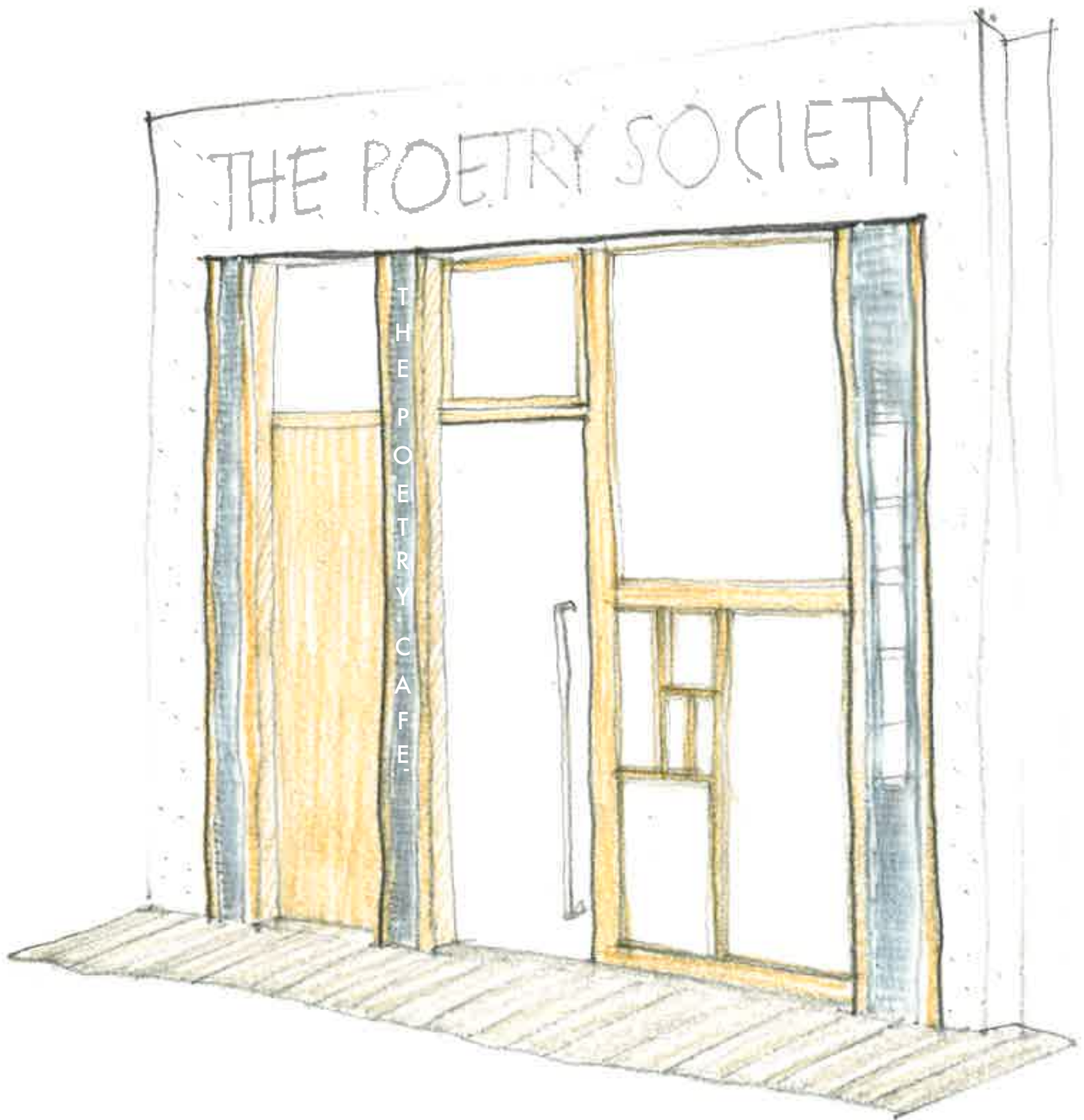


The Poetry Society

Design and Access Statement

Submitted to the London Borough of Camden
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The Poetry Society

