

St Pancras Hotel

Gilbert Scott Restaurant, Bar and Portico: Proposed Alterations

Design, Access and Heritage Statement

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1 Introduction

The opening of the St Pancras Renaissance Hotel and residential apartments in 2011 marked the culmination of an 80-year long search for a viable use for Sir George Gilbert Scott's Midland Grand Hotel. The project is perhaps the most notable conservation success story of the century and makes appropriate and beneficial use of all parts of the former hotel, as well as the former taxi rank and Booking Office. The project has won several conservation and design awards, including an RIBA Award, and has proved successful and popular for hotel users and visitors. The project was taken forward by the Manhattan Loft Corporation under Harry Handelsman, with RHWL and Richard Griffiths Architects as joint architects.

Since opening in 2011, the hotel has proved highly popular and successful, and the inevitable wear and tear on the Gilbert Scott Restaurant and Bar located on the ground floor and basement and its ancillary spaces has now rendered the space inadequate for its purpose. Manhattan Loft Corporation, in association with the St Pancras Renaissance Hotel, wish to renew and renovate the restaurant and bar and to open the spaces to the public once again.

After the successful completion of the Booking Office Bar renewal and renovation by Hugo Toro in 2021, Manhattan Loft Corporation have again appointed Hugo Toro as interior designer for the Gilbert Scott Restaurant renovation. Light IQ – the lighting designers for the Hansom Lobby and Booking Office - have also been appointed to provide lighting design services for the restaurant.

The exterior portico, a key area of the hotel's public Euston Road frontage, has continued to be problematic area for the hotel management and security since the hotel opened in 2011. This renovation project aims to tackle these issues in a sensitive way by allowing the historic form of the building to remain dominant while addressing serious concerns of damage, antisocial behaviour and blight. Currently as agreed with the council the area has been fenced off to prevent damage to the structure, risk of exposure to drug paraphernalia (needles etc) and prevention of litter and rubbish.

