

CAMDEN TOWN HALL
LENDLEASE
COUNCIL CHAMBER AND STAIR NOSING
LBC APPLICATION
DECEMBER 2019

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CAMDEN TOWN HALL - LBC APPLICATION

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I.0 INTRODUCTION

I.1 INTRODUCTION

This Listed Building Consent (LBC) application has been prepared by Purcell at the request of Lendlease on behalf of London Borough of Camden (LBC). The application describes the design proposals for improving overall accessibility and future proofing of the Council Chamber and grand staircase.

Accessed via the principal Judd Street Entrance to the East of the site, the Council Chamber is at the heart of Camden Town Hall and stands as a symbol of democracy and inclusivity with galleries for the public to oversee the decisions made by their Council representatives. In its current format and condition the Chamber creates great difficulty for less physically able Councillors to attend debates and discussions.

This LBC application details the technical approach of the various proposals whilst assessing the impact on the Town Hall's heritage in the attached Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA). The proposals were presented to Colette Hatton at a pre-planning presentation on 02nd December 2019



2.0 COUNCIL CHAMBER IMPROVEMENTS

2.1 EXISTING CONDITION

The general condition of the Council Chamber is in a poor state of repair. Along with improvements to the mechanical and electrical servicing, the joinery benches, desks and dais had been highlighted for repair works.

Under further review, Jane Toplis Associates (JTA), who are Access Consultants for the project, highlighted various elements of the current layout and strategy that can and should be improved to make the Council Chamber more easily accessible to all.

As existing, wheelchair users visiting the Chamber can be sat in one of two locations:

- 01 Behind one of two removable end bench locations that can be installed prior to arrival
- 02 At one of two inner 'horseshoe' locations.

The main issue with both of these locations is the difficulty of adaptation. It is a slow, laboured process to remove/install the relevant parts in order to allow make the space usable. This in turn requires knowledge of attendees in advance of councillors arriving; wheelchair users are less free to attend as more able-bodied councillors.

Further, the current dais arrangement is very bulky leaving little room for climbing the steps to the raised platform and has no means for wheelchair users to access the dais.

Finally, from a future-proofing stance, the current delegate voting stations wired into chamber seating benches is no longer fit for purpose. With the full electrical re-servicing of the Town Hall, there is an opportunity to secure the use of the Council Chamber for the foreseeable future with an upgrade to the voting stations incorporating WiFi and greater input connectivity.



Existing removable bench to provide wheelchair accessible seating



Existing benches with integrated voting stations and microphones



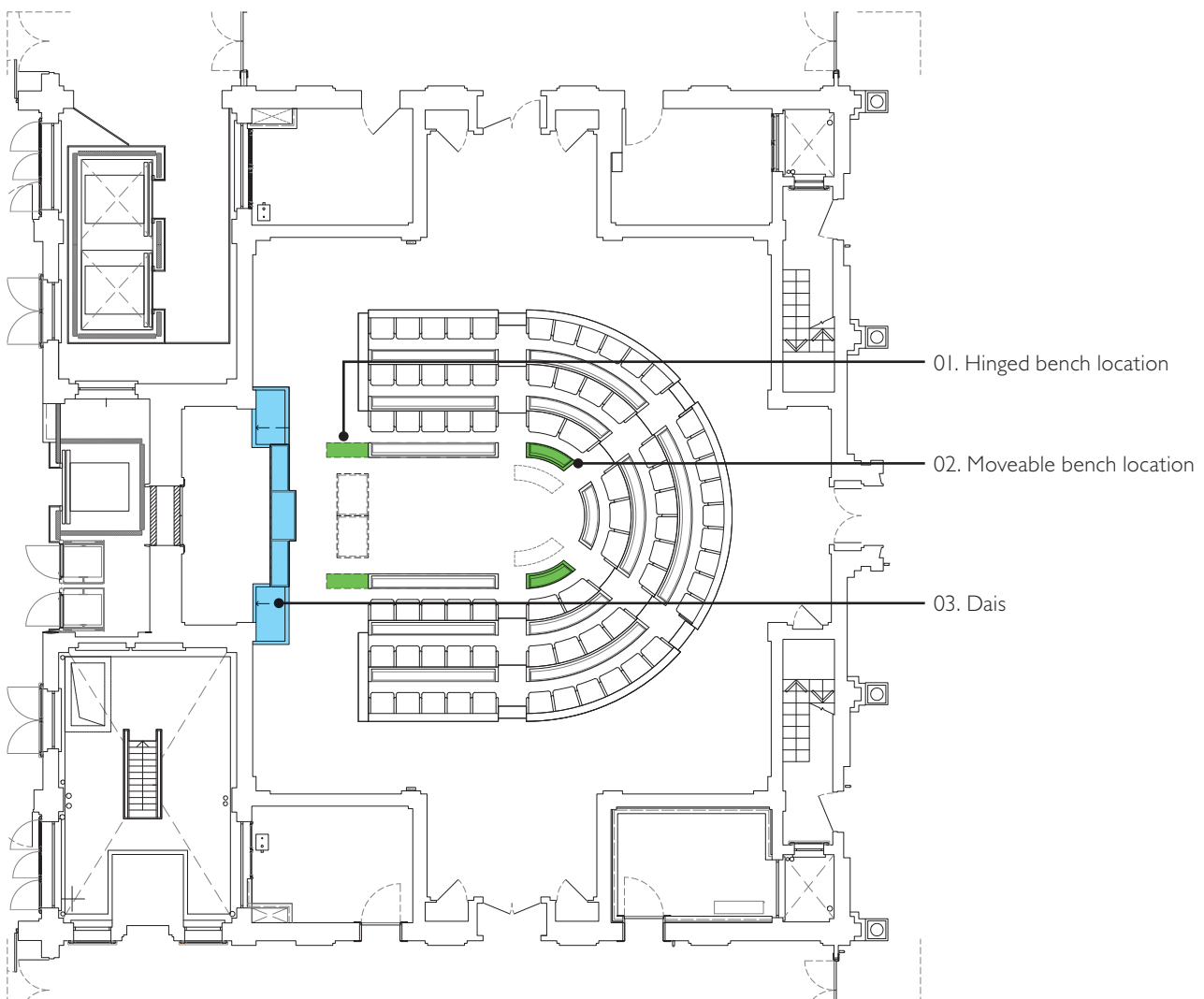
Existing dais arrangement with stepped access and split-level platform

