

Design, Access and Heritage Statement

**New Office and Ancillary
Accommodation, Lodge Rooms 18 &
19, Freemasons' Hall, 60 Great Queen
Street, London WC2B 5AZ**

For

United Grand Lodge of England



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1 DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

1.1 Purpose of statement

This design and access statement provides essential information relating to the proposal to create new office accommodation at upper ground floor level store within Freemasons' Hall, 60 Great Queen Street, London, following demolition of existing partitioning, as set out in preapp enquiry 2017/2653/PRE. It has been prepared on behalf of the United Grand Lodge of England to accompany a listed building consent submission to the London Borough of Camden.

1.2 The application site

Freemasons' Hall [NGR: TQ 30470 81244] lies on the south east side of Great Queen Street at the southernmost tip of the London Borough of Camden and on the eastern edge of Covent Garden.

The present day Freemasons' Hall is the third such structure on the site and/or adjoining land, the first being completed in 1775-76. It occupies a substantial part of Sub-Area 2 of the Seven Dials Conservation Area, which, designated in 1971 by the GLC, was the first of the five constituent subareas to be recognised as being of special architectural and historic interest in this way.

As the London Borough of Camden's adopted conservation area appraisal of 1999 notes, Great Queen Street was built in the first half of the 17th century, forming a continuation of the north side of Lincoln's Inn Fields until the construction of Kingsway in 1905. Its character and built form were shaped by the development of the first Freemasons' Hall, constructed to the design of Thomas Sandby, a watercolour artist-turned-architect, in 1775-76.

The site of today's Freemasons' Hall is of irregular polygonal shape, covering 2.25 acres and is entirely taken up by the Grade II* listed building, designed by architects Ashley & Newman and completed in 1933 [Map 1; Figures 1, 2]. Its principal entrance occupies the south west corner of the site and faces roughly west northwest. The site and building are bordered by Great Queen Street to the north west, Wild Street to the south and Wild Court to the south east.

1.3 Proposals

When it was built, Ashley & Newman's Freemasons' Hall included a changing and dressing suite for members at upper ground floor level on the Grand Connaught Rooms side of the building [see location plan at Annex III(1)]. The spaces within that suite included an attendant's office, bathrooms, individual dressing rooms, and a locker room [see Ashley & Newman drawing at Annex III(2)]. Comparison of the same plan with the layout in the building today [see Annex III(3)] indicates that very substantial changes have taken place subsequently, most probably later in the third quarter of the 20th century,

including the removal of almost all (if, in fact, not all) internal non-loadbearing partitioning and reconfiguration of the cleared space with new partitions to form two Lodge Rooms (known as Lodge Rooms 18 and 19), circulatory corridors and ancillary accommodation. As a result, the character and function of the area bears no resemblance to that designed by Ashley & Newman.

In May 2017, UGLE submitted a pre-application enquiry to the London Borough of Camden (2017/2653/PRE) regarding a proposal to demolish all existing masonry and timber stud partition walls within this area to create a flexible open plan space in readiness for development of a scheme at some future date to further reconfigure the space for 'office and/or meeting room use'. The preapp submission acknowledged that that further reconfiguration would need to be the subject of a second listed building consent application in due course.

In response to the May 2017 pre-application submission, London Borough of Camden advised in an email from its Heritage and Conservation Officer, Sarah Freeman, dated 28th June 2017 that:

'It is accepted that this area of the building makes no contribution towards the overall significance of this Grade II listed building, and that the existing spaces and finishes are of a very modest character. On balance it is considered that the removal of the existing partition walls...would not cause any harm to the architectural and historic significance of this Grade II* listed building. As such the current proposals are supported in principle..'*

UGLE has now developed a scheme for use of the open plan space that would be created by demolition of the existing partitioning (as set out in the preapp submission) in order to provide additional office accommodation and is applying for listed building consent to carry out the totality of these works.

1.4 Design statement

Existing

The existing arrangements have been described already in the May 2017 preapp submission and are as recorded in Annex III (3) – (5):

- Annex III (3) - Existing Layout – E01 Rev.1
- Annex III (4) - Existing Section A-A – E03
- Annex III (5) - Existing Sections B-B & C-C – E04

As proposed

The proposed re-configuration of spaces within the site area will provide additional office accommodation within Freemasons' Hall. The proposals are shown on TFT drawing nos. at Annex III (6) – (14):

- Annex III (6) - Demolition – D01 Rev.1
- Annex III (7) - Proposed Layout – P01 - M&E
- Annex III (8) - Proposed Layout – P02 Rev.1 - General

- Annex III (9) - Proposed Layout – P03 - Fem. WC, Clnr's Store & Elects. Cupd
- Annex III (10) - Proposed Layout – P04 - Tea Making Facility
- Annex III (11) - Proposed Layout – P05 - Male WC
- Annex III (12) - Proposed Section A-A – P06 Rev.1
- Annex III (13) - Proposed Sections D-D & E-E – P07
- Annex III (14) - Proposed Sections B-B & C-C – P08

1.5 Technical requirements and standards

All works are to be undertaken in accordance with Building Regulations and British Standards. Material and workmanship will reflect best conservation practice.

1.6 Use and layout

The project will not result in any change to the general layout of principal accommodation within, or use of, Freemasons' Hall.

1.7 Access issues

During and on completion of the project, existing access arrangements into the building will continue unaffected and as existing.

1.8 Format of the remainder of this statement

Section 2 of this statement provides an outline description and history of Freemasons' Hall in Great Queen Street, before section 3 provides an assessment of its significance. Section 4 sets out relevant local and national heritage policy, while section 5 assesses the effects of the proposals on the significance of the heritage asset.

Annexes I and II provide respectively historic maps/plans (I), and photographs and other illustrations (II). Existing and proposed plans and other drawings are provided at Annex III.

2 HERITAGE STATEMENT

2.1 Introduction

This section develops an understanding of the heritage assets that may be affected by the development proposals, which have been outlined in section 1.3 above. That understanding will then be used as a platform for the assessment of significance in section 3 below.

The National Planning Policy Framework [NPPF], which, since 2012, has incorporated the Government's heritage policy, recognises that the historic environment is a non-renewable resource whose fragile and finite nature is a particularly important consideration in planning [NPPF; para 126]. Paragraph 128 of the NPPF demands that:

'In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.'

