
KEY AREAS OF INTERVENTION

3

3 | KEY AREAS OF INTERVENTION

3.1 | LAYOUT CHANGES

LAYOUT OVERVIEW

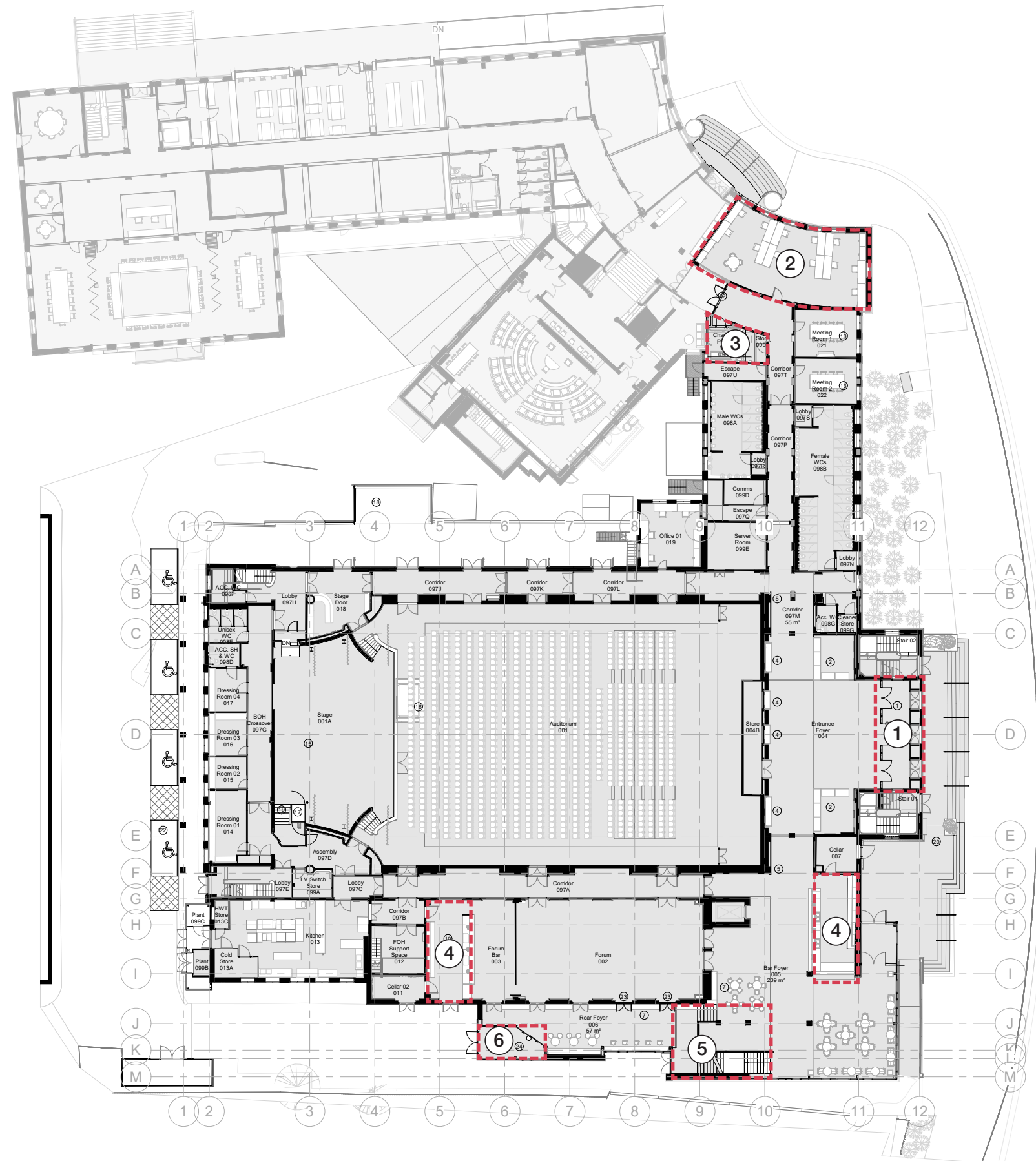
We are proposing some minimal plan layout changes to improve usability and flow. Most significantly, we are proposing to reinstate the original main entrance, which includes the introduction of a new draught lobby into the main entrance foyer.

Other changes affecting historic fabric, are the current offices in the crescent space being combined into a single open plan operator office, and the reconfiguration of the current staff kitchen and cleaner store to create a Changing Places WC.

In addition to this, minor changes are being made to the contemporary building fabric, including reconfiguring the rear entrance into the extension, alongside the provision of a new draught lobby. The foyer accommodation stair is being relocated to improve natural way-finding and visitor flow between ground and first floor, while each of the bar areas have also been reconfigured to improve the queuing interface.

Key layout changes are indicated on the adjacent plan and summarised as follows, with items affecting historic fabric noted in bold-

1. **MAIN ENTRANCE LOBBY**
2. **OPEN PLAN OFFICES**
3. **CHANGING PLACES WC**
4. **BAR RECONFIGURATION**
5. **FOYER STAIR**
6. **REAR ENTRANCE LOBBY**



3 | KEY AREAS OF INTERVENTION

3.1 | LAYOUT CHANGES

MAIN ENTRANCE LOBBY

The original entrance doors to the Colosseum have not been in use since the 2011 redevelopment. This is in part because the extension provided a new entrance, but also because the original entrance doors created significant draughts in the foyer which made the space unusable. We are therefore proposing to insert a new timber-framed draught lobby into the entrance foyer, which will help to eliminate draughts and enable the original entrance to be reinstated. The lobby construction will be independent of the historic fabric tying back to the existing for support only, and will be fully reversible.

OPEN PLAN OFFICES

The current cellular offices are predominantly original rooms, with some later additions to further sub-divide the largest of the original three spaces. The size and configuration of the four offices is no longer considered to be practical from an operations standpoint, with operators expressing a preference for open plan office space. Consequently, we are proposing to remove both the original and more contemporary partitions in this crescent space to create a larger open plan office that is more conducive to modern working practices. While some of this building fabric is original, it is not considered to be of particular historic significance within the context of the building as a whole. No unique or notable details are proposed for removal, and the demolition is not considered to be harmful to the special historic character of the building.

CHANGING PLACES WC

The final proposed alteration affecting historic fabric is the reconfiguration of the current Cleaner Store and Staff Kitchen to create space for a Changing Places WC in accordance with part M of the current Building Regulations. As with the office reconfiguration, removal of existing building fabric in this area is not considered to be of detriment to the building.



3 | KEY AREAS OF INTERVENTION

3.2 | ENTRANCE FOYER

CHARACTER

The entrance foyer is intended to be a bold and theatrical space for people to arrive and gather in. At the same time, the proposed material palette references the original finishes in the building through the introduction of terrazzo and timber floor finishes to aid orientation and a new timber frame entrance lobby with laser-cut brass ornament. Feature coloured walls at low-level help to give definition to the space, as well as creating an opportunity to harmonise with operator branding. Back-lit promotional signage and merchandise will be carefully coordinated to complement the space and avoid it becoming cluttered.

MATERIAL FINISHES



The existing high pile carpet and underlay will be removed and replaced with slim floor finishes to suit the existing finished floor level. Depending on the finish depth, terrazzo or terrazzo-effect porcelain tiles will provide a hard-wearing durable finish to the main entrance area, while European Oak engineered plank wood flooring in a chevron pattern will denote the main circulation route.

ACOUSTIC FINISHES

A variety of acoustic absorptive finishes are proposed to counteract the effect of removing the high pile carpet. Fabric-wrapped absorptive panels are proposed behind to the new draught lobby. There is slatted timber-veneered acoustic panel lining to the main tunnel through-routes and acoustic plaster panels within each of the coloured alcoves. In each case, the panels are an overlay that does not require the removal of any historic fabric and is entirely reversible. The acoustic plaster has been targeted in areas where it can be contained to avoid any awkward edge conditions.



KEY

-  Fabric-wrapped absorptive panels
-  Acoustic absorptive plaster



3 | KEY AREAS OF INTERVENTION

3.3 | FORUM HALL

CHARACTER

The Forum Hall is an area of high historic value, but that has had its original character marred by ad-hoc services installations which detract from its special historic character. The strategy for the Forum Hall is therefore to rationalise the services and reinstate a softer, neutral colour palette that is subservient to the historic features in the space. The proposed colour and character of the Forum Hall is elegant and sophisticated, responding directly to the specific heritage context. The monolithic bar counter has a marble effect finish to set it apart from the other more playful and casual bars within the contemporary extension of the building.

MATERIAL FINISHES



As with the Entrance Foyer, a new engineered timber floor is proposed to replace the high pile carpet in this space, but which will in this case, be a suspended sprung floor system to replace the existing. The intention is to detail the new sprung floor to existing finished floor level to avoid interfering with the high-value historic doorsets and original timber panelling.

ACOUSTIC FINISHES

To counteract the removal of the thick pile carpet in this space, and improve the acoustic in the space, absorption is proposed in the form of proprietary fabric-wrapped absorptive panels which will be colour-matched to the warm white walls, and new acoustic curtains to each of the full-height glazed doorsets.



KEY

-  Fabric-wrapped absorptive panels
-  Acoustic absorptive plaster



3 | KEY AREAS OF INTERVENTION

3.3 | FORUM HALL

THEATRE-TECH

One of the main interventions into the historic areas of the building is the proposals for a pipe grid and technical fit-out in the Forum Hall, comprising internally wired bars (IWB) supporting new production and house lighting, alongside a new portable temporary staging system. The proposed interventions will enable more regular and flexible use of the Forum Hall and are considered to be vital for its functioning as a versatile and flexible performance space.

