



Freemasons' Hall, 60 Great Queen Street, London

Heritage and Design & Access Statement

March 2022

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Heritage and Design and Access Statement has been prepared by PJB Planning on behalf of the United Grand Lodge of England and accompanies a listed building consent application for the proposed works to convert an existing staff kitchen area on the ground floor of the hall into a disabled toilet and baby changing area for general use of staff and visitors to Freemasons' Hall.
- 1.2 The proposed conversion of this room is part of the ongoing works to the Hall to ensure that it continues to provide facilities to meet DDA requirements.
- 1.3 Included with this application are existing and proposed plans showing the changes proposed, and also photographs of the existing kitchen area. Photographs are also included showing an example of another recently renovated toilet within the building, showing the quality of finish that will be achieved.

2.0 Heritage listing

- 2.1 Freemasons' Hall is a Grade II* listed building, located on the southeast side of Great Queen Street. The Hall falls within Sub-Area 2 of the Seven Dials Conservation Area, designated in 1971, and is located on the site of the first Freemasons' Hall in 1775-76. The current Hall was completed in 1933, designed by architects Ashley & Newman and comprises an irregular polygonal shape.
- 2.2 Historic England entry number 1113218. The building was first listed on 9th March 1982 and has been given the following description:

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.

3.0 Proposals

- 3.1 The proposed works in this application are located in a room on the ground floor at the back for the central main canteen area. From the main canteen area there is an existing door through to a shared access to a stair well, the kitchen area to be converted and a large room at the back of this part of the building.
- 3.2 The following photographs show the existing entrance door into kitchen area from the shared access, and also internal views of the existing kitchen area.



Photograph 1 – View of entrance door to the existing kitchen area



Photographs 2 and 3 – Views from inside of existing kitchen area



Photograph 4 – View from within existing kitchen area

- 3.3 The proposed works also include the removal of a partition wall within the kitchen area. Behind the partition wall is a lift shaft, which houses a redundant dumb waiter. The following photographs show the lift shaft and dumb waiter with servicing.



Photographs 5 and 6 – Lift shaft and dumb waiter

3.4 The application provides the following schedule of works:

- Remove and strip out existing kitchen.
- Remove partition, dumb waiter, lift shaft and any accessories.
- Shutter the floor to complete floor slab on ground floor.
- Block up existing doorway.
- Install new lintel to form new doorway.
- Install timber partitioning to square of room ready for new WC installation.
- Adapt existing supply and waste to pick up sink and toilets.
- Install new copper supply and waste pipes to serve new toilet and sink.
- Install surface finishes, including of vinyl flooring and tiling.
- Install mechanical extract – this may involve locating and making access to the closest location externally, may be a bit of builder's work involved with this.
- Adapting electrical supplies to automate doors leading into the lobby and installing new lighting.
- Install Doc M pack.
- Finish and completion.

3.5 The submitted drawings show these changes and alterations proposed and also shows the existing room to be altered. Although the lift shaft will be removed at ground floor level to enlarge the room, the upper and lower floors of the lift shaft will remain unaffected and all the mechanisms of the dumb waiter located elsewhere in the building will be kept in situ.

3.6 The Freemasons' Hall has a long planning history of alterations to the building, including various works to wc facilities around the building. Most recently in March 2021 listed building consent was granted for works to the interior of Toilet 25 located on the second floor of the Hall (LPA 2020/1227/L). The conclusion of the works proposed in the 2021 application was considered to amount of a 'minor change' of the Hall's significance-bearing fabric, and that the proposed works represented a 'slight beneficial effect' on the significance of the designated heritage asset.

3.7 The same approach taken to the assessment of application 2020/1227/L can therefore be applied to the assessment of this application.

4.0 Heritage Legislation, Policy and Guidance Summary

National Policy

Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990

4.1 The primary legislation relating to Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas is set out in the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

- Section 16(2) states *"In considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works the local planning authority or the Secretary of State shall have special*

regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses”.

National Planning Policy Framework (2021)

- 4.2 The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published on 20h July 2021, replacing the previous published 2019 and 2012 frameworks.
- 4.3 With regard to the historic environment, the over-arching aim of the policy remains in line with philosophy of the 2012 framework, namely that “our historic environments... can better be cherished if their spirit of place thrives, rather than withers.” The relevant policy is outlined within chapter 16, ‘Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment’.
- 4.4 This chapter reasserts that heritage assets can range from sites and buildings of local interest to World Heritage Sites considered to have an Outstanding Universal Value. The NPPF subsequently requires these assets to be conserved in a “manner appropriate to their significance” (Paragraph 189).
- 4.5 NPPF directs local planning authorities to require an applicant to “describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting” and the level of detailed assessment should be “proportionate to the assets’ importance” (Paragraph 194).
- 4.6 Paragraph 195 states that the significance any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal should be identified and assessed. This includes any assets affected by development within their settings. This Significance Assessment should be taken into account when considering the impact of a proposal, “to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset’s conservation and any aspect of the proposal”. This paragraph therefore results in the need for an analysis of the impact of a proposed development on the asset’s relative significance, in the form of a Heritage Impact Assessment.
- 4.7 Paragraph 199 requires 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 (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.”
- 4.8 It is then clarified that any harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, either through alteration, destruction, or development within its setting, should require, “*clear and convincing justification*” (Paragraph 200). This paragraph outlines that substantial harm to grade II listed heritage assets should be exceptional, rising to ‘wholly exceptional’ for those assets of the highest significance such as scheduled monuments, Grade I and grade II* listed buildings or registered parks and gardens as well as World Heritage Sites.

