

Access Appraisal and Review

Prepared for

FACT



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1.0 Introduction and Overview

Introduction

Instructions were received from Union North in October 2010, to visit the FACT building in Wood Street, Liverpool and provide a report with respect to accessibility for visitors and also appraising the latest proposals for improvements.

This report has been compiled with consideration given to the following legislation:

- Part M of the Building Regulations 2004.
- Code of practice for fire safety in the design, management and use of buildings BS9999: 2008.
- The Disability Discrimination Act 2005
- Design of Buildings and Their Approaches to Meet the Needs of Disabled People – Code of Practice BS8300: 2009.

It is assumed that all Planning Permission and Building Control requirements are fully complied with during construction as they are outside the remit of this report.

A full access audit of the building has been completed and can be found in Appendix B of this report. This report is an exception report listing current items which are not in-line with the latest legislation and guidance as indicated above. This Appraisal and Review is intended to provide an assessment from the site visit to be taken forward and used to provide a platform for implementation of the works on-site.

Overview

Proposals are currently in design to provide new visually linked entrances with a cube theme throughout reflecting FACT's existing logo. The main and secondary entrances will have new cubed entrance enclosures using polished stainless steel frame, glass and integral LED coloured lighting to allow information to be displayed. Furthermore, the cubes can be used as a back drop for projections in some areas. Variations of the cube theme can then be seen at the entrance to galleries 1 and 2 and also 'The Box'.

Additional advertising and information of services within FACT are also to be displayed on a cube matrix on the roof and also with an 'outreach' cube. The outreach cube is a 3 m x 3 m cube that can be erected (within schools, on street corners and international for example) and used for a wide variety of media events. The cube can also be internally accessed.

The underlying theme for this proposal is to create a visual wayfinding link between entrances to the building and gallery entrances within the building.

The proposed scheme also looks at creating a new retail space, information desk and multi-purpose room (mezzanine floor) directly accessible and open to the main entrance foyer.

2.0 Proposals

2.1 Main Entrance (via Wood Street)

It is important that the principle entrance to any building is easy to find and is clearly distinguishable from the façade. With a glazed façade, a suitably colour-contrasting door and frame installed will be deemed to be satisfactory.

The proposed cube to the main entrance is framed within the existing elevation with glass appended signage and a 50/50 split automated sliding doors.

The proposed cube to the main entrance is constructed from polished stainless steel frame and double skin glazing panels. Within the external double skin of glazing will be an LED matrix used for providing images, text and various displays. The internal double skin of glazing will have a reflective film which will allow two-way mirror effect in tandem with layered lighting and infinity effects.

This design concept is an excellent method of highlighting the main entrance to the building and providing visitors with an immediate concept of the digital interactive nature of the services contained within. The cube theme is mirrored throughout the FACT building providing cubed 'gateways' for and to information, exhibitions, events and presentations.

Automatic main entrance doors are preferred and recommended however, security and controlled egress are paramount and must be adequately adopted. Internal protection to sliding doors is also recommended and can be overcome with the installation of physical barriers or additional PIR system.

A weather mat of firm texture, not coir, should be sited inside the entrance lobbies. This mat should be flush fitting and designed to avoid a future tripping hazard upon use.

2.2 Secondary Entrance (via Fleet Street)

The secondary entrance, via Fleet Street, has the same design proposals and components as those for the main entrance. The difference here is that the secondary entrance is located midway along the façade and not on the corner of the building as the main entrance. Therefore, this entrance may require additional signage perpendicular to the building.

Accompanying the proposed cube are sliding doors to the café area at the rear of the ground floor. The sliding doors, when opened, provide ventilation and a visual connection to Art House Square in Fleet Street.

2.3 Retail Element (adjacent to Wood Street Entrance)

At present, adjacent to the secondary entrance is a small retail unit selling stationery, gifts, etc. The proposed alterations look at moving this unit near to the main entrance (Wood Street). With innovative storage and display units and a new counter, this facility will become more accessible and better utilised.

The proposed sales counter should be dual-height with appropriate hearing enhancement system installed (induction loop). Positioning of lighting should also assist visitors who rely on lip reading for communication in this instance should come from behind the visitor and not from behind the sales counter.

As part of the retail element, new transitional lighting and suitable wayfinding information are to be provided as persons enter from the main entrance cube. It is especially important in this instance that levels of glare from floor finishes and glazed façade is minimised so as not to confuse visually impaired visitors.

2.4 Multi-Use Space/Education Hub (Mezzanine Floor)

This space is a new proposal situated on a new mezzanine floor accessed via the reception foyer.

