

Hillingdon Civic Centre & Middlesex Suite Change of Use

Design, Access and Heritage

Statement

Rev. F - April 2024



HILLINGDON
LONDON

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01

Introduction



01

Introduction

This Design and Access statement is prepared to support the change of use application to facilitate the relocation of Uxbridge Library to the Middlesex Suite of Uxbridge Civic Centre. In addition, refurbishment to the Main Entrance and Reception Area are proposed to improve the access to the proposed library and other services provided within the Civic Centre and enhance the experience of public engaging with these functions. Internal rearrangement on Level 1 of the Middlesex Suite are also proposed to provide space for the Mobile Library Service and staff meeting and welfare facilities.

02

Planning Statement Summary

Proposed use change

The application seeks planning permission for Change of use of Middlesex Suite (Part Level 1, Level 2) for use as a public library (Use Class F1). Minor internal alterations and improvements to the corporate reception area.

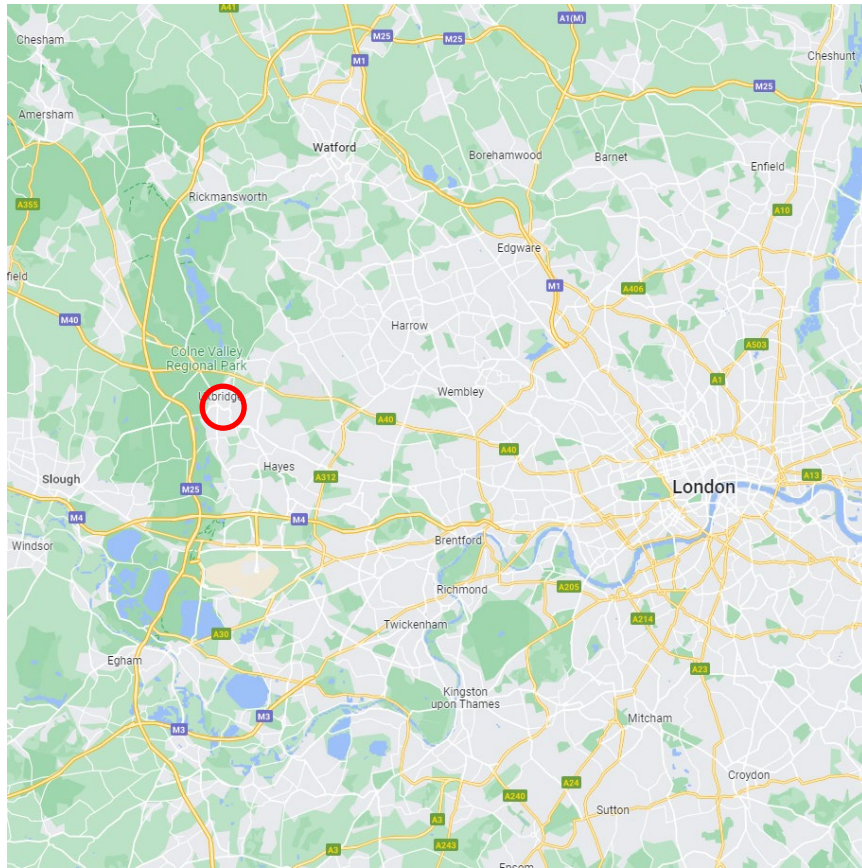
Detailed Planning Statement

Detailed Heritage Report, prepared by Nexus Planning is submitted as separate document to support the application. The document list all relevant national and local planning policies and analyses the proposal against the requirements. The planning statement demonstrates that the proposed scheme complies with the NPPF and all relevant development plan policies, representing sustainable development.

03

Heritage Statement

Site Location



Uxbridge, West London



Civic Centre, Uxbridge, West London

The Hillingdon Civic Centre is located in the heart of Uxbridge, located in the outskirts of West London.

03

Official list entry

Heritage Category: Listed Building
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1451218
Date first listed: 18-Apr-2018
Statutory Address: London Borough Of Hillingdon, Civic Centre, High Street, Uxbridge, UB8 1UW

Location

Statutory Address: London Borough Of Hillingdon, Civic Centre, High Street, Uxbridge, UB8 1UW

County: Greater London Authority
District: Hillingdon (London Borough)
Parish: Non Civil Parish
National Grid Reference: TQ0581183862

Summary

Civic centre, designed in 1971, largely built in 1973-1977, the civic suite completed 1978 and external works like landscaping in 1979, by Robert Matthew Johnson-Marshall (RMJM), partner in charge Andrew Derbyshire, project architect Terence Swales. The building also incorporates part of Middlesex county council offices of 1939 by C G Stillman.

The listed building includes integrated hard landscaping, including paving, planters, steps and walls. These elements are not included in the blue area on the List entry map as the map is schematic and their extent cannot be illustrated accurately.

Pursuant to s1 (5A) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 ('the Act') it is declared that the interior of the building (that is, those areas enclosed on all sides) is not of special architectural or historic interest.

Detailed Heritage Report

Detailed Heritage Report is submitted as separate document to support the application:
Civic Centre Heritage Statement March 2024



Historic England Archive: DP138614

Reasons for Designation

Hillingdon Civic Centre, 1973-1979 by Robert Matthew Johnson-Marshall (RMJM) is listed at Grade II for the following principal reasons:

Architectural interest:

- as an early example of English Post-Modernism which creatively reinterprets the Arts and Crafts tradition as an expressive composition of revivalist form and detail;
- through its planning and elevational treatment the building's large mass is broken down into more intimate spaces and forms, offering a revised approach to civic architecture;
- for its high level of craftsmanship, with a creative take on traditional brickwork detail, finely executed;
- the building stands little altered externally, complete with extensive integrated hard landscaping.

Historic interest:

- as one of the first major works in England by a Modernist architect to embrace an overtly historicist aesthetic, marking the emergence of a new architectural zeitgeist.