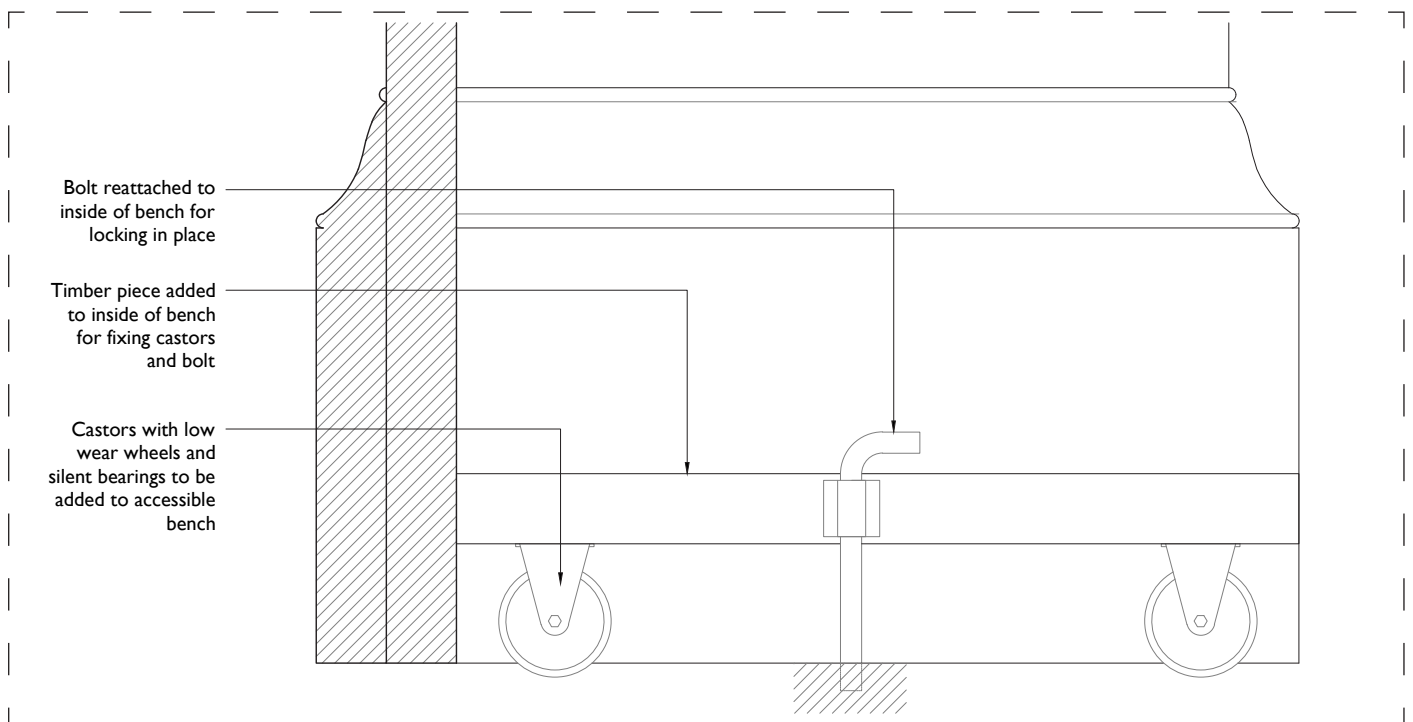
2.2 PROPOSED ACCESSIBLE SEATING IMPROVEMENTS

The two locations highlighted in green below are currently used by wheelchair users. As mentioned previously however they both require prior knowledge of wheelchair users attending meetings in the Chamber to ensure the accessible locations can be prepared. The repeat mounting/demounting of these accessible locations has also caused significant damage to the joinery.

The proposed works retain these locations but improve the integration and flexibility of the adaptable joinery in the following ways:

- 01 Proposed accessible folding table hinged to existing bench with pivoting post leg . Finished to match existing council chamber joinery and topped with leather to match existing
- 02 Existing seat retained in position. Bench to be placed on castors with ability to be dead-bolted into new position to allow for wheelchair access behind bench.





Proposed adaptation of moveable benches with castor wheels and drop-bolt

2.3 PROPOSED DAIS IMPROVEMENTS

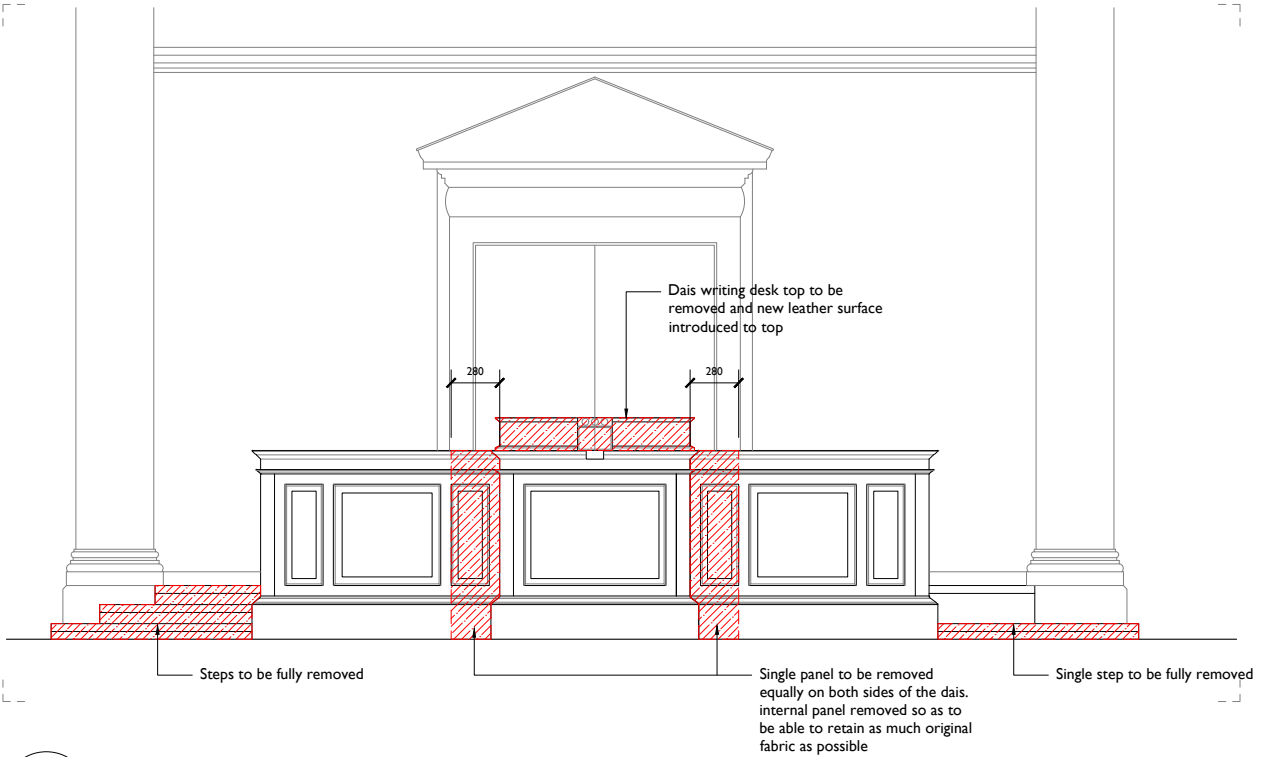
Highlighted in blue, the proposed works to the dais seek to improve general access for all users with a focus on wheelchair accessibility.