- 4.9 In relation to harmful impacts or the loss of significance resulting from a development proposal, Paragraph 201 states the following:

“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 total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:

a. the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and

b. no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and

c. conservation by grant-funding or some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and

d. the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.”

- 4.10 The NPPF therefore requires a balance to be applied in the context of heritage assets, including the recognition of potential benefits accruing from a development. In the case of proposals which would result in “less than substantial harm”, paragraph 202 provides the following:

“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, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.”

- 4.11 It is also possible for proposals, where suitably designed, to result in no harm to the significance of heritage assets.

- 4.12 The NPPF therefore recognises the need to clearly identify relative significance at an early stage and then to judge the impact of development proposals in that context.

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)(2021)

- 4.13 The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) was updated on 20 July 2021 and is a companion to the NPPF, replacing a large number of foregoing Circulars and other supplementary guidance.
- 4.14 In respect of heritage decision-making, the PPG stresses the importance of determining applications on the basis of significance and explains how the tests of harm and impact within the NPPF are to be interpreted.

Historic England 'Conservation Principle: Policies and Guidance' 2008

4.15 Historic England sets out in this document a logical approach to making decisions and offering guidance about all aspects of England's historic environment, including changes affecting significant places. The guide sets out six high-level principles:

- *The historic environment is a shared resource*
- *Everyone should be able to participate in sustaining the historic environment*
- *Understanding the significance of places is vital*
- *Significant places should be managed to sustain their values*
- *Decisions about change must be reasonable, transparent and consistent*
- *Documenting and learning from decisions is essential*

4.16 'Significance' lies at the core of these principles, the sum of all the heritage values attached to a place, be it a building, an archaeological site or a larger historic area such as a whole village or landscape. The document sets out how heritage values can be grouped into four categories:

- *Evidential value: the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity*
- *Historic value: 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: the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place*
- *Communal value: the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory.*

4.17 It states that:

New work or alteration to a significant place should normally be acceptable if:

- a) There is sufficient information comprehensively to understand the impacts of the proposal on the significance of the place;*
- b) the proposal would not materially harm the values of the place, which, where appropriate, would be reinforced or further revealed;*
- c) the proposals aspire to a quality of design and execution which may be valued now and in the future;*
- d) the long-term consequences of the proposals can, from experience, be demonstrated to be benign, or the proposals are designed not to prejudice alternative solutions in the future" (Page 58).*

Local Policy

Adopted Camden Local Plan 2017

- 4.18 The Camden Local Plan was adopted in 2017 and is used for determining planning applications. Of particular relevance to this application is Policy D2 that provides guidance
- 4.19 Policy D2 *Heritage* – This policy provides guidance and policy requirements for developments in Conservation Areas and to Listed Buildings, and primarily supports enhancements to the heritage assets.

London Plan 2021

- 4.20 The London Plan 2021 provides further guidance in relation to the consideration of this application.
- 4.21 Policy HC1 of the London Plan provides guidance of heritage assets and states:

Development proposals affecting heritage assets, and their settings, should conserve their significance, by being sympathetic to the assets' significance and appreciation within their surroundings. The cumulative impacts of incremental change from development on heritage assets and their settings should also be actively managed. Development proposals should avoid harm and identify enhancement opportunities by integrating heritage considerations early on in the design process.

5.0 Assessment of potential impacts

- 5.1 Previous applications submitted at Freemasons' Hall have demonstrated that the building falls within an asset of high significance, due to its considerable historic and architectural interest, which can be summarised as follows:
- Siting of the first Masonic building with a 240-year progression.
 - Dominating and landmark presence of the building along Great Queen Street.
 - Central headquarters for the United Grand Lodge of England.
 - Historic links from 1933 to present day.
 - Identified by the Twentieth Century Society as one of London's important memorial structures.
 - Its Art Deco-influenced interior remain substantively 'as built' and in use for their original purpose.
 - The building contains many important artifacts and sculptures.
 - Designed by Ashley and Newman.
 - The Grade II* listing given the Hall national recognition as a being a '*particularly important building of more than special interest*'.