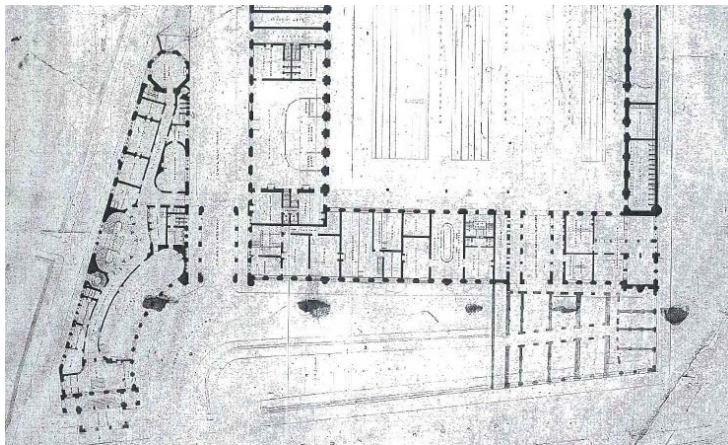


The Grand Midland Hotel c1900

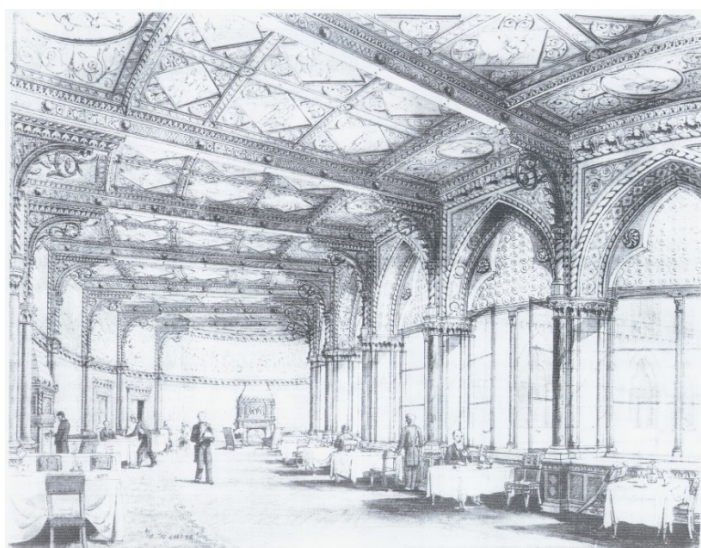
2 Historical background

George Gilbert Scott's **Midland Grand Hotel** was constructed to provide a fitting London Terminal to the Midland Railway. His successful competition design gave the Midland Railway the image that they wanted to advertise their ambition and achievement at a time when the other railway terminals had mainly been completed. It was noted, not least by Scott himself, as a noble attempt to prove that the Gothic style was suitable for a major civic building, following his failure to do so at the Foreign Office.

The **competition design of 1868** provided for a west wing with a portico for carriages, a tall entrance hall with a Venetian screen to the hotel reception, and a curved corridor leading to the famed staircase, giving access to the curved coffee room and to the rest of the hotel. The staircase gave access to the wing of hotel rooms either side of a long corridor facing onto Euston Road or onto the station platforms. The platform level rooms are a storey height above Euston Road, so as to allow trains to cross over the Grand Union Canal, rather than below it as at Kings Cross. The entrance hall is at street level, so there are changes of level to the ground floor corridor, to the staircase, and to the hotel concourse. The rooms to the west of the entrance corridor are tall enough to allow the introduction of mezzanine-level rooms, and these are also affected by the proposals.



Scott's competition plan 1868



Competition design for coffee room

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The **west wing** of the hotel was completed in 1876, after the east wing had been operating for four years. However, during construction the Midland Directors rejected Scott's proposal of Clayton and Bell as decorators and appointed Gillow's instead. They adopted a hierarchy of materials from ash, mahogany and oak in the bedrooms to ebonised gold and crimson velvet in the public rooms, or alternatively walnut and huja with black and gold decoration.

The most significant decorative schemes in the five main historic rooms in the west wing - leading from the entrance hall to the ladies' smoking room above - were restored in the 2011 restoration project as a condition of the listed building consent. In practice this meant that the entrance hall, ground floor corridor, first floor corridor and ladies' smoking room were redecorated in the original colour scheme, and the ground floor restaurant and grand staircase were redecorated in accordance with later schemes.

The **portico** acted as a covered canopy for carriage drop-off, with a balcony above opening off the Ladies Smoking Room.



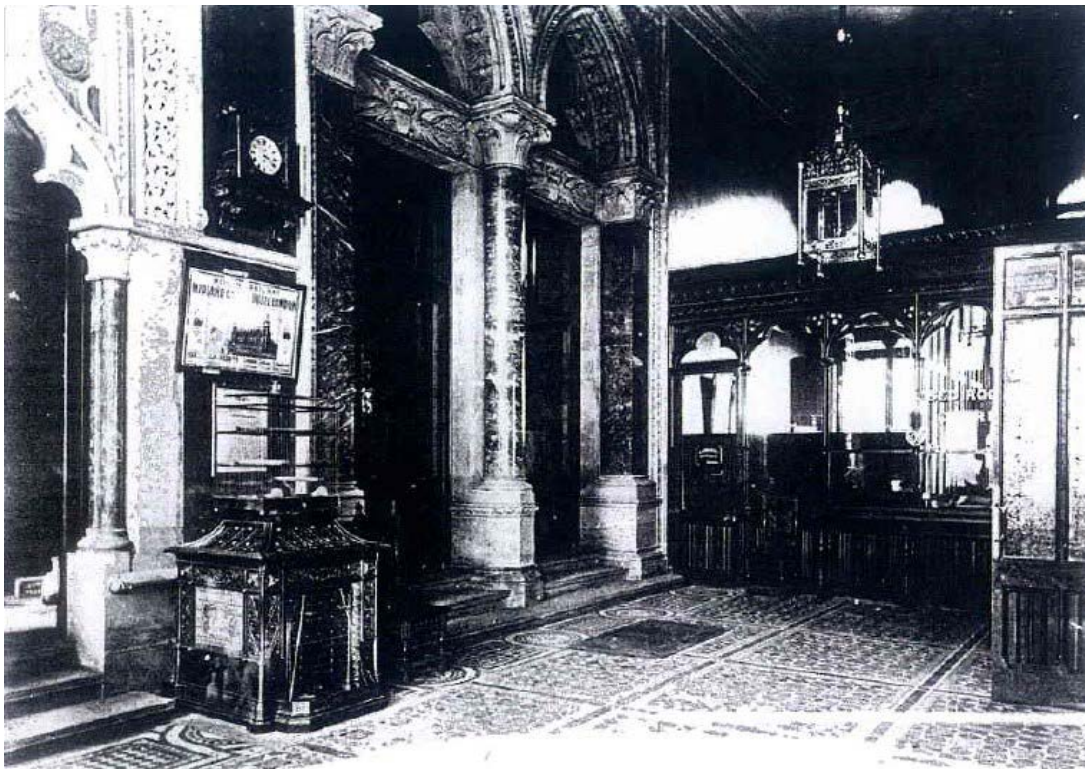
The portico carriage entrance from an early photograph