As shown over the page, joinery works include to the dais will reduce the width of the desk by removing a single section of panelling to each side. This in turn provides greater space between the desk and walls when climbing the flanking steps and in particular allows for a wheelchair user to access the raised platform. The works will retain the symmetry of the joinery and will be constructed in a way that looks purposeful as opposed to a visible change to the original design.

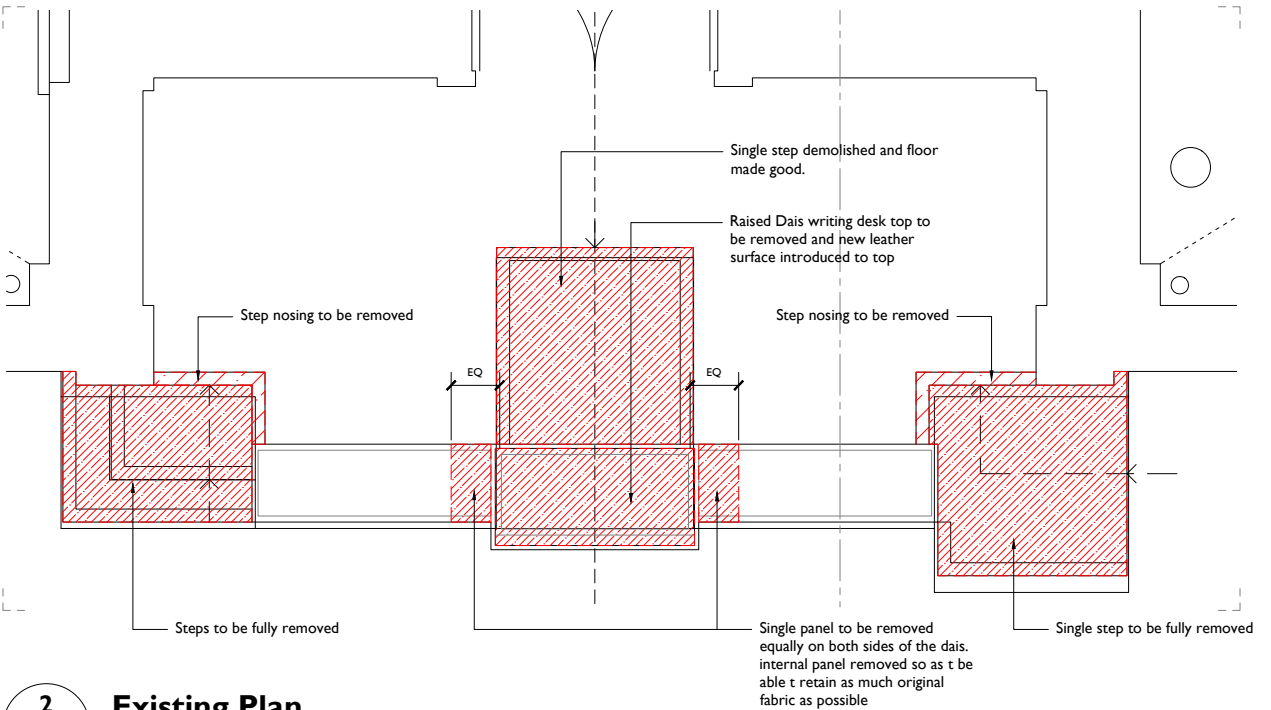
The current arrangement has a further raised central section to the desk accessed by a single step. The proposed works remove this central section, removing the need for the additional step and allows a wheelchair user to have full use of the dais and desk.

The current stepped arrangement is unequal and distracts from the strong symmetry of the Chamber. The proposed works reinforce the symmetry by rebuilding equal steps to either side, introduce more appropriate step nosings in keeping with the character of the Chamber and provides space for installation of a temporary ramp allowing for wheelchair users to access the dais.

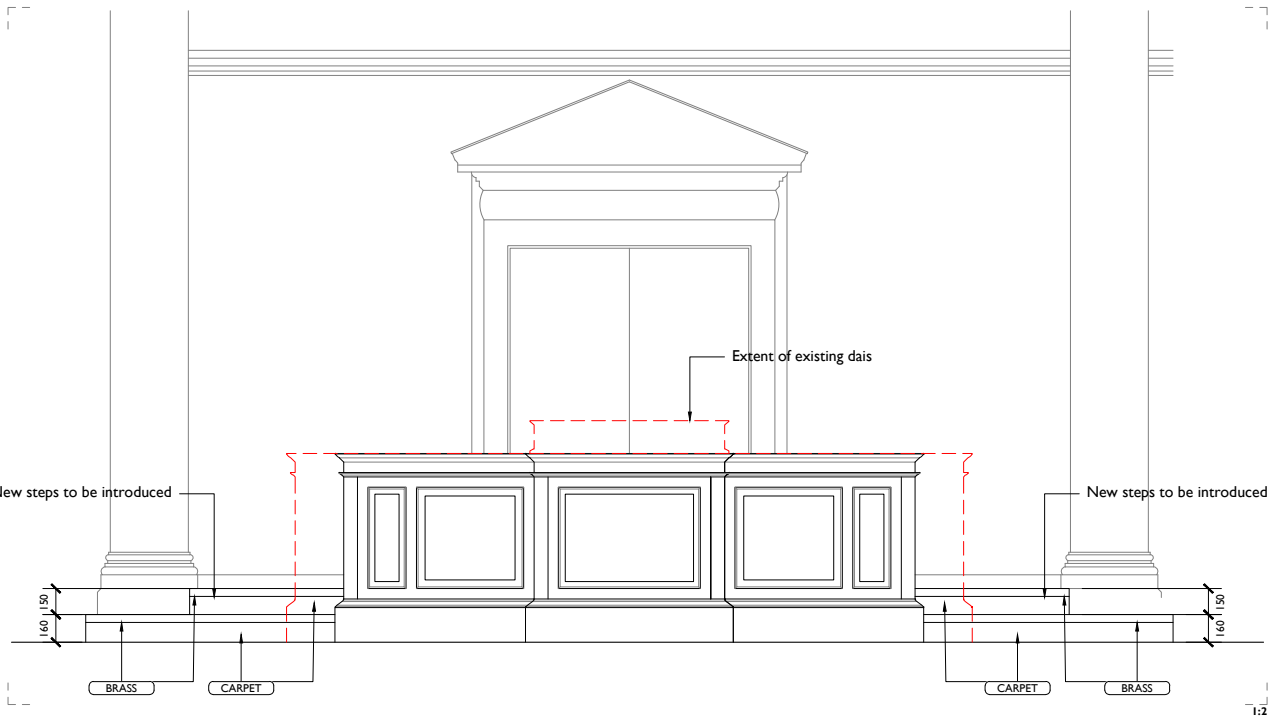
Refer to the drawings overleaf for detailed proposals.