Moreover, the Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 2 (entitled 'Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment' and published in July 2015), states:

'Development proposals that affect the historic environment are much more likely to gain the necessary permissions and create successful places if they are designed with the knowledge and understanding of the significance of the heritage assets they may affect. The first step for all applicants is to understand the significance of any affected heritage asset and, if relevant, the contribution of its setting to its significance.' [HEGPA 2, paragraph 4]

It also notes in introduction that:

'...the information required in support of applications for planning permission and listed building consent should be no more than is necessary to reach an informed decision, and that activities to conserve or investigate the asset needs to be proportionate to the significance of the heritage assets affected and the impact on that significance' [HEGPA 2, paragraph 3]

The Good Practice Advice advocates a logical step-by-step approach to dealing with heritage assets during the planning and design of development and subsequently in making a planning application – namely:

- *'Understand the significance of the affected assets*
- *Understand the impact of the proposal on that significance*
- *Avoid, minimise and mitigate impact in a way that meets the objectives of the NPPF*
- *Look for opportunities to better reveal or enhance significance*
- *Justify any harmful impacts in terms of the sustainable development objective of conserving significance and the need for change.*

- *Offset negative impacts on aspects of significance by enhancing others through recording, disseminating and archiving archaeological and historical interest of the important elements of the heritage assets affected.’ [HEGPA 2, paragraph 6]*

This document has been prepared in accordance with that advice. In this instance, the nature of the proposals is such that the only heritage asset that can realistically be affected is the application site, Freemasons’ Hall, itself. Accordingly, although the building lies within a designated heritage asset, Seven Dials Conservation Area, and adjacent to a number of other designated and potentially non-designated heritage assets, these are not of relevance to the pre-app submission and will not be covered in detail within this section.

2.2 Freemasons’ Hall

2.2.1 Outline history

In 1774, the Moderns’ Grand Lodge bought a house on the south eastern side of Great Queen Street, with a garden and further house behind, for the purpose of erecting the first Freemasons’ Hall to the rear of the plot. Until then, the Grand Lodge had been forced to meet in Livery Company halls and rooms or in various local taverns. Designed by Thomas Sandby, the new building was opened with great ceremony on 23rd May 1776, while the front house was subsequently converted as the Freemason’s Tavern in 1786. In addition to its Masonic use, the Hall rapidly became an important venue for London Society, hosting concerts, balls, plays, literary evenings and meetings during the Season. In 1815, Sir John Soane purchased and gave additional land occupied by two adjoining houses and on which he designed and by 1820 had built a further hall, standing alongside Sandby’s, providing much needed extra accommodation.

The second Freemasons’ Hall was designed by Frederick Cockerell and was completed in 1869 [Map 2]. It replaced everything on the Great Queen Street site except Sandby’s original structure, which was retained and incorporated as a secondary hall, before being damaged by a serious fire in 1883. Cockerell’s building – termed a ‘showy pile’ by the respected architectural historian, Professor James Stevens Curl - had a severe and heavy classical feel, much enriched with symbolic sculptures by William Nicholl (renowned for his work on the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge (1848) and St George’s Hall, Liverpool (1854)). However, with the burgeoning growth of Masonic membership in the last quarter of the 19th century, accommodation in the second Freemasons’ Hall rapidly came under pressure. Extensions to the Hall were built in 1906 (designed by H L Florence and Brown and Barrow), 1910 and 1915/16 (Brown and Barrow), but the pressure continued unabated. As Calderwood (2013) noted:

‘The [later] Victorian age...had witnessed a constant struggle between the accommodation needs of the growing body of London freemasons and the inadequate capacity of Freemasons’ Hall in Great Queen Street. During the nineteenth century, several attempts were made to resolve this tension, but with no more than short term success. Thus, the rebuilding of the Hall between 1864 and 1869 and its enlargement in 1899 and again in 1910 proved to be no match for the growth of the masonic population meeting in the capital. In 1919, a bold plan was announced for a new

building which would be a marriage between the need for more accommodation and the desire to commemorate those who had died in the First World War.

[...]

The insufficiency of masonic accommodation in Great Queen Street was further highlighted in 1920 at the annual festival of UGLE, when the Grand Master observed that ‘The scene they had witnessed that evening when from two to three hundred had been turned away because of the inability to find room was proof of the necessity for such a home. Additional proof was seen when the choice of site for the new building was debated in Grand Lodge and the attendance was so large that the meeting had to be moved to the nearby Kingsway Hall.’

The 1919 ‘bold plan’ by the Grand Master, HRH Duke of Connaught, was to create a new building that would ‘provide adequate central headquarters for the Craft’ and would be able to accommodate 2,000 Masons rather than the 720 of Cockerell’s second Hall. It would form ‘a perpetual memorial...to honour the many brethren [it is now known, numbering 3,225] who fell during the war’. A campaign aiming to raise £1 million in subscriptions for the proposed Masonic Peace Memorial was established in January 1920. In December 1922, the Times, along with other national and local newspapers, reported on the decision taken by Grand Lodge about the site for the new building – the extended Great Queen Street site being chosen over another in Adelphi ‘facing the river [and] regarded as being the finest available in London at the present time’, which would have cost another £300,000 to £350,000 to develop over and above the £1 million estimate for the Great Queen Street site.

An open international architectural competition was held in 1925, attracting 110 entries. These sketch designs were whittled down by a small judging committee chaired by Sir Edwin Lutyens to a shortlist of ten architectural practices for a second limited (and paid) competition of ‘elaborate sets of [worked up] drawings’, run early in 1926. The June 1926 edition of the ‘Architect and Building News’ reported in detail on the submitted designs, which were exhibited at the RIBA, commenting critically that only two (including the selected winner) were ‘planned even approximately on the same lines, while the remaining schemes exhibit the greatest degree of diversity conceivable and resemble each other only in the negative quality of differing in most essential particulars from the design which was placed first’.

The article is useful in explaining the brief for this, the third Freemasons’ Hall for the Great Queen Street site, for otherwise this does not appear to survive in the Library and Museum of Freemasonry or elsewhere in the public domain. The ten competing designs were required to provide:

‘...a great meeting hall or temple. In association with this were to be administrative and executive rooms, Grand and Past Grand Officers’ Rooms and offices of the Royal Masonic Benevolent Institution. Besides a number of smaller lodge rooms, there were to be a library, museum, reading and writing rooms for visitors from the provinces and overseas. In addition, there was to be a licensed restaurant, to replace the existing Connaught Rooms and Mark Masons’ Hall.’

