

# **PROPOSED LIDL STORE LEWIS'S LIVERPOOL**

## **HERITAGE STATEMENT**



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**PETER DE FIGUEIREDO Dip Arch MA (Urban Design) RIBA IHBC  
HISTORIC BUILDINGS ADVISER**

**1 Ingestre Road, Oxton, Wirral CH43 5TZ**

**T: 0151 652 1027 M: 0771 7291947**

**E: [peter@defigueiredo.co.uk](mailto:peter@defigueiredo.co.uk) W: [www.defigueiredo.co.uk](http://www.defigueiredo.co.uk)**

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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Planning approval was granted in August 2008 for conversion of the Grade II listed Lewis's Building to a mixed development comprising leisure, hotel, restaurant, offices, cinema, live entertainment and retail uses. Since then further design development, together with a change in market conditions has necessitated a number of amendments to the scheme, some of which have required listed building consent.
- 1.2 This report considers a proposal to convert part of the lower ground floor to a Lidl food store. The scheme involves alterations to the entrance, removal of the mezzanine balcony along the Ranelagh Street facade of the building and some changes to the ceilings and columns.
- 1.3 Government policy as set out in *the National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF) requires that proposed changes to the historic environment are based on a clear understanding of significance of any heritage assets and their setting that are affected, providing information so that the likely impact of proposals can be assessed.
- 1.4 This report carried out by Peter de Figueiredo provides an assessment of the areas and features of the building that would be affected, and an understanding of its significance based on research and building recording. The report assesses the impact of the proposed scheme on that significance in the context of the NPPF and local planning policy.

## **2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 David Lewis first opened a store on Ranelagh Street in 1856, selling boys' clothes at prices working people could afford. This was soon expanded to include mens' and womens' clothing, footwear and dress materials. In 1880 he opened a store in Manchester, followed by others in Birmingham and Sheffield, and a second in Liverpool, which was called The Bon Marche, selling Paris fashions. He pioneered the art of popular marketing, and used advertising in innovative ways.
- 2.2 On Lewis's death in 1885, his nephew Louis Cohen took over the business, increasing the size of the stores and expanding the range of merchandise. He also continued Lewis's promotional style, for example bringing the *Great Eastern*, the largest steamship in the world, out of retirement in Milford Haven to the Mersey to act as a floating entertainment centre and advertisement for the stores. He popularised tea drinking, cutting the cost by more than 50% through bulk buying, and launched a celebrated music hall song called *Lewis's beautiful tea*. Lewis's was the first chain of stores to set up a central buying operation. Under the subsequent direction of Harold and Rex Cohen, expansion continued, and the company went public in 1924. In 1951, a London presence was established with the acquisition of Selfridges.

- 2.3 Following a fire in 1885, the store was rebuilt, but this building in turn was gradually replaced in stages from 1910 to 1923 to the design of Gerald de Courcy Fraser. An incendiary bomb severely damaged the store on the night of 4 May 1941, which led to its redevelopment from 1947-56, again to the design of de Courcy Fraser. The only part of the earlier 20<sup>th</sup> century store to be retained was the Watson Building, which forms the end five bays fronting Renshaw Street.



*View showing war damage(Lewis's is the background building)*

- 2.4 After a board room battle in 1965 Sears Holdings gained control of the company with a bid worth £59 million, and proceeded to rationalise the business. Some stores were sold, and services reduced. In 1992, what remained of the once prosperous group was sold to Owen Owen. Following closure of the Manchester store in 2001, the Liverpool branch remained the only store trading under the Lewis's brand, but in early 2007 Owen Owen went into administration. In 2009 the property was acquired by Merepark.

### **3 GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE BUILDING**

- 3.1 The present store dates from 1947-56, and replaced the building that was damaged in the blitz. The Watson Building is the remaining part of the earlier building, though it was modified when the new store was built.
- 3.2 The old building was taken down in sections to allow trading to continue, but post war shortages of building materials caused delays to the programme, and necessitated the recycling of steelwork from the former premises. The first section opened in 1950, and when completed at a cost of £1,200,000, the business occupied nine floors, with 280,000 sq feet of retail floor space.
- 3.3 Gerald de Courcy Fraser specialised in store design, having been the architect for the previous building on the site, and other Liverpool department stores. All are in a stripped-down classical style, which was promoted by CH Reilly, the influential Professor of Architecture at the Liverpool School of Architecture from 1904-1933.