The proposed information counter, at ground floor level, should be dual-height with appropriate hearing enhancement system installed (induction loop). Positioning of lighting should also assist visitors who rely on lip reading for communication in this instance should come from behind the visitor and not from behind the sales counter.

The new stairs leading to the mezzanine floor should have suitable handrails and colour contrasting nosings all designed to AD M.

The scheme indicates that a platform lift is proposed for access to the mezzanine floor. Providing an accessible passenger lift will require:

- a) Structural implications on the building fabric.
- b) Access to and around the lift space.
- c) Size of the lift to comply with AD M.
- d) Additional management procedure for evacuation of mezzanine floor visitors to the fire assembly point.
- e) Alterations to the buildings Fire Risk Assessment.

The proposed toilets should have standard unisex WC and unisex accessible WC facilities. This will provide adequate WC facilities for all service users. The layout of the new unisex accessible WC should be set out as per AD M giving particular attention to positioning of fixtures and fittings and colour contrast. The standard unisex WC should have

handrails, wrist action taps and suitable colour contrast between fixtures and fittings.

2.5 Gallery 1 and The Box (Ground Floor)

The entrance to both Gallery 1 and The Box carry on the cube theme with new entrances. The proposals and components are similar to the main entrance and secondary entrance design and concept.

The Box entrance is slightly different as it will only have three sides and form more of an anti-space leading into The Box. Visually it will meet the aesthetics of the other cubes and provide similar visual imagery.

The proposed cube entrance to Gallery 1 has the same theme but this time incorporates both a ramp to the left and steps to the right for access. All other components match that of the proposed cubes elsewhere.

In total, there are four new cubes proposed to the ground floor, all along a similar sight line defined by a central thoroughfare. This will provide visual wayfinding to room entrances and can be aided by the LED information displayed on each.

2.6 Gallery 2 (First Floor)

The entrance to Gallery 2 continues the cube theme onto the first floor with a new entrance. The proposals and components are similar to all four ground floor cubes except this entrance is fully recessed in the corner of the room and has only two physical sides. The other two 'sides' will be formed by colour contrasting headers and footers on the ceiling and floor forming the visual cube.

A column may be required within this cube for structural reasons subject to further investigations. If required, this column must contrast in colour with the background and not become a collision hazard.

2.7 Outreach Cube Education

The outreach cube is a 3 m x 3 m cube that can be erected (within schools for example) and used for a wide variety of media events. The cube can be internally accessed and used as a venue for small meetings/gatherings. The cube can also be internally accessed for back projection equipment during external media events.



2.8 Building Management and Procedures

It is important that those involved in making the building accessible, contribute to the drafting of the building management manual, which can be updated and added to as required.

How the building is managed on a day-to-day basis will have a huge impact on how easy it is used by disabled people. Installing an induction loop on the main reception is only useful if management advertises its presence and keeps it correctly maintained. Poor maintenance and cleaning of external footpaths can cause tripping or slipping hazards.

Routine maintenance of circulation spaces, building services, doors, etc., is fundamental to keeping premises accessible to all visitors and staff. All cyclical maintenance programmes should incorporate upgrading and alterations that are sympathetic to the needs of disabled people with reference to the latest best practice guidance i.e. DFA2 and BS8300: 2009.

Continuous staff training is required to account for new staff arriving, posts changing and the influx of disabled staff and visitors. Particular attention must be given to train staff in the use of emergency evacuation procedures.

An Access Action Plan is required for the FACT building to carry forward information and recommendations from this Appraisal. The plan is to be used by FACT staff to maintain a record of issues for consultation when refurbishment, repairs and painting programmes are implemented within or around the building.

3.0 Conclusions

The existing building entrance and gallery entrances are not visually linked at present. The FACT's cube theme is also not prominent and can be overlooked or missed within the existing layout. The proposed physical and aesthetic changes will rectify this and enhance the cube theme by providing a visual link from main entrance to gallery entrance.

Other enhancements require only a small amount of physical improvement work in order to provide a wholly accessible service. Whilst this is, in most cases, achievable, it is certainly unviable to make the whole of the building fully accessible within this scheme.

Our recommendation is that, where practical, the proposals are implemented with the recommendations given above. This will provide a sufficient percentage of the services within the building to meet national standards.

It must be appreciated that the information contained within this Access Appraisal and Review is based on a 'snap-shot' survey. Any changes to the management, design, layout or functionality of the building, will not be commented on within this report and may therefore not comply with the technical or management standards commented upon.

APPENDIX A – PHOTOGRAPHIC REPORT

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APPENDIX B – ACCESS AUDIT

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