



Our ref. WG1328 HS.ppp
15 January 2024

**Heritage Statement
Installation of a vertical lift
The Masonic Hall, Duncombe Place, York**

Introduction

The statement has been prepared to satisfy the requirement for a Heritage Statement to accompany the application which proposes the installation of a vertical lift within The Masonic Hall, Duncombe Place, York.

The Masonic Hall is Listed Grade II and within York's Central Historic Core Conservation Area.

A copy of the list description for the building is appended to this statement.



History of the building

Taken from the visitor pamphlet published by
The Masonic Hall, Duncombe Place:

The Masonic Hall is situated behind the War Memorial in Duncombe Place York, 100 metres from York Minster. Access to the Masonic Hall is reached along the wide drive to the right of the War Memorial that leads to the Front door of the Masonic Hall.

The Masonic Hall is constructed of brick with natural stone quoins and stone parapets, topped with a slate roof and a columned Stone Entrance Porch to the Front Door. The building was purpose built by the Union Lodge No 287 to the specification approved by the lodge members in 1862/3, Bro Oates was the Architect who designed the Hall and Bro. J.Barton Wilson, a London mason designed the interior.

The Hall was part funded from the proceeds of the sale of the old Masonic Hall owned by Union lodge, which was situated in 'Little Blake Street', and was situated fifty metres in front of the present building fronting onto Little Blake Street a narrow road which gave access to York Minster.

In 1862 the Lodge instructed the architects to provide the Lodge with three requirements: a large library to house their collections; books and artifacts', a dining room, and a meeting room for all Masonic occasions.

The Masonic Hall was completed in 1863. Union Lodge was renamed York lodge No.236 in 1870. The Lodge building was extended by three additions commissioned by York Lodge, the first in 1877 and the last being built in the period 1929/33. York Lodge architects designed all the extensions. The ground floor offices in the new extension were occupied from 1933, continuously until March 1997 by the Provincial Grand Lodge of Yorkshire North & East Ridings.

Freemasons have found this accommodation satisfactory for both Masonic and Social occasions since 1863.



Brief

The Masonic Hall, like most historic buildings, presents visitors with accessibility challenges.

The approach to the Hall is generally accessible from Duncombe Place and entry to the building is managed on an ad hoc basis to negotiate the limited number of steps on entry. The challenge within the building is then how to circulate vertically between entry level at ground floor (which includes the Hall) and the Dining Room at first floor.

Greater access and appeal to the public is significantly limited as a consequence of this constraint. This in turn compromises the potential for income generation for the Charitable Trust who offer this unique building for private functions.

For some time Members have considered a solution. Early discussions had the proposal to install a stair lift dismissed presumably on the grounds that this would be too harmful to the character of the principle entrance hall and stair.

The focus has since turned to the possibility of a vertical lift.

Siting

As might be expected the building has principle rooms and service rooms. The Robing Room is accessed directly off the entrance hall but is simple in it's plan-form and architectural detail. The ceiling is lath and plaster with a simple picture rail to the wall.

This room at ground floor is the most sensitive location for the installation of a lift.

At first floor, location of the lift within the Robing Room presents the opportunity to land at first floor within the Servery, which again, is a service room of simple aesthetic. Coincidentally, the double-margin door off the Dining Room to the Servery could be utilised as the exit point for the lift.

Within the Robing Room, the impact on plan-form represents the greatest harm. To mitigate this harm the lift will appear as a distinct intervention within the room. This will be achieved by utilising the lift manufacturer's white painted steel and aluminium enclosure presenting a materially modern aesthetic.

At first floor, the lift is enclosed on three sides by the walls of the building. To the Survey side, a new plasterboard partition will enclose the lift and provide fire separation.



Ground and first floor locations of the proposed lift.

Alterations

The proposed site of the lift will require removal of floorboards, lath and plaster ceiling, and timber floor joists to create the aperture for the lift shaft. Whilst this will represent permanent loss of historic fabric, the fabric is general building material and of limited significance beyond historical age.