History

- The London Borough of Hillingdon was formed from four smaller authorities in 1965 as part of the government reorganisation of London: Uxbridge Metropolitan Borough, and the urban district councils of Hayes, Ruislip-Northwood, and Yiewsley and West Drayton. Uxbridge was seen as the communications hub for the area and the natural location for the civic centre. The site chosen had been home to the Middlesex county council offices, library and health centre, a building of 1939 by CG Stillman.
- The councillors and chief architect, Thurston Williams, agreed that the new building should have an open plan to bring together 1,300 staff who had previously worked in many small offices across the borough. Williams produced a design brief in early 1969, and took councillors to see several office complexes in the UK, and to Volvo's offices in Stockholm, considered the closest continental example of what was needed.
- In March 1970 the Welwyn Garden City office of Robert Matthew Johnson-Marshall and Partners (RMJM) were appointed to the job, with Andrew Derbyshire the partner in charge, later joined by Alan Crawshaw. Initially, the RMJM team produced a modern building, but this was rejected by councillors who demanded it be redesigned in a traditional style. This was a reaction to the factories and offices in which they worked by day and to problems the borough had experienced with its modern, flat-roofed housing. They and local residents sought something more like the houses they lived in or aspired to. In a revised design Derbyshire grasped this aspiration and offered instead 'familiar and friendly materials, and a formal vocabulary well-known to the public'. Sources for the design were based on models from nearby counties, in particular the Arts and Crafts Movement, with Derbyshire admiring JP Seddon's church at Ayot St Peter and that by J Harold Gibbons of 1939 at Kempston, both near his home in Welwyn Garden City. It was also from the Arts and Crafts style that much mass housing, such as that found in suburban Hillingdon, had its origins.
- The stepped section and serrated perimeter of the main offices were exploited to give the elevations complexity, with balconies and planting boxes. These were enhanced by pitched roofs set on the diagonal, which step down almost to ground level so that more roof is seen than wall. Derbyshire considered it unsatisfactory to have more than three storeys, as it is easier to communicate horizontally than vertically. He divided the large, square floor plate into four quadrants by a half-storey change in level, creating distinct areas each accommodating about a hundred people. The landscaping was developed in-house with Maurice Lee, whose contribution was fully acknowledged, marking a close relationship between it and the building.
- Hillingdon Civic Centre reflects the change of emphasis in new local government buildings of the later post-war period. The tradition of building imposing statements of civic authority lost traction in favour of a more informal approach, intended to resonate with the communities being served. It is hard to appreciate the novelty of the building's appearance at the time of its construction, other than through the controversy it sparked. Coming from a practice like RMJM, and the committed Modernist, Andrew Derbyshire, it was seen by some as a betrayal of Modernism; the wrapping of a conventional office building in a historicist skin. Derbyshire's hand was to some extent forced by the rejection of his first, Modern, design by the client, but, as was recognised by critics like Gavin Stamp (AR 1979), he grasped the popular draw of traditional architecture and responded with a meaningful language, related to that of the semi-rural suburban area in which the building stood. To many commentators at the time, Hillingdon's new civic centre represented a new way of celebrating civic pride, initiated by a Conservative council and completed by a Labour one without significant changes in brief.
- The partnership of Robert Matthew and Stirrat Johnson-Marshall was established in 1956, with offices in Edinburgh and London. The practice was joined in 1961 by Andrew Derbyshire (1923-2016) when RMJM won a limited competition for the building of York University. Derbyshire had studied physics at Cambridge before turning to architecture. He studied at the Architectural Association and went on to design power stations with Farmer and Dark and schools for West Yorkshire County Council before becoming deputy city architect at Sheffield, where his most important work was the Castle Market (demolished). He had impeccable modernist credentials, making Hillingdon a marked departure of style.
- Hillingdon Civic Centre is an example of Post-Modern architecture. Post-Modernism can be found across philosophy, literature, art and architecture, and the term is an old one, used in painting in the 1880s and literature in the 1940s. The term began to be used in architecture in the mid-1970s to signify a transformation of the orthodoxy of the Modern Movement that incorporated references to older architectural traditions, was more aware of setting and context, and sought enjoyment through colour and collage techniques. A clear distinction can be made between Post-Modernist architects, who all grew out of the Modern Movement, and traditionalists such as Quinlan Terry who had no such relationship with Modernism.
- The origins of the style are found in the United States, notably in the work of Robert Venturi and Charles Moore from the mid-1960s, paying homage to all aspects of their country's traditions. A more rigorous, classically-minded version evolved in Italy in the work of Paolo Portoghesi, Aldo Rossi and Vittorio Gregotti; in Italian-speaking Switzerland Mario Botta offered a more over-scaled version, and monumentalism was also seen in Spain. In England, the American and European idioms converged in the late 1970s, where it produced major architects of international significance, including James Stirling, and distinctive voices unique to Britain such as John Outram. The movement in architecture coincided with the revival of the British economy in the 1980s that encouraged new commercial and housing developments in areas such as Docklands.

Details

- Civic centre. Designed in 1971, largely built in 1973-7, the civic suite completed 1978 and external works like landscaping in 1979, by Robert Matthew Johnson-Marshall (RMJM), partner in charge Andrew Derbyshire, project architect Terence Swales. The building also incorporates part of Middlesex county council offices of 1939 by CG Stillman.
- MATERIALS: the building has a reinforced concrete frame clad in narrow handmade brown brick in English bond. Brick planters are incorporated at ground floor and on upper balconies. There are covered ways at ground level reached from an open square to the front, these are paved in brick and concrete slab. Courtyards, paths and garden spaces are paved with brick. The very steep pitched roofs are tiled and the windows are of hardwood.
- PLAN: the building is sited on an irregularly-shaped corner plot, between the High Street to the approximate north, and the curving dual-carriageway of Hillingdon Road to the east and south. The building is reached across a large square which opens from the High Street. The main entrance is to the south of the square. Behind, the council offices have a diamond-shape footprint and a stepped profile of three and four storeys, set over a semi-basement car park. To the east of the square, connected behind the main entrance, is a second, more irregularly shaped, part of the complex. This contains the council chamber, civic suite and registry office, and also has parking beneath. To the rear of this, visible to the south and from an internal courtyard, is part of the earlier 1939 building.
- EXTERIOR: the building's exterior is complex and varied, its overall aesthetic defined by dramatic roof-lines and modelling, executed in the warm tones of brick and tile. The windows are set flush into shallow recessed panels with a toothed course at the head.
- The entrance is reached up a flight of steps, within a raised single-storey loggia-like pavilion with its own steep roof. The main elevations over-looking the square have glazing arranged in a grid, over a partially open ground floor, raised over covered walkways. Over the range to the east, the clock tower from the earlier building has been resited, and at the front, facing onto the square is a bank of landscaping.
- To the south the covered ways open into landscaped gardens with brick paviors and planters. To the sides and rear of the offices the roofs step down over the first and second floors, where the square fenestration is set between brick piers, with some square blind panels above. Multiple small bays, some set at angles, appear to cascade down the building. The semi-basement is set-forward as a plinth to the sides with arched openings providing light, and to the rear, ventilation for the car park. Entrances and exits are at the corners of the plan. The east side of the complex also has varied roof forms, but with a larger scale, and more irregular massing. This part of the complex contains the remains of the 1939 building, visible to the south (containing the Middlesex Suite). This has a distinctive Moderne style, with deep, semi-circular projecting wings and wide multi-pane steel windows. The building is also visible from an internal courtyard, where it has a more classical style, with light red brick over a Portland stone ground floor.
- Subsidiary features: There are a number of paths and open spaces around the building paved with a mixture of brick and slab. There are raised brick planters, and the change in levels across the site is addressed by steps, ramps and high-level walkways, also of brick.
- Pursuant to s1 (5A) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 ('the Act') it is declared that the interior of the building (that is, those areas enclosed on all sides) is not of special architectural or historic interest.