The winning design, again chosen by Lutyens’ judging panel, was submitted by the London based architectural practice of H V Ashley and Winton Newman. Ashley & Newman established their partnership in 1907. Their first major commission was an extension to the Council House in

Birmingham, a competition won in 1907 although the extension was not completed until 1919. By the time they won the Masonic Peace Memorial competition in 1926, they had also designed and seen built an extension to Birmingham's Art Gallery and Museum (completed 1917), the out-patients' department for the Royal Free Hospital (1914), significant new housing commissions in Hampstead and Totteridge (1913-14), Clive House (the Passport Office) in Petty France (c1925), London and Cheltenham Technical College, and Schomberg House between Page Street and Vincent Street, Westminster (1926).

As the Architect and Building News article tartly, but correctly, identified, Ashley & Newman had the advantage (along with the designer of the second entry '*planned even approximately on the same lines*') of themselves being Masons and therefore had '*an intimate acquaintance with the needs of their own institution*'. Despite this carping, the writer of the article acknowledged that '*Messrs Ashley and Winton Newman have been fortunate enough to provide for these needs in a more convenient and economical manner than the other competitors*' and '*...the fact remains that their scheme was far the best when judged on purely architectural grounds and they are to be heartily congratulated upon a very fine achievement*'.

In reality, the irregular polygonal shape of the extended development site made fulfilment of the brief in a suitably resonant piece of architecture very challenging and, in this respect, the analysis provided by the contemporary article is very useful:

'Most of us who ourselves have in the past entered for architectural competitions in which practical requirements were complex and exacting will have every sympathy with the architects who have prepared schemes for the new Masonic Peace Memorial and will realise that some of the aesthetic problems put forward were as nearly insoluble as any such problems can be...The two most important things about this building are that it contains a large hall or temple and that it is designed for the use and meeting place of a secret society [as UGLE was regarded at the time]...

[...]

...In the case of the design placed first [that is, that of Ashley & Newman], what must have influenced the assessors in no small degree is the fact that the architects grasped a very important fact, namely, that the corner between Great Queen Street and Wild Street presented the only opportunity for a great architectural display. It so happens that neither Great Queen Street nor Wild Street are of sufficient width to enable a really good view to be obtained of a very long façade. On the other hand, the above-mentioned corner is being opened up to view from Long Acre as the block of buildings at the corner of Drury Lane and Wild Street is due to be removed. Consequently, it was a masterly stroke on the part of Messrs Ashley and Winton Newman to put their great tower or cupola in this position. When once the maximum note of emphasis was placed on this point the main disposition of the [internal] plan followed therefore, for with the main entrance at this corner it seemed a fairly logical procedure to make the main access of the temple on the line bisecting the angle between these two streets, so that from the entrance portal one should proceed straight to the main chamber of the building with subsidiary apartments arranged symmetrically on either side of it. But having, with good reason, adopted such a scheme it follows

immediately that the temple itself was as it were buried from view and could on no account receive external expression...To a certain extent, therefore, the design suffers on this account, but there is no doubt that the practical convenience which resulted from the central position of the temple and the extremely skillful planning of the rooms adjacent to it were well worth the sacrifice of architectural expression.'

The foundation stone weighing almost two tons was laid by the Duke of Connaught on 14th July 1927 by 'synchronisation', using an electrically operated model of a crane from the stage of the Royal Albert Hall. Demolition of some of the existing houses on the newly acquired section of the site commenced soon afterwards [Figures 3, 4] and was followed in July 1928 by the commencement of a 'vast' foundations contract let to Messrs Holloway Bros for £71,000. Once this was complete, the main building contract was let to contractor, Sir Walter Lawrence of Finsbury Square for £637,000 and work commenced in October 1928 [Figures 5, 6, 7]. According to national and local newspaper articles at the time:

'The memorial will be finished in Portland stone in a restrained and dignified style, combining the beauty of the classic tendency with the needs of modern utility in the elevation.

[...]

The memorial will be notably British as regards the material which we are using in its construction.

Practically the whole of the wood will be from British Empire trees. There will be Australian and Tasmanian oak, English oak, Honduras mahogany, as well as laurel wood, teak, 'silver grey' and padauk from India.

Five thousand tons of British steel, 6000 tons of British cement, 75,000 cubic feet of British [Portland] stone, and 5,000,000 bricks will be needed for the structure.

We shall be employing 800 men altogether on the work...'

This was, of course, a major building project being announced just as the global economy was about to be shattered by the Wall Street Crash that month and the ensuing Great Depression, although the importance of that could not have been foreseen at the time.

Sandby's badly fire damaged Hall was demolished in 1930, as construction progressed, and by the time the Masonic Peace Memorial was complete, of Cockerell's second Freemasons' Hall, only part of the façade together with the former tavern portion remained – both today being part of the Connaught Rooms.

The building [Map 3], which in total cost in the region of £1,300,000, was dedicated by the Duke of Connaught on 19th July 1933, although it had been in use for many months. It remained known as the Masonic Peace Memorial until the outbreak of war in 1939, when its name reverted to Freemasons' Hall.

2.2.2 Description

A London Open House leaflet has helpfully set out a reasonably detailed description of the building:

The building is constructed on a steel frame and faced with Portland stone. The principal ceremonial rooms are located on the first floor. Three vestibules form a ceremonial approach to the Grand Temple and are of increasing richness in architectural treatment and design.

In the Second Vestibule there are displays about Freemasonry and further information about the history of the site and this building. The First Vestibule lies above the ceremonial entrance to the building below the tower at the junction of Great Queen Street and Wild Street. The stained glass windows on either side represent the six days of the Creation. On one side these are shown with the five orders of architecture and on the other side with five Masonic symbols.

The Shrine was designed by Walter Gilbert (1871-1946). In bronze, its design and ornamentation incorporate symbols connected with the theme of peace and the attainment of eternal life. It is in the form of a bronze casket resting on a boat amongst reeds; the boat is indicative of a journey which has come to an end. In the centre of the front panel a relief shows the Hand of God set in a circle in which rests the Soul of Man.

At the four corners of the Shrine stand pairs of winged Seraphim carrying golden trumpets and across the front are four gilded figures portraying (from left to right) Moses the Law Giver, Joshua the Warrior Priest, Solomon the Wise and St George.

The Roll of Honour of the 1914-1918 War is guarded by kneeling figures representing the four fighting services (Navy, Army, Royal Marines & Royal Flying Corps). The bronze Pillars of Light flanking the Shrine are decorated with wheat (for resurrection), lotus (for the waters of life) and irises (for eternal life). At the base of each pillar there are four panels of oak leaves.

The theme of the stained glass over the Shrine is the attainment of Peace through Sacrifice. The figure of Peace is holding a model of the Tower façade. Fighting men and civilians are shown in the lower windows ascending a winding staircase until they arrive with the pilgrims through the ages at the feet of the Angel of Peace.