*View from Lime Street c.1952 before the installation of the Epstein sculptures and the completion of the Renshaw Street frontage*

- 3.4 The building is steel framed, with principal elevations faced in Portland stone, the rear being partly in brick. There are seven storeys, a basement and sub basement. The principal elevations are divided into three layers, each separated by string courses, whilst the top floor is set back behind a parapet. The top layer is of two storeys and is articulated by pilaster strips; the three storey middle layer is of plain ashlar, and the bottom layer has shopfronts framed by shallow incised decoration.
- 3.5 There are five public entrances, all of which lead into a lobby and staircase area. The two most imposing entrances are at the canted corners of the building. The one on the corner of Ranelagh Street and Fairclough Street leads to an imperial staircase that rises to fifth floor level. The main entrance is the one on the corner of Renshaw Street and Ranelagh Street which is the setting for a group of outstanding sculptures by Sir Jacob Epstein, which were unveiled in November 1956. The giant figure of a naked man with arms outstretched, standing on the prow of a ship, is titled *The Spirit of Liverpool Resurgent*, and symbolised the bright future, not only of Lewis's, but also of Liverpool after the wartime years of hardship.
- 3.6 The internal plan consists of a series of large floor plates, supported by steel columns set out to a standard grid. From basement to fourth floor, the columns are faced in cast stone to a fluted pattern.
- 3.7 The walls of the entrance lobbies are partly lined in travertine and Italian and Swedish buff and green marble, their floors are paved in marble and terrazzo. From these lobbies, staircases, faced in terrazzo, lead to the upper and lower floors, and are fitted with brass and steel handrails and balusters of Art Deco design.

- 3.8 The interiors of greatest interest are found on the fifth floor, which was originally restaurants and a hair dressing salon, and has now been remodelled as a hotel. This area includes an impressive late 1950s tiled mural, 65 feet long and 10 feet high, depicting culinary objects. There is also a series of wall panels in Lebanon cedar, etched with scenes depicting the history of Liverpool, beginning with the grant of the Charter by King John in 1207<sup>1</sup>. These areas are evocative of the Festival of Britain era in their liveliness and bright use of colour, as well as showing evidence of the social life of Liverpool at the time.
- 3.9 During its heyday, the business was run like a large family, with training and apprenticeships, pension provision, and care for staff welfare. As a result, staff were invariably loyal, and some spent their full working lives at the store. There were in-house plumbers, electricians, painters, French polishers, window cleaners, hair dressers, window dressers, a printing department and a poster studio.

#### **4 HISTORIC FEATURES AFFECTED BY THE PROPOSAL**

- 4.1 The proposed food store will occupy roughly half the ground floor of the building, that part which has frontages to Ranelagh Street and Fairclough Street. The historic features that will be affected by the scheme are some of the column casings and the mezzanine gallery to Ranelagh Street.
- 4.2 A condition of the original planning consent required the preparation of an inventory of heritage features, fixtures and artefacts, which was carried out by the author of the current heritage statement in July 2011. The relevant data relating to the column cases and the mezzanines was as follows.

##### ***COLUMN CASINGS***

##### ***Description***

- 4.3 In areas of open retail space, from basement to fourth floor and on the ground floor of the Watson Building, the freestanding steel structural columns were originally encased in cast stone (terrazzo) claddings in the form of classical columns. They support a series of beams which are boxed and plastered to form a coffered ceiling. The height of the column casings is 3.5 m at basement, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor and 4<sup>th</sup> floor; 4.6 m at ground floor; 3.8 m at 1<sup>st</sup> floor, and 4.2 within the Watson Building.
- 4.4 The number of column casings per floor was originally as follows:
- Basement: 85
  - Ground Floor: 77
  - First Floor: 85
  - Second Floor: 81
  - Third Floor: 81
  - Fourth Floor: 81
  - Watson Building, ground floor: 6

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<sup>1</sup> Daily Post, May 30, 1956

### ***Purpose***

- 4.5 The steel columns are fabricated from riveted and bolted steel plates, channels and angles, and were not designed to be visible. The hybrid nature of the steel frame was probably the result of post-war shortage of materials and the need to salvage structural steel from the bomb-damage building. The casings thus serve a decorative function, give visual order to a very large space, and provide fire protection to the steelwork.

