

MARTINS BUILDING WATER STREET LIVERPOOL

CONSERVATION STATEMENT AND HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT (PPG 15 Statement)



November 2009

**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 W: www.defigueiredo.co.uk

CONTENTS:

1	INTRODUCTION	page 3
2	HISTORY OF THE BUILDING	page 3
3	ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS	page 4
4	STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE	page 11
5	ISSUES AND CONSTRAINTS	page 13
6	THE PROPOSAL	page 15
7	HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT	page 15
8	LIVERPOOL UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN	page 23
9	LIVERPOOL WORLD HERITAGE SITE SPD	page 24
10	ENGLISH HERITAGE POLICY AND GUIDANCE	page 25
11	CONCLUSION	page 26

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The proposal for conversion of the Martin Building to a 5* hotel involves alterations to a Grade II* Listed Building within the Liverpool World Heritage Site. Government guidance on the protection of the historic environment states that proposed changes to listed buildings must be based on a clear understanding of the special interest of the property, and provide full information so that the likely impact can be properly assessed.
- 1.2 This document provides a historical and architectural analysis of the historic property and an assessment of its heritage significance. The information is then used to assess the impact of the proposed development on the special interest of the building in support of the planning and listed building consent applications.

2 HISTORY OF THE BUILDING

2.1 History of Martins Bank

- 2.1.1 The origins of Martins Bank date back to the mid 16th century, when it was connected with Sir Thomas Gresham, whose crest, the grasshopper, became its emblem. The bank was taken over in 1918 by the Bank of Liverpool, becoming the Bank of Liverpool and Martins¹. The Bank of Liverpool, which was founded in 1831 by a group of leading merchants, was one of the first to be set up after the passing of the Bank Act of 1826. This was intended to check reckless speculation by putting a stop to the issue of £1 notes by private banks, and authorised the establishment of joint stock banks of issue, whose accounts had to be published. The emblem of the Bank of Liverpool was a liver bird.
- 2.1.2 By 1928 the Bank had expanded to 560 branches nationwide, at which date it shortened its name to Martins Bank Limited. In 1969 Martins Bank was bought by Barclays.



Emblem of Martins Bank

¹ *Four Centuries of Banking*, G Chandler, 2 vols, 1964-68

2.2 History of the Martins Building

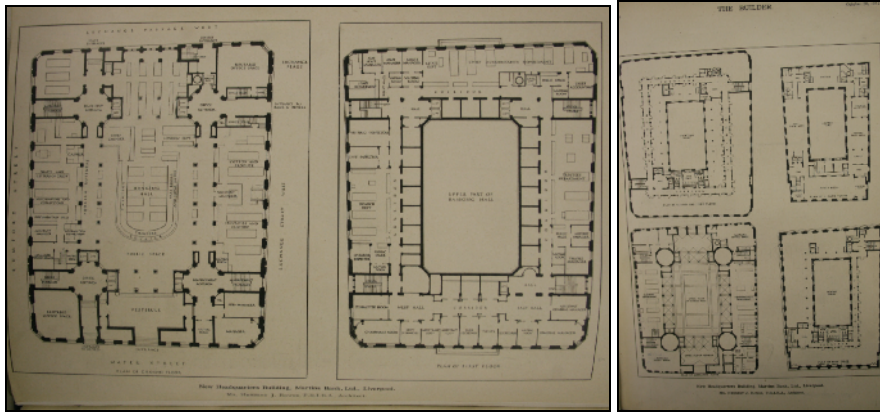
- 2.2.1 The Martins Building was built as the new headquarters of Martins Bank, and opened in 1932 after a five-year construction contract. It was the subject of a limited competition held in 1927 between selected Liverpool and London architects. The competition was assessed by Charles Reilly, Professor of Architecture at the University of Liverpool, and was won by Herbert J Rowse².
- 2.2.2 In 1923 Rowse had already won the competition for the design of India Buildings for the shipping firm Alfred Holt & Co. on the opposite side of Water Street. Rowse controlled the design of every feature of the building, including furnishings, and on its completion, the bank retained the architect to supervise the maintenance of the building.
- 2.2.3 The new building allowed the Bank to concentrate its operations on a single site, but only the basement, ground first and eighth floors were used by bank staff, the remaining floors being leased as general office premises.
- 2.2.4 During the war a portion of the Bank of England's gold reserves was transferred from London and stored in the vaults, as a potentially safer refuge from bombs, before being shipped to Canada.
- 2.2.5 In 1989 Barclays sold the building to the Carroll Group, from which it was acquired in 1996 by the present owners, Castlewood Properties. Barclays closed the branch two years ago and vacated the building, since when the banking hall and other accommodation has remained vacant. Since taking ownership in 1996, Castlewood has carried out an extensive programme of repairs and improvements to the exterior and interior of the building, including cleaning and architectural lighting, but substantial work is now required to the banking hall before it can be brought back into active use.