04

Existing

Existing Photographs



Corporate Reception Area



Covered walkway and Middlesex Suite entrance door



Middlesex Suite Level 2 interior

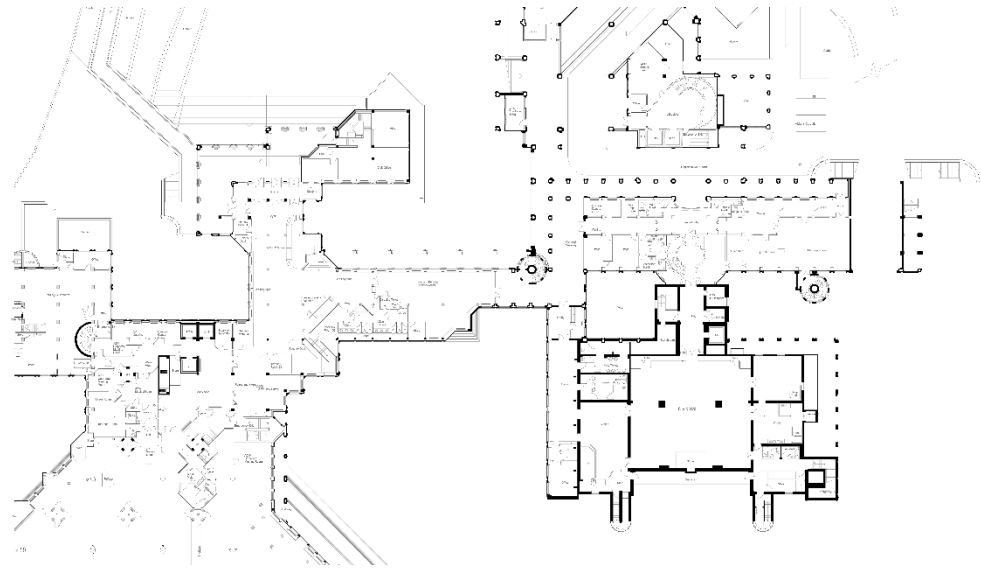


Middlesex Suite South Elevation

Existing Plans

Level 2:

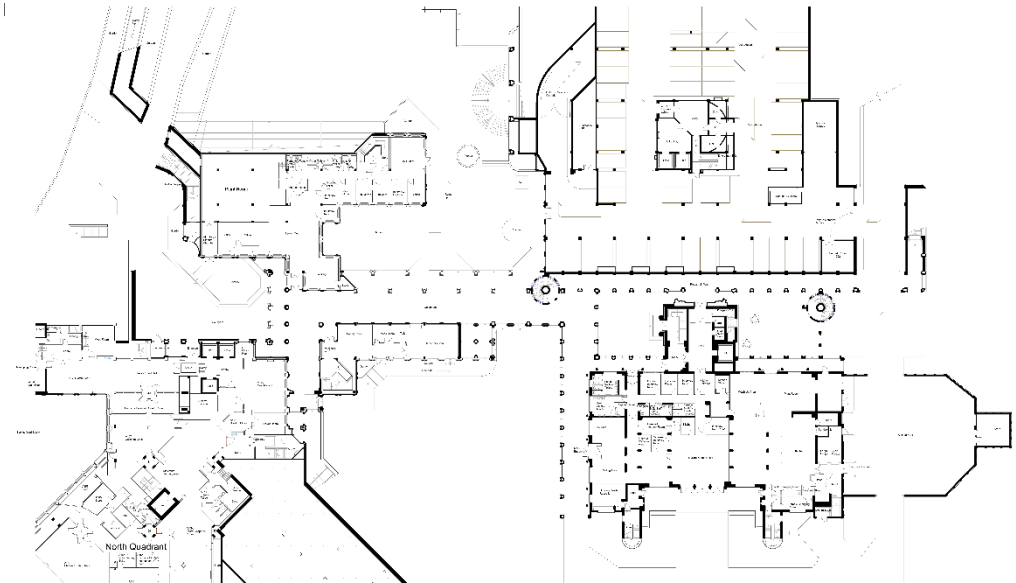
This space has been used as rentable function space with larger, high ceiling space in the centre and smaller, auxiliary service, catering and toilet facility areas associated with the main function. The previous arrangement was a result of extensive internal alterations, including blocking up of openings in structural walls and addition of non-load-bearing partitions.



Existing Plan – Level 2

Level 1:

This space has been used as part cellular office space part commercial catering kitchen. The existing arrangement is a result of extensive internal alterations, including blocking up of openings in structural walls and addition of non-load-bearing partitions. Original elements are the load bearing walls and rounded structural columns.