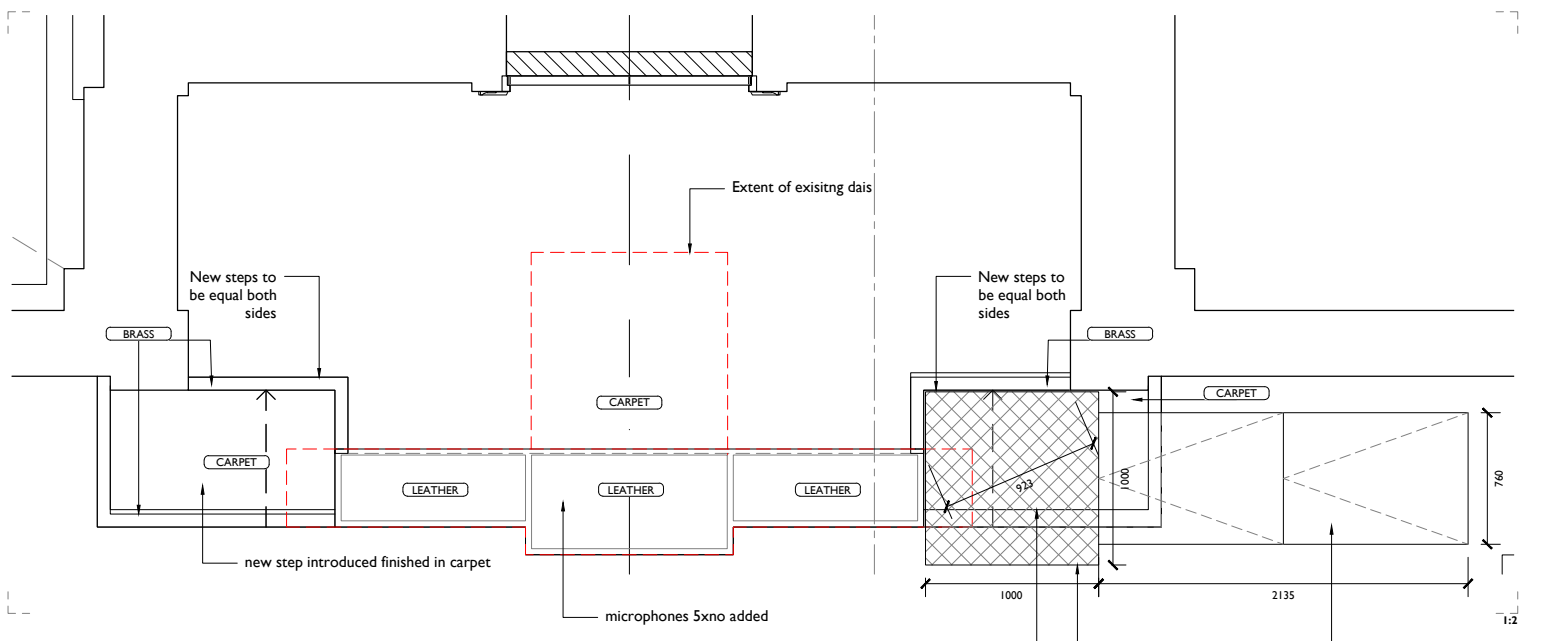
1
Existing Elevation
98020 1:25 @ A1



2
Existing Plan
98020 1:25 @ A1



3 Proposed Elevation
98020 1:25 @ A1



4 Proposed Plan
98020 1:25 @ A1

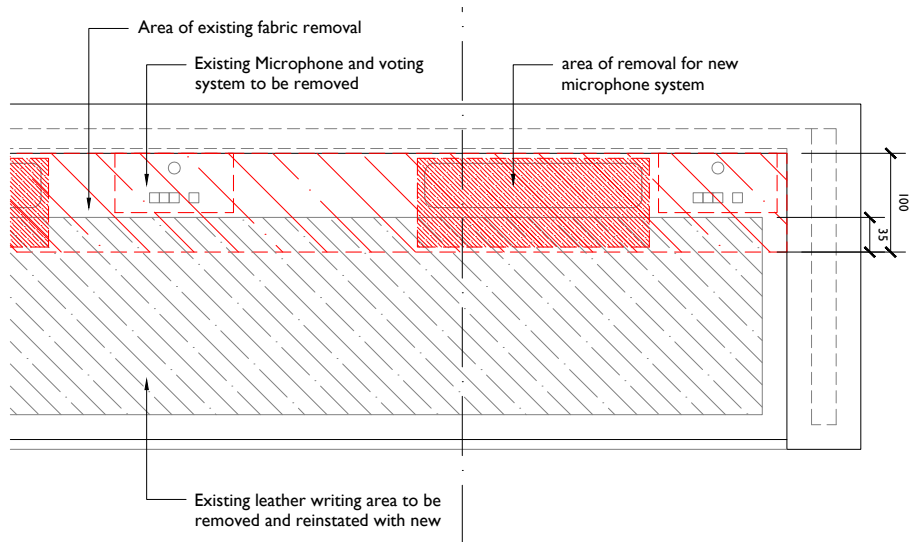
2.4 PROPOSED CONNECTIVITY IMPROVEMENTS

The current integrated delegate voting stations are not fit for purpose. The proposed works will seek to benefit from the wholesale electrical re-servicing of the Town Hall by introducing new integrated voting stations that bring the Council Chamber up to modern standards and increase the lifespan of the Town Hall.

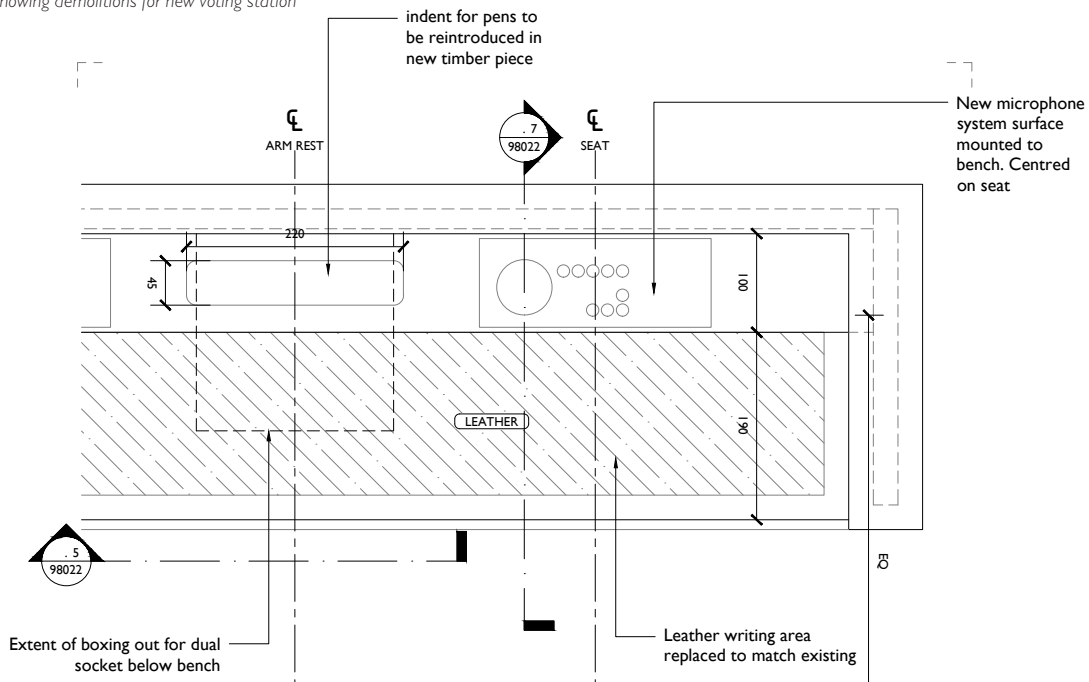
The desks will be adapted to incorporate the new stations with new leather inlays to match the reupholstered seats. Where currently the microphones are fixed to the desks, the new integrated stations will allow for the microphone to be removed and held by hand. This has benefits for less-abled users for who leaning forward to speak at the desk may be uncomfortable or not possible.