Introduction

The Poetry Society is a registered charity established in 1909. The Poetry Society's building at 22 Betterton Street is in Camden's Seven Dials Conservation Area, at the eastern edge of Sub Area 1. It is next door to the Grade II* listed 24 Betterton Street currently being refurbished. No. 22 is not nationally or locally listed, nor identified as making a positive contribution in the Conservation Area Statement. However, the building is in keeping with the character of the north side of Betterton Street. The façade is in line with the neighbouring properties with a sheer four storey façade in stock bricks that are smoke blackened, though not the same age nor brick as the properties on either side.

The upper floor window apertures are likely to be 19th Century, with shallow curved arches and keystone, but the window frames themselves are not original. The front windows are 1970's timber, single glazed, set flush with the face of the brickwork. All of these windows have rotten sills. A number are loose in their frames.

The ground floor elevation is framed by render panels at either side and across the head, which may recall the original framing, but again the infill solid and glazed panels and doors are not original and create the impression of an unwelcoming facade. If there were pilasters, corbels and entablature originally, there is no remaining detail. Internally beams clear span from party wall to party wall on every floor, suggesting the building was never residential, or has been partially reconstructed. A platform lift has been installed from ground floor to basement that obstructs the interior space of the Café making it not user-friendly.

The yard at the rear of the building has been partially infilled in the past with the kitchen extension. It is overlooked by windows, but there is no door to access it for routine maintenance and as a contained area without good access is currently a flooding risk.

Proposal

The Poetry Society has occupied the building for approximately 24 years and in that time undertaken repairs on an ad hoc basis. They have recently secured funding for a limited refurbishment of the building, to carry out essential maintenance to the fabric of the building, improve the working environment on the upper floors, improve the cosmetic look of a down at heel building, improve the environmental sustainability of the building as a whole and improve the access to and facilities of the public spaces.

- The windows are rotten throughout and need to be replaced, for both safety and environmental control reasons, with double glazed units.
- Balustrades are required at roof level to improve safety.
- The lift is at the end of its usable life with parts no longer being manufactured and needs to be re-



placed with a new reliable model. This will provide suitable disabled access to the basement and make better use of the café floor plan.

- The front doors and glazing need to be replaced to accommodate the new lift and stair position and to improve the quality and attractiveness of The Poetry Society's frontage.
- A door into the yard needs to be provided for maintenance.
- Extend the existing kitchen extract to roof level.
- A new ventilation system is required to serve the basement room, to make it suitable for events.
- Remove the hanging sign.



Interior of Cafe, basement room and rear yard.



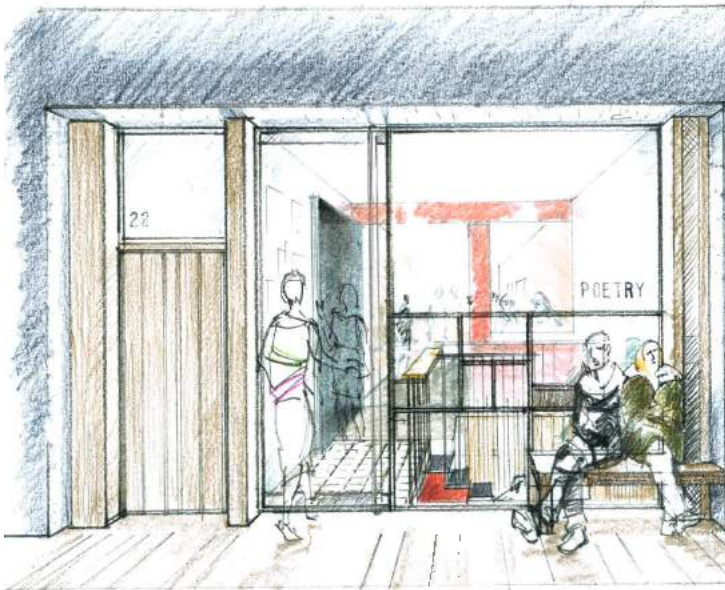
Society and Cafe front to Betterton Street, ventilation grill and white tiled threshold.