The double-margin door to the Dining Room will be retained but altered.

This door will be manually operated by Members to stand the door open when the lift is in use and closed when not.

The door is double-margin, and the proposal is to split the door along the central bead and form a rebate to create a pair of doors.

Parliament hinges shall be installed to allow the door leaves to open beyond 90 degrees therefore being clear of the gate to the lift which must open out.

The clear opening width of this door is less than that required by the lift gate, but not by much. The preference is to retain the three-panel reveal linings but if clear width requirements mean this cannot be achieved, they will be removed to prioritise the clear width required by the lift gate.

Whilst this represents harm through loss of historical architectural detail, the justification is the greater public benefit of improvement to the accessibility of the building. It might also be considered that the linings are not entirely appropriate to the Servery side – this being a

service rather than principle room – and as such, harm is limited.

Architrave detail to both rooms shall be retained.



Double-margin door with reveal linings.



Conclusion

The Masonic Lodge is a significant building in the history of the City of York which has the potential to be experienced and enjoyed by a wider audience if accessibility to the building can be improved.

Members have given great consideration to an appropriate solution which has been determined from a deep understanding of the building of which they are custodians.

Improved accessibility has the potential to broaden the appeal of the building, increasing its potential for income generation, the profits of which return to the Charitable Trust responsible for the upkeep of The Masonic Hall.



Official list entry

Heritage Category: Listed Building

Grade: II

List Entry Number: 1257873

Date first listed: 12-Mar-1997

Statutory Address 1: MASONIC HALL, DUNCOMBE PLACE

Location

Statutory Address: MASONIC HALL, DUNCOMBE PLACE

District: York (Unitary Authority)

Parish: Non Civil Parish

National Grid Reference:

SE 60201 52082

Details

YORK SE 6052 SW DUNCOMBE PLACE (South east side) 1112-1/27/304 Masonic Hall 14.3.97

GV II

Masonic hall, offices and flat. 1862-63, altered 1866, with early C20 extension, Hall by J Barton-Wilson and John Edwin Gates. MATERIALS: Hall of grey brick in English garden-wall bond with ashlar front, moulded cornice and hipped slate roof with brick stack: extension of red brick in English bond with brick quoins, ashlar doorcase and reset porch, and moulded stone cornice; slate hipped roof with brick corniced stacks. EXTERIOR: Hall has 2-storey 3-bay front on basement plinth: extension is of 2 storeys, 6 bays. Entrance in extension through reset round headed panelled double doors in round-arched architrave and Doric porch with triglyph frieze, moulded cornice and low parapet. Hall front has rusticated clasping pilaster strips at outer angles and to projecting centre bay, supporting entablature beneath low parapet. Two basement openings in outer bays have ornate cast-iron grilles. Ground floor windows are 1-pane sashes in plain openings over sill band. First floor windows are similar sashes with semicircular overlights in keyed round-arched openings, also with sill band. Eaves frieze inscribed with the words AUDI VIDE TACE, one over each bay. Right return: Articulated by rusticated pilaster strips carrying moulded cornice. First floor sill band returns from front as storey band. There are no openings. Towards front, upper storey is set with low relief moulding of Masonic insignia enclosed in raised surround. Extension has panelled door in keyed moulded stone doorcase at left end. Ground floor windows are unequal sashes of 6 over 9 panes: first floor windows are 12-pane sashes. All windows have stone sills; those on first floor have keyed brick arches. Broad first floor band of brick. INTERIOR: Ground floor: Library completely fitted with reused C18 raised and fielded panelling and set fireplace. The walls of the Masonic Hall are articulated by marbled pilasters of the Greek Corinthian order and incorporate paintings and Honour boards. Master's Chair and porch over doors enclosed by clustered columns. Ornately enriched frieze to coffered ceiling. Lighting columns in the form of the Classical Orders. Founded as the Union Lodge on 7 July 1777 at Lockwoods Coffee House.

Listing NGR: SE6020152082