In the ante chamber to the Grand Temple (the Third Vestibule) the pattern of the richly coloured ceiling painted with gold is echoed in the elaborate floor pattern executed in marble and mosaic. The central multi-pointed star is inlaid with lapis lazuli. The four blue panels represent heaven and the rose in each corner reflects the connection between England and Freemasonry (the Grand Lodge of 1717 formed in London was the first Grand Lodge in the world).

The Grand Temple is at the centre of the site but the design and use of internal courtyards is such that it has external walls on three sides. The Temple is 120 ft long by 90 ft wide by 62 ft high, and holds approximately 1700 people including balcony seating. On ceremonial occasions access to the Temple is via the bronze doors, the design of which incorporates historical and symbolic themes. The walls of the Temple are lined with various types of marble.

The central panel of the ceiling is a representation of the celestial sky. Surrounding it is a deeply coffered and richly decorated border with the arms of the United Grand Lodge of England at each corner. The decoration of the cornice, which is 15 ft deep, is entirely in mosaic and took 22 months to complete. The allegorical groups in the design each incorporate columns of a classical order of architecture.

On the eastern side (opposite the bronze doors) in between two Ionic pillars (representing Wisdom) is a representation of the Ark of the Covenant and Jacob's Ladder. Resting against the Ladder is the Volume of Sacred Law (any holy book displayed at a lodge meeting). Jacob's Ladder bears the symbols for Faith (a cross), Hope (an anchor) and Charity (a burning heart), ascending towards the Hebrew character of YOD (Jehovah). To the left stands King Solomon, to the right King Hiram, the builders of the first Temple at Jerusalem.

On the western side (above the bronze doors) two Doric pillars (representing strength of knowledge) are flanked by Euclid and Pythagoras on either side of the 47th Proposition (the symbol worn by a Past Master of a Lodge). The pillars support the Moon around which is an ancient symbol of wisdom, the serpent.

On the Southern side are two Corinthian pillars (representing beauty) with Helios, the Sun God, driving his chariot across the heavens to mark the Sun at its meridian. The pillars support the All-Seeing Eye below which is a five pointed star.

On the Northern side between the two pillars of the Composite order are the arms of the Duke of Connaught and Strathearn (Grand Master when this Hall was built). On one side is St George and on the other the Dragon. The celestial globe on one pillar and the terrestrial globe on the other represent the universal nature of Freemasonry. At the base of the pillars are two blocks of stone (ashlars). One is rough representing Man entering Freemasonry and the other is smooth representing how Man is improved through Freemasonry.

In the corners of the cornice stand four angelic figures portraying the four cardinal virtues Prudence, Temperance, Fortitude and Justice. The inscription commences in the north east corner and is taken from Chronicles I xvii 12-14. The frieze on the four splay walls carries the twelve signs of the Zodiac. These have no Masonic significance but are a link with the first Freemasons' Hall on this site which featured them in its decoration.

The organ console is situated in the centre at the end of the dais. The organ is a three manual Willis instrument with over 2000 speaking pipes.

The Library and Museum of Freemasonry houses one of the leading collections of Masonic artefacts and books and is open to the public.'

Despite the masonic emblems explained in the foregoing, as Curl notes in his paper on 'Freemasonry and Architecture' in the 'Handbook of Freemasonry' (edited by Bogdan and Snoek (2014)), 'apart from a few allusions, [the building's] 'masonic' aspects are subtle'. Generally, the building externally is seen as pared down, dignified classicism. As already mentioned, the building has long facades, emphasised in its external detailing, and culminates across the west angle in its corner tower, which echoes the

form of the Temple entrance beneath. The effect defies the diagonal axis the Temple is set on, as well as its processional access route. In his Buildings of England series, the notable architectural historian, Nikolaus Pevsner called this exterior, '*...bewilderingly self-possessed...with a corner erection like the Port of London Authority and all the detail in a kind of classical revival*'.

The fine detailing of the interior is markedly Art Deco influenced, with symmetry and balance of design. It is generally held to be the only Art Deco major building interior in London that remains substantively 'as built' and in use for its original purpose. The importance of the interior's symbolism of peace is of great importance and is well explained in Saunders and Cornish's 2009 'Contested Objects – Material Memorials of the First World War':

'The single largest, most impressive and enduring of the many Masonic artefacts which can be judged material legacies of the Great War is the Freemasons' Hall, funded entirely from members' subscriptions, in exchange for which...a medal or jewel was produced....Over 53,000 of these jewels were issued, and they became a strong visual indicator of the fundraising appeal for the lifetime of their owners...

[...]

The symbolic importance of the peace memorial at the time may be judged by the fact that King George V, although not himself a freemason, kept a model of the tower on his writing desk until his death.

Elements of war and remembrance are incorporated into key parts of the building's fabric. The architectural space of the main ceremonial rooms begins with an area termed 'the shrine', whose focal point is the casket for the scroll of remembrance. This takes the form of a biblical reed boat which incorporates Masonic and nationalistic imagery: at each corner kneels a figure representing one of the forces...The panels are filled with foliage of plants that grow in Flanders – a reference to the landscape of this particularly bloody battle zone of the Great War. The main stained glass window of the shrine area shows pilgrims ascending to their rest, including soldiers from the war...The bronze cast doors of the main temple also feature two soldiers as emblems of the virtue of sacrifice among the otherwise classical iconography...'

Over recent years, the Grand Temple, just as with Sandby's Hall, has increasingly been used for non-Masonic events such as concerts and musical theatre – having an almost perfect acoustic and clear sight-lines.

2.2.3 The building since completion in 1933

Freemasons' Hall continues to be used for its original purpose. It has been maintained to a very high standard since completion and, as a visit to the building powerfully demonstrates, its management has always focused on best practice care rather than 'economical' maintenance.

With the knowledge, approval, and where necessary consent of London Borough of Camden, in recent years, significant investment has been made in combating and repairing the effects of progressive corrosion in the building's structural steel frame. Allied to this, two vertical light-wells have been

infilled and incorporated into the accommodation, creating additional space at each floor level. Recently, a lavatory at first floor level (not originally one of the formal toilets) has been refurbished and extended into the adjacent infilled light-well in order to create additional toilet facilities, for use by male and female visitors. This reflects an important management responsibility – namely, ensuring that the building remains suitable for its present day use and future demands. The Ashley and Newman design did not incorporate female WCs: today, the building is used and visited by many thousands of women every year.

