Heritage Statement

Britannia Buildings
Huddersfield

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Site Location
Britannia Buildings
St Georges Square, Huddersfield

Existing Site

Built originally as a warehouse, showroom and offices, completed about 1858 to designs by local architect William Cocking, altered in the 1920s by Clifford Hickson for the Huddersfield Building Society, now in residential and commercial use. Grand palazzo style.

MATERIALS: ashlar sandstone, slate roof coverings.

PLAN: located in a prominent position overlooking St George's Square on a rectangular island site bounded to the north east by John William Street, to the south east by St Peter's Street and to the south west by Station Street.

EXTERIOR: Britannia Buildings is of three-storeys plus basement with quoined corners (those to the ground and first floor are vermiculated) and a hipped slate roof.

St George's Square elevation: this elevation is of 13 bays with a central neoclassical entrance flanked by three large plate-glass windows to each side, all installed in the 1920s. The entrance has six steps up to a pair of timber eight-panelled doors set within a richly carved and moulded doorcase adorned with a variety of classical and Egyptian motifs, including fasces combined with rosettes, and Greek key decoration. The doorcase entablature incorporates an Egyptian winged sun-disk in relief, with a Separating the first and second floor is an acanthus decorated cornice acting as a continuous sill for the second-floor windows. The windows contain two-over-two sashes and have moulded surrounds, segmental heads and keystones with sunken panels between them. The panels flanking the central window have elaborately carved flowers and scroll-shaped brackets. There is a deeply moulded eaves cornice above with scrolled brackets, between which are paterae and festoons. Above is a balustrade with moulded rail, vase-shaped balusters, and panelled piers with elaborate gadrooned urns. In the centre, the parapet is segment-shaped and bears the Royal Arms sculpted in high relief topped by a large sculpture of Britannia.

John William Street elevation: This seven-bay elevation, which provides the best idea of the architect's original design for the St George's Square ground floor elevation, is the most elaborate and faces onto what was the principal highway through the New Town. It has a rusticated plinth with recesses below the windows, vermiculated quoins on the ground and first floor, and chamfered quoins on the second. The ground-floor windows are round headed with vermiculated quoined jambs and voussoirs. The keystones feature boldly sculpted masks of classical deities (and a further one on the St Peter's Street and Station Street returns). There are panels containing a sculpted floral ornament below each window sill. The central bay breaks forward and has Tuscan pilasters with alternately vermiculated courses, an entablature and modillioned cornices framing two parts. The lower part is a doorway filled in by a display case in the 1920s, with a segmental head, bolection moulding, keystone and modillioned cornice. The upper part is a round-headed sash window set within a concave recess with rusticated voussoirs and quoins, and a sculpted mask on the keystone.

The floors above are similarly styled to those of St George's elevation but without the central venetian window, replaced by a single window with segmental pediment.

The other elevations are simplified versions of the St George's Square and John William Street elevations. However, the end bays break forward to create a pavilion composition on the corner of both. The St Peter's Street elevation has a central entrance that breaks forward in the style of a shallow enclosed porch with three steps up to recessed partly-glazed double doors incorporating integral margin lights. The doorcase has a raised, moulded surround set within a concave recess, above which is an enriched pulvinated frieze and a further Greek-key frieze. Above is a Diocletian fanlight with leaded glazing also within a segmental-headed concave recess with moulded surround and scrolled keystone. Topping the porch is a cornice with four lion heads similar to the north elevation entrance. Bay three contains a further entrance door with paired panelled doors and a glazed overlight, whilst bay 13 contains an inserted modern door. The Station Street elevation features an inserted modern door within bay seven and all the ground-floor windows contain casements.

The street names 'John William Street,' 'St Peter's Street' and 'Station Street' are carved on their respective elevations.

modillioned cornice incorporating four lion heads and topped by anthemion set upon a low pediment. The ground-floor windows have bronze mullions and transoms and are separated by enriched pilasters with raised panels and stylised Ionic capitals that support an entablature with modillioned cornice that runs across the elevation.

The first floor has two-over-two sash windows with sills supported on four scrolled brackets, between which are sunken panels and carved rosettes. The windows have moulded surrounds and Tuscan half-pilasters, full entablatures, and triangular modillioned pediments. In the central bay is a Venetian window in a surround of Tuscan pilasters and entablature, breaking forward around the central light which also has quarter columns, a moulded frame and a segmental head. Above are sunken panels arranged radially beneath a segmental pediment, which in turn supports the apron of the window above.

The site occupies a corner plot in a prominent position within Huddersfield Town Centre.
The area of proposal within the application is the existing basement.

The basement is currently un-occupied, whilst other parts of the buildings are currently used.

The other areas of the building are used as:
Lalas Restaurant
Dentists
24 luxury apartments used as aparthotels.

The basement is currently affected by damp and general neglect.
Part of the basement has been converted for use as part of Lalas restaurant.
This area is separate to the area the application applies to.

Reasons for Listing

The former warehouse, showroom and offices, about 1858, to designs by local architect William Cocking, altered in the 1920s by Clifford Hickson for the Huddersfield Building Society, is listed at Grade II* for the following principal reasons:

Architectural interest:

* a striking example of neoclassical architecture in the grand palazzo style, incorporating high quality sculptural work and decorative detailing;
* the addition of 1920s shopfronts with an eclectic mix of classical and Egyptian motifs adds further interest.

Historic interest

* located on a landmark site originally reserved for the town hall Britannia Buildings illustrates the wealth and power of Huddersfield in the later C19;
* it is one of Huddersfield's mid-C19 purpose-built commercial premises constructed as part of the Ramsden Estate's planned New Town development;
* it was designed by the notable local architect William Cocking who has a number of listed buildings to his name.

Group value:

* it has strong group value with nearby listed buildings, including the Grade I railway station, which face onto St George's Square.

Proposed Development

The proposed development is to utilise this large basement space for a hotel room usage.

The proposal is to utilise the existing walls and install new internal studwork walls within.

External walls where damp shall be treated as required using a proprietary tanking system designed by a specialist.

Existing lightwells give light to part of the basement and these will be utilised in some of the rooms giving a small level of natural light.

Due to the location of the rooms some will have no windows which is not uncommon in hotel living and is not a requirement.

To ensure that the required levels of ventilation that is required to each room is provided a ventilation system will be installed.
The extraction for the ventilation will be a single outlet in a location to be discreet and agreed.

The existing access to the apartments is through the entrance off St Peters Road. The stairs and lift are existing and are to be utilised.

Surrounding and Site Setting

The surrounding area is mainly commercial with a range of bars, restaurants, shops close to the site along with Huddersfield Railway Station.

The setting makes this an ideal location for a small hotel scheme, which can take visitors to Huddersfield easily, provide accommodation overnight for people to use the Huddersfield facilities and the location allows during the week people visiting for work to stay using the train.

Design

The building is not to be affected externally.
As the proposal is within the basement of the building there are no features which would be seen as substantial or of high value.

The conversion using traditional detailing to give opulent rooms with the details matching areas of the building on the upper floors.

i.e. introduction of coving to the rooms.

Conclusion

The building is currently in use and has areas of the building which are not used.
It is the desire of the owners to maximise the usage of the building.

By using the basement for hotel apartments this utilises otherwise a unused space whilst also providing further opportunities in Huddersfield.

The building owner recognises they own a building which is of high value and would like to offer rooms that reflect this.
A conversion they have seen which they see as a reflection of their desires is the conversion of the building on Princess Street into Hotel accommodation.

The scheme therefore should look to compliment the building and the location.