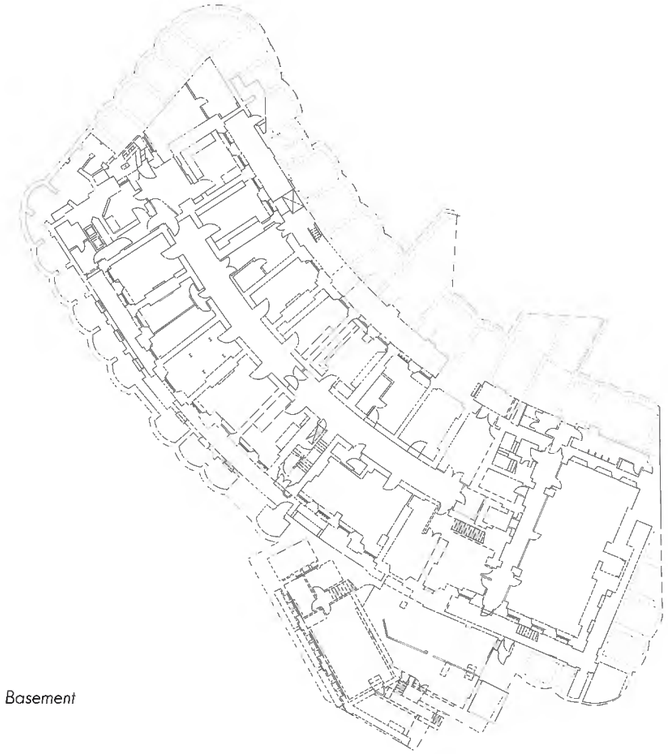

14

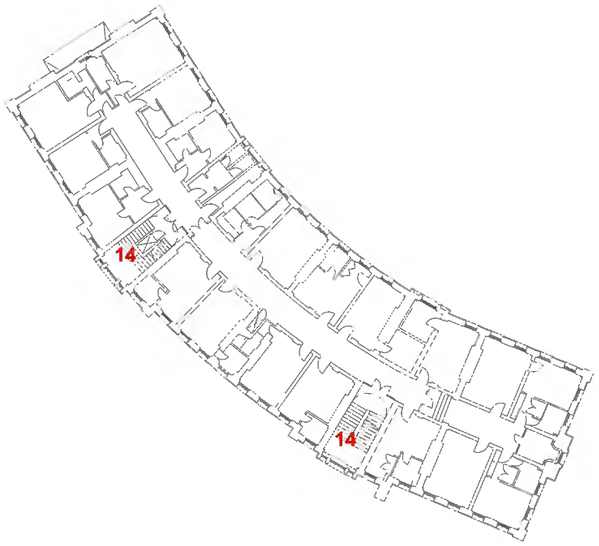
Notable Features



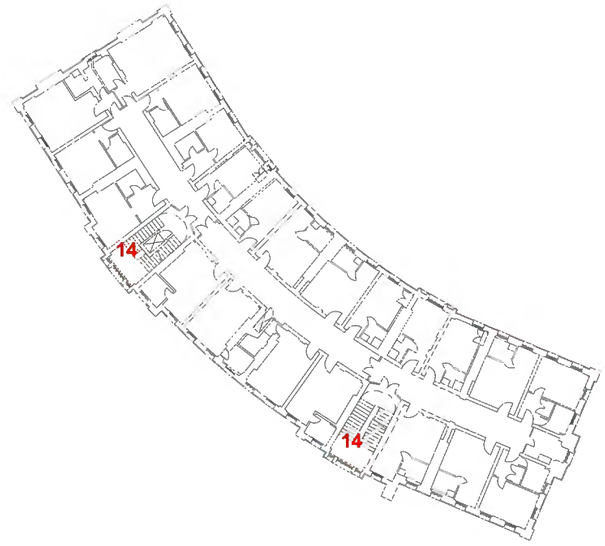
Basement

Ground floor

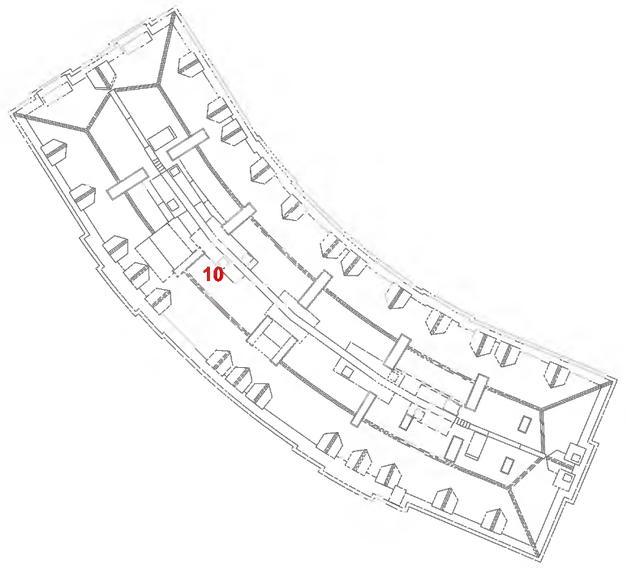
First floor



Second floor

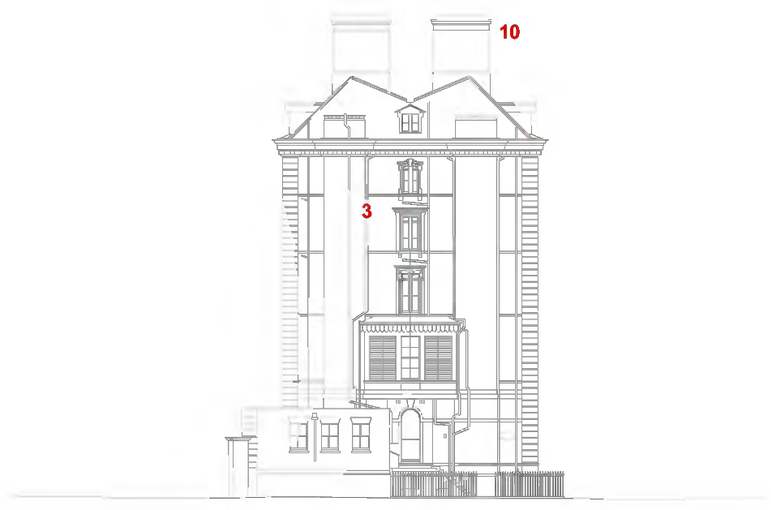


Typical upper floor



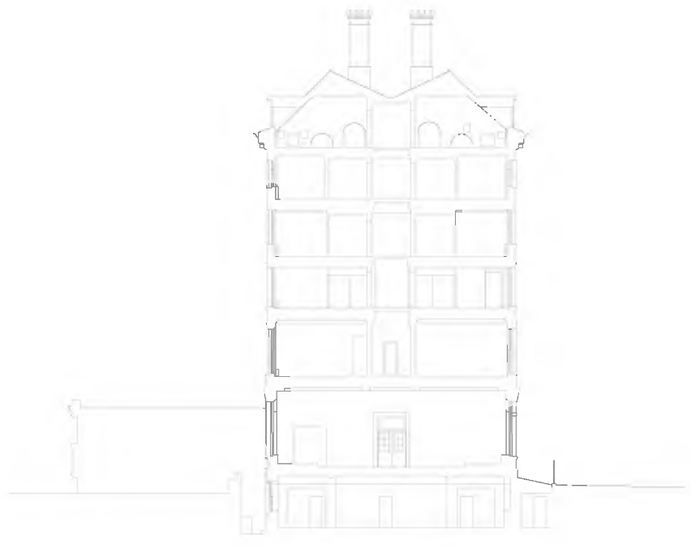
Roof

Notable Features



North-west elevation

South-east elevation



Section AA

North-east elevation

South-west elevation

Great Northern Hotel and King's Cross

Relationship between St. Pancras - Great Northern Hotel - King's Cross

3.3 Summary of Building's Individual and Group Value

The built heritage value of the Great Northern Hotel is considered to be very high.

The overall value of the group in which it sits, including King's Cross and St Pancras stations, is considered to be very high.

4.0 Defining the Objectives

4.1 Current Use

The Great Northern Hotel currently stands empty. It's last use was as a hotel, in 2001. It is currently surrounded by construction compounds for work relating to King's Cross St Pancras London Underground station, the Channel Tunnel Rail Link and King's Cross train station.

4.2 Objectives and Aspirations

The objectives and aspirations for the Great Northern Hotel are:

- To secure the future of the building through viable long-term uses;
- To give enclosure to a major new public space, Station Square, to be constructed to the north of the hotel;
- To facilitate pedestrian movement between the stations, Euston Road and the King's Cross Central development;
- To be a gateway to King's Cross Central;
- To be refurbished to allow an active use, particularly at the ground floor;
- To integrate King's Cross Central and the proposed King's Cross Station Enhancement.

5.0 Works to Facilitate Future Uses

5.1 Initial Conservation Plan - Original Proposals

In order to achieve our aspirations for the building's role within the public realm, the Initial Conservation Plan, submitted with the King's Cross Central Main Site applications, initially identified that some alterations around the perimeter of the building would be required. Additionally, some works would be required to bring the buildings up to a modern standard, particularly with regard to vertical circulation and servicing.

The works proposed in the Initial Conservation Plan are:

1. Demolish the basement (3 offices) and ground floor extension (kitchens, toilet and office) on the south-western facade and the fire escape which crosses the extension;

2. Demolish the basement (storage) and ground floor extension (ladies toilets) on the northern facade;

3. Remove the railings along the south-western and northern sides of the Hotel;

4. Cover the lightwell around the south-western and northern sides of the Hotel;

5. Works to provide disabled access to the building;

6. Insertion of new lift cores to provide vertical circulation through the building;

7. Remove existing lifts and making good the north internal stair;

8. Local alterations to the elevations and internal fabric to facilitate vehicular servicing and means of escape;

9. Alterations to accommodate a central plant room within the fifth floor, with adequate ventilation via the central section of the roof; and

10. Insertion of vertical risers and horizontal ducts to provide for mechanical, electrical and communications services.