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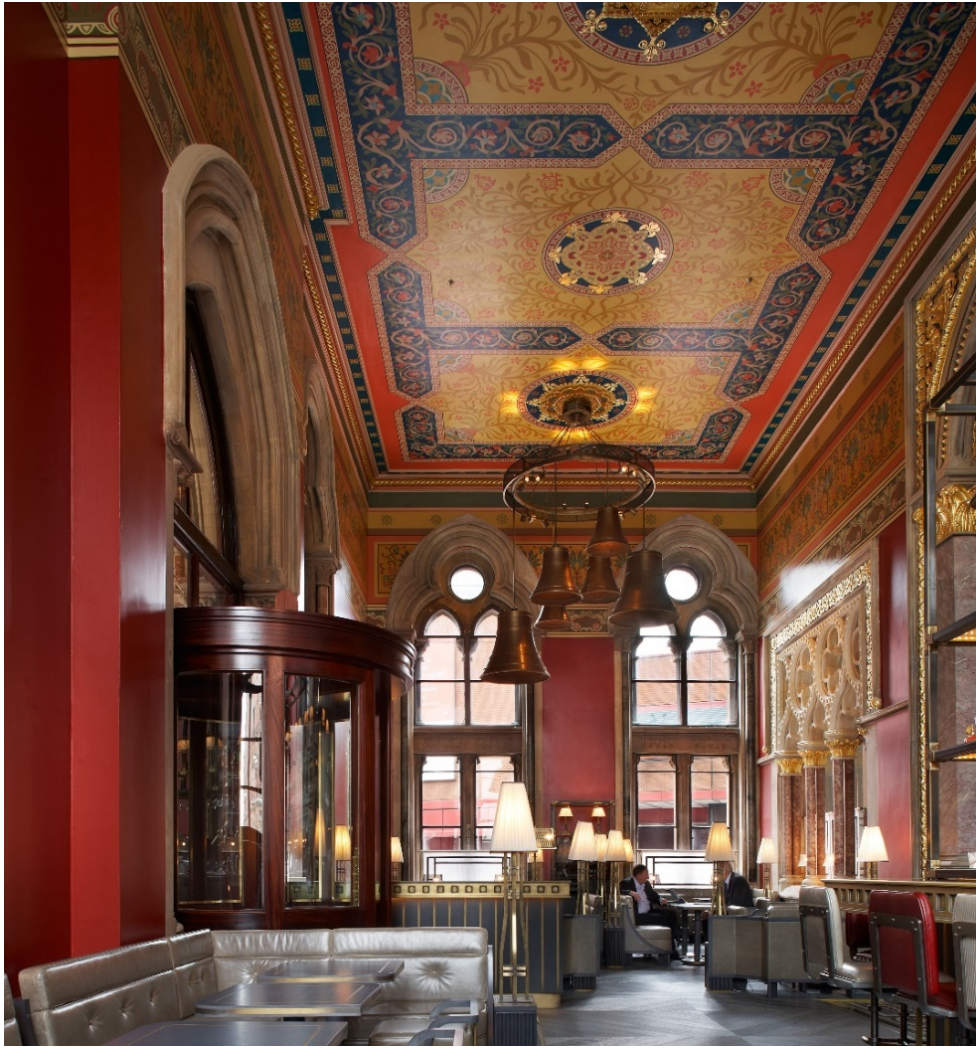
The screened-off portico today