3 ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS

3.1 Plan and Layout

- 3.1.1 The Martins Building has eleven floors above ground including the roof top plant room and colonnades, and three below ground. It forms a single city block, bounded by Water Street, Exchange Street West, Exchange Street East and Rumford Place, and is therefore open on all sides. The plan is straightforward, with a great central banking hall unobstructed by columns, lit by a central lightwell, and surrounded by office suites. At each corner of the hall are rotundas, two originally for the use of the bank and the other two for office tenants.

² *Building*, April 1930, pp. 156-196 and supplement; *The Builder*, 28 October 1932, pp.718 and 721-28



Floor plans

- 3.1.2 The basement and sub-basement are excavated out the rock, and contain the strong rooms, heating and ventilating plant rooms and stores. Ground, mezzanine and first floors were always occupied by the bank. Second to seventh floors were given over to independent offices, whilst on the eighth floor were the bank's board room, directors' and managers' dining rooms and kitchens. The ninth floor contained plant rooms at front and back, connected by colonnades, and the chairman's apartment.
- 3.1.3 Rowse took inspiration from the North American approach to bank design, which had been promoted by Reilly through his journalism and teaching. Reilly drew attention to the spacious banking halls of architects such as McKim Mead and White, contrasting them with the way British banks were subdivided like conventional office buildings. '...the banks of Broadway, New York, and James Street, Montreal, form a series of architectural monuments for a comparison to which one has to go back to Italy of the Renaissance. Indeed one passes from bank to bank in an architectural pilgrimage as one does in Italy from church to church', he related in a radio broadcast³.

3.2 Exterior

- 3.2.1 The building's height and scale is much greater than its immediate neighbours, in particular John Wood's 18th century Town Hall, which adjoins it on the east side. To avoid overwhelming the Town Hall, Rowse introduced a set back at the same height as the building which flanks the Town Hall on its other side, C R Cockerell's Liverpool and London Insurance Co. of 1856-58, now the Royal Bank of Scotland. This skilfully balances the mass of development to each side when the Town Hall is seen head on from Castle Street. Other set-backs occur further up on all faces, giving the building a pyramidal form, both as a means of protecting ancient lights, but also to moderate its apparent height and mass.
- 3.2.2 The architectural language used by Rowse derives from American Beaux-Arts classicism, as promoted by Reilly at the Liverpool School of Architecture, where Rowse studied before visiting the USA. An historicist style loosely based on the Florentine Renaissance palazzo, it was widely adopted for the way it could be

³ Radio broadcast on Bank Architecture, c.1927, Liverpool University Archives, D.207/27

stretched and moulded with fluidity for large scale 20th century buildings. Ornament is used sparingly and concentrated at top and bottom, with the emphasis placed on elegance of proportion rather than the use of orders or elaborate surface decoration. Nonetheless, Rowse gave close attention to the effect of the white Portland stone wall surfaces, producing full size charcoal studies of the masonry details, rendered with cast shadows to give an idea of the finished appearance.



View from Castle Street



View from Exchange Flags

- 3.2.3 Apart from the conventional symbol of soundness and stability, which all banks aimed to project, the underlying theme of the Martins Bank is the fact that Liverpool's wealth comes from the sea. Thus the sculptural programme, executed by Herbert Tyson Smith, assisted by Edward Thomas and George Capstick, is on monetary and maritime subjects. At high level are Neptune's heads, outlined against the sky, combined with stars derived by Tyson Smith from a mariner's compass. There are tridents and fish. The shield with the emblems of the grasshopper and liver bird are supported by a mermaid and a merman. The keystone heads to the bottom storey are of Midas with cornucopias below spilling coins. In the lunettes over the arched windows are mermaids and mermen scattering bank notes. There is wit too in the way that crabs and lobsters take the place of anthemions in the frieze.