Windows on Betterton Street above Cafe, note rotten timber sill sitting on original stone sill.



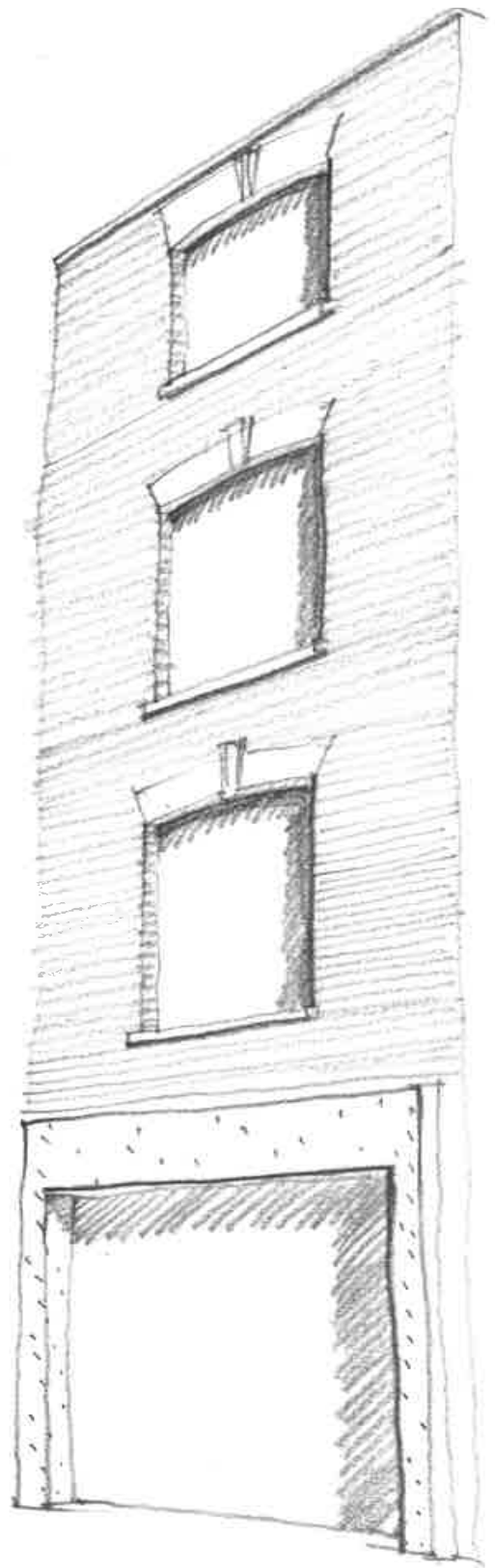
Lack of barrier at roof edge, windows to rear with rotten timberworkx.



Concept sketch for Betterton Street Cafe elevation.



Concept sketch for Cafe interior.



Study of solid and void in the elevation to Betterton Street - punch in upper floor windows to emphasise depth of wall.

Design

Our approach has been to develop a modern design that unifies the elevation and will sit comfortably in the historic Seven Dials Conservation Area with its characteristic, eclectic mix of historic buildings that have been refurbished or have integrated modern design elements. We have retained the existing rendered frame around the 'shop window' and propose a unified elevation within this perimeter that combines the office door, café door and glazing. The aim is to create the impression that the whole building belongs to a single organisation. We also propose to set the new windows back from the plane of the facade.

Use

The Poetry Society does not intend to change any of the current uses at 22 Betterton Street. All the administrative activities of the Society, such as organising events, their education programmes, membership offers, publications and competitions are organised by staff from their offices and shared meeting room on the first, second and third floors.

On basement, ground and first floors, The Poetry Society runs its trading subsidiary, The Poetry Place Ltd (trading name The Poetry Café), which is a licensed venue that runs a member's club and puts on poetry related events to further the aims of the Society.