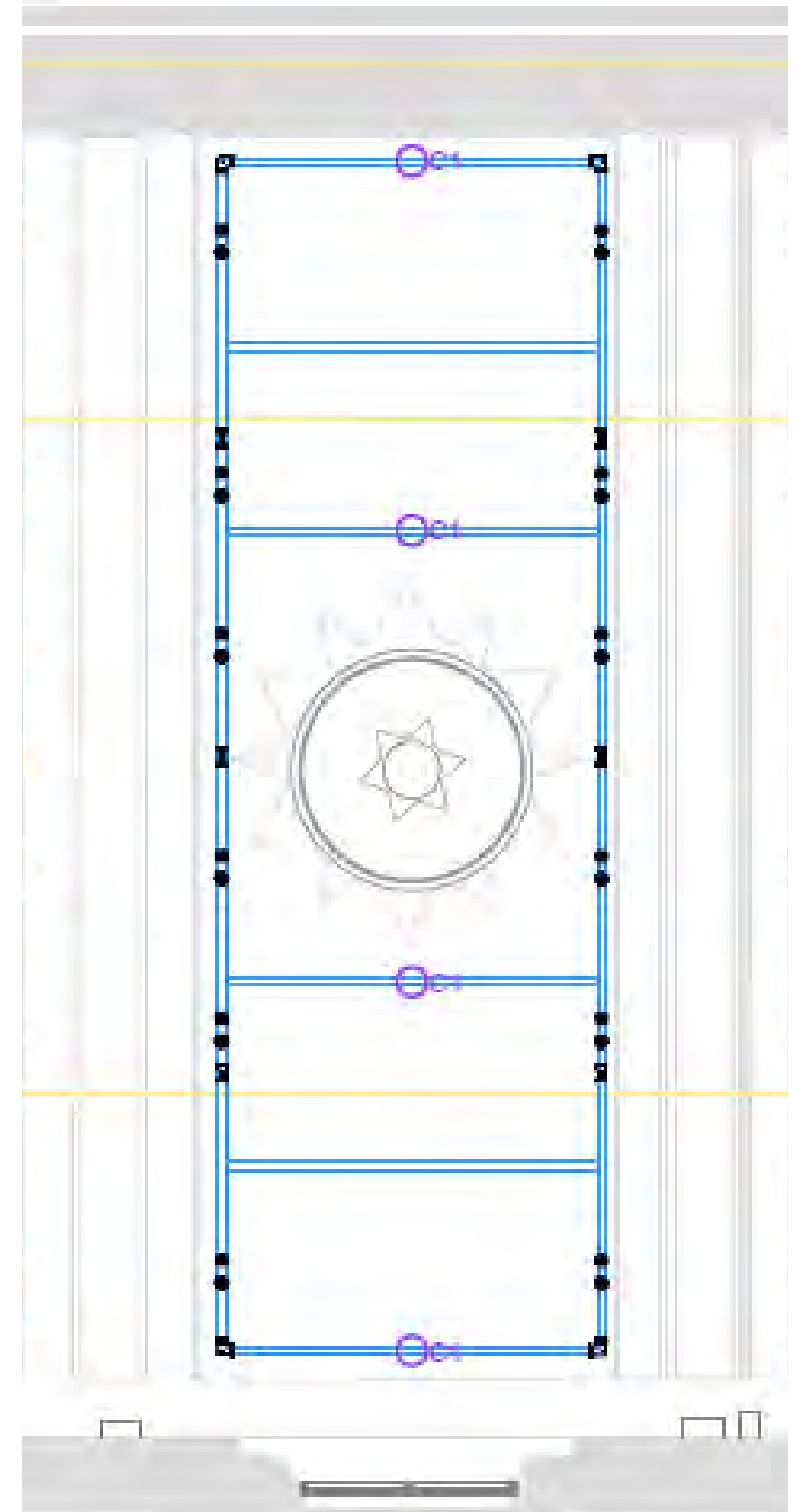
It is recognised however, that the Forum Hall is an area of considerable historic value and that any interventions in this area warrant a bespoke solution. The layout of the pipe grid has therefore been designed to align with the historic ceiling and downstand beams, and avoid obstructing the original light fittings, as shown on this adjacent drawing. The IWB will also be powdercoated warm white to reduce contrast with the ceiling and walls. Roof investigations are being carried out to ensure that any additional weight to the structure will not negatively impact upon the historic fabric, and strengthening works will be carried out where necessary. The pipe grid installation will also rationalise the currently cluttered services, and allow for the removal of the existing lighting bars. The installation will be entirely reversible with no material impact on the historic fabric.

SERVICES

A major feature of the Forum Hall is the Art-Deco style original feature light fittings that are still present and intact, but which have suffered from some discolouration over the years. We are proposing to undertake specialist restoration of these light fittings to clean the original glass diffusers.

The Forum light fittings also conceal air supply to the space, which will be retained, with air extract from either end of the Hall, through new vents in the coffered ceiling at one end, and through the existing vent above the bar at the other end, which will be redesigned to align with the new Art deco-inspired design motif. It is necessary to provide air extract from both ends of the space to enable the both the Forum Bar and Forum Hall to function independently when the central sliding partition is closed.

Finally, since we are installing a new sprung floor system, we are taking this opportunity to install underfloor heating subject to further investigations into the existing floor build-up. If possible, this will enable the current modern white radiators to be removed from the historic timber panelling, further helping to rationalise the existing cluttered service provision in the space. Patch repairs to timber panelling will be undertaken where required.



3 | KEY AREAS OF INTERVENTION

3.4 | AUDITORIUM AND MAIN STAGE

CHARACTER

As with the Forum Hall, the Main Auditorium has had much of its original character eroded through piecemeal refurbishment, including the introduction of a bold purple colour palette and oversized ventilation diffusers that detract from the special historic character of the space. The intention for the Main Auditorium, is therefore to return it to its former neutral and sophisticated colour palette when it was Assembly Hall, alongside the reintroduction of some Art Deco-style detail to the ventilation grilles.

MATERIAL FINISHES

We are proposing to restore the original timber floor in this space and replace the existing high pile patterned carpet around the perimeter with shallow pile neutral carpet tiles that will enable easier movement of equipment in and out of the space. This is not expected to impact upon the historic timber panelling or heritage doors.



ACOUSTIC FINISHES

The acoustic strategy is to retain the current recording acoustic but increase the versatility of the space through the introduction of variable acoustic absorption that can be deployed to enhance the quality of spoken word performance. The variable acoustic absorption is proposed as acoustic banners that are positioned between the windows, with top-casing that aligns with the existing window blind boxes. The existing fixed acoustic absorption to the face of the circle balcony will be replaced with equivalent fabric-wrapped panels that complement the proposed neutral colour scheme.

Secondary glazing is proposed to all of the Auditorium windows to reduce noise breakout. This will be fully reversible and will not impact upon the historic fabric or character of the space.



KEY

-  Variable acoustic banners
-  Brass ornamental ventilation grille



3 | KEY AREAS OF INTERVENTION

3.4 | AUDITORIUM AND MAIN STAGE

NEW STAGE

The existing stage in the Main Auditorium originally had tiers towards the rear, which have long since been removed and a get-in lift added within the extents of the stage. As a result of these ad-hoc alterations, the existing stage structure is now inadequate for contemporary performance requirements and requires upgrading according to structural engineering advice. We are therefore proposing to replace the existing heavily modified stage with a new stage structure that will improve loading capacity and therefore versatility for different types of performances. Additionally, a new platform lift and basement stair are being introduced as part of the stage reconfiguration to improve accessibility and functionality. All existing panelling to the front of the stage will be retained and will be propped and protected throughout construction.

STEEL PORTAL FRAME

As part of the stage replacement works, we are proposing to introduce a new steel portal frame over the stage, that will provide much heavier lifting points for theatre equipment to create more capacity and flexibility over the main stage area. This will remove the any risk of hanging anything from the historic plaster ceiling, helping to ensure its long term preservation.

CEILING RESTORATION

The ceiling in the Main Auditorium is an original fibrous plaster ceiling that like other historic fabric in the space, has been subject to detrimental alteration over the years. The previous refurbishment added extensive scattered holes for house lighting, which was supported from the ceiling and quickly started to cause cracking. This house lighting has since been removed, but the existing holes are being repurposed as far a possible to avoid any further harm to the historic ceiling. Wherever possible, we will be patching and repairing

redundant holes to help to rationalise and restore the ceiling's original character and prevent any further damage. We currently estimate that we will be able to patch 8/50 of the existing holes.

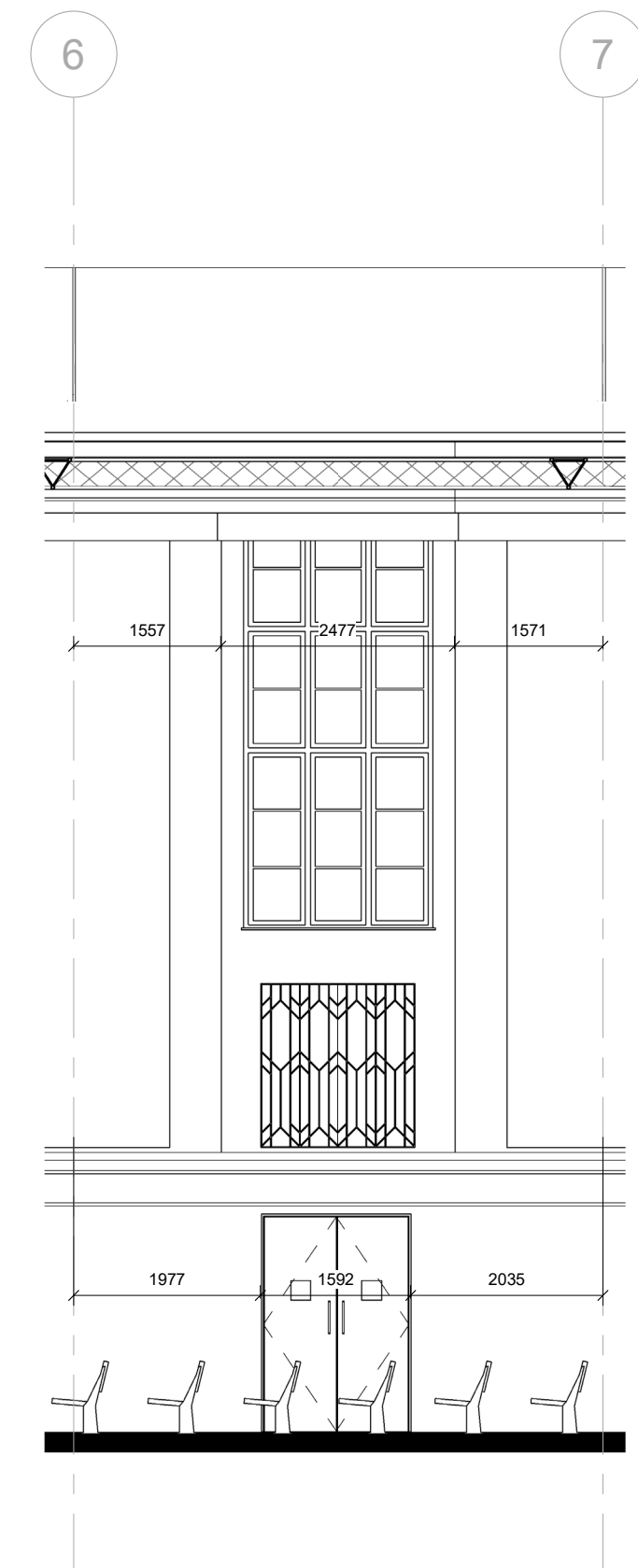
SERVICES

There will be new house and production RGBW LED lighting in the space, including new “thrupower” dimming and data distribution to improve the flexibility of the venue performance lighting control.

