



Freemasons' Hall, 60 Great Queen Street, London

Heritage and Design & Access Statement

April 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 and express advertisement consent application for the proposed advertisement signage to the main western entrance to and north western side of Freemasons' Hall facing onto Great Queen Street.
- 1.2 Included with this application are existing and proposed plans showing the advertisement proposed.

2.0 Heritage listing and Conservation Area status

- 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 siting 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.

- 2.3 Freemasons' Hall is located within the Seven Dials Conservation Area designated in November 1971 and extended in 1974 and 1998. Great Queen Street, including

Freemasons' Hall falls with Sub Area Two of the Council's adopted Conservation Area Appraisal for the Seven Dials Conservation Area (adopted 1998). The Appraisal states:

Great Queen Street was built in the first half of the 17th century begun by the speculator William Newton with the adjacent Lincoln's Inn Fields. Named after James I's Queen, Ann of Denmark it has its origins in a royal private way to James I's favourite residence in Hertfordshire. Great Queen Street formed a continuation of the north side of Lincoln's Inn Fields until the construction of Kingsway opened in 1905.

The character and architecture of Great Queen Street was also shaped by the development of Freemason buildings. In 1774 the Moderns' Grand Lodge (founded in 1717) bought a house on the southern side of Great Queen Street where the original Temple was built in 1775, with the addition of the Freemason's Tavern in 1786. In 1815 two houses were acquired with the aid of Sir John Soane (£500), who later designed additional premises for the Masons that were completed in 1829. In 1863 a new building was erected with designs by S.P Cockerell, son of Professor C.R. Cockerell RA which was completed in 1866. This building became known as "The Connaught Rooms".

The present Freemasons Hall, which is located at the junction of Wild Street and Great Queen Street, is the central headquarters of English freemasonry. Ashley & Newman completed the building in its present form in 1933.

2.4 The Appraisal also makes the following statement of Freemasons' Hall:

The Freemasons Hall is a prominent steel frame construction faced with Portland stone. The Hall fits into an irregular polygonal site and was built as a memorial to Freemasons killed in World War I. It dominates the view eastwards along Long Acre and is widely considered to be an over development of the site by virtue of its scale and bulk in relation to its surroundings.

3.0 Proposals

- 3.1 The proposed advertisements in this application include 2 No. banners located at the main entrance to Freemasons' Hall at the south western end of the building and can be viewed from both Great Queen Street and Wild Street, with long views from Long Acre beyond Great Queen Street. Each of these banners will be 5 m deep/high, by 1 m wide, and set 3.35m above the base column (entrance step). They will be attached to the two main pillars located either side of the entrance.
- 3.2 4 No. banners are located along the north western side of the building, located at regular intervals between windows. These 4 No. banners will be mounted on a projecting pole that attaches to the top and bottom of the banner and will project 1.34m from the side of the building. Each of the banners will be 4 m deep/high by 1 m wide. The lower attachment pole will be set 2.56m above the ground level (pavement).

- 3.4 The banners are made of 540 GSM - PVC sheeting. The 2 No. main entrance banners and the upper supporting cables for the 4 No. projecting banners will to be fixed to the jointing of the building using stainless-steel fixing in the form of an 8mm HUS-HR screw anchor from Hilti with a hanger plate, as shown by the following images:



Figure 1 - 8mm HUS-HR screw anchor from Hilti with a hanger plate

- 3.5 The 4 No. projecting banners will be attached to the building using the following specification which will minimise the amount of connection needed to the building for the signage.