Works 1-4 above are the subject of an application for Listed Building consent submitted alongside the King's Cross Central Main Site applications in May 2004. Camden has resolved to grant Listed Building Consent.

5.2 Intermediate Conservation Plan - Additional Proposals

This Intermediate Conservation Plan accompanies further applications to create a pedestrian arcade within the Great Northern Hotel at street level, in order to continue to meet the objectives and aspirations set out for the building, and consequential to Network Rail proposals to construct a new western concourse for King's Cross Station.

The further planning and Listed Building consent applications propose the following works:

(Note: In some cases these elaborate upon works proposed in items 1-10.)

11. Removal of the existing **basement, ground and first floors** of the building;

12. Construction of a **new ground floor slab** (with breakout panel section) 1.1m lower than the existing floor;

13. Construction of a **new first floor slab** below the existing floor level with a raised floor at existing first floor level;

14. Replacement of the **basement floor level** and foundation strengthening;

15. Construction of a **basement concrete box** in the area of the (to be demolished) south-western extension;

16. Removal of multiple sections of **internal structural walls and fireplaces** between ground floor and first floor, the truncation of the **chimneys** at first floor level and the structural formation of new openings;

17. Removal of every second **external load bearing pier** (ground to first and in some cases basement to first) around 70% of the perimeter, the formation of **new openings** and making good of the **façades** of the building;

18. Replacement of the remaining **existing windows** at street level on the south-west elevation with new doors or timber framed windows with lower sills;

19. Removal of external **rainwater and drainage goods** on all façades and their replacement/rationalisation with new, external cast iron downpipes on all façades (to be diverted internally above the proposed concourse roof on the north-east elevation);

20. Removal of a **chimney breast and stack** concealed as quoining on the south-west elevation;

21. (Further to 8.) Provision of **new access arrangements** to the building, comprising an **entrance** from within the arcade, an **entrance** at the centre of the retained part of the south-west elevation, extension of the existing **staircases** to the new ground floor, servicing access point(s), and adequate means of emergency escape;

22. (Further to 8.) Provision of **service access** to the north-west of the building from Pancras Road;

23. Installation of **roller shutters** in those new openings in the north east elevation that would abut the proposed western concourse;

24. Removal of **railings** along the south-east and north-east elevations (the combined effect of this and the earlier application is to propose the removal of all railings along all the elevations);

25. New **surfacing** in the arcade (complementary to the floor of the proposed western concourse) and over the existing lightwells, with ventilation panels, along the north-west, south-west and south-east sides of the Hotel;

26. Rendering and finishing off the arcade soffit and walls, including glazed openings to the retail units and the main building entrances;

27. Installation of **temporary rendered masonry walls** to the proposed retail units, foyer entrance and lowered windows at ground floor;

