

# RAILWAY MUSEUM

## National Railway Museum, Leeman Road, York

Listed Building Consent application for the installation of a hygienic ceiling and repositioning of 1 no. external louvre within the former goods office

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### Planning and Heritage Statement

February 2024



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## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Statement has been prepared on behalf of the Science Museum Group (SMG). It supports a listed building consent application for the installation of a hygienic ceiling within the Grade II Listed Peter Allen Building (PAB) at the National Railway Museum.
- 1.2 The former goods office (PAB) is located to the east of the goods station (Station Hall) and faces on to the goods yard (The Square) at the main entrance to the Museum. For the last 20+ years, the northern part of the building has functioned as a commercial kitchen supplying catering outlets within the museum and facilitating corporate events.
- 1.3 In 2023, planning and listed building consent was granted to extend the kitchen into the southern half of the ground floor with associated internal and external works (22/02625/FUL and 22/02626/LBC). This part of the building had previously functioned as an office space, predominantly open plan with 2 private rooms along the east elevation. There was a modern suspended ceiling throughout the ground floor although this was set at a lower level within the kitchen, where it housed the ductwork for the ventilation and odour management system.
- 1.4 The approved drawings for listed building consent 22/02626/LBC show a new hygienic ceiling throughout the ground floor, which was set at the same height as the existing suspended ceiling within the southern office space. Following detailed design / specification, it has now become clear that a greater void will be required to accommodate the plant and service ductwork required for the new kitchen. The impact is to lower the height of the new ceiling in part of the ground floor, which requires a further listed building consent.

## 2.0 Proposals for Development

- 2.1 The proposal is to install a new hygienic ceiling within the northern and southern rooms of the former goods office, which are located either side of the central corridor leading towards the Station Hall.

2.2 Previously, the main kitchen area was set across the ground and basement levels of the northern wing (Photographs 1 and 2). This part of the building has been completely stripped-out but the height of the former ceiling is still easy to identify just above the mid-point of the arched window (Photograph 3). The impact of the modern fit out on the exterior of the building is shown on photograph 4, which was taken prior to the recent refurbishment. The ground floor windows were either wholly or partially obscured by the kitchen units and ceiling and there were 2 no. ventilation grilles located along the northern elevation within the first and fourth windows.



Photo 1: former kitchen space (northern wing)

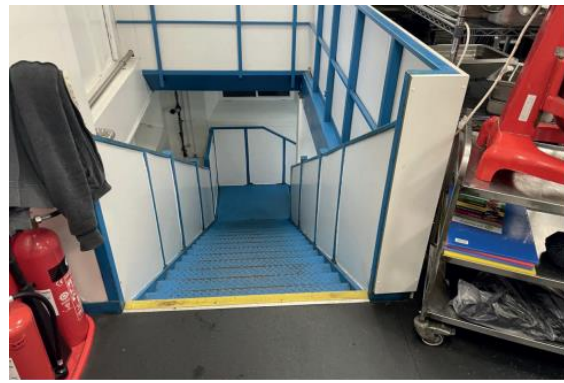


Photo 2: Modern staircase to basement



Photo 3: windows obscured by former kitchen



Photo 4: height of former kitchen ceiling

2.3 Within the northern wing, the proposal is to reinstate the ceiling at its former height but to insert a bulkhead approximately 1.75m back from the eastern wall. This will prevent the new ceiling from crossing the window line along the principle eastern elevation and allows the existing ventilation grill within the first window of the norther elevation to be relocated to the second bay. It represents an improvement of the previous situation.

2.4 A similar approach is adopted within the southern wing. Here, the suspended ceiling is currently set just above the arched windows and there are a couple of cellular offices that

obscure the first window to the left of the entrance (see photos 5 and 6). The proposed hygienic ceiling will be set approximately 4m inbound of the eastern elevation, terminating in a bulkhead. It will cut across 2 of the arched windows on the southern elevation, where the intake / extract grilles are located although the position of the grilles is the same as the approved scheme. Externally, the revised arrangement will therefore have a neutral impact and the only visible change will be perceived internally.