The entrance hall was restored to its original scheme of decoration in the 2011 restoration, and the carved Venetian Gothic screen to the reception desk was rebuilt after a fire in c2010. Its decoration illustrates how far design in the Scott office had moved forward during the 1880's with peacocks and sunflowers, Aesthetic Movement features within the (Venetian) Gothic interior.



Entrance hall in 1876

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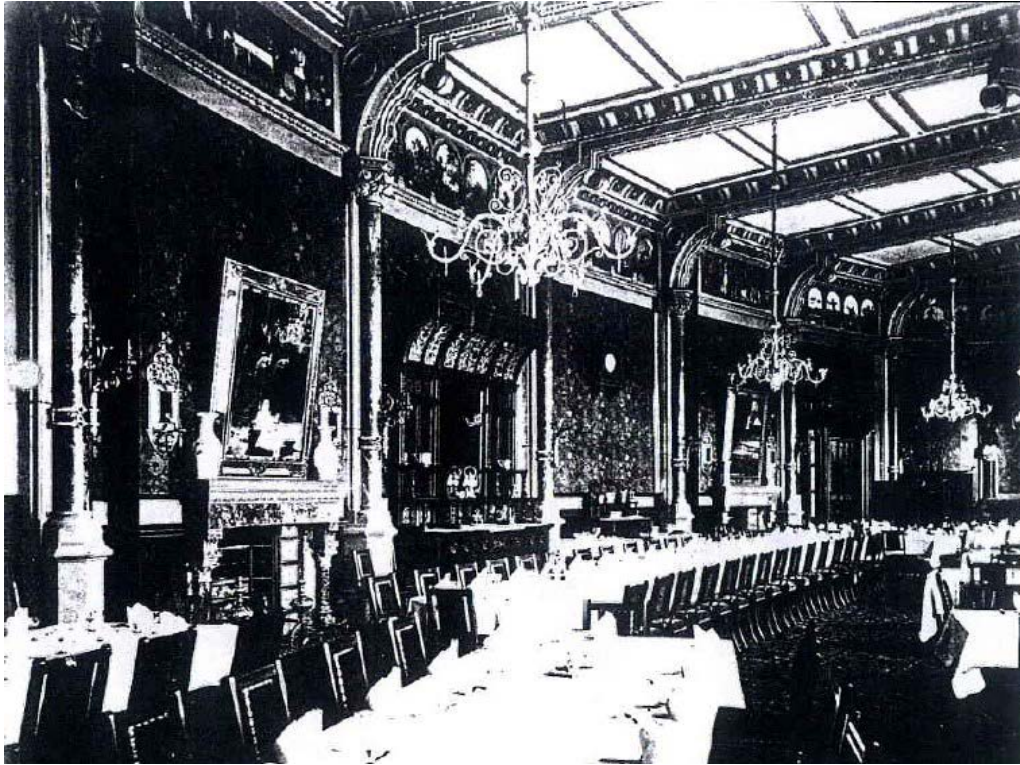
The entrance hall today fitted out as a bar, the Venetian screen to the right.