28. (Further to 7.) Removal of the **lift shaft and car** from first floor to basement and the removal of **stairs** from ground floor to basement, all centrally situated half way between the two main stair cores;

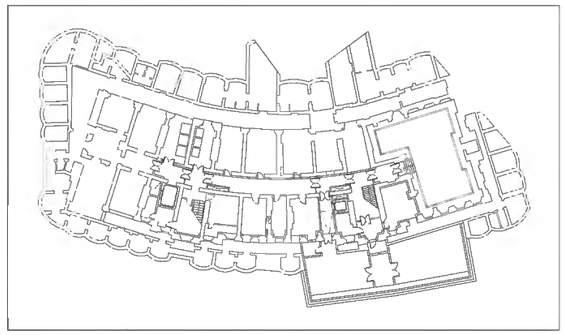
29. (Further to 7.) Removal of the **lift shaft, car and supports** from first floor to basement in the northern main staircase;

30. (Further to 7.) Removal of the **small lift and stairs** in the north-eastern lightwell;

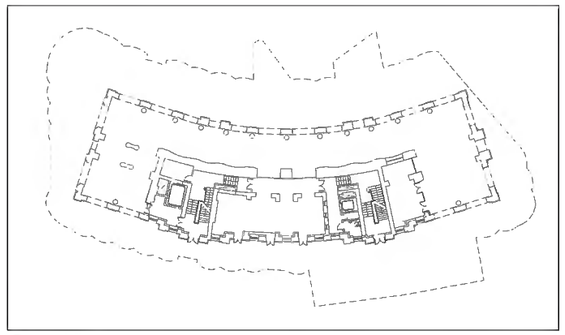
31. (Further to 6 and 10.) Provision for **service risers and lift cores** through all floors; and