The new microphone and voting stations will be integrated into the desks by remove a section of joinery to the top of the desks and reinstating a new panel to match existing. Cable routes will be contained behind a new panel to the underside of the desktop allowing for the integration of USB charging ports, greatly improving the versatility of the joinery and again modernising the Chamber. This in turn creates a new storage shelf beneath the desktop to free up space for writing.

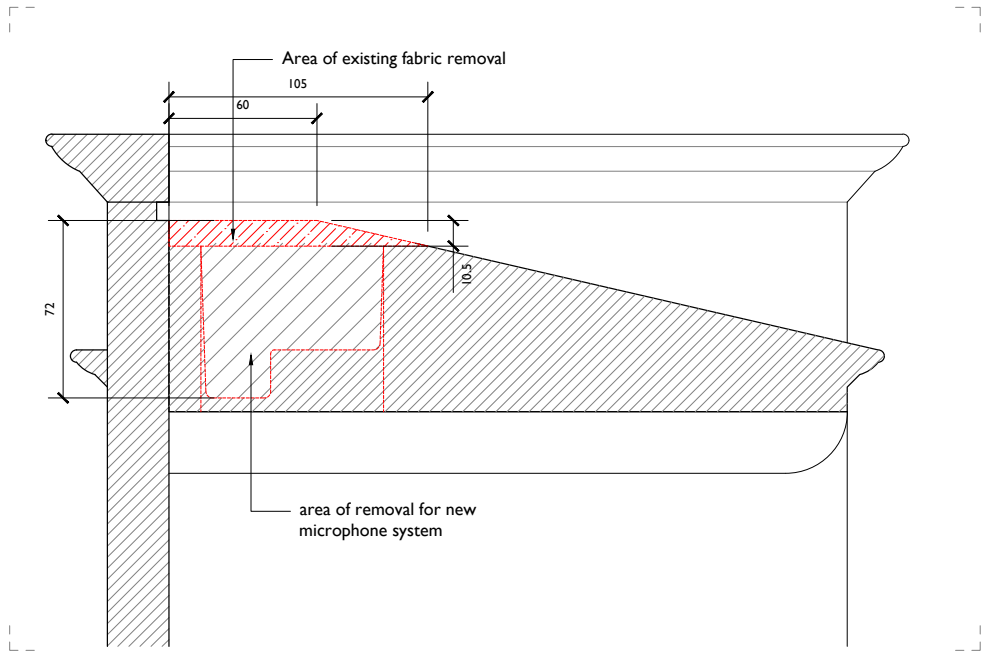
The inset voting station and USB charging plate will be finished in antique brass to retain the character of the Chamber.



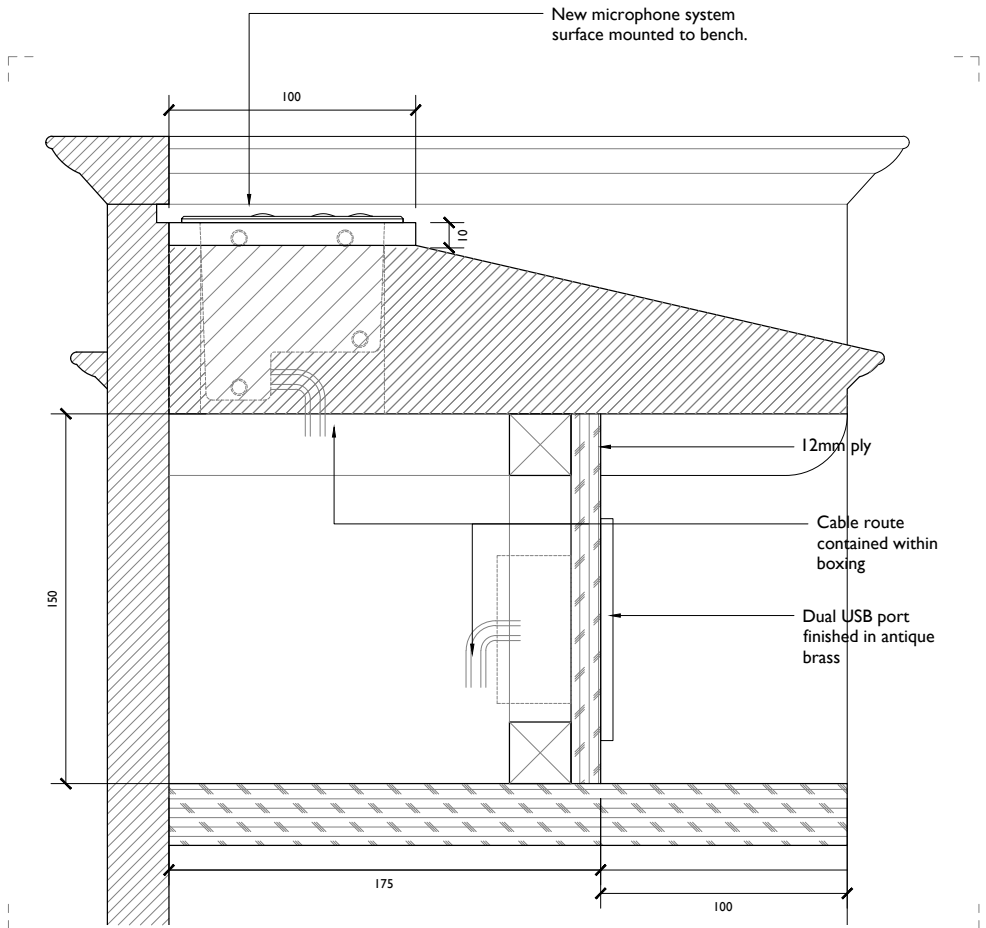
Existing bench plan showing demolitions for new voting station