External decoration



Internal decoration

3.3 Interior

- 3.3.1 The central entrance from Water Street leads through a pair of sliding cast bronze doors into the magnificent top-lit banking hall. Apart from the entrance rotundas and some small subsidiary rooms at the four corners, the whole ground floor effectively forms one enormous space. The main axis stretches through the centre of

the hall, providing a vista from the entrance doors to the rear window in Rumford Place, a distance of 55 metres. The central banking area is 14 metres high to the glazed light well. Around the four sides are round arched colonnades with vaulted ceilings, behind which are mezzanine floors on the two long sides.



Views of banking hall

- 3.3.2 Within the hall, the quality of materials and decoration is exceptional, with every detail down to the customers' desks with built-in stationery holders designed by Rowse, all remarkably well preserved. The walls are clad in polished travertine, the floors patterned with purple Levantine marble, and the 20 giant columns are travertine monoliths, bored down their entire lengths and threaded onto the steel stanchions⁴. The plaster ceilings were originally enriched in emerald green, Indian red and gold, and the lantern in gold and bronze. Occupying the centre is a large island counter clad in purple Levantine, vert antico and black marbles, and surmounted by a gilt bronze screen, originally with vertical grilles. Within the entrance is a War Memorial with an inscribed marble panel and Roll of Honour.
- 3.3.3 The rotundas too are richly decorated, especially those on the Water Street side with pairs of black marble Ionic pilasters, marble floor in the form of a star burst and sculpture by Tyson Smith, including low relief carved panels depicting cherubs pouring coin-filled cornucopias into the Exchequer. The domed ceiling is coffered and moulded with a running ornament of grasshoppers picked out in emerald green. Within the rotundas are the lifts with their original panelled cars and timber doors.



South east rotunda



Lift doors and panelling

⁴ *The Architects' Journal*, 7 April 1926, pp. 525-32; 18 December 1929, p. 934; 2 November, 1932, pp. 543-44, 548-53, and supplement

- 3.3.4 Also remarkable are the interiors on the eighth floor, including the board room designed in the manner of a Renaissance palazzo. This has an elaborate marble chimneypiece, and a timber beamed and coffered ceiling painted with ships, dolphins, Neptunes, and mermaids in red, green and blue, alternating with liver birds and grasshoppers. A specially woven carpet and the walnut board room table and seat furniture remain in situ. Beyond are a smaller committee room and the Directors' Dining Room in Adams style.
- 3.3.5 Impressive too are the offices of the Chairman and General Manger and conference room on the first floor, part of the bank's administrative suite. These are fitted out with panelled walls, fireplaces and mahogany doors. Other internal features of interest include the staircases with bronze handrails, doors and door furniture, and some original lavatories with marble partitions, tiled floors and sanitary fittings. Within the basement are shallow domed rotundas, simply treated, joined by corridors that enclose the solidly lined bank vaults.



Board Room



Directors' Dining Room



Management Suite Corridor



Chairman's Office



Basement Lavatories

3.4 Structure and Services

- 3.4.1 As well as its architectural style, the construction and mechanical and electrical services of the building followed contemporary American practice. Excavation was taken down to 15 metres below pavement level and foundations were laid on the bedrock. The sub basement has a layer of asphalt within a 200mm concrete slab, which is carried up the outside of the facing walls to form a watertight tank. It consists of a steel frame enclosed with brick walls faced in Portland stone on the outside, and white glazed bricks with terracotta ornament to the light well. The flat arched window openings to the light well were formed by bricks placed on end, reinforced by steel bars, and grooved to accept a bed of cement putty. At the head is

a terracotta entablature with copings originally formed of two courses of Lombardic tiles finished with half-round ridge tiles, now replaced by replicas in GRP.