32. Provision for **new signage** at ground level entrance points and around the retail units.

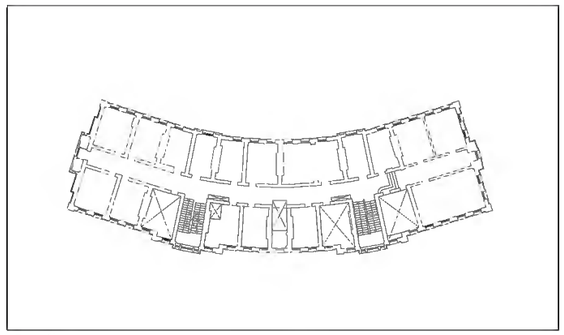
Proposed plans



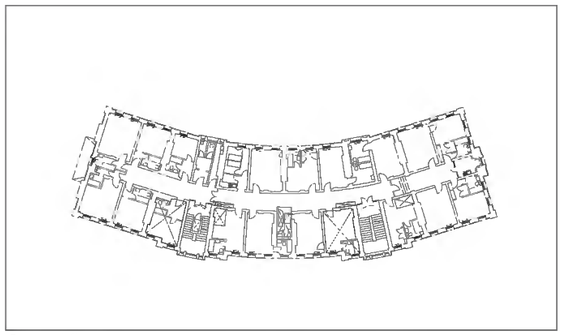
Basement



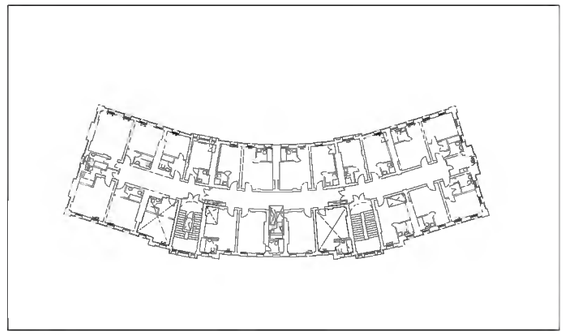
Ground floor



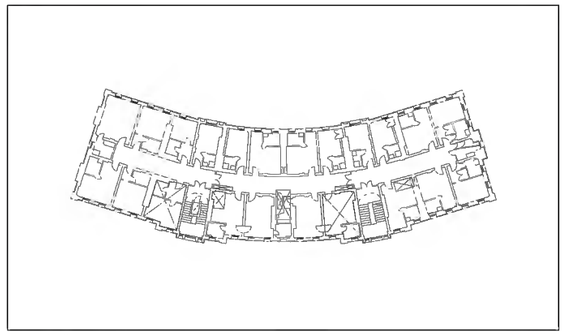
First floor



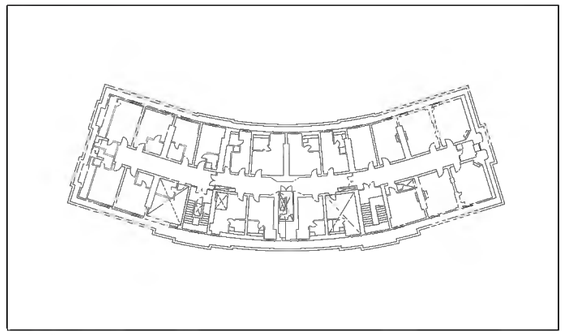
Second floor



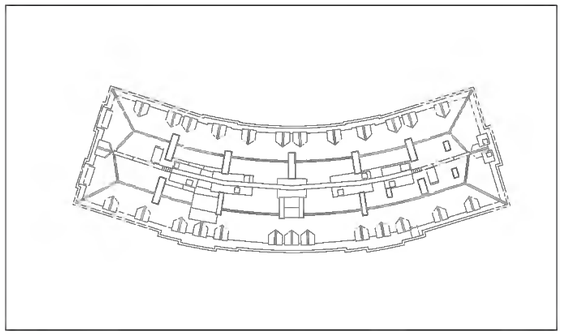
Third floor



Fourth floor



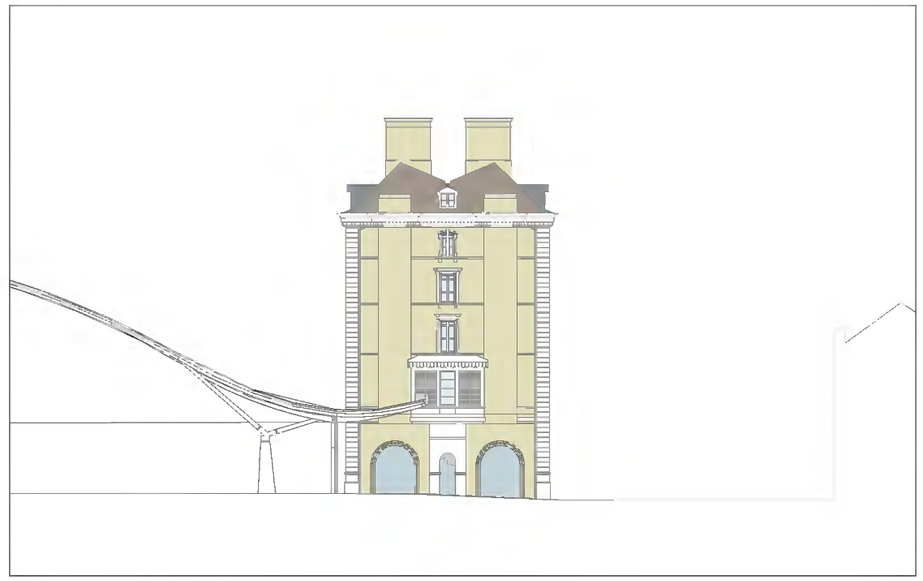
Fifth floor



Roof

Proposed elevations

South-west elevation (shows proposed Network Rail western concourse for context)



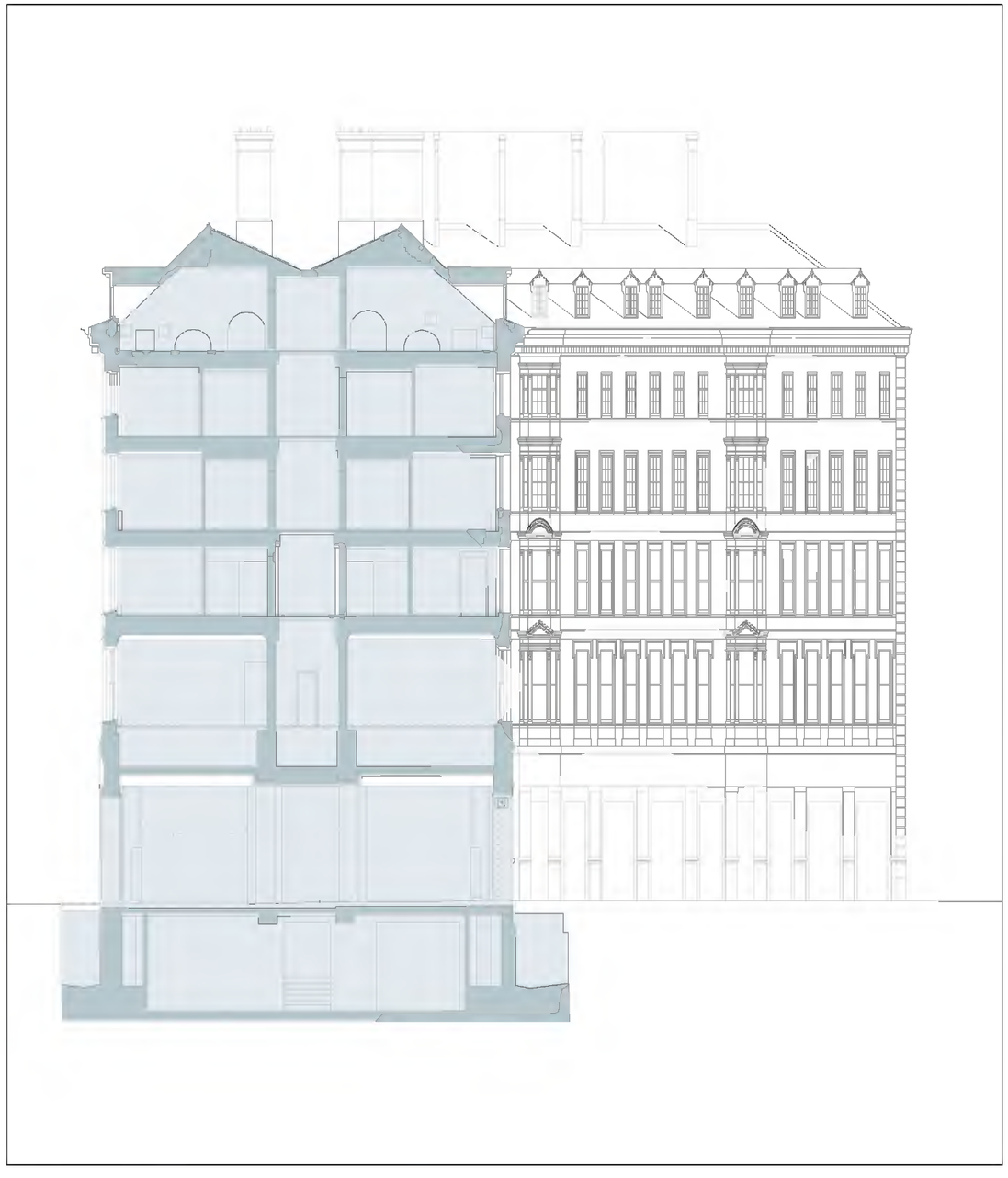
North-west elevation (shows proposed Network Rail western concourse for context)

North-east elevation

South-east elevation (shows proposed Network Rail western concourse for context)

Existing and proposed sections

Existing Section AA



Proposed Section AA

6.0 Conservation Factors, Objectives and Proposals

This chapter identifies factors that could affect the future conservation of the building. These typically arise from either:

- Changes in the external environment [External];
- Existing state or maintenance of the building [Existing]; and/or
- Works proposed to facilitate the building's future reuse [Reuse].

Conservation objectives are set out that serve to address or mitigate these factors. They are structured so as to give them permanence throughout the building's life but would also be updated, if necessary, when further proposals for the building's reuse are brought forward and during the building's operation.

Many of these objectives are addressed fully or in part by the current proposals.

The conservation of this building is a slightly unusual case. Many of the proposed works relate to the creation of a pedestrian arcade within the building at street level, and are a direct consequence of proposals by Network Rail to create a western concourse for King's Cross Station. With the western concourse, the creation of an arcade is essential to secure both high quality pedestrian routes at this busy transport interchange and the building's future, viable reuse.