The current ventilation strategy is being retained, with air supply through the wall grilles, and extract through the ceiling. The existing oversized ventilation surrounds will be removed and new brass ornamental grilles will be installed flush with the wall finish. Additional AC ducted units will replace the existing fan convectors to provide both heating and cooling to the Main Auditorium. Diffusers will be colour matched with the timber panelling to reduce any visual impact.

GET-IN LIFT

As mentioned, the existing get-in lift is within the extents of the stage, which limits usability as the stage cannot be fully set-up while the lift is in use. We are therefore proposing to provide a new get-in lift outwith the stage area, that will improve functionality and access to both stage and substage levels, as well as improving the speed and process of the get in/get out. The new get-in lift will require a small amount of excavation to the Auditorium floor and some alteration to the front of the stage. Existing timber panelling will be retained and incorporated in to the lift design so that there will be no aesthetic impact from the proposal.



3 | KEY AREAS OF INTERVENTION

3.5 | EXTERNAL INTERVENTIONS

LANDSCAPING

The existing landscaping is well designed and in reasonably good condition. As a result the proposed landscaping works are limited to accessibility improvements to the main entrance steps, the resurfacing and reconfiguration of the painted parking bays to the rear to create some additional accessible parking, the cleaning of brickwork retaining walls and access ramps and minor repairs, weed removal and cleaning to the existing stone paving and entrance steps. Please refer to the Accessibility section of this report for full details of the proposed accessibility improvements.

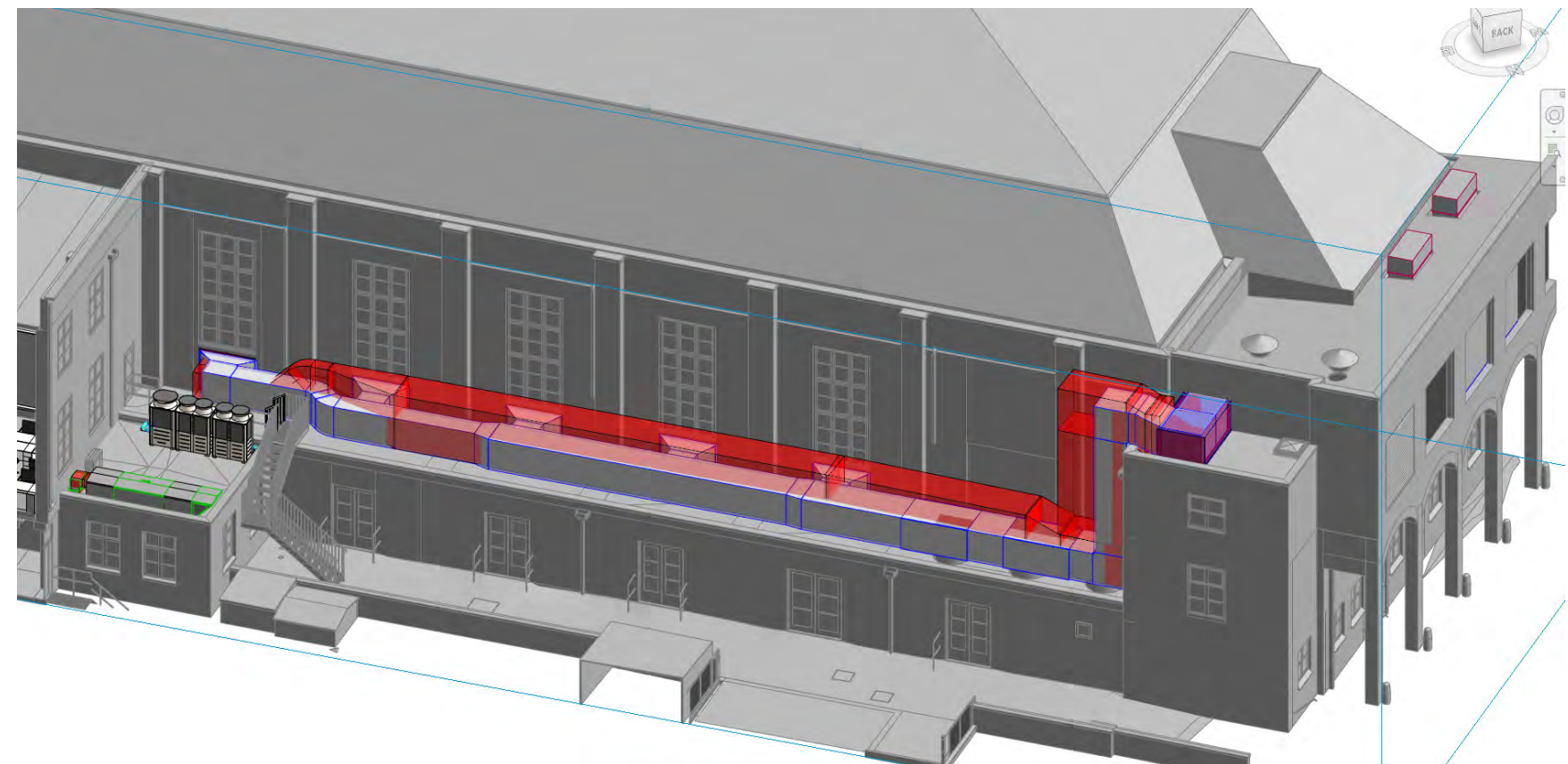
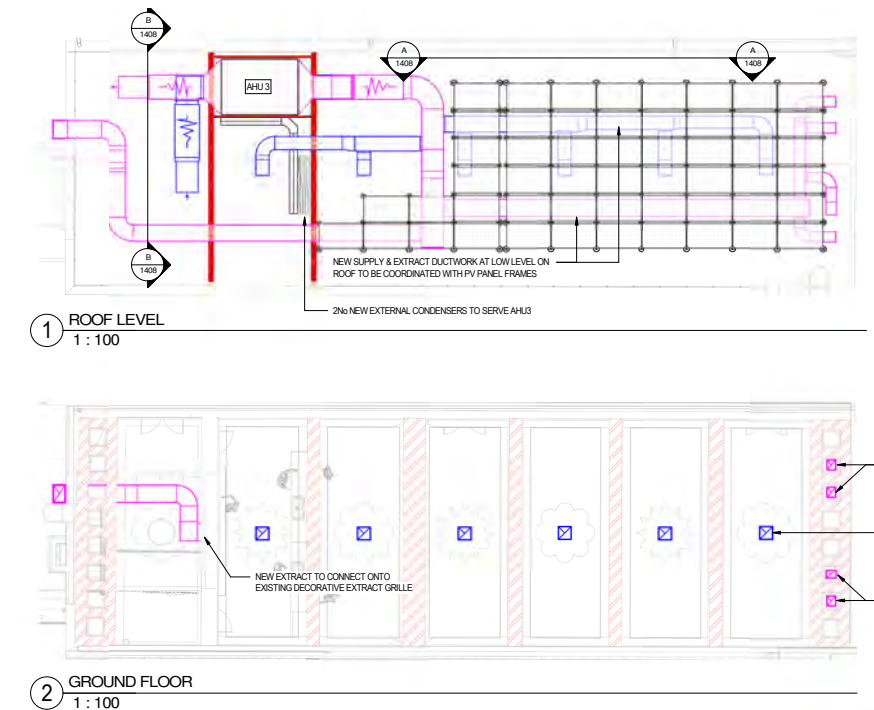
EXTERNAL DUCTWORK

The existing low level supply ductwork which distributes on the external elevation on both sides of the Auditorium appears oversized and has inconsistent finishing, which negatively impacts upon the external character of the building. Unfortunately it is not possible to remove this ductwork, but there is plenty of room to improve its aesthetic through rationalising and reducing the size where possible. We have looked at air flow requirements and estimated the extent that new ducts could be reduced in height to improve external aesthetics. An indicative solution is illustrated on the adjacent diagram, with existing ducts (red) and proposed ducts (blue/grey), showing that the reduction particularly on the vertical could be significant. Additionally, the new supply and extract ducts will be made uniform in appearance with a plain flat panel aluminium covering.

ROOF-TOP PLANT

As part of the works a new full package heat recovery AHU and associated supply and extract ductwork shall be installed on the roof of the existing Forum Hall. The ductwork shall be coordinated with the new PV panels, that are being installed under PSDS. The new AHU shall be installed on new elevated structural supports and has been located as far back on the roof as possible to minimise the sight lines to ground level.

As part of the works the existing toilet extract plant currently mounted on the office roof shall be removed and replaced with new. In addition to this, the new AC condensers serving the Auditorium will also be installed on this roof. While this will have some visible impact on this side of the building at roof level, it will only be seen from the rear service yard is therefore not considered to impact upon the aesthetic appreciation of the building.





4



ACCESS

4 | ACCESS

4.1 | SITE ACCESS

We are proposing no changes to site access or waste management. However, we are changing how the building is accessed, both from the front and rear approaches.