The foregoing example illustrates an important matter. While Freemasons' Hall continues to be used for its original purpose, aspects of its use have altered significantly with changing needs, demands, customs and culture. The management challenge facing the UGLE Board is not only to maintain Freemasons' Hall's built fabric, but also to adapt it to meet the needs of Freemasonry in the 21st century, while maintaining and enhancing its suitability for non-Masonic functions, including international fashion shows, use as a film set and a multitude of other events that now represent an ever-increasing demand and a vital income generator, assisting in safeguarding the designated heritage asset and its significance for future generations. The recently consented and completed new Museum Gallery within the building is a good example of the changing need which UGLE is committed to managing, while retaining the building's important original use.

3 ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

3.1 Observations regarding heritage assets and significance

The NPPF defines significance as being *'The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting'*. One of the key lessons from this is that, in assessing value, we need to consider the future along with the present and try to determine what will be regarded as being of value in the future.

In its *Conservation Principles* (2008), English Heritage put forward the following system of four groupings of values to be considered when assessing the significance of a heritage asset:

- **Evidential value** - deriving from the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity.
- **Historical value** - deriving from the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present – it tends to be illustrative or associative.
- **Aesthetic value** - deriving from the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place.
- **Communal value** - deriving from the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory.

Although the NPPF recognises that value system, in line with current legislation (which for the moment remains out of synch with the values- or significance-based approach enshrined in the NPPF), NPPF's policy is based on the notion of significance being restricted only to archaeological, architectural, artistic and/or historic values (as set out in its glossary definition).

Once its definitions are drawn together, the NPPF identifies heritage assets as being components of the historic environment that can be positively identified as having a degree of archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic interest meriting consideration in planning decisions. Simply being old, being part of an ensemble or area that is - as an assemblage - recognisable as a heritage asset, having a history of use, bearing a similarity to components in the locality that are heritage assets, or conversely being physically distinctive within its setting or wider context does not *per se* transform a built (or other ordinary) asset into a heritage asset. Building on the definition of 'heritage' set out in English Heritage's *Conservation Principles* (2008) (being *'all inherited resources which people value for reasons beyond mere utility'*), heritage assets can be distinguished from other components of the environment by the meaning for society that a heritage asset holds over and above its functional utility. So to be regarded as a heritage asset, a building or structure must have some meaningful archaeological, architectural, artistic or historical interest that gives it a value to society transcending its functional utility.

3.2 Establishing a hierarchy of significance

Various hierarchies to ‘quantify’ or ‘measure’ the comparative significance of each value set have been utilised in recent years. They all have strengths and weaknesses, given the inevitability that such comparisons will always be somewhat subjective in their nature – especially when attempting to predict what future generations will find of value.

However, at present, the only such hierarchy sponsored from within central Government is that set out within the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB; HA208/07, Volume 11 Section 3 Part 2) jointly published the Highways Agency, Transport Scotland, the Welsh Assembly Government, and the Department for Regional Development Northern Ireland (2013 edition). It has the added benefit of having been subjected to scrutiny within the planning system, including Public Inquiries. It is this hierarchy of significance that has been adopted for use in this statement, as a result.

With minor adaptation under ‘negligible’ to bring the 2013 hierarchy into line with the NPPF, across two Annexes, DMRB provides the following terminology and definitions for a cultural heritage hierarchy of significance:

Level of Significance	Criteria
Very high	World Heritage Sites; Assets of acknowledged international importance; Assets that can contribute significantly to acknowledged international research objectives; Historic landscapes of international value (designated or not) and extremely well preserved historic landscapes with exceptional coherence, time depth, or other critical factor(s).
High	Scheduled Monuments and undesignated assets of Schedulable quality and importance; Grade I and II* Listed buildings (Scotland category A); Other Listed buildings that can be shown to have exceptional qualities in their fabric or associations not adequately reflected in their Listing grade; Conservation Areas containing very important buildings; Undesignated structures of clear national importance; Designated and undesignated historic landscapes of outstanding historic interest (including Grade I and Grade II* Registered Parks and Gardens); undesignated landscapes of high quality and importance of demonstrable

Level of Significance	Criteria
	<p>national value; and well preserved historic landscapes exhibiting considerable coherence, time depth or other critical factor(s);</p> <p>Assets that can contribute significantly to acknowledged national research objectives.</p>
Medium	<p>Designated or undesignated assets that contribute to regional research objectives;</p> <p>Grade II (Scotland category B) Listed buildings;</p> <p>Historic (unlisted) buildings that can be shown to have exceptional qualities in their fabric or historical association;</p> <p>Conservation Areas containing important buildings that contribute significantly to their historic character;</p> <p>Historic townscapes or built up areas with important historic integrity in their buildings, or built settings (for example including street furniture or other structures);</p> <p>Designated landscapes of special historic interest (including Grade II Registered Parks and Gardens); undesignated landscapes that would justify such a designation; averagely well preserved historic landscapes with reasonable coherence, time depth or other critical factor(s); landscapes of regional value.</p>
Low	<p>Designated and undesignated assets of local importance including those compromised by poor preservation and/or poor survival of contextual associations;</p> <p>Assets of limited value, but with potential to contribute to local research objectives;</p> <p>Locally Listed buildings (Scotland category C(S) Listed Buildings) and historic (unlisted) buildings of modest quality in their fabric or historical association;</p> <p>Historic townscape or built-up areas of limited historic integrity in their buildings or built settings (for example including street furniture or other structures);</p> <p>Robust undesignated historic landscapes; historic landscapes with importance to local interest groups; and historic landscapes whose value is limited by poor preservation and/or poor survival of contextual associations.</p>

Level of Significance	Criteria
Negligible	Assets with very little surviving archaeological interest; Buildings of little architectural or historical note; Landscapes with little significant historical interest.

Table 1: DMRB Hierarchy of Value

Whilst, inevitably, some subjectivity is at times involved in making value judgements, this hierarchy of values has to be appreciated as a continuum. There will be shades of interpretation where, for instance, an asset lies close to the borderline between the descriptions of ‘high’ and ‘very high’ significance. In these instances, in this statement, the assessment of an asset’s significance will be expressed as ‘*high (approaching very high)*’ where it is considered there are attributes present that potentially uplift the basic assessment of high significance towards, but not reaching, its borderline with very high or ‘*very high (approaching high)*’ where certain attributes potentially depress the basic assessment of very high significance towards its borderline with high.

Finally, in introduction to the issue of significance, it should be noted that, as a generality, Government policy recognises the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and the positive contribution that such conservation can make to sustainable communities, including their economic vitality. This involves putting designated and non-designated heritage assets to viable uses consistent with their conservation whenever practicable.