Existing Plan – Level 1

Scale plan drawings are provided to show existing layout. For existing plans refer to drawings:

M9556-APL0002

M9556-APL0003

M9556-APL0004

05

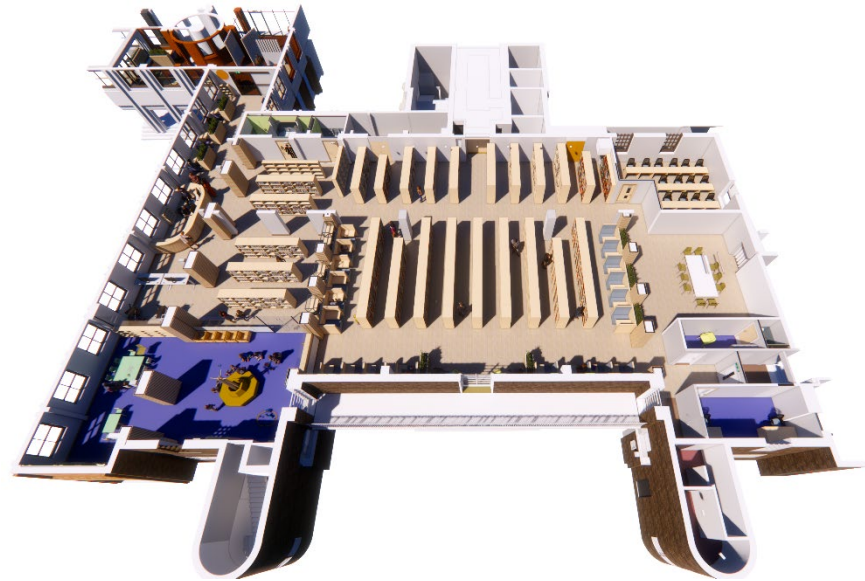
Design Proposal

Design Proposal:

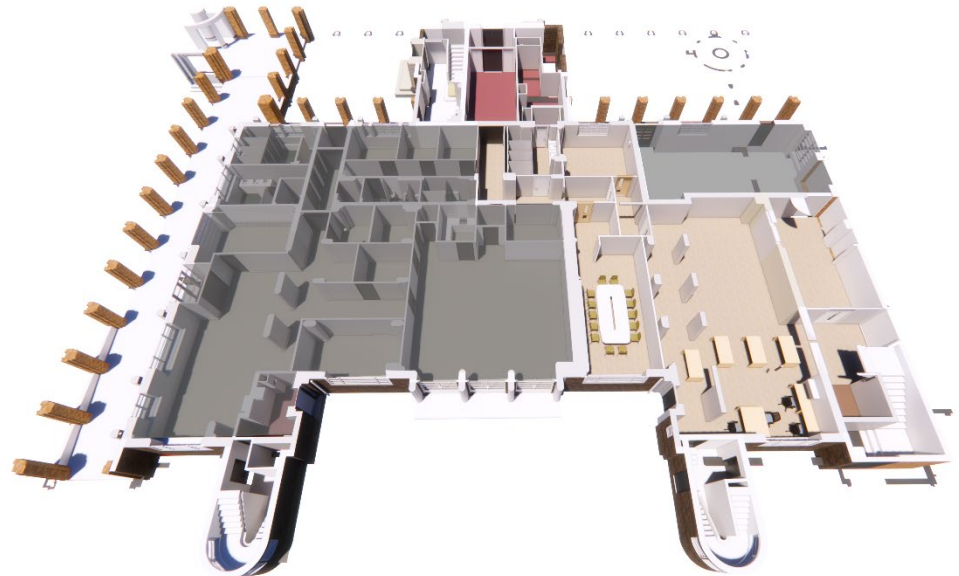
The application seeks to change the use of the existing disused Middlesex Suite to facilitate moving the existing Uxbridge Library, located on the High Street. The proposal includes internal alteration and forming an enclosed link between the Main Entrance area and Middlesex Suite. Planning Approval and Listed Building Consent Approval for this has been previously obtained (Application reference: 14805/APP/2023/3254 and 14805/APP/2023/3274).

In addition, internal alterations to Level 1 of the Middlesex Suite are proposed to provide the following functions:

Mobile Library
Shared Staff Training and Meeting Space and Welfare.



Level 2



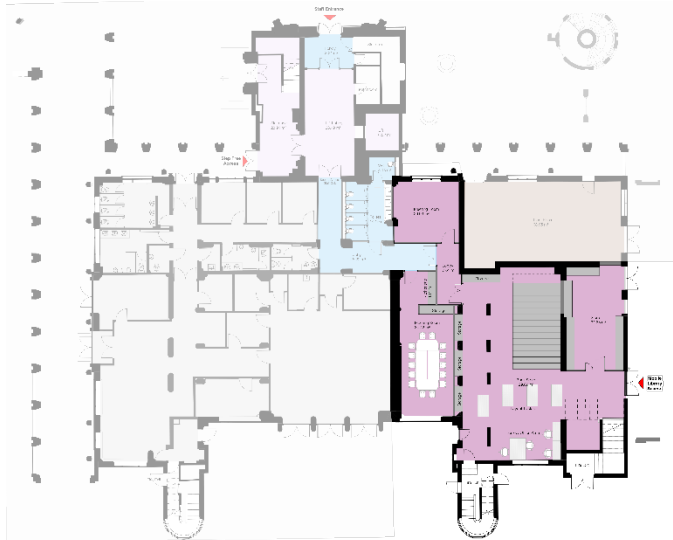
Level 1

Mobile Library:

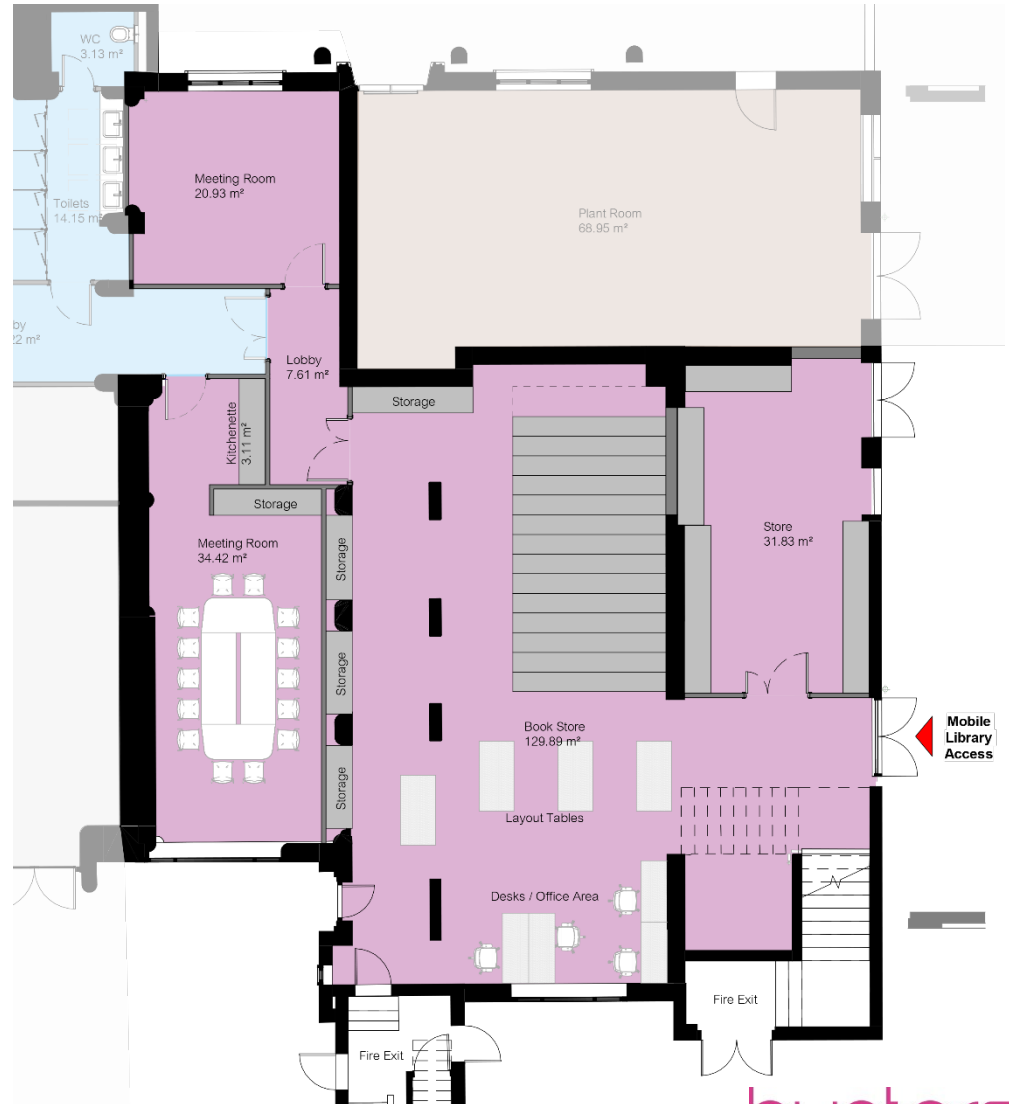
Mobile Library function is proposed to be located on the east side of Level 1 of the Middlesex Suite.

Key design principles:

- Direct access to the service yard for library van deliveries.
- Large storage capacity including movable shelving
- Layout table area
- Office space with 4 no. workstations
- Designated meeting space
- Access to shared staff facilities



Proposed Plan

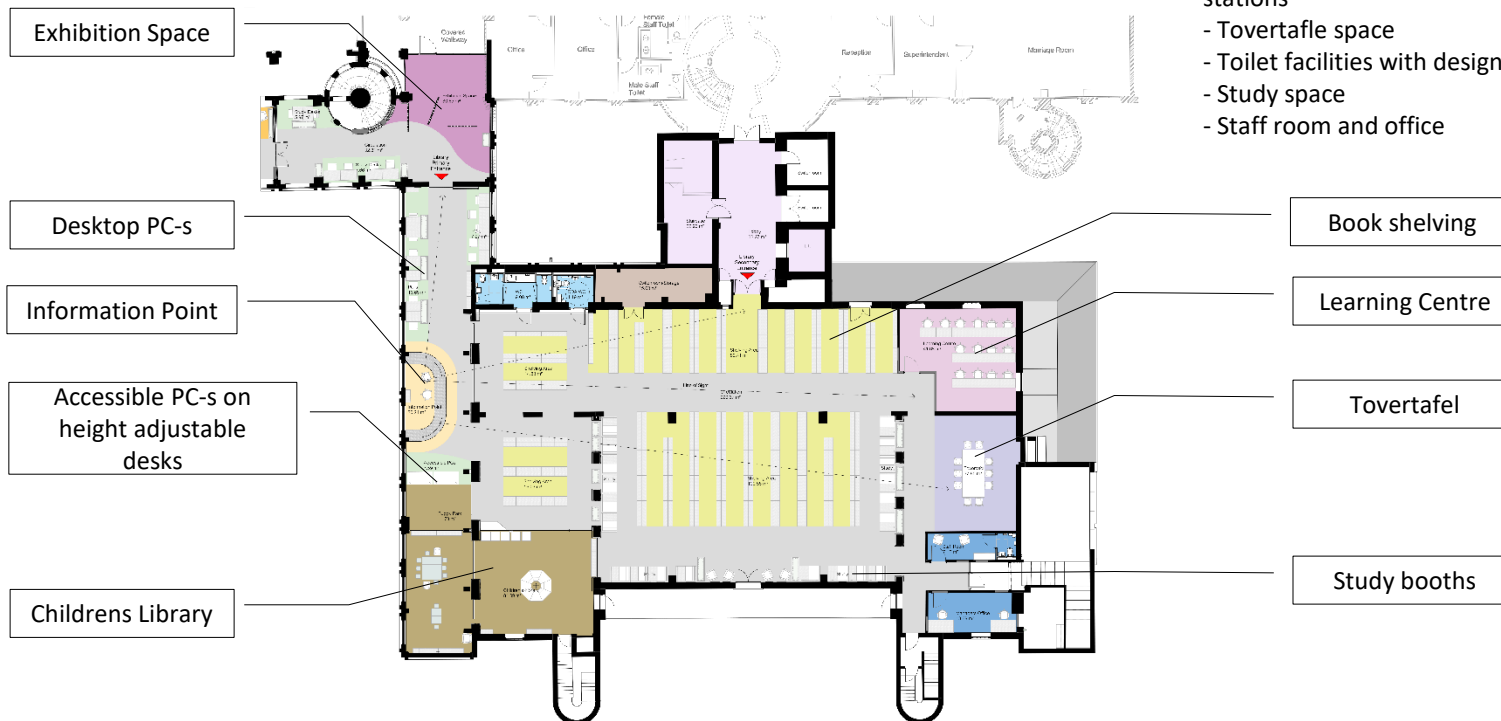


Library:

The proposed library will be arranged on Level 2 of the Middlesex suite, incorporating the newly formed enclosed link space leading from the Corporate Reception. The design will reinstate the previously blocked up original openings in structural walls to form open spaces and allow for good visibility across the floor. Reception desk / information point is positioned to be clearly visible for arriving library users whilst providing clear line of sight for the staff behind. The central, high ceiling area will be brought back to its former glory by removing the low-level suspended ceiling and opening up the previously blocked crittall windows.

Key design principles:

- Clear special and functional arrangement, line of sight and wayfinding for all visitors.
- Well positioned information point
- Enclosed Children's Library
- Book shelving areas across the space
- Learning Centre
- Desktop PC-s including high adjustable accessible stations
- Tovertafle space
- Toilet facilities with designated Doc M toilet.
- Study space
- Staff room and office



Library Proposed Visuals



New Information Point



Children's Library Area



Study booths and main shelving area



Study booths and main shelving area

06

Access

06

Overview

The proposal aims to take a holistic view on accessibility including access to the building and the proposed constituent functions as well as all rooms and services within, whilst working with the constraints of an existing building with listed exteriors.

The elements of accessible design are carefully considered to provide overall improvements to the whole Civic Centre Campus beyond the areas directly affected by the application.

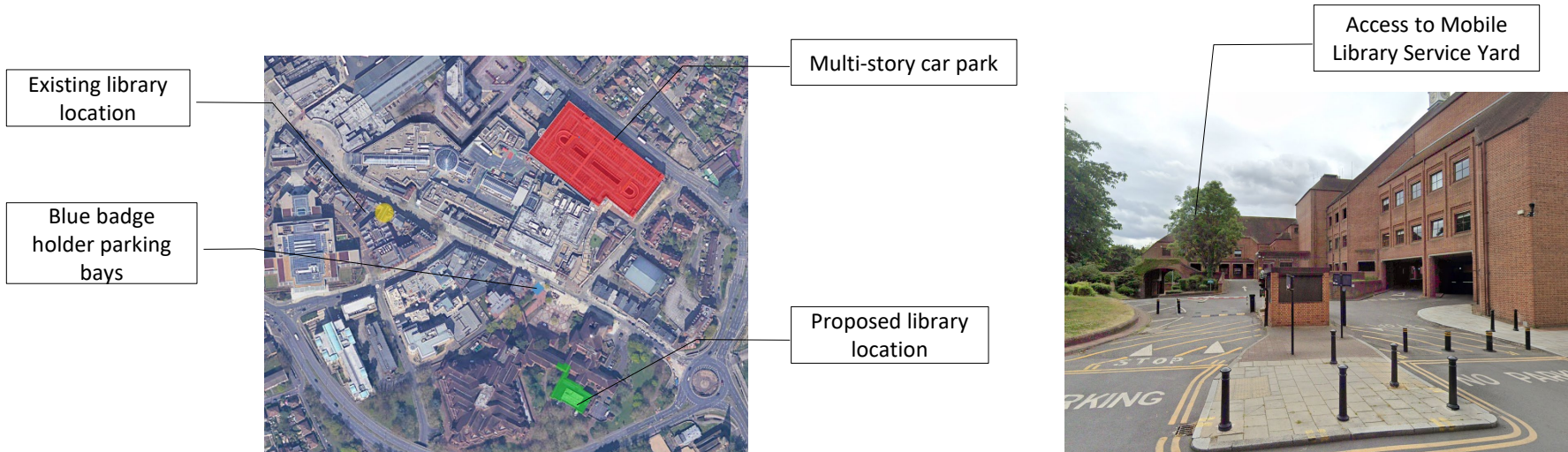
The proposed alterations present the perfect opportunity to implement good practice principles of dementia friendly design and design to aid visitors with a wide variety of physical and cognitive impairments.

Vehicle Access

There is no change regarding vehicle access. Visitors can use the publicly accessible town centre multi-story car park (The Chimes Car Park) to park their vehicles. Mobile Library delivery vehicle will access the service yard from the High Steet.