Proposed bench section showing new voting station and USB charging plate



Existing bench section showing demolitions for new voting station



Proposed bench section showing new voting station and USB charging plate

3.0 GRAND STAIRCASE IMPROVEMENTS

3.1 GRAND STAIRCASE PROPOSALS

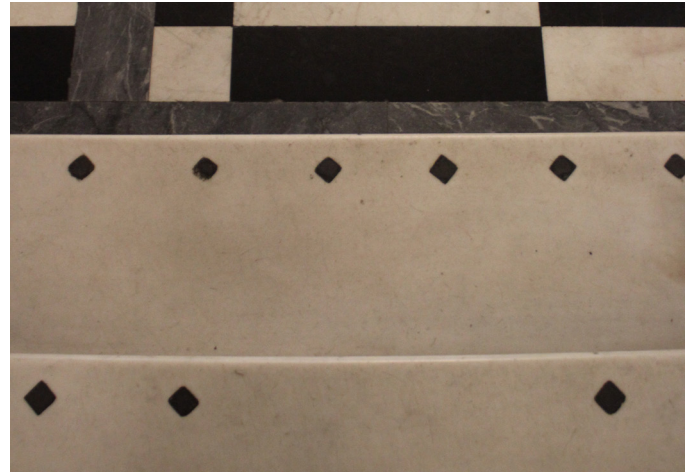
Visitors to the first floor Committee Rooms and Council Chamber will likely arrive via the Grand Staircase accessed from the Judd Street entrance. They can be regular Council staff, invited guests or members of the public unfamiliar with the building.

The current staircase features small diamond-shaped, adhesive applied stickers to assist with visibility of the first three steps only. Over time, the stickers have worn off leaving an inconsistent appearance that lets down the formality of the staircase.

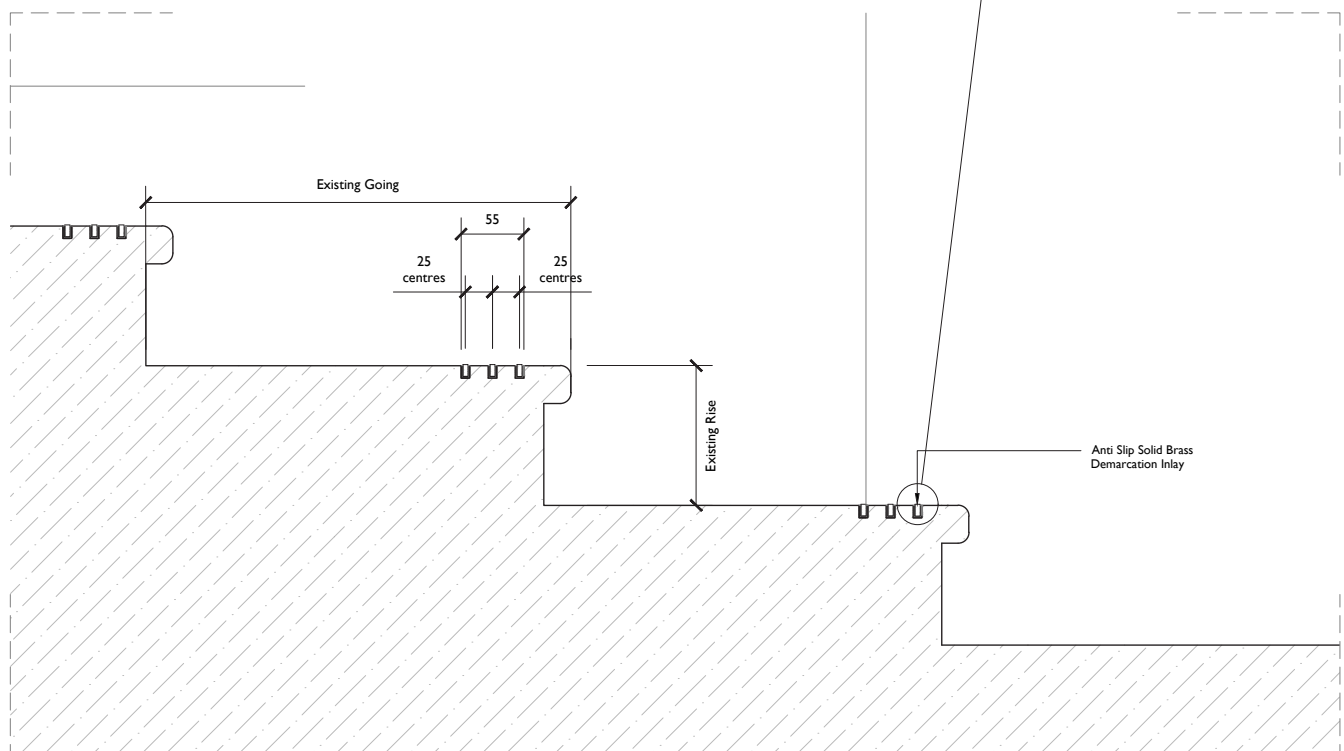
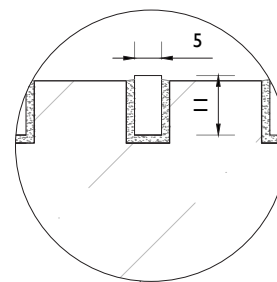
Under the advice of JTA, the proposals seek to provide a permanent solution that improves visual differentiation of the steps and compliments the character of the staircase. JTA advised that works should be consistent to all steps to minimise the risk of injuries from slipping or not registering a step by visually impaired users.

The strategy is to rout slots in the marble steps and inlay 3no. anti-slip solid brass strips per nosing. They are to be raised enough to provide grip whilst not creating a trip hazard.

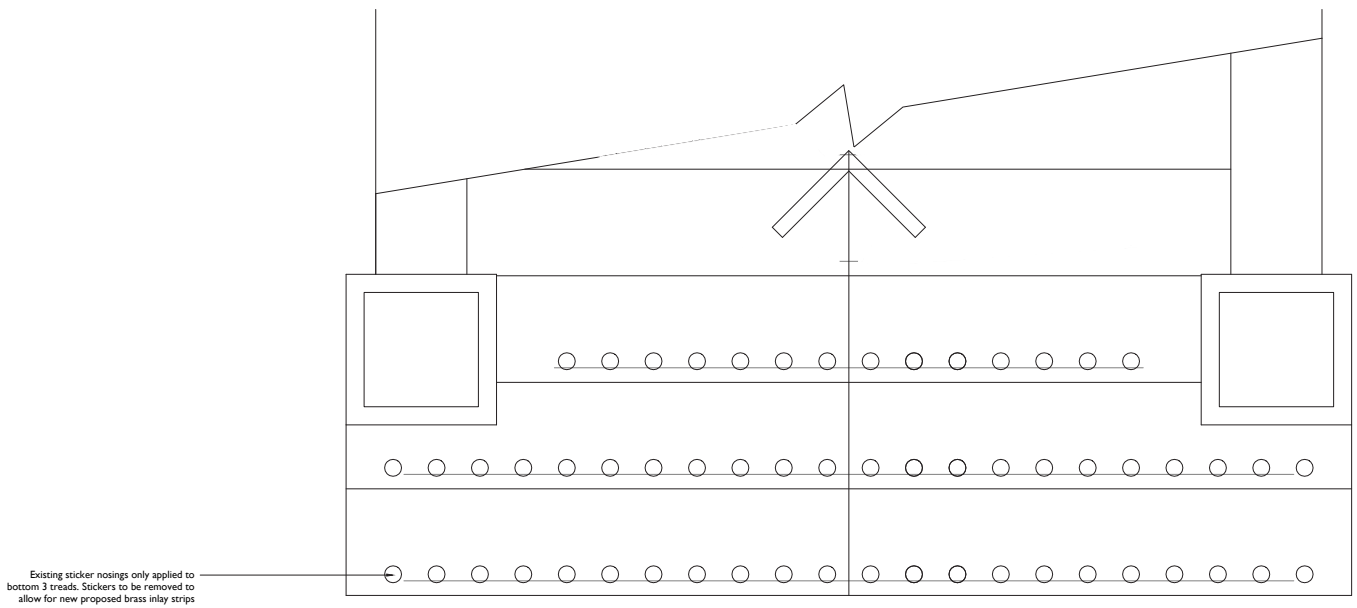
The drawings below and opposite detail the existing and proposed condition. The images overleaf provide an impression of what the new inset nosings would look like