3.3 Designations

From a heritage perspective, built and other assets in the environment are either heritage assets or ordinary assets. Those that are classified as heritage assets may be designated (for example, a listed building or conservation area) or non-designated.

Freemasons’ Hall is a designated heritage asset, being Grade II* listed on 9th March 1982. The list description for the asset (list entry 1113218) reads:

‘Central headquarters of English Freemasonry. 1927-33. By HV Ashley and Winton Newman, whose ingenious fitting of the plan to the irregular. polygonal site won them the commission as the result of a competition. Steel frame construction faced with Portland stone. Massive building in stripped Classical style. Long facades (with slightly projecting entrance bays) emphasised by string courses and heavy cornice above 1st floor. 2 attics stepped above, culminating across the west angle in the corner tower, which echoes the form of the Temple entrance beneath, flanked by 2 giant fluted columns in antis. This defines the diagonal axis along which the Temple itself lies, as well as its associated processional access route. Metal-framed windows. Decorative lamp brackets. INTERIOR: principal halls, meeting rooms and staircases all marble lined, richly detailed but austere neo-Grecian in pattern. Set on diagonal axis. Grand entrance hall and museum collection on ground floor. The principal rooms on the first floor, with Grand Temple, Grand

Officers' rooms, library and reading room. Grand Temple of double height with gallery, dias and organ. Walls lined with Ashburton and Botticino marbles, surmounted by cove decorated with mosaics, coffered and decorated ceiling. Bronze doors in neo-Egyptian style by Walter and Donald Gilbert. Boardroom panelled in hardwood, and with stained glass. Fine bronze and wrought-iron work throughout the building. HISTORICAL NOTE: built as the "Masonic Peace Memorial Building" and a memorial to Freemasons killed in World War I.'

As previously mentioned, the listed building lies within the designated Seven Dials Conservation Area.

3.4 Assessment of significance

3.4.1 Introduction

As noted in section 3.1, the NPPF defines significance as being:

'The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.'

In this section, the significance of Freemasons' Hall will be considered in terms of appreciable historical, architectural, archaeological, and/or artistic interest.

3.4.2 Freemasons' Hall

The description of the building and the story of its development, as described above in section 2 indicates that its primary significance can be summarised as lying in the following:

- It constitutes the latest in a 240-year progression of important Masonic buildings on the same site, representing a fundamental and highly important continuity of ownership and use in this central London site.
- The building dominates Great Queen Street and Wild Street and influences profoundly the present day character and built form of this sub-zone of the Seven Dials Conservation Area.
- It is a landmark and focal point structure within the local built environment, providing critical visual closure to the view eastwards along Long Acre from the Bow Street/Endell Street junction.
- Freemasons' Hall is the central headquarters of the United Grand Lodge of England, an organisation of long standing influence within British society.
- The building has had extensive associations with people of historical note and influence from completion in 1933 to the present day.
- The building has been identified as the *'single largest, most impressive and enduring of the many Masonic artefacts which can be judged material legacies of the Great War'*.

- It has been identified by the Twentieth Century Society as one of London’s important memorial structures. It also held very high value to contemporaries as a symbol of peace and remembrance.
- Its Art Deco-influenced interiors remain substantively ‘as built’ and in use for their original purpose. It is believed that this is the only such instance in major London buildings.
- The building contains fine mosaics, memorials, stained glass, sculpture, and bronze and wrought-iron work by some of the most talented and influential designers working in the inter war period.
- It is arguably the most important work by Ashley and Newman, a respected national architectural practice.
- Today, it is an important heritage and cultural destination and facility, receiving visits from an international audience and hosting key cultural events.
- The Library and Museum and UGLE’s archive, maintained within the building, are important cultural heritage resources.
- As a Grade II* listed building, Freemasons’ Hall has been given national recognition as being a ‘*particularly important building of more than special interest*’.

In summary, Freemasons’ Hall has very considerable historical, associational, artistic, architectural and townscape value. On this basis, using the DMRB hierarchy of value set out in section 3.2 (Table 1), it is considered to be a designated heritage asset of **high significance**.

3.4.3 The contribution of accommodation at the upper ground floor including Lodge Rooms 18 & 19 to the significance of Freemasons’ Hall

As designed, the changing and dressing suite for members at upper ground floor level on the Connaught Rooms side of Ashley & Newman’s building performed an important, albeit supporting, role to its overall ceremonial function. It is hard to gauge the appearance of the spaces – no 1930s’ photographic images are available for this part of the building. What is certain, however, is that today’s layout bears no similarity - in character, appearance or use – to that original changing and dressing suite.

The contribution made by the original accommodation to the significance of the site has been completely lost. All indications are that this occurred a long time ago. It is believed that by the end of WWII, the way that Freemasons would have used the bathing facilities within the building had changed. While this does not mean that the major adaptation of the area occurred at that time, the appearance and nature of visible later built fabric suggests that the space had been reconfigured for its changed use by the time the building was listed in 1982. Today’s accommodation performs a role within the headquarters’ function of Freemasons’ Hall, but the ‘everyday’ modest character of the spaces and their absence of comparably-refined architectural quality mean that they do not contribute in any substantive way to the significance of the designated heritage asset.

The foregoing assessment of significance has been accepted by the London Borough of Camden in its preapp advice (ref. 2017/2653/PRE) dated 28th June 2017.

4 HERITAGE LEGISLATION AND POLICY CONTEXT

4.1 National and local policy context

In the UK today, Government policy is framed around the principle that the care and conservation of individual heritage assets and the wider historic environment must involve:

'Managing change...in ways that will best sustain...heritage values, while recognising opportunities to reveal or reinforce those values for present and future generations'

[English Heritage (2008) *Conservation Principles*]

Accordingly, in the Ministerial Foreword of the NPPF, which became Government policy in March 2012, the Government has stated that:

'Sustainable development is about change for the better, and not only in our built environment. Our historic environment – buildings, landscapes, towns and villages – can better be cherished if their spirit of place thrives, rather than withers.'

The crucial point that is made forcefully in the NPPF is that, to be sustainable, development must consider and involve the protection and enhancement of our natural, built and historic environment. Its paragraphs 6 and 7 conclude:

'The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The policies in [the NPPF], taken as a whole, constitute the Government's view of what sustainable development in England means in practice for the planning system.... Pursuing sustainable development involves seeking positive improvements in the quality of the built, natural and historic environment, as well as in people's quality of life...'