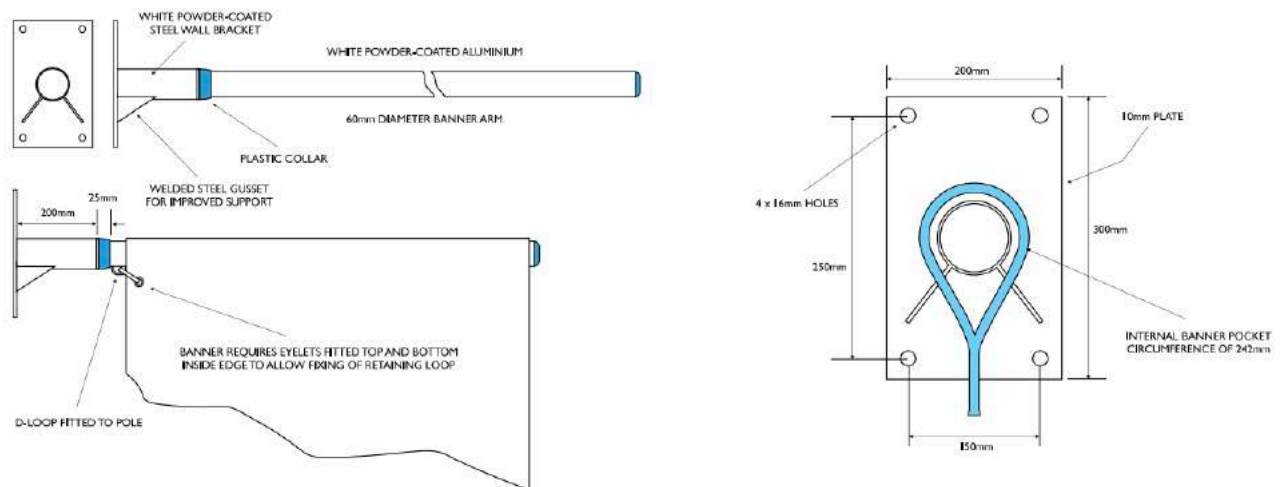


Figure 2 – Pole and fitting details for 4 No. projecting banners

- 3.6 The schedule of works to erect these banners include:

- Print banners from signed off design.
- Abseil / install team to prepare positioning of ropes from our drawings supplied.
- Position of banners marked up by our install team.
- Necessary fixings positioned.
- Poles fixed into wall with appropriate fixings for front elevation.
- Banners then attached to poles or tied around columns in position.

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 are 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 Policies D2 and D4 that provides guidance in relation to the impact on heritage assets and also guidance for the design of advertisements.
- 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.
- 4.20 Policy D4 *Advertisements* – This policy sets out guidance for the consideration of advertisements and requires them to preserve or enhance the character of their setting and host building. The policy requires advertisements to respect the form, fabric, design and scale of their setting and host building and be of the highest standard of design, material, and detail. The policy seeks to resist advertisements that would:
- contribute to an unsightly proliferation of signage in the area;
 - contribute to street clutter in the public realm;
 - cause light pollution to nearby residential properties or wildlife habitats;
 - have flashing illuminated elements; or
 - impact upon public safety.
- 4.21 Where banner advertisements are proposed the policy refers to the criteria set out in the Council’s Supplementary Planning Document.

Camden Planning Guidance: Advertisements (SPD, March 2018)

- 4.22 The Council adopted supplement guidance to assist with the consideration of advertisement applications in March 2018. This guidance relates to Camden Local Plan policy D4 and its status is a Supplementary Planning Document.
- 4.23 Paragraph 1.7 of the SPD states:

Good quality advertisements respect the architectural features of the host building and the character and appearance of the surrounding area. As a general guide, the most satisfactory advertisements are those which take into account the character and design of the property, its surroundings and alter the external fabric of the host

building as little as possible. Advertisements will not be considered acceptable where they adversely impact upon amenity and public safety.

- 4.24 Paragraph 1.8 goes onto state:

Advertisements and signs should respect the form, fabric, design and scale of the host building and setting. All signs should serve as an integral part of the immediate surroundings and be constructed of materials that are sympathetic to the host building and the surrounding area.

- 4.25 In terms of public safety, the guidance requires advertisements to not be hazardous to vehicular traffic through blocking site lines or impede on pedestrian movement.

- 4.26 In relation to Conservation Area and Listed Buildings, the guidance states:

Advertisements in conservation areas and on or near listed buildings require detailed consideration given the sensitivity and historic nature of these areas or buildings. Any advertisements, of whatever type, on or near a listed building or in a conservation area must not harm their character and appearance and must not obscure or damage specific architectural features of buildings.