On the ground floor The Poetry Café offers light refreshments in a small quiet café, that is predominantly frequented by poets and writers. The street is largely residential, and The Poetry Café is located a few doors down from Good Vibes yoga studio another public use building in the middle section of the street. Our observation and The Poetry Society's experience over some years is that Betterton Street does not attract as much pedestrian through traffic as other areas of Covent Garden. Hence the café does not attract passing shopping and tourist trade.

The majority of The Poetry Society's events are organised from the premises but held in venues across the UK and internationally. However, small community-focused events such as readings, performances and book launches are held in the basement room. The intention is that by improving the acoustic separation between the café and basement room and upgrading it generally, The Poetry Society will be able to hold events as they do currently for groups of up to 60 to hear a poetry reading, or launch a new book of poems. Similar events are held in the licensed first floor meeting room.

Amount

The application does not change the amount of accommodation at the site. A Building Regulations full plans application has already been reviewed by an Approved Inspector.

Poetry Society Offices Layout

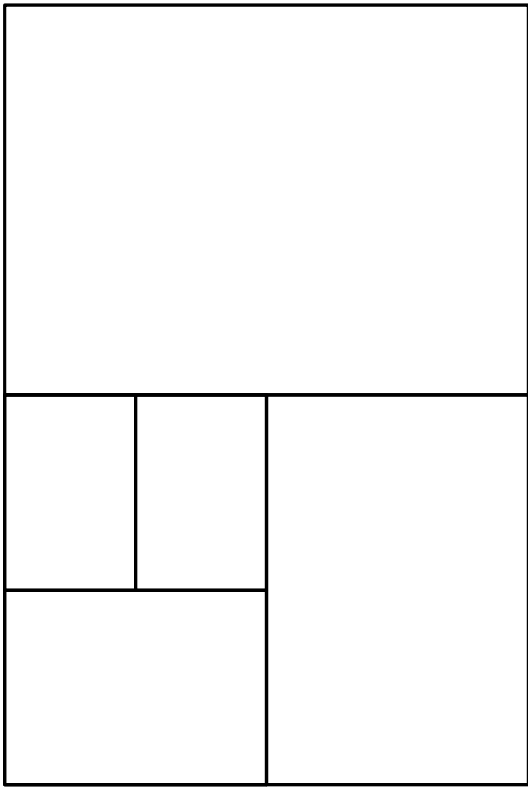
There is some internal reorganisation of the WCs and kitchenette which will improve their quality and compli-



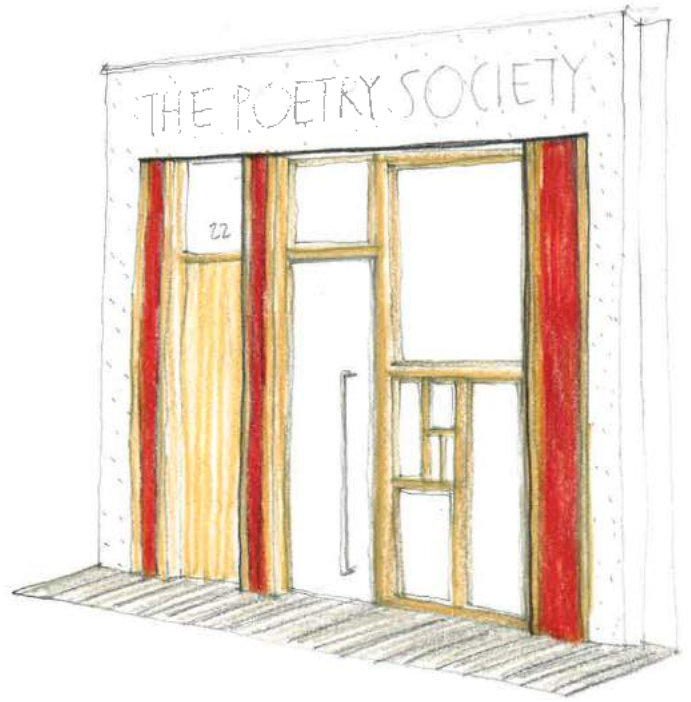
9 Betterton Street with dark painted window frames.