Of particular significance are Government policies for the historic environment set out in paragraphs 131-4 and 137-8 of the NPPF which variously require the local planning authority in determining applications for development to consider:

- *'The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
- *The positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and,*
- *The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness [paragraph 131];*

while dictating that:

- *When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through*

alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of a grade II listed building, park or garden should be exceptional. Substantial harm to or loss of designated heritage assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, battlefields, grade I and II listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional. [paragraph 132];*

- *Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss [paragraph 133];*
- *Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use [paragraph 134];*
- *Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Area and World Heritage Sites and within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of the asset should be treated favourably [paragraph 137];*
- *Not all elements of a World Heritage Site or Conservation Area will necessarily contribute to its significance. Loss of a building (or other element) which makes a positive contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site should be treated either as substantial harm under paragraph 133 or less than substantial harm under paragraph 134, as appropriate, taking into account the relative significance of the element affected and its contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site as a whole. [paragraph 138].*

In addition to these national policies, in terms of heritage, the London Borough of Camden's own Core Strategy and Development Policies are relevant.

London Borough of Camden Core Strategy, 2010: Policy CS14 - Promoting high quality places and conserving our heritage

'The Council will ensure that Camden's places and buildings are attractive, safe and easy to use by:

- a) requiring development of the highest standard of design that respects local context and character;
- b) preserving and enhancing Camden's rich and diverse heritage assets and their settings, including conservation areas, listed buildings, archaeological remains, scheduled ancient monuments and historic parks and gardens;
- c) promoting high quality landscaping and works to streets and public spaces;

d) seeking the highest standards of access in all buildings and places and requiring schemes to be designed to be inclusive and accessible;

e) protecting important views of St Paul's Cathedral and the Palace of Westminster from sites inside and outside the borough and protecting important local views.'

London Borough of Camden, Development Policies, 2010 - DP24: Securing High Quality Design

'The Council will require all developments, including alterations and extensions to existing buildings, to be of the highest standard of design and will expect developments to consider:

- a) character, setting, context and the form and scale of neighbouring buildings;
- b) the character and proportions of the existing building, where alterations and extensions are proposed;
- c) the quality of materials to be used;
- d) the provision of visually interesting frontages at street level;
- e) the appropriate location for building services equipment;
- f) existing natural features, such as topography and trees;
- g) the provision of appropriate hard and soft landscaping including boundary treatments;
- h) the provision of appropriate amenity space; and
- i) accessibility.'

London Borough of Camden, Development Policies, 2010 - DP25: Conserving Camden's Heritage

'Conservation areas

In order to maintain the character of Camden's conservation areas, the Council will:

- a) take account of conservation area statements, appraisals and management plans when assessing applications within conservation areas;
- b) only permit development within conservation areas that preserves and enhances the character and appearance of the area;
- c) prevent the total or substantial demolition of an unlisted building that makes a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area where this harms the character or appearance of the conservation area, unless exceptional circumstances are shown that outweigh the case for retention;

- d) not permit development outside of a conservation area that causes harm to the character and appearance of that conservation area; and
- e) preserve trees and garden spaces which contribute to the character of a conservation area and which provide a setting for Camden's architectural heritage.

Listed buildings

To preserve or enhance the borough's listed buildings, the Council will:

- f) prevent the total or substantial demolition of a listed building unless exceptional circumstances are shown that outweigh the case for retention;
- g) only grant consent for a change of use or alterations and extensions to a listed building where it considers this would not cause harm to the special interest of the building; and
- h) not permit development that it considers would cause harm to the setting of a listed building.

Archaeology

The Council will protect remains of archaeological importance by ensuring acceptable measures are taken to preserve them and their setting, including physical preservation, where appropriate.

Other heritage assets

The Council will seek to protect other heritage assets including Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest and London Squares.'

[NB. The original document incorrectly uses the label '(e)' twice and so has been renumbered above]

5 ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS

5.1 Introduction and general observations

As has been noted at the start of this statement, it has been prepared to comply with paragraph 128 of the NPPF, which requires an applicant whose proposals may affect one or more heritage assets ‘to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting’ to a level of detail that is ‘sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance’. This concluding section of the statement reviews likely impacts on relevant heritage assets in the light of the foregoing analysis and findings.

5.2 Potential receptors of impacts

The heritage assets that may be affected by the development proposal have been identified in earlier sections of this heritage statement as being:

- Freemasons’ Hall - Grade II* listed - designated; **high significance**
- None other

This is considered to be the only potential receptor of impacts from the proposed development of the application site.

5.3 Introduction to impact assessment and mitigation

This and the following sub-sections of the heritage statement set out to:

- Identify impacts resulting from the application proposals and to quantify their magnitude and significance of effects, and,
- Identify appropriate mitigation measures for any significant adverse effects on heritage assets.

The heritage impact assessment process has been guided by the NPPF and based around ‘*Environmental Impact Assessment: a Guide to Procedures*’ issued by the former DETR and the National Assembly for Wales (2000). The assessment of impacts and significance of effects follows the guidance given by the Highways Agency in 2013 in the DMRB, Volume 11, Section 3, Part 2: Cultural Heritage. Specifically, the magnitude of any change/impact on a heritage asset or its setting has been assessed using the criteria set out in Table 2 below. This is based on Tables 5.3, 6.3 and 7.3 of Annexes 5, 6 and 7 respectively of HA 208/07.

Magnitude of Impact	
Major	Change to key historic building elements, such that the asset is totally altered Comprehensive change to the setting.
Moderate	Change to many key historic building elements, such as the asset is significantly modified. Changes to setting of an historic building, such that it is significantly modified.
Minor	Changes to key historic building elements, such that the asset is slightly different. Changes to setting of an historic building, such that it is noticeably changed.
Negligible	Slight changes to historic building elements or setting that hardly affect it.
No Change	No change to fabric or setting.

Table 2: Factors in the Assessment of Magnitude of Impact

Using the assessment of the value/significance of the heritage asset (see section 3.4.2) for weighting purposes and the magnitude of the impact determined from the table above, the significance of the effect after mitigation has been assessed using the matrix shown in Table 3 below, which is based on Table 5.1 of HA 208/07. Where two alternatives are given in this table, professional judgement has been used to decide which best reflects the significance of the effect of the impact identified.

Heritage Value	<i>Very High</i>	Neutral	Slight	Moderate / large	Large or very Large	Very large
	<i>High</i>	Neutral	Slight	Moderate / slight	Moderate / large	Large / very large
	<i>Medium</i>	Neutral	Neutral / Slight	Slight	Moderate	Moderate / large
	<i>Low</i>	Neutral	Neutral / slight	Neutral / Slight	Slight	Slight / moderate
	<i>Negligible</i>	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral / Slight	Neutral / Slight	Slight
		<i>No Change</i>	<i>Negligible</i>	<i>Minor</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Major</i>
		Magnitude of Impact				

Table 3: Significance of Effects

The significance of effects from impacts read from Table 3 can be positive or negative.