- 5.2 The scale of impact of the proposed works therefore needs to be assessed against this backdrop and consideration needs to be given to the contribution that the existing kitchen and lift shaft to the significance of Freemasons' Hall.
- 5.3 The existing kitchen area is a small area located in a secondary part of the building, away from primary ceremonial areas and routes. The existing partition wall appears to be potentially a later addition to the building. The lift shaft is also redundant and not in use, so has no existing function.
- 5.4 As such, it is considered that the existing kitchen and lift shaft make a low contribution within the significance of the listed building as a whole.
- 5.5 The proposed works will reposition the doorway into the disabled wc and baby changing area but continue to use a wooden paneled door to reflect other doors found elsewhere in the building.
- 5.6 It is proposed to fit out the new toilet/baby changing area with tiling and fixtures that are reflective of other toilets within the building.
- 5.7 It should also be taken into account that these works will provide the Hall with an addition disabled toilet and also baby changing area. The proposal will therefore assist the Hall in meeting current day standards and could be considered to represent a public benefit that also needs to be taken into account.
- 5.8 The proposed works propose a sympathetic improvement to the facilities with minimal change to the original fabric of the building, amounting to a 'minor change' and also considered to reflect a 'slight beneficial effect' on the significance of the designated heritage asset as a result of the works.

6.0 Design & Access Statement

Amount and layout

- 6.1 The proposed works involve the internal conversion of an existing kitchen area and partitioned dumb waiter lift to a disabled wc and baby changing area. The existing layout shown on the following page, along with the proposed layout, show the extent of the works proposed.

A floor plan of a bathroom. It shows a toilet, a sink, and a shower area. The toilet is located on the left side of the room. The sink is located on the right side of the room. The shower area is located at the bottom of the room. The plan includes dimensions for the toilet, sink, and shower area.

[illegible]

Fig 3 – Structural details

Design and Material finishes

- 6.2 The proposed alterations include fixtures and fittings that are found in other toilets within the building. The following elevations show the extent of the changes proposed to the room. The photographs show one of the other toilets within the building as a typical example of what is proposed in this application.

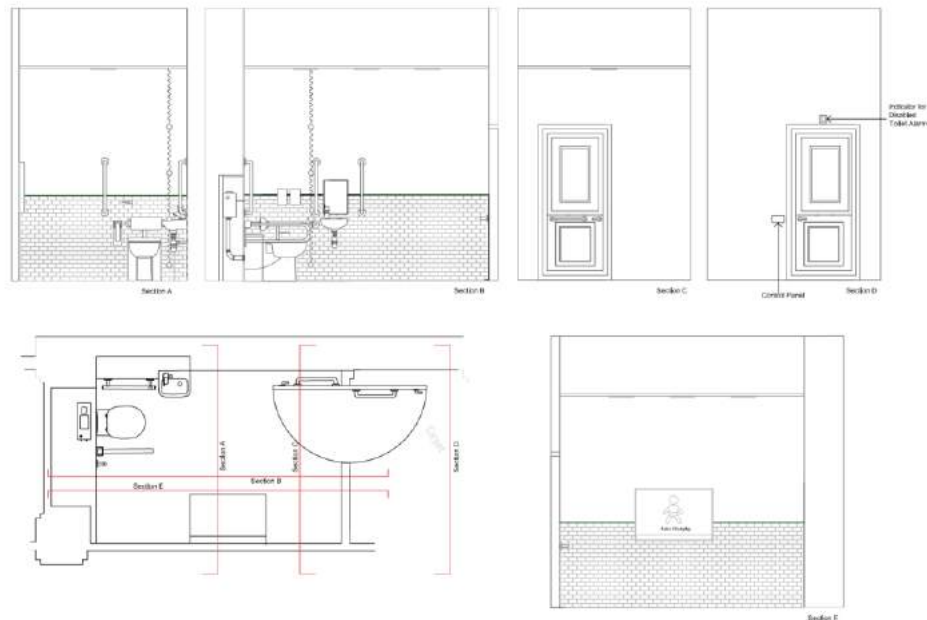


Fig 3 – Proposed elevations



Photograph 7 – Example of a similar toilet within Freemasons' Hall

Access

- 6.3 The proposed conversion of the kitchen area to a disabled wc is located on the ground floor of the building providing ease of access by users. It will also ensure that the Hall meets DDA requirements to be meet current day requirements.

7.0 Conclusions

- 7.1 This Statement has evaluated the importance of Freemason's Hall and assessed the impact of the proposed works to convert an existing small kitchen area and redundant dumb waiter lift shaft to a disable wc/baby changing area.
- 7.2 Based on this assessment it is considered that the proposed works will have a 'low impact' and 'minor change' on the Grade II* listed building, and with the fixture and fittings proposed is considered to be a 'slight beneficial effect' on the significance of the designated heritage asset as a result of the works. It is also considered there are public benefits of the proposed works.
- 7.3 It is therefore considered that listed building consent should be granted for the proposed works.