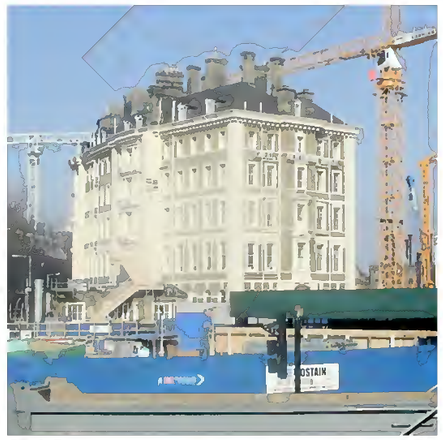


Fig.1 Existing site

Fig.2 King's Cross Central illustrative scheme of southern area

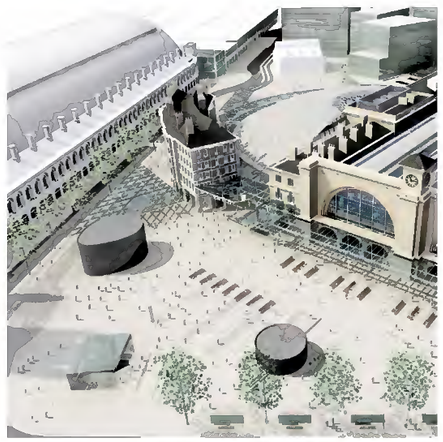


Fig.3 Proposed NR western concourse and relationship with the Great Northern Hotel

6.1 Setting

Factors

- [External] Current works relating to King's Cross St Pancras underground station, the Channel Tunnel Rail Link and St Pancras train station are altering the building's setting (Fig.1);

- [External] The King's Cross Central Main Site development will regenerate the land around the building. Changes to the public realm, in particular will alter the building's setting (Fig.2);

- [External] Network Rail's proposals for King's Cross station include the removal of the 'temporary' ticket hall accommodation to the south of the station and the provision of a new western concourse that adjoins the building. Together they would affect views of the building, creating more views from the south, and reducing views from the north (Fig.3).

Objectives

- Designs of new public realm and buildings, that contribute to the setting and views of the building, should take the opportunity to enhance them (where designs are within the control of the 'Applicants');

- Design of the proposed western concourse should be integrated with the Great Northern Hotel to ensure that its setting is enhanced and views are retained where possible.

Proposals

- *The King's Cross Central Main Site development will regenerate the land around the building through the provision of a new urban framework and high quality public realm, thereby enhancing the setting and the views of the building (Fig.2);*

- *Designs of the proposed Great Northern Hotel Arcade and western concourse have been integrated to ensure that the building's setting is enhanced and views are retained where possible (Fig.4 overleaf). Exciting new views through the arcade would be created.*

Fig.4 Visualisation of the proposed Western Concourse and Arcade

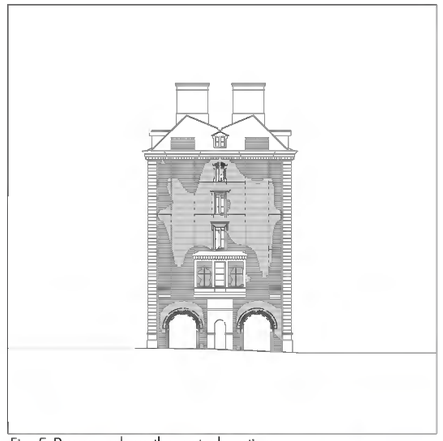


Fig.5 Proposed north-west elevation

Fig.6 Stepped access

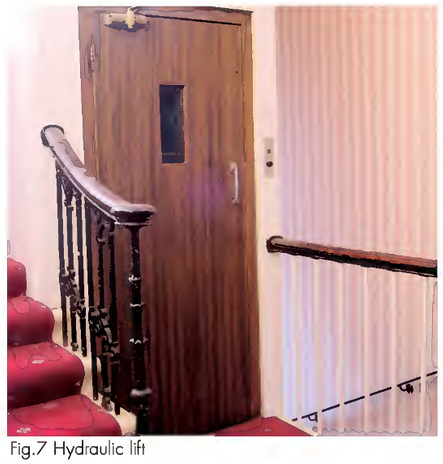


Fig.7 Hydraulic lift

6.2 Form, Layout and Composition

Factors

- [Existing] Twentieth-century extensions to the south-west and north-west elevations sit uncomfortably with the building's notable form and symmetry;

- [Reuse] Great Northern Hotel Arcade applications propose to create a pedestrian arcade within the building at street level. This includes modification to all elevations, significant alterations to the layout and the level of the ground floor and it may also require some public areas to be located on the first floor.

Objectives

- Twentieth-century extensions should be removed to restore clarity of the building's form and symmetry. The elevations should be made good in materials that match the existing;

- Interventions should be designed to be complementary to the scale, character and proportions of the building and the detailing of its facades.

Proposals

- *King's Cross Central Main Site applications propose demolishing the south-west and north-west extensions and making good the elevations with appropriate materials;*

- *Proposed Arcade interventions are designed to be complementary to the scale, character and proportions of the building and the detailing of its facades. The opportunity has been taken to improve elevations where possible (Fig.5).*

6.3 Access and Circulation

Factors

- [Reuse] The building's stepped access to ground floor is currently inaccessible to many people from street level (Fig.6). The existing hydraulic lift is inappropriate for wheelchair use and does not access basement level (Fig.7);

- [Reuse] The building will lack provision of an appropriate fire fighting shaft if its future, viable use should be anything other than as a hotel.

Objectives

- Designs should aim to achieve inclusive design and accessibility for all, including disabled people;

- Designs, where applicable, should provide for the creation of an appropriate fire fighting shaft, should the building's future use be anything other than as a hotel.

Proposals

- *The Great Northern Hotel Arcade applications facilitate accessibility for all, including disabled people, to and within the building. This is set out in the Access Statement that accompanies the Great Northern Hotel Arcade applications;*

- *The Great Northern Hotel Arcade applications provide for the creation of an appropriate fire fighting shaft where appropriate.*

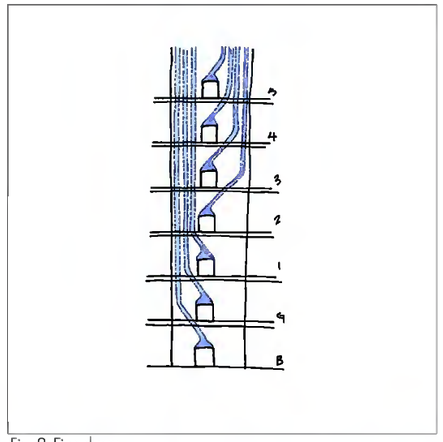


Fig.8 Fireplace

Fig.9 Railings

6.4 Fabric and Features

Factor

- [Reuse] Great Northern Hotel Arcade applications propose to remove items including window frames, bricks, mouldings, fireplaces (Fig.8), railings (Fig.9), stone slabs and cast and wrought iron beams.