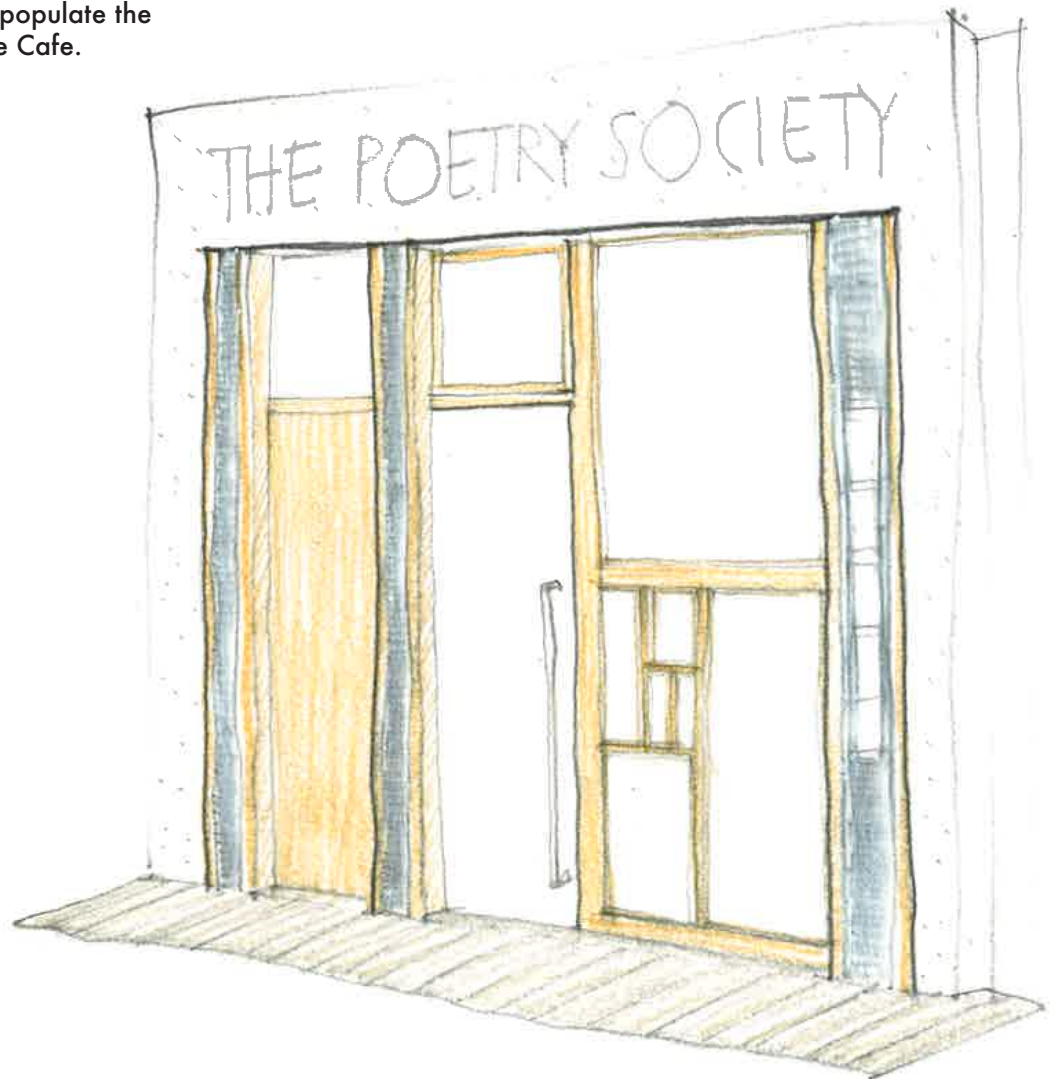
Timber framed cafe bar elevation on St Giles High Street within frame of pilasters and entablature.