### ***Design and Changes***

- 4.6 The columns are fluted with capitals and bases modelled in a simplified version of the Doric order. The steel beams supported by the columns are boxed out and plastered with a plain stepped running mould.
- 4.7 At the level of the echinus, and in line with the beams above, each column has four small bronze hooks, possibly intended for hanging curtains or signage. Each base has a recessed metal cover plate with two electric sockets.



*Capital and hook details at third floor level*



#### *Base and socket details at basement level*

- 4.8 During the later 20<sup>th</sup> century a number of changes were made to the store that affected the column casings. At ground level, this included the removal of 6 no. column casings for the insertion of escalators in the centre of main floor space, which were clad in square section plasterboard; and the replacement of 3 no. columns with 6 no. new square columns to support escalators close to the back wall.

#### ***Construction/Technical Details***

- 4.9 The casings are manufactured in cast or reconstructed stone, with a smooth ground and polished terrazzo finish to simulate marble.
- 4.10 The casings are made of 12 no. precast rings, each ring composed of four equal segments, with separate capital and base rings. The rings are jointed with metal pins, two per casting, with a final seal of fine grout.



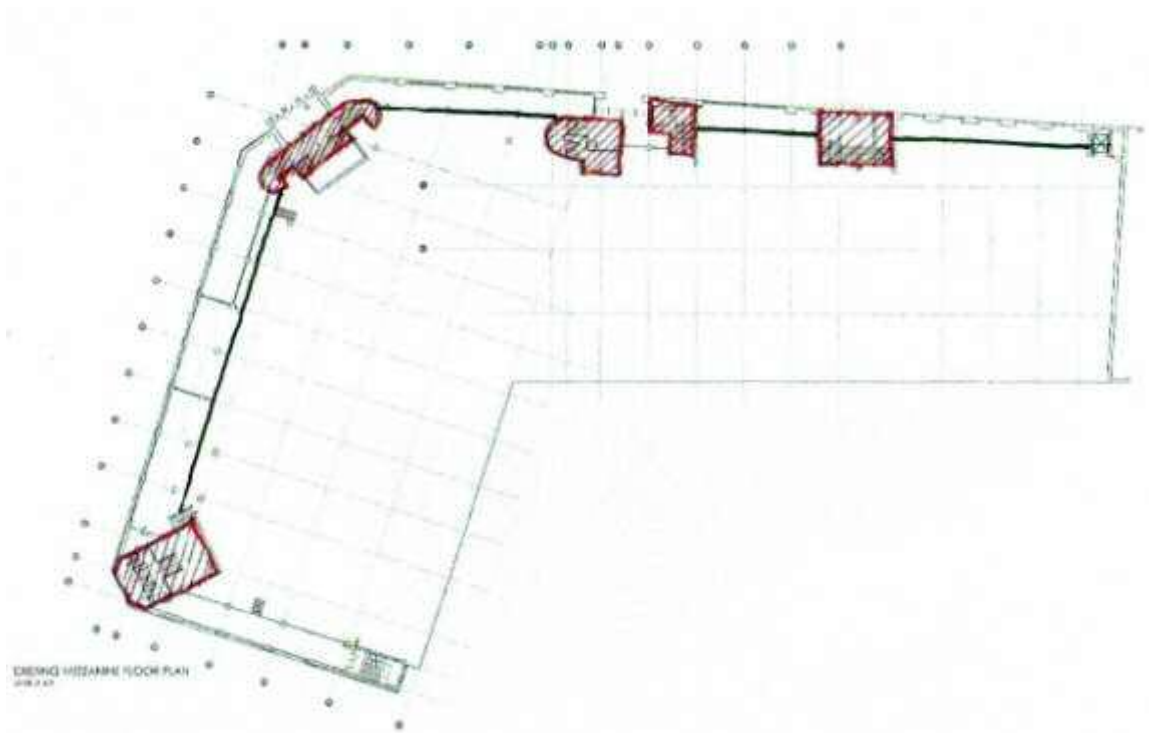
*Casting with metal pin joint visible*

#### ***MEZZANINE GALLERIES***

##### ***Description***

- 4.11 Around three of the perimeter walls of the ground floor sales area, mezzanines are inserted to provide window display areas or additional retail space.
- 4.12 The mezzanine galleries differ in function and character, and were either enclosed, as on Renshaw Street, where they serve as window displays, or open, as on Ranelagh Street and Fairclough Street, where they are above street level. The areas below the galleries are also different, serving as window displays on Ranelagh Street and Fairclough Street, and part of the ground floor retail area on Renshaw Street. The galleries have balustrades of the same design as the staircases.
- 4.13 Over time the mezzanine galleries have been altered by the addition of staircases and boxed in or subdivided.