Objectives

- The two main staircases, notable features of the building, should be retained;

- Where it is proposed that window frames, bricks, mouldings, fireplaces, railings, stone slabs and cast and wrought iron beams are removed, they should be salvaged where practicable, either for reuse in the building or elsewhere;

- No works should take place until an appropriate programme of building recording and analysis has been implemented;

- The palette of materials used in any new construction should be complementary to that of the existing building.

Proposals

- *The Great Northern Arcade applications retain the two main staircases and many of the other features of the building for future reuse;*

- *Where window frames, bricks, mouldings, fireplaces, railings, stone slabs and cast and wrought iron beams are removed, they would be salvaged where practicable, either for reuse in the building or elsewhere;*

- *No works would take place until a programme of building recording and analysis by a person or body approved by the London Borough of Camden has been implemented. This programme would be in accordance with a written scheme, approved in writing by the London Borough of Camden;*

- *The palette of materials proposed for the Great Northern Hotel Arcade is complementary to that of the existing building. This includes the use of original materials (e.g. stucco), for continuity and new materials/fittings (e.g. stainless steel, GRC, glazing, light fittings) to create a robust and attractive new piece of public realm, in keeping with the wider regeneration of King's Cross.*

6.5 Structure

Factors

- [External] The proposed western concourse roof and ground slab abut the concave elevation of the building thereby providing potential load transfer between the structures.

- [Reuse] The Great Northern Hotel Arcade applications propose significant structural interventions to create an arcade within the building;

- [Reuse] The building contains materials that are hazardous. For example, there is asbestos in some pipe insulation and door panels.

Objectives

- Further structural and material surveys should be undertaken to inform the detail design prior to commencement of works on site, where applicable;

- A full risk assessment should be undertaken and method statements for working prepared prior to the commencement of works on site;

- The building fabric should be protected where appropriate from damage during construction works;

- The structure should be monitored for movement during and after the works required for the creation of the proposed Arcade, are undertaken.

- The insertion of mechanical and electrical services should be designed to minimise the impact on original structure and fabric;

- New construction materials and finishes should be of high quality and selected to be sympathetic to original and existing material;

- There should be no transfer of loads between the proposed western concourse (roof and ground slab) and the building.

Proposals

- *An initial hazardous and deleterious materials survey has been undertaken to assess the presence of asbestos and horsehair. An initial structural and materials survey has been undertaken to inform engineering design. Further survey work would be undertaken prior to commencment of works on site;*

- *A full risk assessment would be undertaken and method statements for working prepared prior to the commencement of works on site;*

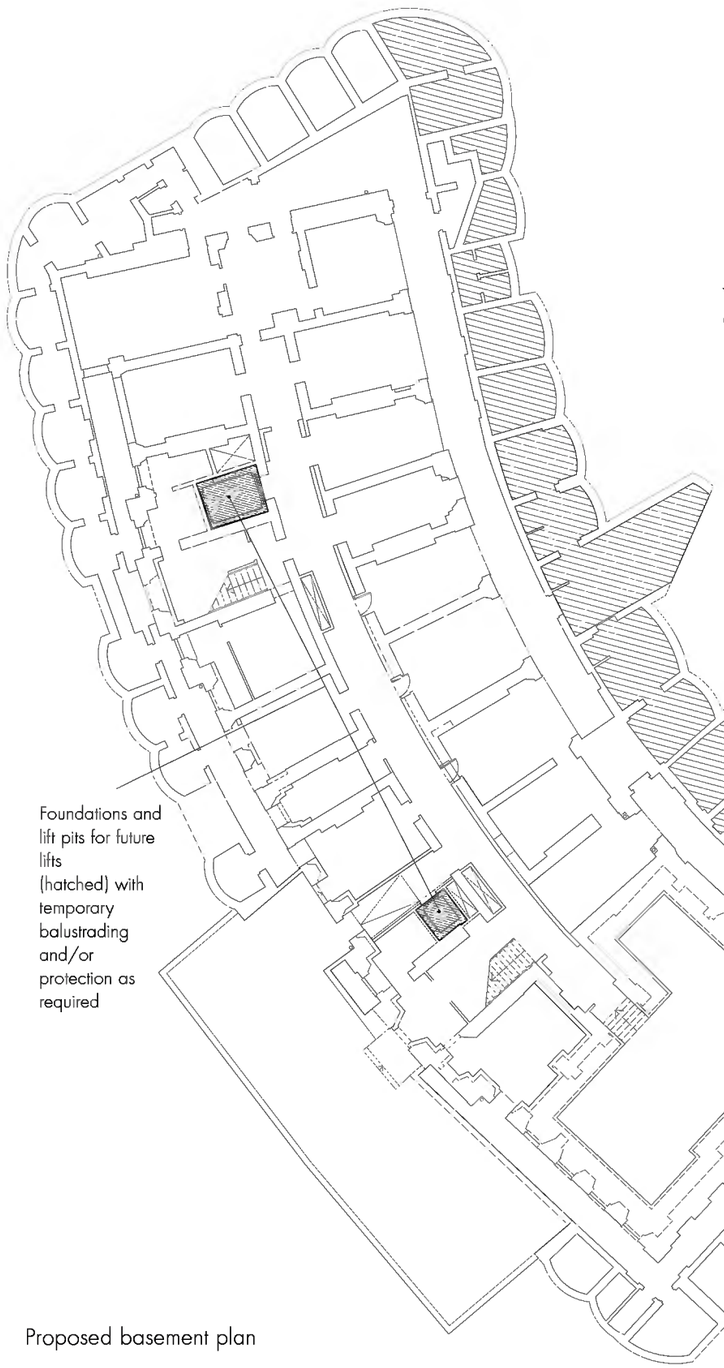
- *The building fabric would be protected where appropriate from damage during construction works;*

- The structure would be monitored for movement during and after the works required for the creation of the proposed Arcade, are undertaken.