MAIN ENTRANCE

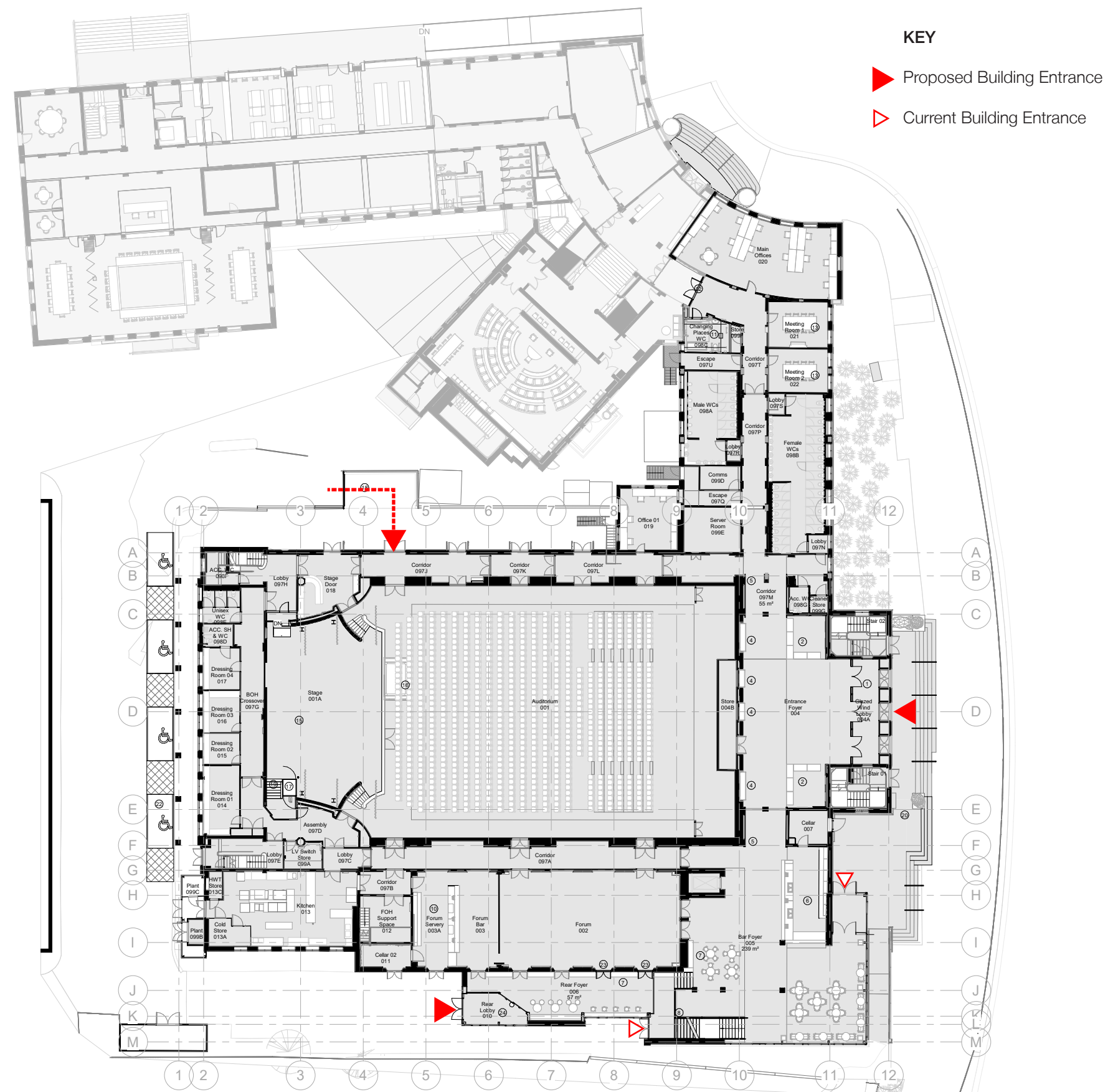
As has been discussed, we are proposing to reinstate the original entrance as the primary means of access for performance events. This has resulted in a number of knock-on interventions, including the relocation of primary building signage, as discussed in Section 3.5, and various interventions to improve accessibility to this entrance, which are described in Section 4.2. The existing entrance into the extension will be retained as a daytime entrance into the bar/cafe, but this will become secondary to the original entrance.

REAR ENTRANCE

The building is currently accessed by a lobbied entrance at the front of the building and a lobbied entrance to the side, with a fire escape exit to the rear of the extension foyer. The architectural hierarchy of the building is such that the side entrance is barely noticeable, while the rear exit only doors appear far more prominent. We are proposing therefore to turn the rear fire escape into a primary rear entrance. For this to work practically, it requires a new draft lobby to be added to the rear entrance to enable regular use. Moving the entrance to the rear will activate the whole stretch of accommodation outside of the forum, and elevate it from being an ancillary bar area to a central thoroughfare.

LOADING ENTRANCE

The other minor change affecting site access is alterations to the existing loading bay at the rear of the auditorium, which is to be shortened to facilitate access for longer vehicles, including articulated lorries.



4 | ACCESS

4.2 | ACCESSIBILITY

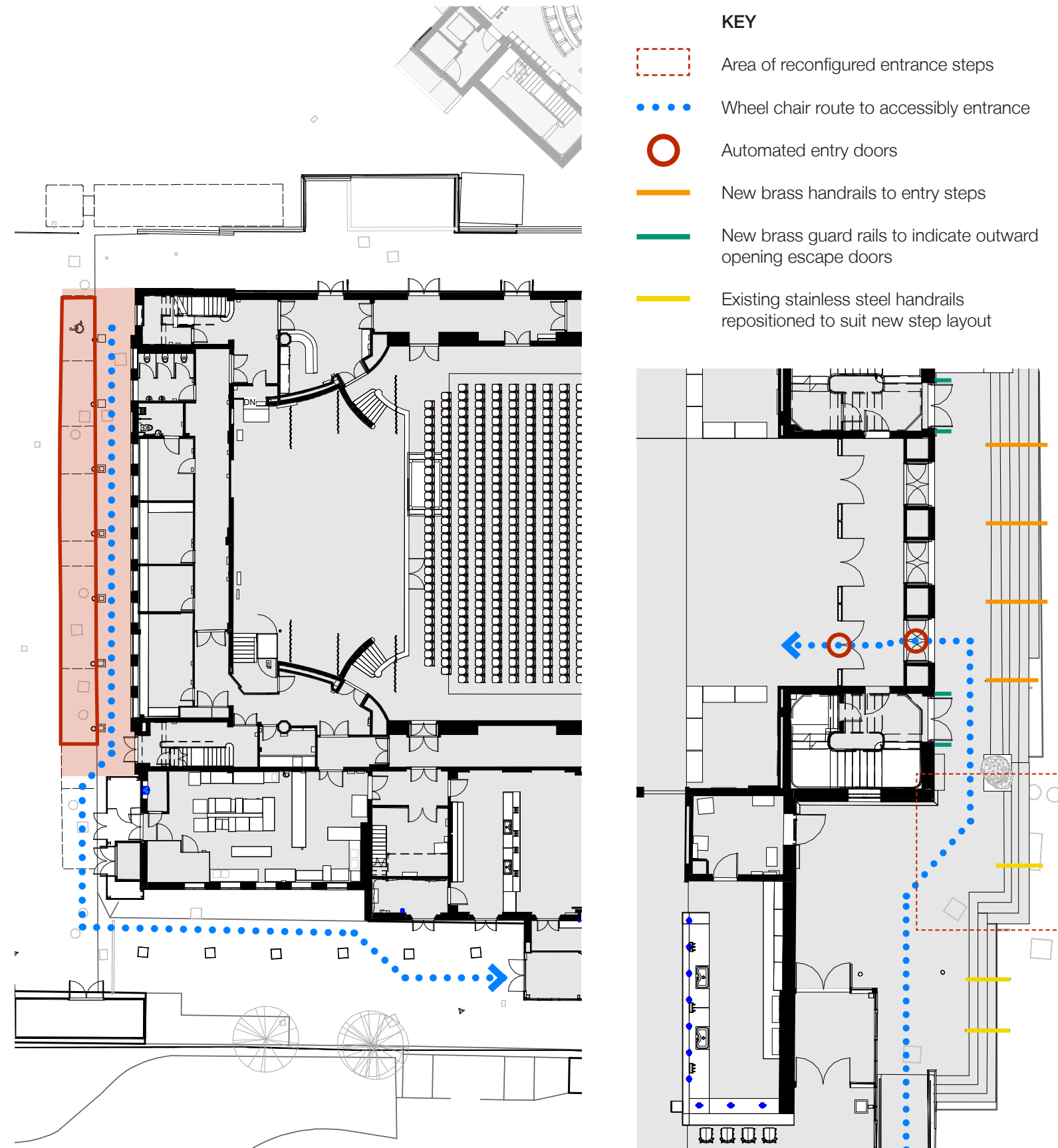
DISABLED PARKING AND DROP OFF

There are currently a limited number of accessible parking spaces within close proximity the main entrances to the building. The proposed works include the re-purposing of the existing parking bays along the rear elevation of the auditorium to create 4no. dedicated accessible parking spaces. Isolated resurfacing works will be undertaken to ensure level access is provided to the new rear foyer entrance doors.

MAIN ENTRANCE

The reinstatement of the main entrance to the Colosseum is a key part of the proposed refurbishment. As such it is important that this newly restored entrance is accessible for all building users.

A section of the entrance steps to the Colosseum will be reconfigured to remove an existing pinch point and ensure that wheelchair users can access the reinstated entrance via the existing pedestrian ramp. The existing stainless steel handrails will be re-configured to suit the new step layout. Level thresholds will be provided at all entrances and the most southerly set of entrance doors and doors from the wind lobby into the foyer will be fitted with powered openers. This new wheelchair access route passes the emergency exit door from the Southern escape stairs. Brass guard rails will be fitted to mark the extent of the outward opening door swings in this location to minimise any risk to the visually impaired or wheelchair users. The original stone entrance steps at the main entrance will be retained, repaired and cleaned. The existing pair of black painted handrails will be replaced with 4no. Part M compliant brass handrails which will improve accessibility and will fit better with the overall character of the building. Tactile, brass corduroy warning strips will be installed along the top and bottom of the entrance steps to highlight the change in level for the visually impaired.



4 | ACCESS

4.2 | ACCESSIBILITY

AUDITORIUM ACCESS

Building Regulations guidance states that for a venue with more than 600 seats, the number of permanent wheel chair positions provided should equal 1% of the total seating capacity. As the seating capacity at the Colosseum is variable due to the retractable seating and loose flat floor seating, the number of wheelchair spaces required within the auditorium will be dictated by the overall size of the audience for any particular event. Wheelchair spaces can be easily provided within the area of loose seating on the flat floor, so can be distributed around the auditorium for a range of viewing options.