*Mezzanine Plan showing mezzanine galleries and staircases*



*Mezzanine gallery to Ranelagh Street*

#### ***Purpose***

- 4.14 Because of the sloping site, the mezzanines serve different purposes, though their essential function was to create designated window display areas and to maximize floor space at ground floor level.

#### ***Design and Changes***

- 4.15 The mezzanines form a narrow band around the edges of the store facing onto Renshaw Street, Ranelagh Street and Fairclough Street. They have large windows overlooking the streets. Originally the galleries to Ranelagh Street and Fairclough

Street were open to the main ground floor sales area, with balustrading of matching design to the main staircases.

- 4.16 Access to the galleries was originally from the ends, where narrow steps lead from the half landing of the staircase at Fairclough Street/Ranelagh Street, and from the landing at Ranelagh Street/Renshaw Street. Timber staircases were later introduced from the ground floor to increase accessibility. Access to the window display areas was along narrow internal corridors.
- 4.17 The mezzanine galleries have been used for different functions such as shop window displays (on Renshaw Street), café space, sales area and storage, and adapted in different ways. Some areas have been boarded over and partitioned.
- 4.18 The mezzanines are chiefly of interest for their distinctive windows at gallery level on Ranelagh street and Fairclough Street, for the original access stairs with travertine cladding at the Ranelagh Street/Fairclough Street corner, and for the balustrades.



*Modern staircase up to Ranelagh Street gallery*



*Gallery access from Ranelagh Street/Fairclough Street staircase lobby*



*Mezzanine gallery to Fairclough Street*

### ***Construction/Technical Details***

- 4.19 The mezzanines take support from the main structural frame. The balustrade sits on a small upstand at the edge of the gallery and the handrail is fixed into the cast stone cladding of the structural columns.

## **5 PROPOSED SCHEME**

- 5.1 The proposed scheme involves the conversion of part of the ground floor to a foodstore, with access from Ranelagh Street. The layout is shown on the application drawings.
- 5.2 The scheme involves alterations to the existing entrance, the installation of suspended ceilings, partitioning of the rear part of the store, and the removal of the mezzanine gallery to the Ranelagh Street facade.

## **6 HERITAGE IMACT ASSESSMENT**

### ***Entrance from Ranelagh Street***

- 6.1 With the exception of the remodelling of the existing entrance from Ranelagh Street, there will no alterations to the exterior of the building.
- 6.2 One set of the existing entrance doors will be fixed shut, and the other set will be replaced with sliding doors. None of the existing doors is original. The entrance will be gently ramped to satisfy DDA requirements. The floor finish will be in ceramic tiles in a colour and texture that is compatible with the existing floor finishes.
- 6.3 The non-original white panels above the existing entrance will be removed. The one over the retained set of existing doors will be replaced by a new window to the original design, and the one over the new sliding doors will be replaced with a new Lidl sign in accordance with the advertisement application.
- 6.4 None of these works will affect original fabric, and the overall impact of the alterations to the significance of the entrance area will be beneficial.

### ***Partitioning of the Floor Area***

- 6.5 The rear part of the floor area will be partitioned off to create a warehouse area for goods. This will continue the line of the existing partition to the service, lifts and plant room areas along the back of the store. While this will have a minor impact on the spaciousness of the floor area, it will cause no physical impact and would be easily reversible. The impact of the partitions on the significance of the space will be neutral.

### ***Suspended Ceilings***

- 6.6 A suspended ceiling will be installed across the retail area. This will butt up to the existing fluted columns, but will not involve any physical alterations to the casings. The column casings will be repaired in matching materials where they have been altered or damaged in the past. No suspended ceiling will be introduced along the front edge of the store in the position of the existing mezzanine, so as to avoid obscuring the shop fronts.

- 6.7 In the rear storage area of the store there will be a lower suspended ceiling. This is necessary to under-draw the existing service pipework from the hotel at first floor level, which runs below the first floor concrete slab. This will cause no physical change, and will not be visible from the retail area.
- 6.8 Although the suspended ceilings will obscure the heads of the column casings, they will cause no harm to the historic fabric, and the overall impact on the significance of the column casings will be neutral.