- 4.27 Specific guidance is set out in paragraph 1.28 above banner advertisements, where they will only be permitted in the following circumstances:

They relate to landmark or unique buildings, such as festival venues, museums, and do not detract from the appearance and form of the host building or the surrounding environment.

In some commercial areas, flags or banners may be considered a suitable form of display. Within residential areas, conservation areas, and on or near listed buildings we will be primarily concerned with safeguarding the amenity, character and appearance of these areas and buildings and therefore it is unlikely that such advertisements will be supported.

- 4.28 It is noted that the guidance contained within paragraph 4.27 does not necessarily preclude a banner advertisement on a listed building, but it does highlight the importance of protecting the heritage integrity of the listed building and sets a higher level to attain if consent is to be approved for this type of banner.

London Plan 2021

- 4.29 The London Plan 2021 provides further guidance in relation to the consideration of this application.

- 4.30 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 advertisements therefore needs to be assessed against this backdrop and consideration needs to be given to the impact on the fabric of the building.
- 5.3 In terms of physical changes and works to the listed building, the proposed 2 No. banners located on the pillars either side of the main entrance are to be fixed to the building at joints between the stonework. The intention is to a minimal form of attachment the building and will use Portland limestone to fix into the anchors to hold the banners. The 4 No. project banners to the side of the building have been designed to keep alterations to the exterior to the building to a minimum, using small fixing plates and cables that will be fixed into the joints between stonework.
- 5.4 The actual physical works to the building will therefore be minimal and will not result in a significant impact to the fabric of the building.

- 5.5 In terms of the assessment of the banners under the Council's adopted Local Plan policies and SPD, it is considered that as Freemasons' Hall is a *landmark building* along Great Queen Street and this part of the Conservation Area. As such, provided the banners are not obtrusive and do not result in an unattractive visual clutter, this policy guidance supports this form of proposed advertisement.
- 5.6 The number of banners proposed in this application have been keep to a minimum. At the entrance to the Hall, two banners are proposed either side located on the main pillars, giving a symmetrical feel to the scheme. 4 smaller banners are then located to the side of the Hall along Great Queen Street, this will give them a subservient appearance to the main entrance banners and are spaced at regular intervals between windows.
- 5.7 The designs of the banners included with the application are to be used on a general basis throughout the year. However, during the year there are a number of Open House events and other events organised and it is proposed to swap the general banners for event banners for a short period leading up and during the event.
- 5.8 An example of these event banners has been included with the application. The fixtures to the building will not be changed and it is only the banner part of the advertisement that will be swapped with the event banner leading up to and during the event.
- 5.9 Taking into account proposed works result in minimal alteration to the fabric of the building and that the advertisement banners have been sympathetically located on the building, it is considered the amount of change is 'minor' on the significance of the designated heritage asset. It is also considered the banners proposed are supported under Local Plan policies and SPD guidance.

6.0 Design & Access Statement

Amount and layout

- 6.1 The proposed advertisements comprise 2 banners at the main western entrance to the Hall, and 4 No. banners along the north western side of the building. The banners will be 5m and 4m high/deep, respectively, and 1m wide and located on the pillars either side of the main entrance and along regular intervals between windows on the north western side of the hall.

Design

- 6.2 The photographs on the following page show the existing building:



Photograph 1 - South western main entrance onto Great Queen Street



Photograph 2 - View from north western side from Great Queen Street

6.2 The following drawings show the proposed signage and their locations proposed on the building.

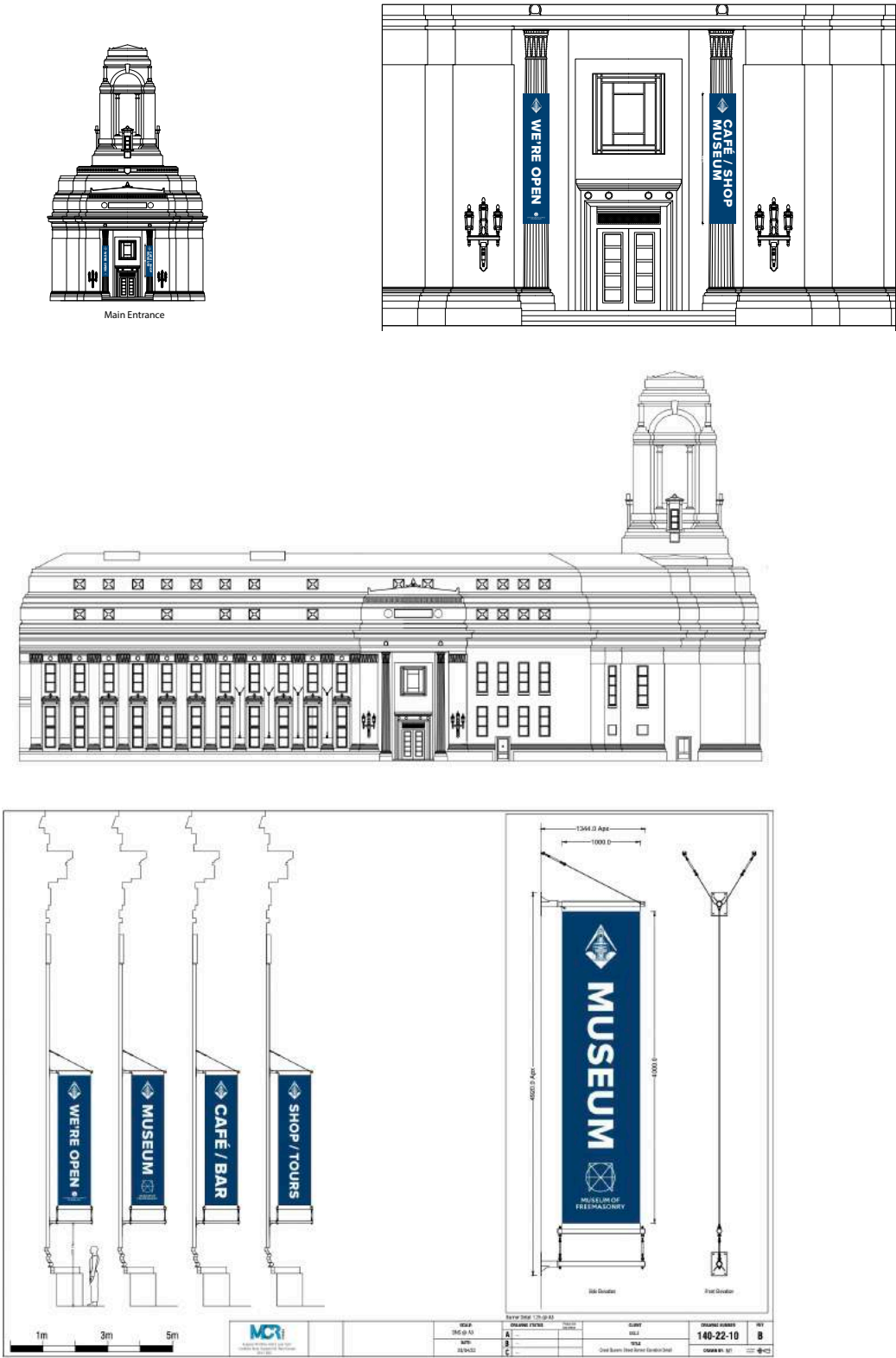


Figure 3 - Proposed banner signs

- 6.3 The following drawings are an example of an event banner to be used leading up to and during an event:



Figure 3 - Typical event banners

Access

- 6.4 The proposed 2 No. advertisements attached to the pillars either side of the main entrance are set above ground level by 3.35 m and will not impede on access to and from the building. The proposed projecting banners to the side of the building will be 2.56m above ground level and project 1.34m out from the side of the building. This signage will overhang the adjoining footpath and will be at a height that will provide sufficient and safe access for pedestrians below the banners.

7.0 Conclusions

- 7.1 This Statement has evaluated the importance of Freemason's Hall and assessed the impact of the proposed advertisements.
- 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.
- 7.4 The proposed banners follow and are supported by the Council's Local Plan heritage and advertisement policies and SPD guidance.
- 7.3 It is therefore considered that listed building consent and express advertisement consent should be granted for the proposed advertisements.