- 3.4.2 The Portland stone was sourced and detailed with great care. It came from the St Paul's and Wakeham quarries, which are considered to provide the finest quality⁵. An innovative technique was used to support the stonework. This involved isolating the steelwork by the introduction of a concrete layer and cavity to avoid staining, and fastening the stonework to the concrete by means of ties at each course. The back surfaces of the stone facings were painted with two coats of Sealex waterproof paint as a further precaution against stains appearing on the surface.
- 3.4.3 To enable the great banking hall to be unobstructed by columns whilst maximising the depth of the office floors arranged around the lightwell, Rowse used a system of steel cantilevers, which carry the weight of the eight floors above. This structural method had been pioneered by Norman Shaw in his design for Parr's Bank, now NatWest in Castle Street, Liverpool in 1898-1901.
- 3.4.4 The floors are of reinforced concrete of standard Truscon design, but modified to take service pipes and heating panels within the ceilings. Above the concrete slabs a 100-150mm Aerocrete fill was laid in which an under floor electrical duct system was embedded, finished in a sand/cement topping to receive the floor coverings of variously linoleum, rubber, tiles and marble.
- 3.4.5 The ceilings are formed of fibrous plaster slabs secured to teak fillets on the underside of ribs in the Truscon slabs and finished with two coats of plaster. Suspended ceilings of plaster are carried on Hy-Rib lathing hung from the floor slab above. Partitions are of Aerocrete slabs, 75, 100 or 150mm thick according to position, with Thistle hard plaster used throughout the building. All the stairs are of reinforced concrete finished with rubber treads and marble margins and risers.
- 3.4.6 The heating system consists of panels cast into the underside of the concrete slabs with water circulating at 32-48°C depending on the air temperature. Individual control of the panels is provided by hand-operated magnetic valves fitted in specially designed boxes built into the pipe ducts or walls with decorated metal covers. Theses maintain the temperature within 1° of the setting.
- 3.4.7 Ventilation is by balanced inlet and extract installations in the banking hall and other public areas; extract vents in the kitchens, lavatories and WCs; and fresh air supplies to the vaults and boiler house. Fresh air enters at high level and passes through oil and wet spray-type filters and air heaters to a system of ducts in the basement, from where sheet metal risers distribute it throughout the building. Specially-designed distributing ducts are incorporated into the decorative schemes for the banking hall and other public areas.

⁵ *Building*, April 1930, pp. 156-196 and supplement

- 3.4.8 All plumbing was contained in ducts and easily accessible (in spite of objections from the local authority as it was contrary to local by-laws). Similarly electric lighting, power and telephone cables are concealed within a grid of half-round fibre ducts 35mm below the floor surface, one duct for high tension cables such as power and lighting, and another for low tension such as bells, telephones and clocks. These were readily accessible so as to prevent tenants damaging or disfiguring the building when services or communications needed to be upgraded.
- 3.4.9 The general contractors were William Moss and Sons, a leading Liverpool construction company in the early 20th century, at whose masonry yard all the stonework was executed. The consulting engineers were Sharman and Travers Morgan, and the clerk of works was Charles Rose.

3.5 Later Alterations

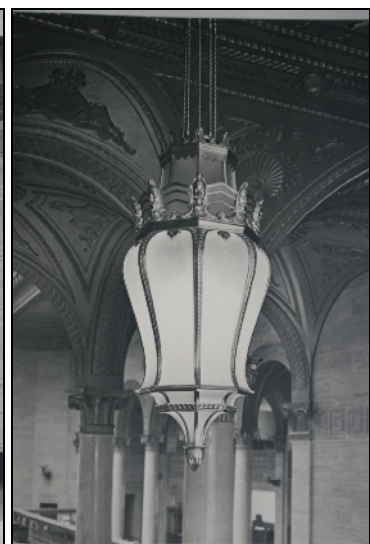
- 3.5.1 Since completion of the building, alterations have been relatively limited. Strengthening of the bank vaults was carried out in the 1930s, together with the installation of a bullion lift within the banking hall. The revolving doors were not an original feature. Later security precautions involved fitting aluminium and glass bandit screens to the counters, and removal of the bronze grilles. The office floors have been altered by the removal of partitions to create open plan spaces. Improvements have been made to various services including the conversion of the boilers from oil to gas, enhanced lighting, IT facilities and telephones. Most of the lavatories have been upgraded, involving new sanitary ware and hygienic surfaces, and the lifts have been overhauled. Externally the walls have recently been cleaned and a high quality architectural lighting installed. Some original light fittings have been removed from the banking hall, and fluorescent strip lighting has been installed in all the office areas.