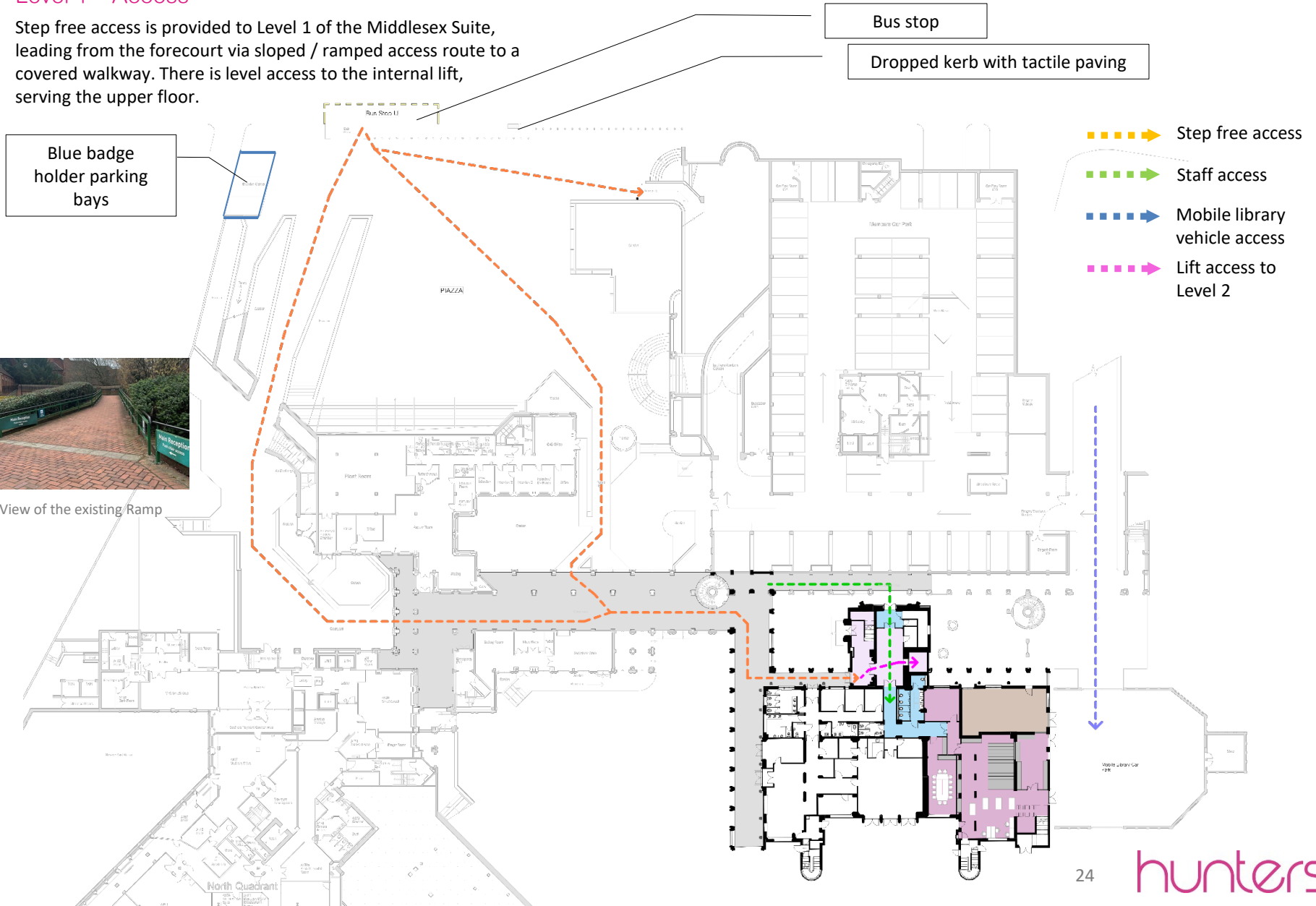
Disabled parking

There are 3 no. blue badge holder parking bays at the forecourt accessed from the High Street. In addition, disabled parking bays are available in the multi-storey car park with lift access.



Level 1 – Access

Step free access is provided to Level 1 of the Middlesex Suite, leading from the forecourt via sloped / ramped access route to a covered walkway. There is level access to the internal lift, serving the upper floor.



Blue badge holder parking bays

Bus stop

Dropped kerb with tactile paving

- - - - - ➔ Step free access
- - - - - ➔ Staff access
- - - - - ➔ Mobile library vehicle access
- - - - - ➔ Lift access to Level 2



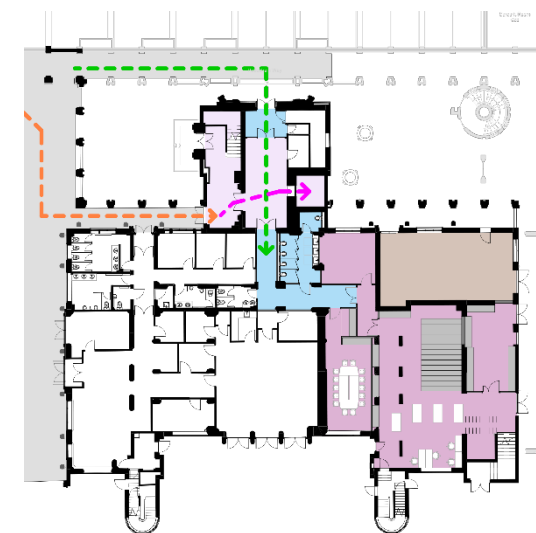
View of the existing Ramp

Level 2 – Library Access

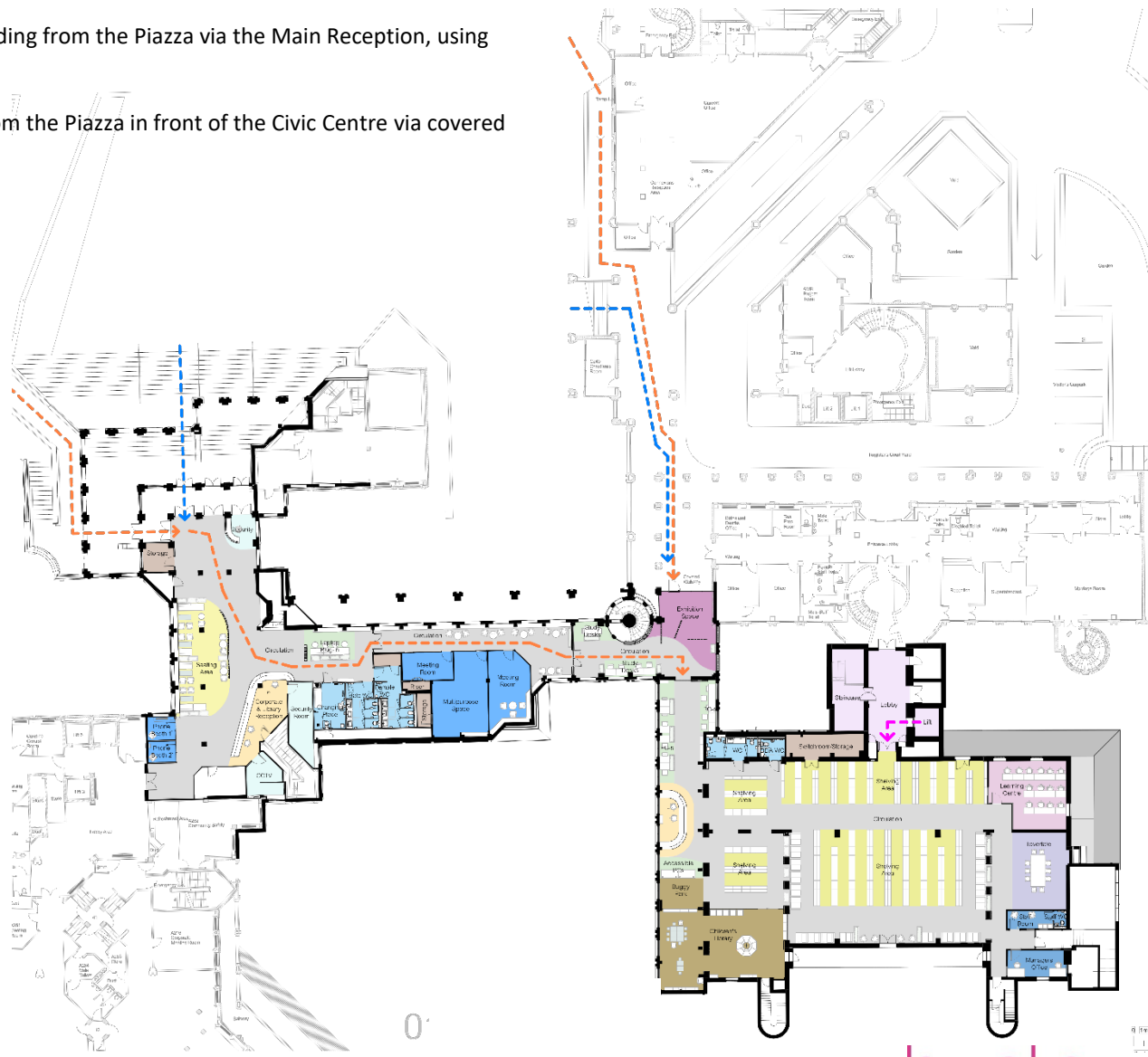
Access is proposed for the public to the Library leading from the Piazza via the Main Reception, using either the existing external stairs or ramp.