Thus, for example, where proposals affect the setting of a heritage asset of *high* value (say a Grade II* listed building) to the extent that that setting is significantly modified (a *moderate* magnitude of impact), the significance of the effect of the proposal on the setting of the heritage asset is deemed to

be *moderate* or *large* (with precise determination being dependent upon professional judgement) and *positive* or *negative* depending upon circumstance.

Since in cultural heritage terms, the purpose of impact assessment is the prediction and prevention of harm to significance (or its reduction in exchange for greater public benefits that outweigh the level of harm), the mitigation of impacts lies at the heart of the impact assessment process. Put another way, negative impacts (that is, harm that is likely to result to a heritage asset or its setting from implementation of application proposals) must always be mitigated, wherever possible, to ensure that they are minimised.

There are a number of relatively obvious key principles to effective mitigation of impacts on heritage assets from development:

- An important part of impact reduction is early identification of the potential problem. This means that the likely impact of development on the significance of the heritage asset should be considered from project commencement.
- Development proposals need to avoid or minimise harm to heritage assets and their settings.
- Acts of mitigation need to be clearly identified, practical and achievable.
- Mitigation of impacts can take a number of forms, including removal, re-planning or re-location of the detrimental element(s) of the proposal, amendments in design (technical solutions, changes in use, operation or construction, or appearance and/or layout solutions), screening, creation of protective zones and other planning conditions, and/or amelioration through planning and management agreements of one form or another.

Thus, a successful mitigation strategy has to commence as planning and design are initiated. It is an iterative process, developing and refining measures to address significant potential impacts as these are revealed through impact assessment. In almost all instances, it is better to prevent an impact on (or harm to) a heritage asset than have to attempt some form of mitigation – that is the basic presumption that lies behind the NPPF. This leads to a preferred hierarchy or approach to mitigation measures (starting at the top and working downwards):

- Avoid impacts during planning and design
- Minimise impacts through planning, design, conditions or agreements
- Abate impacts on site
- Repair or reinstate following impact
- Compensate for harm in kind
- Compensate for harm through other greater benefits
- Enhance.

Mitigation issues relating to the application proposals are discussed below.

5.4 Assessment of potential impacts

5.4.1 Introduction

This sub-section makes an assessment of the impact of the submitted development proposals on the significance of the designated Freemasons' Hall.

5.4.2 Impacts on the significance of the designated Freemasons' Hall

In section 3.4.2 above, it has been determined that Freemasons' Hall is an asset of high significance due to its considerable historical, associational, artistic, architectural and townscape interest, with its heritage value being derived from the fact that:

- It constitutes the latest in a 240-year progression of important Masonic buildings on the same site, representing a fundamental and highly important continuity of ownership and use in this central London site.
- The building dominates Great Queen Street and Wild Street and influences profoundly the present day character and built form of this sub-zone of the Seven Dials Conservation Area.
- It is a landmark and focal point structure within the local built environment, providing critical visual closure to the view eastwards along Long Acre from the Bow Street/Endell Street junction.
- Freemasons' Hall is the central headquarters of the United Grand Lodge of England, an organisation of long standing influence within British society.
- The building has had extensive associations people of historical note and influence from completion in 1933 to the present day.
- The building has been identified as the *'single largest, most impressive and enduring of the many Masonic artefacts which can be judged material legacies of the Great War'*.
- It has been identified by the Twentieth Century Society as one of London's important memorial structures. It also held very high value to contemporaries as a symbol of peace and remembrance.
- Its Art Deco-influenced interiors remain substantively 'as built' and in use for their original purpose. It is believed that this is the only such instance in major London buildings.
- The building contains fine mosaics, memorials, stained glass, sculpture, and bronze and wrought-iron work by some of the most talented and influential designers working in the inter war period.
- It is arguably the most important work by Ashley and Newman, a respected national architectural practice.
- Today, it is an important heritage and cultural destination and facility, receiving visits from an international audience and hosting key cultural events.
- The Library and Museum and UGLE's archive, maintained within the building, are important cultural heritage resources.
- As a Grade II* listed building, Freemasons' Hall has been given national recognition as being a *'particularly important building of more than special interest'*.

However, as is concluded in section 3.4.3 above, as reconfigured in the mid-20th century, the present Lodge Rooms 18 and 19, the adjacent men's WC, a server room, office and other ancillary accommodation do not contribute in any substantive way to this significance. The development proposal to clear away existing internal non-loadbearing masonry and timber stud partitioning in this area to create an open plan space for subsequent reconfiguration will not result in any loss of or harm to the historical, architectural, archaeological or artistic interest of Freemasons' Hall. The changes will not be visible from outside the existing space. The foregoing impact assessment relating to the demolition of partitioning in Lodge Rooms 18 & 19 has been accepted by the London Borough of Camden in its preapp advice (ref. 2017/2653/PRE) dated 28th June 2017.

The reconfigured office layout for the cleared open plan space is respectful and subordinate to spaces and fabric of significance within Freemasons' Hall. The intended use is appropriate to its location within the Grade II* listed building and is as presaged within the 2017 preapp submission. The reconfiguration with new partitioning will not result in any loss of or harm to the historical, architectural, archaeological or artistic interest of Freemasons' Hall, and the changes will not be visible from outside the existing space.

On this basis, reading from the DMRB 'Magnitude of Impact' table set out in section 5.3.1 Table 2, the direct impact on significance-bearing fabric within Freemasons' Hall that would arise from the development proposal is considered to amount to '**no change**'. Using DMRB's matrix in Table 3 (section 5.3.1), this indicates that a **neutral effect** on the significance of the designated heritage asset will result from the development proposal.

6 CONCLUSIONS

The proposal to demolish internal non-loadbearing partitions in this self-contained, but under-used, part of the upper ground floor level within Freemasons' Hall and to reconfigure the area as additional office accommodation and ancillary facilities will assist in optimising beneficial use of the building – as well as in spreading uses around it – and so represents sound conservation management by UGLE.

The development proposal can be undertaken without harming the historical, architectural, archaeological or artistic interest of the listed building. It will help to spread vital uses around the building's accommodation, reducing pressure on facilities elsewhere, while respecting and retaining the significance of the heritage asset. Overall, the works will result in no substantive change to the heritage asset's importance and no negative effect on its significance.

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