Corridor screen decorated with peacocks and sunflowers

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The **ground floor curved room** was originally the coffee room for the hotel, and was decorated with heavily decorated walls and ceiling, an ebonised mantelpiece and paintings to the walls and to the frieze. In 1907 the north bay of the room was partitioned off and the frieze and ceiling were painted white. It was this scheme that was recreated in 2011.



Ground floor coffee room in 1876



Coffee room redecorated in 1904

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The Gilbert Scott restaurant (former coffee room) today

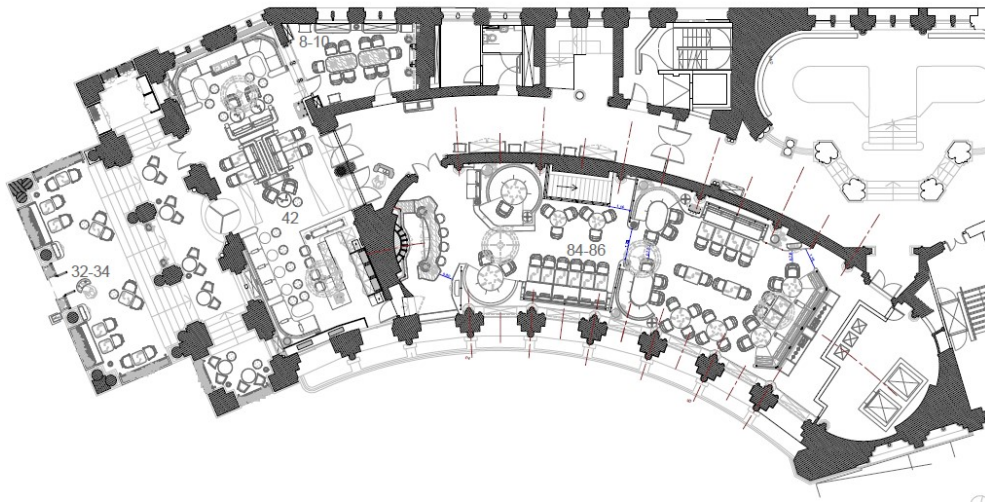


The ground floor corridor today with 2011 recreated original decoration and ochre wallcolour

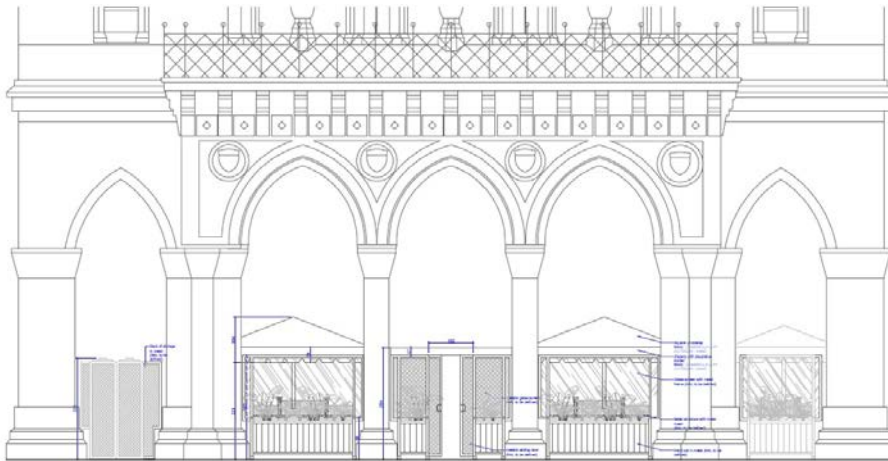
3 Significance of the Restaurant and Bar

- Scott's St Pancras Hotel is grade 1 listed.
- It is arguably the most notable neo-Gothic Revival secular building in the world.
- The portico marks the 1876 main entrance to the hotel in an ostentatious manner.
- The former coffee room was, after the main staircase, the most notable architectural interior, but its significance is reduced because the room was redecorated c1905 with a different, lighter aesthetic.
- The bar is notable as one of the last interiors to be decorated with what were then the latest Aesthetic motifs of peacocks and sunflowers.
- The bar (former entrance hall) retains its original splendid ceiling decoration and Minton tile floor.
- The highly significant decorative schemes were restored during 2011 project.
- The bar and restaurant use from has proved popular, but the 2011 fit-out has some practical shortcomings.