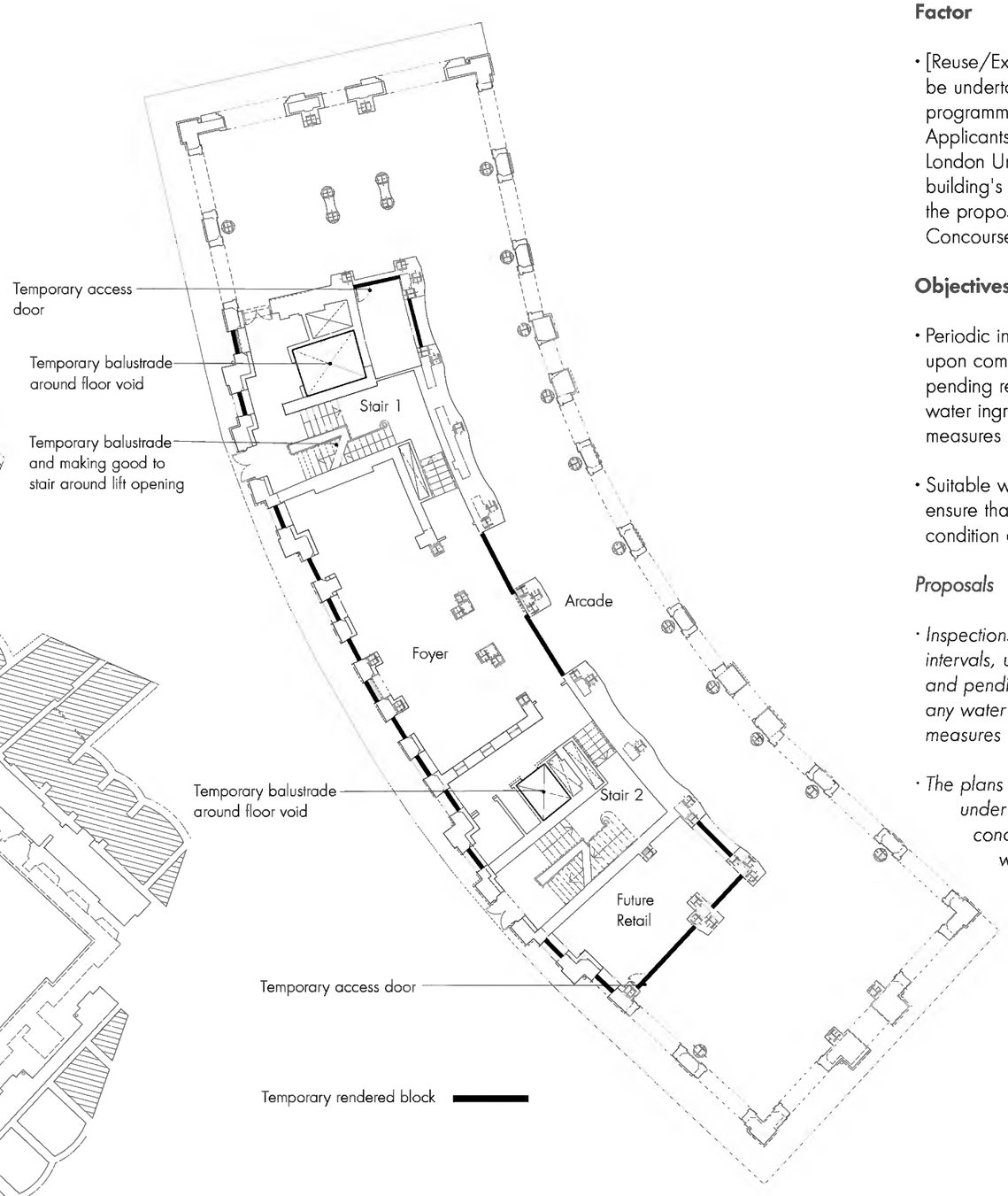
- *A stategy for making interventions to create the proposed arcade, without damaging the structural integrity of the building, accompanies the Great Northern Hotel Arcade applications (Structural Engineering Summary);*

- *New construction materials and finishes proposed in the applications are of high quality and are selected to be sympathetic to original and existing materials;*

- *There would be no transfer of loads between the proposed western concourse (roof and ground slab) and the building.*



Proposed basement plan



Proposed ground floor plan

6.6 Phasing

Factor

- [Reuse/External] Proposed works to the building would be undertaken in stages so as to integrate within a wider programme for the delivery of adjacent projects by the Applicants, Network Rail, Department for Transport and London Underground. Works to refurbish and reuse the building's upper floors are works to come forward after the proposed arcade and the adjoining Western Concourse are completed.

Objectives

- Periodic inspections should be made of the building, upon completion of the proposed arcade works and pending refurbishment for its future reuse, to detect any water ingress or other deterioration. Reasonable measures should be applied to remedy these;

- Suitable works should be undertaken where necessary to ensure that the building is left in a secure and safe condition after each stage of work.

Proposals

- *Inspections of the building would be made at regular intervals, upon completion of the proposed arcade works and pending refurbishment for its future reuse to detect any water ingress or other detenoration. Reasonable measures would be applied to remedy these;*

- *The plans opposite describe works that would be undertaken to leave the building in a secure and safe condition upon completion of proposed Arcade works.*

Fig. 10 External drainage and rainwater goods

6.7 Maintenance

Factors

- [External/Existing] The proposed western concourse and associated structures could restrict access to repair and maintain the elevations of the building;

- [External/Existing] The proposed western concourse roof and ground slab abut the concave elevation of the building thereby potentially creating additional routes for water ingress.

Objectives

- Scaffolding access should be provided to all elevations of the building to allow for refurbishment and maintenance of its external fabric;

- Junctions between the proposed western concourse and the building should be designed to efficiently disperse any build up of water and to be weather/water proof.

Proposals

- *Support points for scaffolding would be provided by Network Rail, on the western concourse and other structures. A strategy would be developed and agreed with Network Rail to allow safe and convenient access to the concourse and canopy roofs by Hotel scaffolding and maintenance operatives;*

- *Proposed junctions between the proposed western concourse and the building have been designed to efficiently disperse any build up of water and be weather/water proof.*

6.8 Building Services and Environmental Control

Factors

- [Reuse] The building has inadequate services provision (including lifts and electrics) for good quality reuse at present;

- [Maintenance/Reuse] The building is likely to suffer from poor energy efficiency and environmental control;

- [Maintenance] The building has many external rainwater and drainage goods that present a maintenance risk and detract from the visual quality of the elevations (Fig.10).

Objectives

- Services, energy efficiency and environmental control should be improved where practicable to meet modern-day standards as part of proposed works to facilitate future use: whilst not detracting from the historic interest of the building;

- Future proposals should address the maintenance risk and poor aesthetics of the external rainwater and drainage goods on the building.