STAGE ACCESS

A new platform lift is proposed on the South side of the stage to provide wheelchair access between the backstage area and the stage.

EXISTING LIFT

The existing passenger lift within the contemporary extension provides wheelchair access to the first floor of the Colosseum including the front row of the circle balcony. There is no wheelchair access to the upper tiers of the balcony or the control room and stores on the second floor.

HEARING LOOPS

Hearing induction loops will be provided to all front of house areas including the foyer, bars and offices.

DROPPED COUNTERS

Dropped counters will be incorporated into all of the bar areas including the bar within the forum to ensure that they are accessible for all.

ACCESSIBLE WC'S

On review, the existing provision of accessible WCs appears to be broadly aligned with the guidance set out in part M of the Building Regulations. Both of the large gendered WCs on the ground floor include an oversized cubicle in accordance with the guidance. The oversized cubicles have been fitted with outward opening doors and grab rails fulfilling the requirement for the provision of an ambulant disabled cubicle as well. To improve the accessibility of the WCs, and to make the provision fully compliant with the Building Regulations an additional ambulant cubicle will be provided in each of the gendered WC's. These will be fitted with an outward opening door, grab rails and a suitable WC pan. Baby change facilities will be provided in both of the gendered WCs and within one of the accessible WCs.

CHANGING PLACES WC

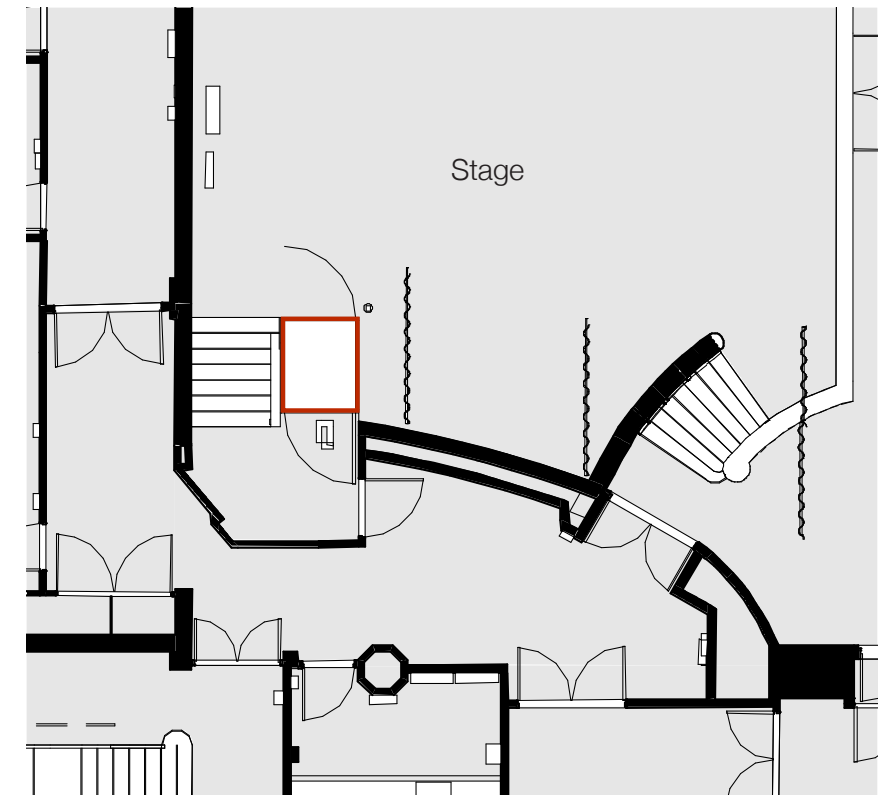
A changing places toilet is being provided on the ground floor in accordance with part M of the current Building Regulations. The changing places toilet provides WC and changing facilities for individuals with complex and multiple impairments.

WAYFINDING

A new wayfinding scheme for the building will ensure that all accessible facilities are clearly identified and easy for all building users to locate.

REDUCED VISUAL INTENSITY

The replacement of the existing patterned carpet with a calmer palette of natural timber floor finishes, lightning of paint finishes and improvements in lighting levels will all assist in reducing the visual intensity of the interiors, making the building more comfortable for neurodivergent building users.



(top) Plan detail highlighting the proposed platform lift at the South side of the stage. The lift provides wheelchair access from the backstage area to the stage.
(bottom) An example of a changing places WC facility

4 | ACCESS

4.3 | ACCESS AND MAINTENANCE

We are proposing minimal changes to the Access and Maintenance Strategy. Proposed interventions are primarily focussed on reducing risk and improving the provision of safe access routes.

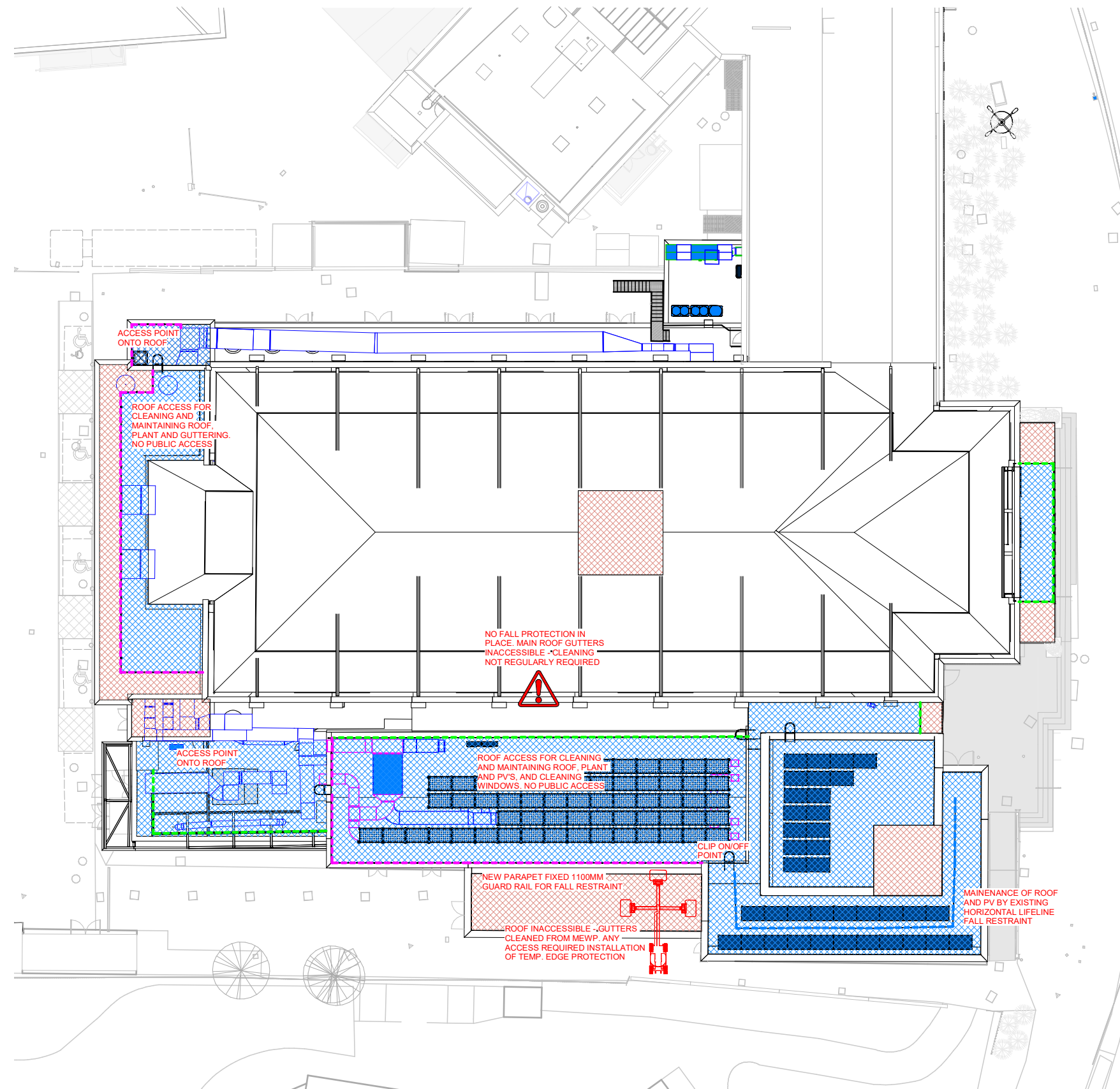
ROOF ACCESS

Access onto the Kitchen, Forum and Extension roofs via the access door from the NE stair well remains unchanged. The existing roof top guard rails to these roofs has been retained and a new 1100mm high, parapet fixed, guardrail has been added to the outer edge of the Forum roof to ensure that safe access can be provided to the new PV panels. The existing Roodsafe fall arrest system on the Extension Roof is to be retained and upgraded to a fall restraint system and will be used for access to the new PV panels on this roof. There is no means of access to the flat roof over the rear foyer area.

Access to the backstage roof is via the existing wall mounted ladder and access hatch at the top of the Northern stair well. There is currently no guarding to this roof edge and so a new 1100mm high, parapet fixed, guardrail is to be installed around the stairwell roof and across the back stage roof to reduce the risk of falls from height for operatives accessing these roofs for routine cleaning and plant maintenance.

WINDOW CLEANING

There are no changes proposed to the window cleaning strategy for the building. The majority of windows in the building are to be cleaned from the ground level hardstanding using a telescopic pole. On the north elevation of the Auditorium, the external ventilation ducts obstruct the windows and make pole cleaning to this elevation impossible. Therefore window cleaning in this location will need to be undertaken from a MEWP with an articulated boom.



4 | ACCESS

4.3 | ACCESS AND MAINTENANCE

LIGHTING

Generally, LED lighting is provided throughout the building, reducing the frequency of access required for bulb replacement. When inspection or replacement is required, high level access will be via MEWP

Within the auditorium the LED house lighting is accessed from above, via the access walkways within the auditorium roof void. All of the specialist show lighting is mounted on powered rigs that can be dropped to low level for positioning and re-setting. Some fine tuning and light focussing works may need to be carried out from a MEWP depending on the circumstances.