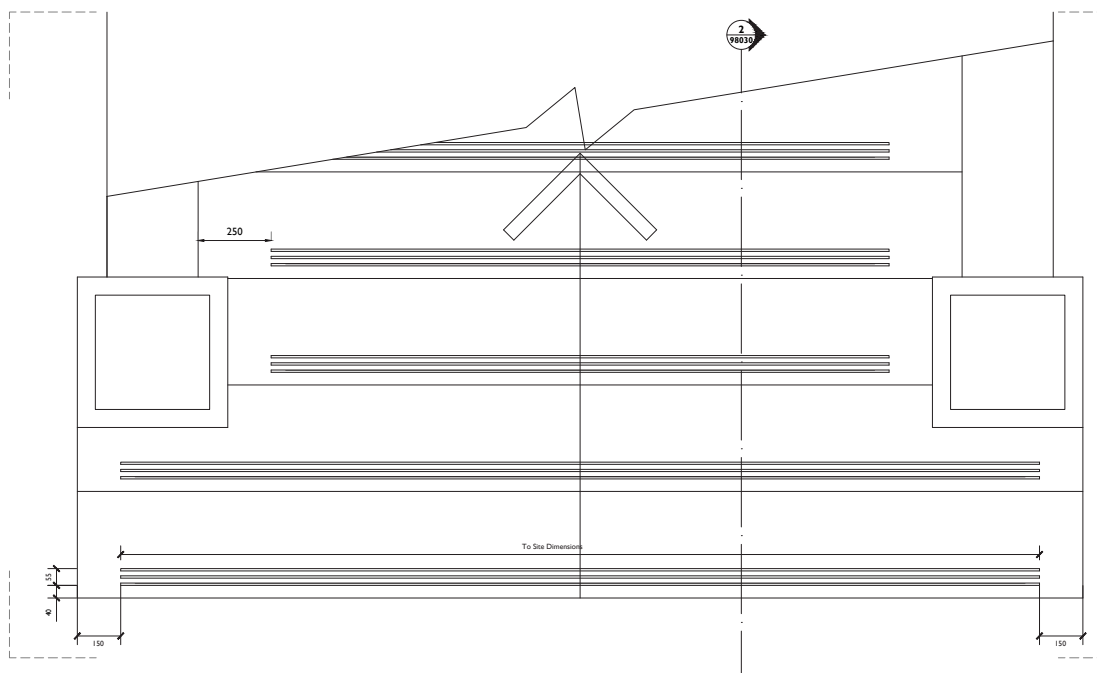
Existing adhesive-applied nosing stickers to bottom 3no. steps of Grand Staircase



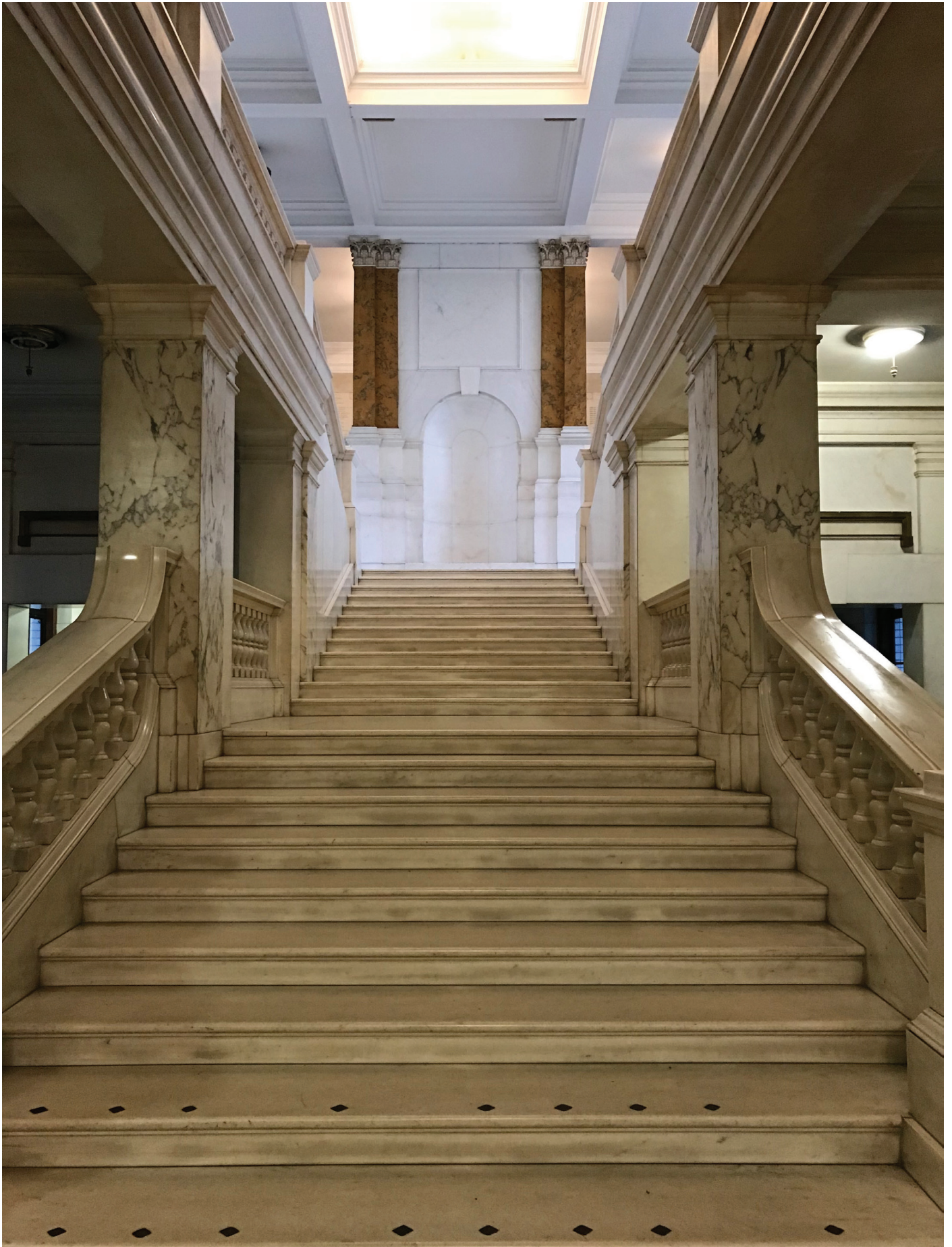
Proposed inlay brass nosing detail to Grand Staircase