### ***Mezzanine Gallery***

- 6.9 The removal of the reinforced concrete mezzanine gallery along the Ranelagh Street facade is necessary to achieve a viable layout. The proposed layout shows that the area currently occupied by the mezzanine is required for the check out area and tills. The headroom below the mezzanine is a mere 1.93 m, which is inadequate for safe usage, and would be an unwelcoming and unattractive space. The mezzanine gallery would have no function and currently obscures views into the store which are important to attract shoppers and enliven the streetscape.
- 6.10 The mezzanine galleries are recorded in the inventory as a significant feature of the building, chiefly of interest for their distinctive windows at gallery level on Ranelagh street and Fairclough Street, for the original access stairs at the Ranelagh Street/Fairclough Street corner, and for the balustrades.
- 6.11 The proposal involves removing the mezzanine gallery along the length of the new foodstore. But it will not affect the gallery level windows. In addition, the link sections at each end, and the original steps with marble treads, travertine cladding and Art Deco balustrading at the Ranelagh Street/Fairclough Street entrance would be retained. A substantial section of existing balustrading is already missing, and parts of the mezzanine have been partitioned and blocked in the past. The works do not affect the existing mezzanines to Fairclough Street or Renshaw Street.
- 6.12 The removal of the mezzanine offers the opportunity to achieve a significant enhancement. This would result from the proposal to install fluted casings to the first line of steel columns, which have all been altered, and lack decorative casings. This would help to unify the space more effectively.
- 6.13 Whilst the mezzanines are features of significance, the removal of the section fronting Ranelagh Street would cause less than substantial harm, and would be considerably mitigated by the installation of new column casings to match all the other existing columns.
- 6.14 Without this alteration the prospective tenants would not be able to make use of the premises, and marketing of the building has resulted in no other potential users.

## **7 HERITAGE PLANNING CONTEXT**

### **7.1 National Planning Policy and Guidance**

#### ***Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990***

- 7.1.1 Statutory protection for built heritage is principally provided by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

#### ***National Planning Policy Framework***

#### ***Planning Practice Guidance: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment (April 2014)***

- 7.1.2 Historic Environment Policies included in the National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012) replaced Planning Policy Statement 5 (PPS5). Planning Practice Guidance: *Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment* (April 2014) has recently replaced the Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide, which accompanied PPS5.
- 7.1.3 The NPPF states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The Government sees three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental, and these roles should be regarded as mutually dependent. Economic growth can secure higher social and environmental standards, and well-designed buildings and places can improve the lives of people and communities. The planning system is therefore expected to play an active role in guiding development to sustainable solutions. Policies 126-141 are related to conserving and enhancing the historic environment.
- 7.1.4 The NPPF defines the significance of a heritage asset as its value '*to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.*' It defines the historic environment in terms of "*heritage assets.*" This term embraces all manner of features, including: buildings, parks and gardens, standing, buried and submerged remains, areas, sites and landscapes, whether designated or not and whether capable of designation or not.
- 7.1.5 Paragraphs 128 and 129 of the NPPF require planning applicants and local planning authorities to assess the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be appropriate to the assets' importance and no more than sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. Local planning authorities should take this assessment into account when the potential impact of proposed development to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

- 7.1.6 Paragraph 131 states that local planning authorities should take account of the desirability of new development sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets; the positive contribution that heritage assets can make to sustainable communities; and the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.
- 7.1.7 Paragraph 132 sets out policy principles guiding the consideration of impact of development on the significance of a designated heritage asset. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be given to the asset's conservation. Any harm to or loss should require clear or convincing justification. Paragraph 133 provides a series of tests which should be applied in cases where substantial harm to or total loss of significance will be caused. In the case of development proposals which will lead to less than substantial harm, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.
- 7.1.8 Paragraph 137 states that local authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance.
- 7.1.9 Paragraph 140 urges local authorities to ensure that any proposals for enabling development would secure benefits that would outweigh a departure from established planning policies.
- 7.1.10 Paragraph 141 states that local planning authorities should make information about the significance of the historic environment gathered as part of the development process publicly accessible, and should require developers to record and advance understanding of the heritage asset before it is lost.
- 7.1.11 The Planning Practice Guidance: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment contains helpful advice on decision-taking, including assessing significance, and how to assess where there is 'substantial harm' in accordance with paragraphs 132 and 133 of the NPPF.