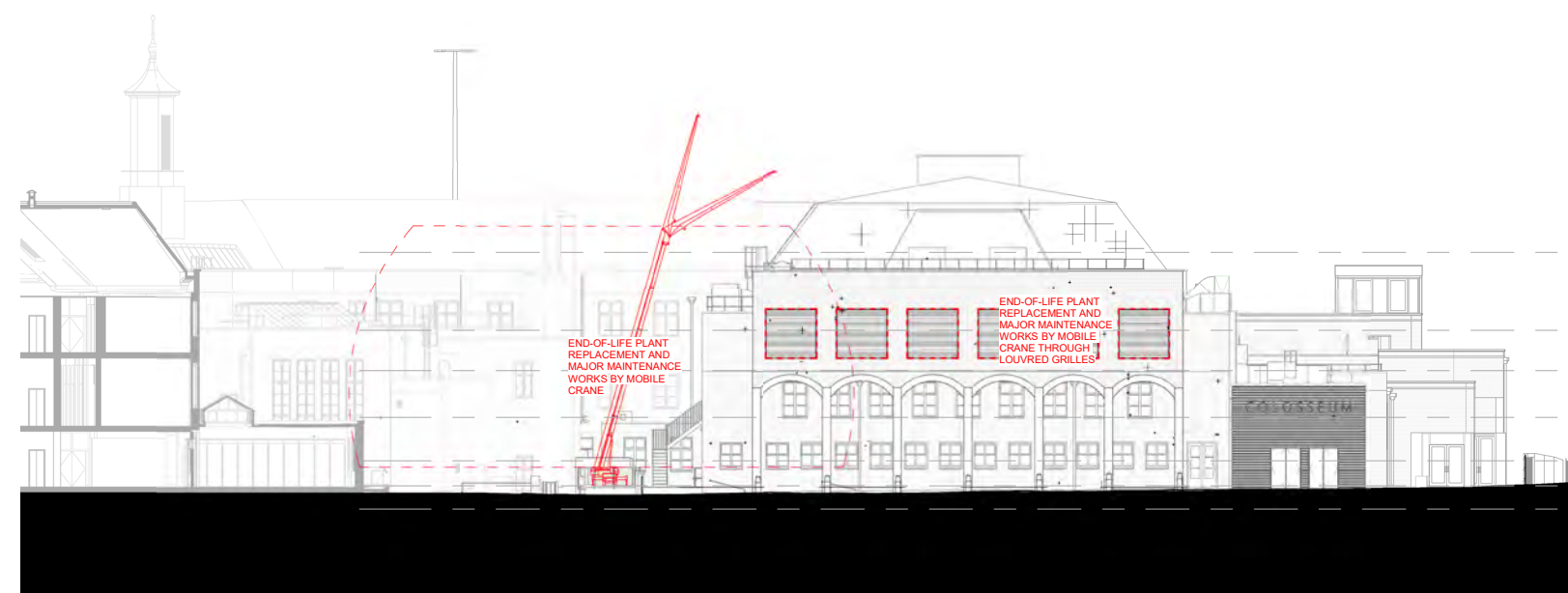
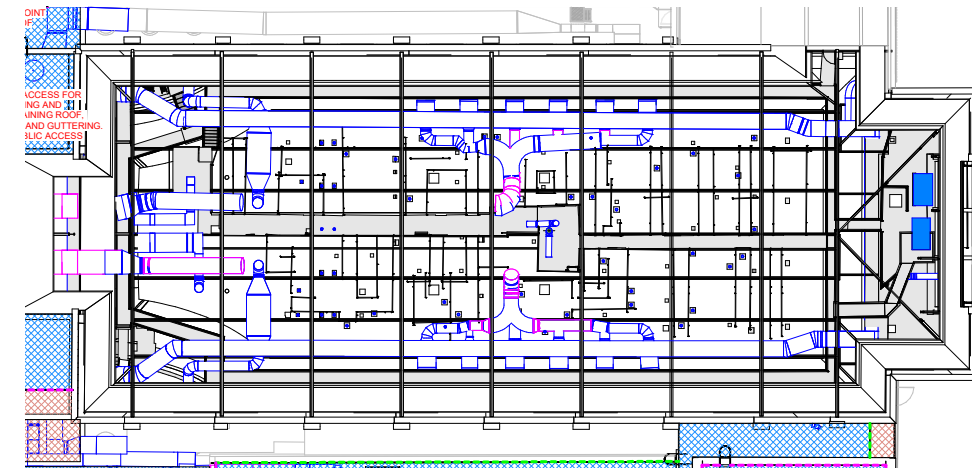
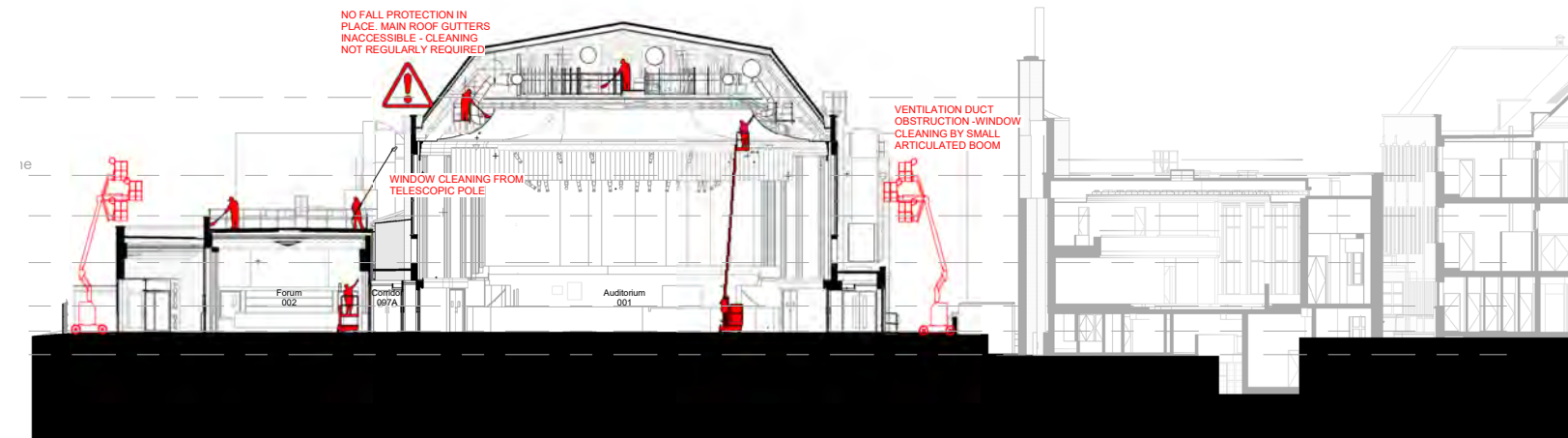
ROOF VOID

The existing, temporary scaffold walkways within the auditorium roof void will be removed and replaced with lightweight permanent walkway structures. These will be designed to improve access within the roof void, improve the functionality of the Auditorium and remove any loading on to the existing ceiling joists to safeguard the historic fibrous plaster ceiling.

PLANT REPLACEMENT

The major maintenance and end-of-life replacement strategy for roof-top plant remains unchanged. Due to the limitations to roof access these work will need to be carried out with a mobile crane.

There is hard landscaping to the perimeter of the building which can support MEWP access. If mobile crane access is required the crane size, plant loading and hard landscaping build-up will need to be assessed on a case-by-case basis to ensure that the crane loading can be supported.





HERITAGE

5



Watford Colosseum

Listed Building Consent Application:
Alterations to Watford Colosseum including restoration of historic fabric, minor layout changes, new material finishes, M&E upgrades, illuminated signage, and landscape works for improved accessibility

Heritage Impact Assessment



0.0 Contents

- 1. Scope (P4)
- 2. Understanding Significance (P5)
 - Desk-top Study
 - Summary of Significance
- 3. Proposals (P6-8)
 - Open Plan Offices & Changing Places WC
 - Entrance Foyer
 - Forum Hall (Former Refreshment Room)
 - Main Auditorium (Former Assembly Room)
 - External Interventions
- 4. Conclusions (P9)
 - Heritage Impact Assessment
 - Conclusions

1.0 Scope

This Heritage Impact Assessment has been prepared by Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios in support of the Full Planning and Listed Building Consent applications for the refurbishment and alterations to Watford Colosseum. The authors have used a growing body of understanding of the heritage values combined with the outcomes of pre-application consultation and site investigations to inform this assessment. We plot efforts to sustain and, where possible, reveal or reinforce those heritage values. Where there is conflict the assessment charts the balance that is sought between the potential positive and negative impacts and explores efforts to avoid or minimise any potential harm to the heritage asset.

The core aims and aspirations for the project are to make the heritage buildings fully functional along with tangible improvements to the visitor experience, through a transformative but cost-effective redevelopment that will ensure the long-term preservation of one of Watford's key heritage assets. In order to achieve the project aims, there are multiple proposed interventions due to take place across various technical disciplines. Some of these interventions are noticeable, transformative elements, and some are more 'hidden' changes that will optimise the building's operation, helping to facilitate the best commercial arrangement with an incoming operator.

These applications describe the proposed interventions and the impact and benefit of key works, which include restoration of historic fabric, minor layout changes, new material finishes, M&E upgrades, illuminated signage, and landscape works for improved accessibility.

This report should be read in conjunction with the Design and Access Statement, which sets out the statement of need and the process of pre-application consultation alongside an illustrated narrative of the context, current condition and overview of the proposals which are not repeated within this report.

2.0 Understanding Significance

Desk-top study

Aesthetic Value

The Grade II Listed Watford Town Hall and Colosseum was built in 1937-39 to the designs of Charles Cowles-Voysey. Classical in style with Art Deco detailing, its gravitas and landmark design contribute to a streetscape of similar civic buildings. The buildings sit within the ‘Civic Core Conservation Area’ which is peppered with national and locally listed buildings, empty development sites and is dissected by the arterial road, Rickmansworth Road, which passes in front of the Colosseum.

The Colosseum is a concrete frame clad in hand made red bricks with simple classical styling in the form of dentil mouldings to parapets and string courses. The main auditorium and entrance foyer is spanned by steel trusses clad in clay tiles with a shallow metal roof to the central area. The ancillary buildings have flat concrete roofs concealed beyond parapets. The windows are white metal framed set-in timber subframes on upper floors.