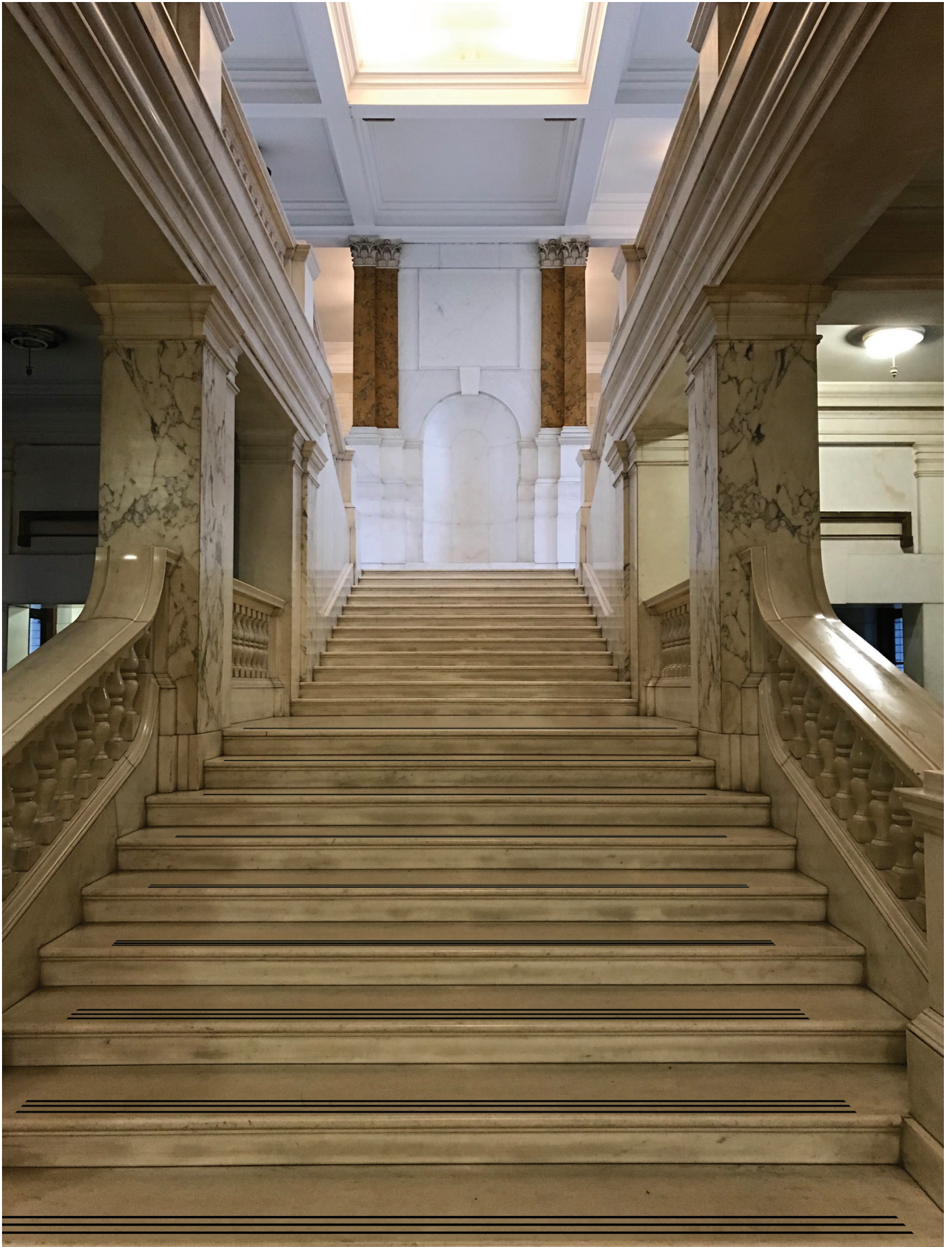
Existing adhesive-applied nosing stickers to bottom 3no. steps of Grand Staircase



Proposed inlay brass nosing strips to all steps of Grand Staircase



Existing photo showing adhesive-applied nosing stickers to bottom 3no. steps of Grand Staircase



Indicative image showing proposed inlay brass nosing strips to all steps of Grand Staircase

4.0 HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

4.1 COUNCIL CHAMBER WORKS

The power and success of the Council Chamber is in its hierarchy of space and symmetry. The current joinery is in a bad state of repair caused by general extensive use but accelerated by the introduction of adaptations that have aimed to improve accessibility. The execution of the existing moveable and extendable desk sections has caused great damage to the joinery and provides a largely inefficient way of adapting the Chamber for wheelchair use. Similarly, adaptations to the dais have been largely insensitive to the heritage character and disrupt the symmetry of the room.

With extensive repair works already proposed within LBC application 2019/2257/L, this provides a great opportunity to secure the future use of the Council Chamber through the integration of modern A/V facilities and works that greatly improve the accessibility and adaptability of the space. The proposals return the original symmetry of the room with reworked access to the dais and formalises the means of adapting the seating to allow for wheelchair users, providing fixed alternate positions for the moveable benches. In doing so, the order of the space is retained no matter the configuration of seating.

Works to the dais and desk are highly invasive with the removal of a significant amount of existing joinery. However, the proposed works to the central desk atop the dais ensure that this area can be accessed by all. This is important for London Borough of Camden Council to celebrate equality and allow for the possibility of a wheelchair user as Mayor. The proposals also read from the existing, adapting the desk by following the lines of the timber panels. The proposed desk will read as a complete, designed solution and not an adapted item.

The proposals will be carried out with sensitive materials that create a complete material aesthetic unifying the dais, central desk and horseshoe seating in a single aesthetic. The materials used will be based on the existing and amplify the heritage character of the space.

Although areas of existing joinery will be lost, the overall works will remedy poor alterations to the historic joinery and present a scheme that is cohesive, in keeping with the character and of great benefit to the Town Hall's use.

4.2 GRAND STAIRCASE WORKS

The existing staircase is an extremely grand gesture within an impressive entrance hall. The current stick-on diamonds do little justice to the nature of the marble and feel like a temporary solution that has worn badly over time.

The proposed brass inlay strips are undoubtedly more invasive and non-reversible. However, they are a formal and solid introduction that works with the character of the marble and emphasises the power and status of the staircase being the primary democratic route. The finish is harmonious with surrounding fixtures and will read as part of the character of the space.

These works are in keeping with the approach of the rest of the works in improving accessibility for all and becoming a permanent feature that emphasises the solidity and steadfastness of the Town Hall.