Photos 5 and 6: Existing suspended ceiling and cellular offices within the southern room

### 3.0 Appraisal

- 3.1 The expansion of the existing kitchen within the goods office is required to serve an uplift in visitor numbers to the museum, the day-to-day catering requirements and their capacity to host conferences and events as part of a drive to boost income streams, become more economically sustainable and less reliant on government grants and funding. This is an important strand of NRM's commercial vision. The proposed kitchen expansion is essential to facilitate it and needs to be considered in the context of the benefits arising from the wider redevelopment programme.
- 3.2 The architectural interest of the building is considered to derive, to a large extent, from its external appearance. In their assessment of previous applications, officers considered that the symmetrical treatment of the front elevation to either side of a projecting entrance bay and architectural decoration including an impost band, sill band, keystones a doorcase and cornice in contrasting brick and sandstone dressings results in a frontage of some distinction, illustrating the importance of freight traffic to the railway company at the time. They also accepted that modern accretions including refuse storage areas, the service yard

and associated raised platform, external fire escape and modern window replacements, including ventilation louvres are intrusive features which detract from the appreciation of the listed building and its setting.

3.3 The works associated with the proposed kitchen expansion (22/02625/FUL and 22/02626/LBC) together with the programme of refurbishment approved under application 22/01366/FUL will result in a considerable enhancement to the appearance of the external appearance of the listed building. This is on the basis that:

- replacement of the multipane windows installed in the 1980's with accurate copies of the original sashes will restore the symmetry of the building, better revealing its significance
- Minor repairs to the building masonry and fabrics, replacement of rainwater goods, the introduction of conservation rooflights and proposed repainting will enhance the character of the listed building in line with good conservation practice
- A new timber enclosure is proposed along the southern elevation to conceal the irregular arrangement of bins, which is an unattractive element in the setting of the listed building. The relocation of the delivery entrance to this elevation will facilitate improvements the northern service yard, enabling the raised metal platform to be removed as a detractor
- Removal of the existing metal fire escape will improve the appearance of the southern elevation, enabling the current fire door to be replaced with a window

3.4 The design of the proposed hygienic ceiling has been carefully considered to limit its impact on the external appearance of the building. When viewed from the adjacent public square, there are benefits to setting the bulkhead inbound of windows along the eastern elevation, which were partially obscured by the previous kitchen. In the southern room, the setback is even greater and will barely be perceived externally. Whereas it does cut across 2 of the windows along the southern elevation, these openings were already identified for ventilation louvres in the approved scheme and internally, the containment plant and machinery is considered to provide a neater and more hygienic solution to having long stretches of ducting travelling across the ceiling.

- 3.5 The Heritage Assessment for application 22/02626/LBC considered the impacts of the proposed kitchen expansion on the interior of the building, identifying a number of benefits in reinstating the original arrangement of rooms in the northern wing through removal of the modern staircase. In the office to the south, a degree of harm was associated with changing the character of this space from an office into a kitchen. However, modern interventions such as the suspended ceiling, floor coverings, partitions and visible servicing have already eroded its Victorian character and the impact would be localised. Whilst the proposed hygienic ceiling represents a further modern intervention, its impact has been sensitively mitigated through a detailed design exercise with the mechanical engineers. The principal plan form of the building, comprising the central hallway to the goods station with its historical features and two flanking spaces would be preserved. The works are not considered to affect the overall appreciation of the listed building or those elements that principally contribute to its significance.
- 3.6 Overall, the proposal would not add significantly to level of harm already associated with the proposed kitchen expansion. The level of harm was previously placed at the low end of less than substantial and there are a series of heritage benefits in removing the modern staircase between ground and first floors, the external fire escape stair, fire door and service door and rationalising bin storage, collection and delivery areas within a neat enclosure away from the main entrance. This led to an overall conclusion that the heritage benefits of the scheme would outweigh the identified harm and the balance is further tipped when taking into account the package of architectural improvements approved under permissions 22/01366/FUL and 22/01367/LBC, which form part of the ongoing programme of works. The proposed interventions are not considered to alter this conclusion, which was previously accepted by both the Council's conservation officer and Historic England. We therefore respectfully request that listed building consent be granted for the proposed hygienic ceiling.