The A4 proportion is the common format used for paper sizes. By making the analogy between the window and the page, we are suggesting that just as words populate the page, people will animate the Cafe.



Study with red/orange panels between timber framing.



Study with silver panels between timber framing.

ance with current standards. The new double glazed windows, a new heating system and refurbishment of the rainwater goods and flashings will radically improve the environmental conditions for staff.

Poetry Society Café Layout

The proposal moves the lift and stair to the front of the building which will make the lift itself more accessible and also make the WCs more accessible from the café by bringing them to the front of the basement.

The small scale of the space means that Building Regulations Control has agreed that the lift can be replaced at the existing car size of approximately 850 x 1200mm.

Bringing the lift to the front of the building, allows both the Café and the basement room to use the full width of what is a very narrow building, and this will improve the atmosphere and flexibility of both spaces. The stair down to the basement will be visible through the Café window, and encourage awareness of events and direct access without interrupting Café users.

A new ventilation unit will be installed inside the rear basement store, supply and extract ducting via bend silencers will connect to louvres on the roof and in the facade of the kitchen in the rear yard.

Scale

The application does not change the scale of the building at the site.

Streetscape

The deeds of ownership of the site indicate that The Poetry Society owns the strip of land immediately outside The Poetry Cafe to the back of pavement line between original iron railings on either side. The proposal removes the poorly detailed white tiles and replaces them with a new stone tiling.

Appearance

The Poetry Society wish to improve the appearance of the building and unify the materials and colours to help assert that The Poetry Society offices and The Poetry Café are two parts of the same organisation. They would also like to open up the facade by replacing the solid areas with glazing to let more light into the Café.

- The windows on the upper floors and at the rear will be timber framed double glazed units, painted in a mid-dark colour to tone in with the stock brick facade, RAL 7022 Umbra grey.
- The existing windows have a timber sill (which has rotted) sat on the original stone sill. The stone sill will be retained and the new windows detailed to sit $\frac{3}{4}$ of a brick back from the face of the brick and directly above the stone sill.
- The retained rendered frame of the ground floor elevation will be painted in a mid-dark tone, RAL 7022 Umbra grey. The signage lettering will be painted.
- Within the render, the elevation will be framed by vertical timber columns/pilasters in a unified composition containing timber framed doors and glazing,

the Society door will be solid timber and the Cafe door will be unframed glass. Both doors will have glazed over panels.

- The intention is that the subdivision of the glazed Café window, derived from the proportional system of A1/A2/A3/A4 sheets of paper, distinguishes it from other plate glazed shop fronts.
- The vertical columns/pilasters screen brickwork nibs left and right and at the internal partition which supports the existing steel across the width of the aperture. They provide the opportunity for signage and a notice board, as well as fixing lights, louvres and alarm box.
- The timber will be finished with a seal, exposing the natural grain of the timber.

Access

Replacement of the lift will improve access to the basement room of the Café and disabled WC. Currently the lift is in poor condition and its location means that tables and chairs often get in the way of access to the lift.

The new location puts the lift in the circulation area which will be kept clear and make the lift more available as recommended in the independent access audit. Due to the nature of events at the Poetry Café, a member of staff will always be available to assist visitors in wheelchairs who are attending events or requiring access to the WC in the basement.

The threshold will continue to provide level access and the new front door will have a minimum 775mm clear opening, the building is too narrow to make it wider and still have room for the stair down to the basement.

Drawings

049-042	Location Plan
049-051	Existing Plans
049-052	Existing Plans
049-061	Proposed Plans
049-062	Proposed Plans
049-233	Demolitions Plans
049-234	Demolitions Plans
049-301	Existing Front Elevation
049-302	Existing Rear Elevation
049-311	Proposed Front Elevation
049-312	Proposed Rear Elevation
049-332	Demolitions Elevations