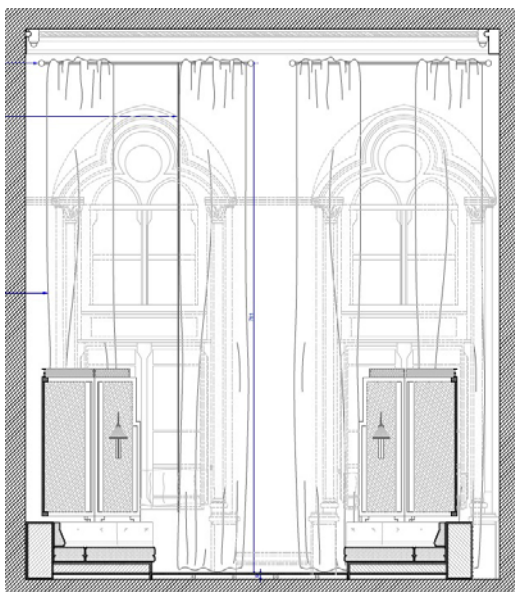
4 Proposals for the renovation



Proposed floor plan with indicative furniture layout



Proposed elevation of portico with planters and screens



Detail of west end elevation of bar with long curtains

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The Gilbert Scott Restaurant and Bar opened in 2011 and was led by celebrity chef Marcus Wareing. It closed before the beginning of the pandemic in 2019 and it has been unused from this time.

Manhattan Loft in conjunction with the Hotel are seeking to renovate the restaurant to become a new luxurious restaurant destination in the fast-evolving Kings Cross area. The new restaurant will offer an international/French dining menu with the front bar focusing on cocktails with accompanying small plate offering of bar food. The restaurant is made up of multiple rooms spread over three floor levels that offer the guests a range of different experiences, including the historic portico, a front bar, the main dining room, a private dining room, the kitchen (open to guests) and wine cellar.

The interior of the existing restaurant space is highly decorated with intricate mouldings, masonry details, decorative columns and painted detailing all of which will remain in place consistent with the buildings Grade 1 listing. Interventions will include new joinery for the two bars, custom banquet style seating and loose tables, chairs and stools throughout. In addition to these items of joinery furniture there will be waiter stations, screens and front of house storage.

Portico

As part of this planning application Manhattan Loft wish to return the portico on Euston Road back to being an active entrance to the Restaurant and Bar. It has been closed for some time due to the restaurant being closed and has struggled to offer the entry experience desired before that. The portico is subject to issues of wind, noise pollution from the Euston Road and air pollution along with issues of shelter for homeless due to being a covered area open to the public.

Manhattan Loft would like the entry to the Restaurant and Bar to utilise the portico rather than use the hotel entrance from the front forecourt. This will offer the guests and public the full splendour of the intricate masonry work, painting, gold leaf and ceramics as restored in 2011.

Front bar

The bar has been successful as part of the previous restaurant fit out and we wish to build on this success as part of this refurbishment. The layout of the space will be similar to the existing bar but will have enhanced lighting to fully express the considerable decoration within the space.

Dining room

This room was a key part of Gilbert Scott's original design and was originally a coffee room for the hotel. This will be the main dining area and is envisioned to have loose dining seats with an additional stools at the bar located at the Euston Road end of the room. There will be a combination of free-standing tables and chairs with some banquet type seating. The joinery will include typical waiter stations and screens as well as a large screen wall at the end of the room to mask the necessary back of house activities within the room.