Proposals

- *Services, energy efficiency and environmental control would be addressed further when specific proposals come forward for future reuse of the building;*

- *The Great Northern Hotel Arcade applications propose that all external rainwater and drainage goods (with the exception of gutters) would be removed and facades made good. A rationalised number of cast iron rain water goods would be installed on all elevations. Pipes would be diverted internally above the proposed western concourse roof.*

Indicative Serviced Apartments Option

Serviced apartments: Ground Floor Plan

Serviced apartments: Typical Upper Floor Plan

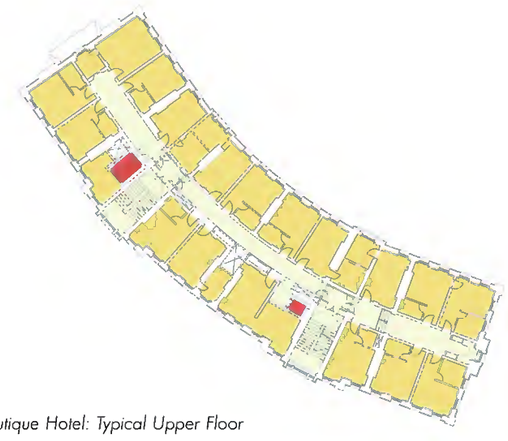
Indicative Serviced Offices Option

Serviced offices: Ground Floor

Serviced offices: Typical Upper Floor Plan

Indicative Boutique Hotel Option

Boutique Hotel: Ground Floor



Boutique Hotel: Typical Upper Floor

6.9 Building Use

Factor

- [Reuse] The Great Northern Hotel Arcade applications propose to create a pedestrian arcade within the building; this could restrict the use of upper floors and impact on the building's viability if inappropriately designed;

Proposals

- Designs should be future-proofed to ensure a range of possible new uses could exist on the upper floors of the building;

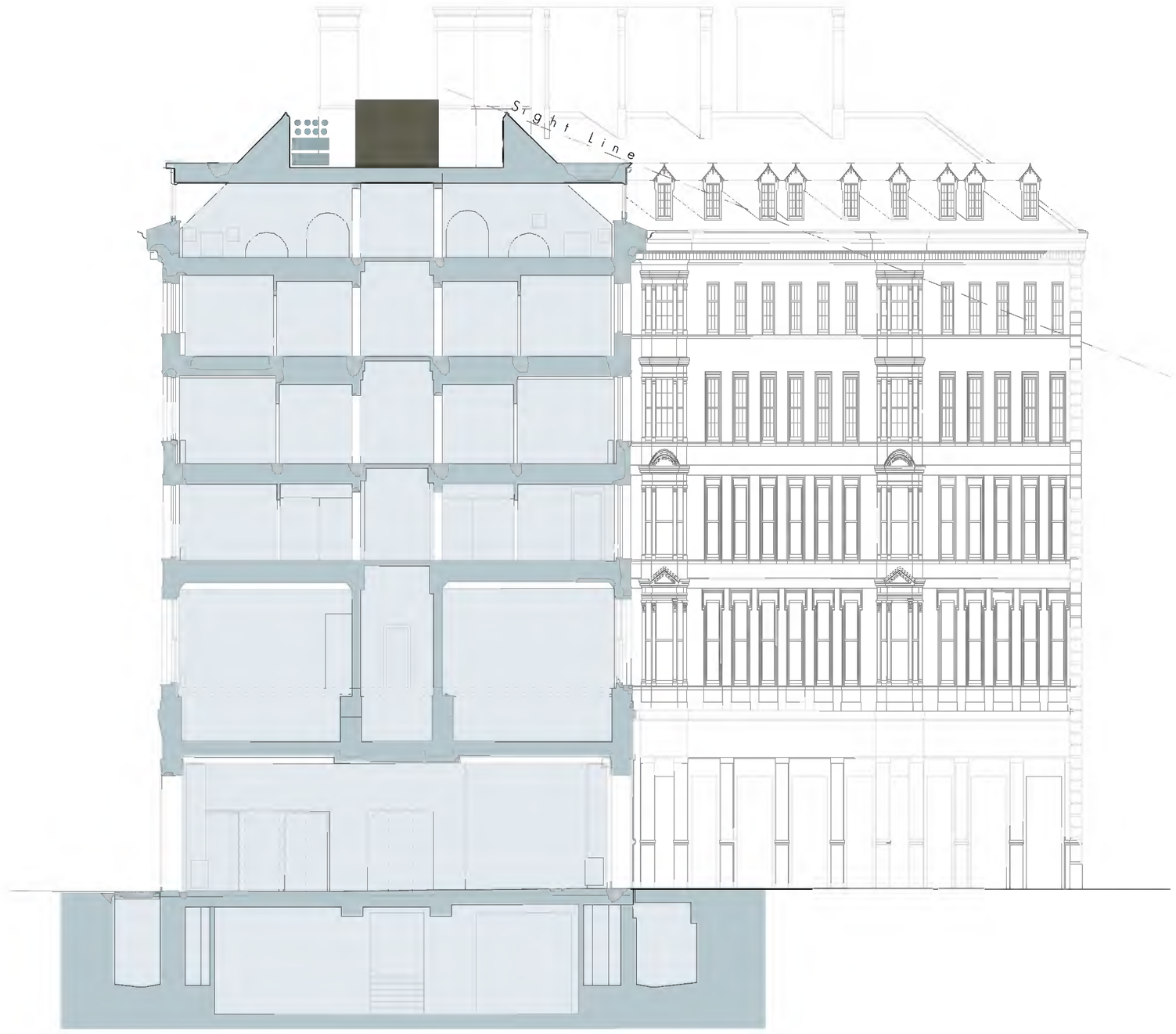
- The proposed arcade should be welcoming to pedestrians, forming an attractive and natural urban route in both daylight and darkness.

Proposals

- *Designs have been future-proofed to ensure a range of possible new uses could exist on the upper floors of the building);*

- *The proposed arcade would be welcoming to pedestrians, forming an attractive and natural urban route in both daylight and darkness. (Fig.11overleaf)*

Fig. 11 Visualisation from within the arcade



Section through roof indicating possible intervention to accommodate plant

7.0 Possible Conservation Factors and Objectives

7.1 Building Services

Factor

As part of future reuse of upper floors, it would be necessary to create a plant deck at roof level. This could affect distant views of the building.

Objective

Any interventions at roof level to accomodate plant should be designed to minimise impact on views of the building. This would be addressed in the context of future, specific proposals for the reuse of the upper floors.

This document has been prepared for
Argent (King's Cross), London and Continental Railways and **Exel**
by **Argent (King's Cross), Allies & Morrison, Arup** and **ICHM**

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