The main elevation on to Rickmansworth Road is of **exceptional / high aesthetic value**. The former entrance is announced by high level decorative brickwork panels, projecting hood mouldings to windows, a cantilevered concrete canopy and a cascade of steps spilling out onto the main street. The aesthetic value could potentially be improved through reinstatement of the original entrance.

The rear elevations were designed to be utilitarian and are consequently of **moderate low / medium aesthetic value**. They have suffered the full impact of modern services and accretions to serve the changing needs of the building. A single storey extension (1953-59) at the junction with the Town Hall is low negative impact whilst the plant room (1988) and associated external ducting to the main auditorium is of high negative impact. There is potential for improvement through rationalising, screening, material unification of services.

The classical spatial planning coupled with Art Deco detailing continues inside with a triple height entrance Foyer, Auditorium (former Assembly Room) and Forum (former Refreshment Room) with their original coved fibrous plaster ceilings and dark stained soft wood lining intact. The aesthetic value of these grand rooms has been eroded over the years by the accumulation of poor quality linings and decorative schemes, ad-hoc services and loss of original fittings which detract from the otherwise **exceptional / high aesthetic value**. Terrazzo staircases with bronze handrails and decorative light fittings in the Forum are a reminder of the pride and aspiration of civic architecture around World War II. There is potential for increasing the aesthetic value through the replacement of poor-quality finishes and ad-hoc services with a sensitively designed decorative scheme punctuated by high quality interventions.

The 2011 Foyer Bar extension (not listed) is constructed of black brick with large expanses of full height glazing which culminate in a lantern over an internal atrium. The extension was conceived as a pavilion forming a new less formal and more functional entrance. The external steps were extended and large format metal lettered signage advertise the new entrance leaving the former entrance and Foyer redundant. The black brick continues into the interior where it wrestles between a multi-layered white plastered ceiling and glare from the large expanses of glazing with randomly coloured glass as part of an exaggerated purple and orange colour scheme.

Historic Value

Historic value lies in the building’s contribution to the narrative of the development of Watford in the inter-war period. The designers: Charles Cowles-Voysey (Architect), Oscar Faber (Structural Engineer) and Hope Bagenal (Acoustician) were all leading exponents of their specialisms in the late 1930’s. The Colosseum is considered a good example of building of the period and retains its original use.

The Colosseum boasts an 80 year history of ‘A-list’ performances ranging from classical to popular music acts. Its excellent acoustics have led to its continued

demand as a recording studio for soundtracks and film scores by the BBC and others. More recently the venue has played host to highly popular plays and boxing matches.

The Colosseum is of **exceptional / high historic value**.

Evidential Value

The Watford Colosseum remains substantially as originally designed by Charles Cowles-Voysey. Much of the original building is intact, both internally and externally, whilst it continues its original use.

During the twentieth century there have been a few small changes to the auditorium to suit the changing needs of performances, most significantly the removal of the choir seating at the back of the stage to provide a flat and more flexible stage. This resulted in changes to the backstage layout and the arrangement of the dressing rooms.

A plant room (1988) and associated external ducting to the rear of the main auditorium was the most noteworthy development before 2011.

The most recent and significant intervention is the 2011 extension by RHWL to provide additional public space to suit the expectation and needs of modern day audiences including level access to the gallery and new circle bar, additional WCs and bleacher seating in the auditorium.

The Colosseum is of **considerable / medium to high evidential value**.

Communal Value

The Colosseum has been an important part of the Watford scene for civic functions and entertainment over the past 80 years. Whilst it has struggled financially over periods of its more recent history, it continues to be a popular venue for concerts, weddings and other functions.

The building has **moderate / low to medium communal value**.

Summary of Significance

The Colosseum is a nationally and locally important heritage asset. Its national architectural credentials are coupled with its importance to the local community in and around Watford as a meeting place, a social venue and a source of inspiration.

Overall, the Colosseum is very little changed from its original design and purpose. Alterations and extension to the building have generally been undertaken in a sensitive manner although there is clearly scope for positive impact on the aesthetic values.

A considerable number of original details remain, including the timber panelling, plaster ceilings and doors and ironmongery which should be protected as part of any future proposal.

Overall the building is considered to have **considerable / medium to high significance** with the acoustic in the auditorium having **exceptional / high significance**.

3.0 Proposals

The proposals are to refurbish and reservice the Colosseum to preserve its historic fabric and sustain its reputation as Watford’s premier performance venue for this and future generations.

Externally the main change will be to re-establish the primacy of the original entrance. New and re-located external signage is proposed to aid orientation. Proposals for digital signage on the 2011 Bar / Foyer extension do not form part of the current Planning and Listed Building Consent applications.

Interior design proposals seek to refresh and re-connect the sequence of grand public spaces with a contemporary materials and finishes inspired by the Art Deco heritage. Architectural intervention in the listed fabric is limited to a new draft lobby in the Foyer, removal of a few partitions in office space to make the building more inclusive. In the non-listed 2011 extension there is rearrangement of bars and staircases to improve orientation and functionality which results in revealing original fabric. New materials and finishes are chosen to complement the original palette, whilst contributing to the orientation, acoustic, thermal and lighting strategies.

The proposals address the poor condition of the auditorium stage, fibrous plaster ceilings and fire compartmentalisation. The reservicing proposals rationalise the ad-hoc service interventions to create an efficient and adaptable infrastructure to increase enjoyment, comfort, safety and maintenance access to sustain the heritage asset.

Summary of Heritage Impact and Technical Analysis of the upgrade options

Open Plan Offices & Changing Places WC

The current cellular offices in the south end of the Town Hall quadrant at ground floor are predominantly original rooms, with some later additions to further sub-divide the largest of the original three spaces. The size and configuration of the four offices is no longer considered to be practical from an operations standpoint, with operators expressing a preference for open plan office space. Consequently, the proposals are to remove both the original and more contemporary partitions in the crescent space to create a larger open plan office that is more conducive to modern working practices. While some of this building fabric is original, it is not considered to be of particular historic significance within the context of the building as a whole. No unique or notable details are proposed for removal and the partitions could be easily reinstated is required. The proposed demolition is deemed to **have a potential minor negative impact on the evidential value and is of neutral impact to the aesthetic value.**

Entrance Foyer

Summary of Heritage Impact

The existing Entrance Foyer has become a rather neglected backwater following the relocation of the entrance to the 2011 Bar Foyer extension. The original subtle streamlined classical character is drowned out by the garish carpet and accumulation of loose fixtures, fittings and furniture. There is ample scope to improve access to heritage and to enhance the special character by reinstating the former main entrance use and replacing unsympathetic finishes.

Lobby

To reduce heat loss and traffic noise the proposals are to add a new timber/ glazed draught lobby to the existing recessed glazed doors to control the thermal and acoustic environment. The high-quality design features decorative panels inspired by the original woven acoustic panels found in the Town Hall.

The lobby height will match the original and will interface with the existing fabric between the doorway to the stair and the existing hatch to the former pay boxes. The lobby lid will conceal the heat curtains to be installed as part of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme. All considered, the proposed lobby is deemed a **neutral aesthetic impact on the space**. The potential harm of adding a modest accretion is balanced by the increased access to heritage, positive impact to the exterior, high quality design and the integration of environmental services. Any residual potential harm is mitigated by reversibility.

Floor

It is proposed that the carpet be replaced with a terrazzo floor between the existing stairs and an engineered timber floor in the spine corridor zone to aid orientation. The proposed high quality floor finishes are deemed to have a **positive impact on the aesthetic value.**

Walls & Ceiling

The upper walls and fibrous plaster coved ceiling beneath the Auditorium gallery are to be redecorated warm white. Below the datum of the draught lobby the walls and alcoves are to be painted a feature colour to align with operator branding. At ceiling level a rectangular field of acoustic plaster is to be fixed in the recess of the existing perimeter moulding. The walls of the alcoves are to be lined with acoustic plaster and finished flush. Radiators are to be replaced with simple contemporary fittings colour matched to walls. The proposals are deemed to have a **positive impact on the aesthetic value.**

Forum Hall (Former Refreshment Room)

Summary of Heritage Impact

Walls & Ceiling

The Forum Hall is an area of high historic value, but has been marred by ad-hoc services installations which detract from its special historic character. The proposal for the Forum Hall is to rationalise the services and reinstate a softer, neutral colour palette that is subservient to the historic features in the space. The proposed colour and character of the Forum Hall is elegant and sophisticated, responding directly to the specific heritage context. To counteract the removal of the thick pile carpet in this space, and improve the acoustic in the space, absorption is proposed in the form of proprietary fabric-wrapped absorptive panels which will be colour-matched to the warm white walls, and new acoustic curtains to each of the full-height glazed door sets.

One of the main interventions into the historic areas of the building is the proposal for a pipe grid and technical fit-out in the Forum Hall, comprising internally wired bars (IWB) supporting new production and house lighting, alongside a new portable temporary staging system. The proposed interventions will enable more regular and flexible use of the Forum Hall and are considered to be vital for its functioning as a versatile and flexible performance space. It is recognised however, that the Forum Hall is an area of considerable historic value and that any interventions in this area warrant a bespoke solution. The layout of the pipe grid has therefore been designed to align with the historic ceiling and downstand beams, and avoid obstructing the original light fittings. The IWB will also be powder coated warm white to reduce contrast with the ceiling and walls. Roof investigations are being carried out to ensure that any additional weight to the structure will not negatively impact upon the historic fabric, and strengthening works will be carried out where necessary. The pipe grid installation will also rationalise the currently cluttered services, and allow for the removal of the existing lighting bars. All considered, the proposals for the Forum are deemed a **neutral aesthetic and evidential impact** on the space, whilst there is likely to be a **positive communal impact**. Any residual potential harm is mitigated by reversibility.

3.0 Proposals

Floors

As with the Entrance Foyer, a new engineered timber floor is proposed throughout the Forum Hall space to the existing finished floor level to avoid interfering with the original door and panelling details. On site investigations revealed it is possible to retain existing finished floor levels since the floor in this area is a suspended sprung floor system, with a void of sufficient depth to accommodate the increased floor thickness. The proposed high quality floor finishes are deemed to have a **positive impact on the aesthetic value**.