The room has an existing wood floor (as part of the 2011 renovation) that has reached the end of its life and is envisioned to be overlaid with wall-to-wall carpet as shown to be installed as far back as photographic records circa 1890's.

Similar to the front bar, lighting will be introduced to fully enhance the historic detailing and again will offer the guests and public access to experience the splendour of Gilbert Scott's design.

Other areas

Renewal of the mezzanine wc's

Chef's table and screen in the kitchen

Alterations to kitchen fittings at basement level

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Lighting

The lighting scheme proposed has been carefully considered in order to embrace and celebrate the heritage of both the interior and exterior spaces, whilst having minimal impact of fixations, integration and detracting from the overall composition.

The key lighting principle being applied is to maintain and re-condition the existing pendants or lighting points within the corridor and exterior portico. Within both the restaurant and bar interiors the existing ceiling points will be re-used to allow for newly installed and aesthetically considered chandeliers.

Within the restaurant portion of the scope, linear Led is introduced above the cornice to softly glow the decorated ceiling with another layer of LED being introduced to light the frieze that wraps the perimeter of the room.

Historic architectural features such as the windows, doorways and archways, restaurant interior colonnade, gold painted column capitals and tympanum will be softly lit and emphasised using floor standing 5 amp plug-in uplighters which will be electrically cabled through the newly designed joinery and existing more recently laid flooring which holds no heritage value. These uplighters would be removable due to the plug-in nature should the space be required to be reinstated to the current situation.

Wireless lighting control is being proposed to prevent the requirement of excessive and intrusive cabling infrastructure which would be required for a hard wired installation. The existing electrical routes would be used to power the newly installed joinery lighting where all lighting will be integrated within the millwork and not fixed to historic elements.

Artist's impressions

These views are indicative only – see the application drawings for detail.



Portico seating

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Bar looking west



Bar looking west

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Dining room looking south



Dining room looking north

5 Heritage Impact Assessment of the proposals

Portico

The original function of the portico as a covered porch for receiving visitors arriving by cab has been redundant since the Grand Midland Hotel closed in the 1930's. It is now a derelict space, screened off for security. The proposed enclosure with freestanding planters and glass/mesh screens will allow café life to return to this area, enhancing the amenity of Euston Road as with a Parisian street café. The screens will provide visual and environmental screening without blocking views of the vaulted soffit of the portico to passers-by. They will not be fixed to the ground, and therefore count as furniture rather than fittings.

Front bar

The former front entrance will remain as restored and redecorated in 2011. The new fittings have been designed the better to reveal the peacock door surround leading to the ground floor corridor. The new fitted furniture will be freestanding (i.e., not fixed to the floor) and where it abuts the walls it will be scribed to the profile of the walls, again without fixing. A curtain rail will be fitted by means of three brackets to hang full height curtains against the windows. The existing wooden floating floor above the Minton tiles will be extended to receive a fitted carpet. The 2011 'bell' chandeliers will be replaced with two new chandeliers better scaled to the room. The bar overthrow has been pulled away from the central doorcase so as to reveal the full glory of the surround, currently impacted by the existing bar overthrow.

Dining room

The dining room will be retained generally as restored in 2011, except for the choice of a deeper yellow ochre colour for the walls (in place of the light yellow chosen in 2011) to match the dado colour in the original decorative scheme for the ground floor corridor (see photo above). The new fitted furniture will be freestanding (i.e., not fixed to the floor) and where it abuts the walls it will be scribed to the profile of the walls, again without fixing. The new counter fittings at the north end of the room will be more effective in screening the back-of-house area than the existing fittings and will be better integrated into the architecture of the room, though still a reversible intervention.

Other areas

In other areas such as the kitchen and the toilets the fitting out will be renewed without detrimental impact to the historic fabric, and with improvement to the present (2011) appearance.

6 Conclusion

The proposals will better reveal and enhance the historic fabric and appearance, and will provide greatly enhanced enjoyment to the public, both those using the bar and restaurant and those who are passers-by.