## **7.2 Local Policy and Guidance**

### ***Liverpool Unitary Development Plan***

- 7.2.1 Policy HD4 of the Liverpool UDP relates to Alterations to Listed Buildings:

*Consent will not be granted for:*

- (i) *extensions, external or internal alterations to, or change of use of, or any other works to a listed building that would adversely affect its architectural or historic character;*

- (ii) *applications for extensions, alterations to, or the change of use of a listed building that are not accompanied by the full information necessary to assess the impact of the proposals on the building;*
- (iii) *any works which are not to a high standard of design in terms of form, scale, detailing and materials.*

*Where the adaptive reuse of a listed building will be used by visiting members of the public, the needs of disabled people should be provided for in a manner which preserves the special architectural or historic interest of a building.*

#### 7.2.2 Policy HD18 of the UDP relates to General Design Requirements

*When assessing proposals for new development, the City Council will require applications to comply with the following criteria, where appropriate, to ensure a high quality of design:*

- 1. The scale, density and massing of the proposed development relate well to its locality*
- 2. The development includes characteristics of local distinctiveness in terms of design, layout and materials*
- 3. The building lines and layout of the development relate to those of the locality*
- 4. External boundary and surface treatment is included as part of the development and is of a design and materials which relate well to its surroundings*
- 5. All plant machinery and equipment are provided within the building envelope or at roof level as an integral part of the design*
- 6. The development pays special attention to the views into and out of any adjoining green space, or area of Green Belt*
- 7. The development has regard to and does not detract from the city's skyline, roofscape and local views within the city*
- 8. The satisfactory development or redevelopment of adjoining land is not prejudiced*
- 9. There is no severe loss of amenity or privacy to adjacent residents*
- 10. In the case of temporary buildings, the development is of a suitable design and not in a prominent location*



*11. Adequate arrangements are made for the storage of refuse within the curtilage of the site and the provision of litter bins where appropriate*

*12. The exterior of the development incorporates materials to discourage graffiti*

*13. Adequate arrangements are made for pedestrian and vehicular access and for car parking*

## **8 CONCLUSION**

- 8.1 The conversion and reuse of the Lewis's building, together with the development of Central Village, is one of the most important future regeneration projects in Liverpool. Adaptive reuse of the listed building is the only option if it is to justify major investment and be restored once again to active use. The original scheme was approved after creative and collaborative working with Liverpool City Council and English Heritage. Since then, amendments have resulted from further design development and adaptation to meet the needs of changed market conditions.
- 8.2 Finding a user for the important ground floor spaces has been challenging, and the current proposal presents an opportunity to create an active frontage to Ranelagh Street.
- 8.3 The only external change that is proposed, is a modification to the entrance, which would have a beneficial impact on the significance of the building. The introduction of partitioning to the rear part of the floor area, and the installation of suspended ceilings would both have a neutral impact on significance.
- 8.4 The only adverse impact of the proposed scheme would be the removal of the reinforced concrete mezzanine gallery along the Ranelagh frontage. However, this would not involve any alteration to the external glazing, or to the staircase at the Ranelagh Street/Fairclough St corner, and it should be noted that a substantial part of the Art Deco balustrading to the mezzanine is already missing.
- 8.5 If the mezzanine is removed, it allows for the cladding of the front row of columns in new matching casings, which will help to animate the space, and will provide better views into the store from the street.
- 8.5 The NPPF states that where a proposal has a harmful impact on the significance of a designated heritage asset which is less than substantial harm, local planning authorities should weigh the public benefit of the proposal (for example, that it helps to secure the optimum viable use of the heritage asset in the interests of its long-term conservation) against the harm.

- 8.6 The headroom below the mezzanine is only 1.93 m , which would not meet adequate safety standards, and would render the frontage strip of the floor space unusable. Without this alteration the proposed use of the premises would not be viable, and marketing of the building has resulted in no other potential users.
- 8.7 Achieving active use of the Lewis's building is essential to the regeneration of the Lime Street/Renshaw Street area, and will support the development of the Central Village project. On balance the public benefits associated with bringing the ground floor of the building back into use outweigh the harm to significance caused by the loss of the mezzanine.