The monolithic bar counter has a marble effect finish to set it apart from the other more playful and casual bars within the contemporary extension of the building. The proposed high quality detailing and finishes are deemed to have a **positive impact on the aesthetic value**.

Main Auditorium (Former Assembly Room)

Summary of Heritage Impact

The Main Auditorium’s original subtle streamlined classical character is obscured by the purple decorative scheme, patterned carpet and ungainly ventilation outlets below the windows. The lighting gantries and peppering of recessed lights in the fibrous plaster ceiling further detract from the special character.

Roof Void

Specialist inspections of the fibrous plaster note evidence of movement attributed to the installation of semi-permanent heavy access walkways, vibration due to motorised lighting gantry lifts, deformation of steel hangers and localised failure of wadding ties.

Proposals are to replace heavy access walkways with a lightweight metal walkway that bears predominantly onto the roof trusses. The new walkways are to be configured to afford access to all regular serviceable plant in the roof void for safety in operation. The strap detail between the ceiling beams and steel angles will be strengthened with new chocks and straps. Facilities management has been advised to operate only one motorised gantry at a time.

Existing theatre lighting, public address systems and curtains are currently hung from an existing roof truss over the front of the stage. Acceptable load calculations limit the future flexibility of the installation. It is proposed to insert a new ground bearing steel portal frame to support theatre lighting and public address system above the stage. Stage curtains and surrounds will continue to be supported by steels between trusses concealing the new portal frame structure.

Detailed structural modelling of the proposed high level theatre equipment has resulted in proposals to strengthen trusses with additional metal tie rods as required. All strengthening will be concealed within the roof void.

A number of recessed light openings made in 2010 are no longer required allowing the fibrous plaster ceilings to be made good in these locations. Mechanical and electrical systems are to be clamped to existing structure to prevent need for drilling or welding.

Stage

The original stage to the former Assembly Room was tiered, constructed of reinforced concrete and lined in timber. The Michael Jackson Consulting survey (2013) revealed the original tiered section of the concrete structure had been roughly removed and replaced with a steel and timber platform whilst the original reinforced concrete flat front section remained. The new brief requires a loading capacity of 7.5KN/m2 and a point load of 4.5KN, the existing fragments of staging do not meet this requirement. Options for strengthening

the existing and a new concrete encased steel replacement were reviewed, and the latter recommended that could be built in combination with the proposed new portal frame supporting the theatre lighting, which is required to relieve the historic structure from overloading the trusses which support the delicate fibrous plaster ceilings.

It is proposed to install a new fully concealed goods lift in front of the stage to facilitate the lifting of set building materials from auditorium level. The existing get-in lift is within the extents of the stage, which limits usability as the stage cannot be fully set up while the lift is in use. The proposed new get-in lift will improve functionality and access to both stage and substage levels, as well as improving the speed and process of the get in/get out. The new get-in lift will require a small amount of excavation to the Auditorium floor and some alteration to the front of the stage. Existing timber panelling will be retained and incorporated into the lift design so that there will be no aesthetic impact from the proposal. Level access to the stage will be provided by the insertion of a new platform lift alongside the existing backstage stair.

On balance proposals are deemed to have a **neutral impact on the aesthetic value and evidential value** and a **positive impact on communal value** These works are essential to **sustain the heritage asset and to enhance future opportunities to access the heritage asset**.

Walls & Ceiling

The upper walls and fibrous plaster are to be redecorated warm white. The acoustic strategy is to retain the current recording acoustic but increase the versatility of the space through the introduction of variable acoustic absorption that can be deployed to enhance the quality of spoken word performance. The variable acoustic absorption is proposed as acoustic banners that are positioned between the windows, with top-casing that aligns with the existing window blind boxes. The existing fixed acoustic absorption to the face of the circle balcony will be replaced with equivalent fabric-wrapped panels that complement the proposed neutral colour scheme. Secondary glazing is proposed to all of the Auditorium windows to reduce noise breakout. This will be fully reversible and will not impact upon the historic fabric or character of the space. The existing stained timber panelling is to be repaired and restored. The proposed high quality detailing, finishes and repairs to existing fabric are deemed to have a **positive impact on the aesthetic, evidential and communal value**.

Floor

The existing modern carpet is to be replaced with a plain shallow pile carpet to aid wheeled movement of furniture. The existing sprung timber floor is to be retained and repaired where necessary. The proposed high quality finishes are deemed to have a **positive impact on the aesthetic value**.

External Interventions

Summary of Heritage Impact

Colosseum Canopy

The proposals are to enhance the original entrance canopy with additional illumination and signage to maximise its impact, street presence and sense of arrival. The existing Art Deco canopy is to be refurbished along with the addition of a backlit signage strip on top of this canopy, allowing the traditional theatrical clip-on lettering and system to display the current event. This illuminated strip will be a fully removable and reversible addition.

Proposals to move the entrance back to its original location make it necessary to shift the signage indicating where to enter. Proposals are to remove the existing aluminium lettering to the extension and replace this with new ‘Colosseum’

3.0 Proposals

entrance signage with illuminated brass-coloured lettering to the upgraded canopy. There is an existing guardrail to the canopy roof that will be retained to act as support for the new lettering. The primary canopy signage will be supplemented by vertical signage to increase visibility to passing pedestrians.

The proposed high quality design is deemed to have a **positive impact on the aesthetic and communal value**.

Landscape

The existing landscaping is well designed and in reasonably good condition. As a result the proposed landscaping works are limited to accessibility improvements to the main entrance steps, the resurfacing and reconfiguration of the painted parking bays to the rear to create some additional accessible parking, the cleaning of brickwork retaining walls and access ramps and minor repairs, weed removal and cleaning to the existing stone paving and entrance steps.

The proposals are deemed to have a **neutral impact on the aesthetic value and a positive impact on communal value**.

External Ductwork

The existing low level supply ductwork which distributes on the external elevation on both sides of the Auditorium appears oversized and has inconsistent finishing, which negatively impacts upon the external character of the building. Unfortunately, it is not possible to remove this ductwork,

but there is plenty of room to improve its aesthetic through rationalising and reducing the size where possible. Air flow requirements calculations indicate the new ducts could be reduced in height to improve external aesthetics. Additionally, the new supply and extract ducts will be made uniform in appearance with a plain flat panel aluminium covering and will be fixed to allow maintenance to the existing flat roofs over corridors which have a history of poor access leading to failure and damage to internal finishes and joinery.

The proposals are deemed to have a **minor positive impact on aesthetic value** and will **enhance (maintenance) access to the heritage asset**.

Rooftop Plant

As part of the works a new full package heat recovery AHU and associated supply and extract ductwork shall be installed on the roof of the existing Forum Hall. The ductwork shall be coordinated with the new PV panels that are being installed under PSDS. The new AHU shall be installed on new elevated structural supports and has been located as far back on the roof as possible to minimise the sight lines to ground level.

As part of the works the existing toilet extract plant currently mounted on the office roof shall be removed and replaced with new. In addition to this, the new AC condensers serving the Auditorium will also be installed on this roof. While this will have some visible impact on this side of the building at roof level, it will only be seen from the rear service yard is therefore not considered to impact upon the aesthetic appreciation of the highly significant elevations of the Colosseum.

The proposals are deemed to have a **minor negative impact on aesthetic value** and will **enhance (maintenance) access to the heritage asset**.

4.0 Conclusions

Heritage Impact Assessment

Aesthetic impact of proposals: Positive

The proposals aim to make a positive impact on the aesthetic value by: restoring the former entrance and internalised window openings; rationalisation of ad-hoc services; simplification of the materials palette and the introduction of targeted high-quality design interventions inspired by the Art-Deco vision.

Historical impact of proposals: Positive

The proposals aim to celebrate and sustain the historic use of the Colosseum as the premier performance and recording venue in Watford. Positive feedback from historic users (e.g. BBC) and potential operators confirm the designs are likely to enhance the popularity and viability leading to the conclusion the proposals are likely to result in a Neutral / Positive impact on the historical value.

Evidential impact of proposals: Neutral / Low

The proposals are deemed to have a minor impact on the evidential value. Loss of original fabric is limited to a remnant of reinforced concrete forming the original stage, holes through the existing slab to form a lift pit, and minor alterations to the original entrance steps to form a level access route to the main entrance. When balanced against the reinstatement of the original entrance and repairs to the existing fabric we conclude the proposals will have a neutral impact on the evidential value.

Communal impact of proposals: Positive

The proposals are wholly focused on providing a positive impact on the communal value of the Colosseum by sustaining and enhancing access to the heritage asset though restoring, reservicing and re-invigorating the offer. Positive feedback from current employees and potential operators confirm the proposals respond to both the identified deficiencies and the potential opportunities in the Cultural Quarter initiatives being developed by Watford Council in partnership with local communities.

Conclusions

The cumulative impact of the proposals contained within the Planning and Listed Building Consent applications for the Colosseum has been managed by understanding of significance, minimising potential harm though sympathetic aesthetic design and co-ordinated technical design proposals. Where potential harm has been identified appropriate risk mitigation methodology has been developed and evidenced to ensure best practice conservation management.

We conclude that the cumulative impact of the proposals represents ‘less than substantial harm’ to the heritage asset. On the spectrum of ‘less than substantial harm’ the proposals would be considerably closer to ‘no harm’ than to the ‘substantial harm’ end. The conclusion of this historic impact assessment is that a ‘planning balance’ review would fall in favour of consent to these proposals.

Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios

03/05/22

Research

The following documents were referenced in the preparation of this assessment:

- HER Database
- Watford Town Hall and Colosseum list description
- Watford Town Hall and Colosseum Statement of Significance July 2018 (Savills)
- Watford Colosseum Conservation Statement July 2020 (Pritchard Architecture)
- Watford Civic Core Conservation Area Appraisal, adopted December 2015

On-site Investigation

The following documents were referenced in the preparation of this assessment:

- Existing Measured Survey - Ayre Chamberlain Gaunt
- Auditorium Ceiling Inspection (Alan Baxter, Richard Ireland 2018)
- Fire Door & Compartment Survey (Tennyson Suite 2020)
- Auditorium Stage Structural Survey (Michael Jackson Consulting 2013 / SFK 2022)
- Forum Floor Construction Investigation (SFK / Morgan Sindall 2022)
- Forum Concrete Roof Structure Investigation (SFK / Morgan Sindall 2022)

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