Alternative step free access is proposed leading from the Piazza in front of the Civic Centre via covered colonnade and utilising existing internal lift.

- - - - - ➔ Step free access
- - - - - ➔ Staff access
- - - - - ➔ Stepped access
- - - - - ➔ Access via lift



Level 1 – Access Arrangement
Showing alternative step free
access via lift



Level 2 – Access Arrangement

Level 2 – Library Access

Removing Barriers:

All proposed new internal doors along the access route to the library will be power assisted to aid access.

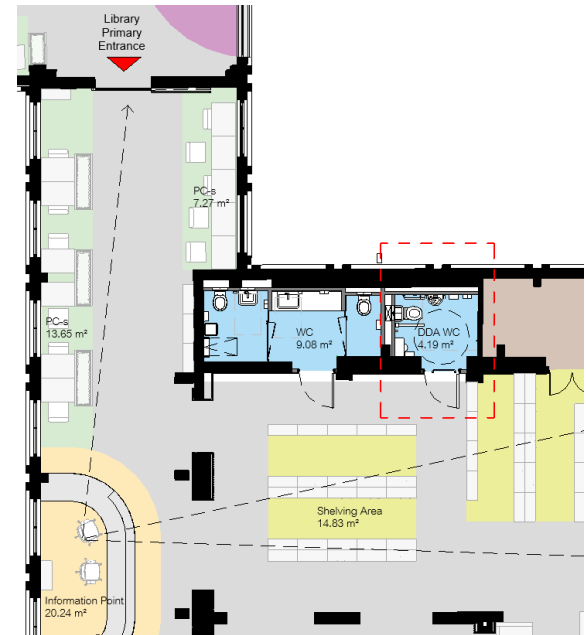
Accessible toilet provision:

At the main entrance area, a full-size changing place toilet is proposed to benefit visitors of the Library and the Civic Centre in general. Separate male and female toilets will be provided with baby-changing tables in both.

Wheelchair accessible toilet will be provided accessed directly from the library space.

Lift Access:

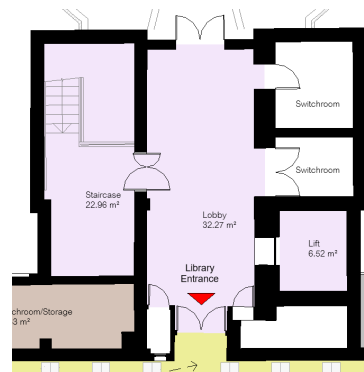
There is an existing lift connecting levels 1 and 2 of the Middlesex Suite. The lift has been out of service for a number of years. As part of the works, it will be recommissioned and made available for the public to use. Site visit with the access officer confirmed that the width of the lift doors will be suitable for wheelchair users.



Wheelchair accessible WC location



Level 1



Level 2

07

Service Arrangement and Waste Collection

07

Service Arrangement

Service arrangement for the proposed functions to utilise existing ones.

Mobile library is the only functional area of the proposal requiring regular vehicle delivery access. This will be provided via the designated service yard, directly adjacent to this function on the east side of the building, accessed from the High Street.

All other functions are expected to have small volume of consumable deliveries, being able to be managed and distributed by hand using existing supply arrangement and internal circulation routes.

Any large-scale service / repair / or cleaning activity will be assessed on individual bases. The proposal will not introduce any additional access restrictions when compared to existing.

Waste Collection

Waste storage and collection strategy is proposed to utilise the existing arrangement in place for the Civic Centre. The volume of refuse and recyclable materials associated with the operation of the library is anticipated to be less than that of the previous use of the Middlesex Suite.

Clearly marked, separate bins for refuse and recyclable waste collection will be provided in areas accessed by the public and in staff welfare areas. Style and signage of bins to be same as throughout the Civic centre.

Waste collection and temporary on-site storage will be managed by the staff.

08

Summary

SUMMARY

The proposed change of use will introduce a function the Civic Centre that is in line with the various public services provided on the premises. Careful consideration of the access arrangements and high-quality design will ensure good integration to the existing building and secure a fit for purpose library space for long term. The vicinity of the proposed location to the existing one will minimise the change in travel for library users.

As part of the application, supporting information in the form of Heritage Report and Transport statement has been commissioned.

The reports conclude that the impact of the proposal on the Listed Building is acceptable and that it is in line with the relevant transport policies.

The supporting planning statement demonstrates that the proposed scheme complies with the NPPF and all relevant development plan policies, representing sustainable development.