Original counter with grilles



Original entrance lobby



Original light fittings

4 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

4.1 Statutory Designation

4.1.1 The Martins Building is listed Grade II*. The list description provides the following details:

4.1.2 *SJ 3490 SW WATER STREET (north side) L2 52/1335 Nos. 4 and 6 12.7.66 (Barclay's Bank) G.V. II* Bank building. 1927-32. Herbert J. Rowse, sculpture by H. Tyson Smith. Large square block in Classical style, stone with rusticated ground floor. 7 storeys, with mezzanine, attic and basement, end bays of 4 storeys; 11 bays and rusticated canted corner bays, 11-bay returns. Centre giant round arch with keystone and coffering, balcony above to 3 central windows; another entrance to left with cornice. 3 round-arched windows to right and one to left with keystones and carved tympana. Arms on flat band over 3rd floor, rich frieze and cornice over 4th floor. Mezzanine above with Greek key band. Bronze doors in low relief. Fine interior with columns, vaulted aisles on 4 sides, balconies and centre glazed ceiling; curved counter in centre; marble floor, light fittings, desks and war memorial. One of the more impressive commercial buildings of its time, it has a complete interior.*

4.1.2 Whilst the description is brief and gives little detail, it confirms the value of the interior and comments that it is one of the more impressive commercial buildings of its time. Indeed, this view of its comparative importance was expressed at the time of its completion: Charles Reilly considered it ‘...the most remarkable bank interior in the country, and it would be wise for the chairmen of all the big banks to pay a visit to Liverpool to see it’.

4.2 Identification of Cultural Significance

4.2.1 The ICOMOS Burra Charter sets out four criteria for the assessment of cultural significance⁶:

- Aesthetic value, including scale, form, colour, texture and materials
- Historic value, including social history
- Scientific value, including industrial archaeology
- Social value, which reflects any associations generated by the site, such as political or spiritual

The building is assessed against each of these values as follows:

4.3 Aesthetic Value

4.3.1 The external form of the building responds to its urban setting. As a single block, with streets on all sides, it has no back, and all the elevations are consequently designed to be seen. The massing is also responsive to its surroundings, in particular to the smaller scale 18th century Town Hall on the west side. In its use of set-backs and modelling of the facades, it provides a model example of contextual tall building design.

⁶ Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter, *International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites*, 1999

- 4.3.2 The plan of the building too is clear and logical, with a strong axial layout, a dominant central hall and peripheral circulation routes with rotundas at the point where the corridors cross. This makes the building easy to understand and navigate.
- 4.3.3 Whilst the style of the building was not advanced for the time, it reflected a particular inflection of modern classicism that was promoted by Reilly and the Liverpool School of Architecture, which derived from American practice and had a huge influence throughout the UK and the British Empire. The Martins Building is perhaps the finest example of the style in its architectural quality, consistency and invention.
- 4.3.4 The building is also remarkable for its architectural sculpture, which is an integral part of the overall design. From the early 19th century onwards, Liverpool developed a tradition of high quality sculpture, and Herbert Tyson Smith, whose career continued into the 1960s, was the dominant sculptor of the inter war period. The inventive interweaving of the twin themes of money and the sea enlivens the building and enriches its surfaces both inside and out.
- 4.3.5 The opulent interior of the banking hall is what one remembers most of the building, and this was the intention of original client and architect. The cathedral-like proportions of the space, the thrilling vistas through arcaded colonnades, the richness of the materials and the quality of the furnishings were all designed to impress the bank's clients and embody the essential values of financial reliability and probity. The rare survival of the interior is a testament to the quality of the work.
- 4.3.6 Other interiors of high aesthetic significance include the public areas such as the rotundas, the lifts and staircases, the first floor administrative offices, the eighth floor board room and dining room, and the former chairman's apartment.

4.4 Historic Value

- 4.4.1 The building is of national historic interest as the former headquarters of one of the country's most successful banks. Whilst it was taken over by Barclays in 1969, its assets at the time were considerable and many considered it could have continued as one of the principal clearing banks. It was regarded as a safe home in the war for the Bank of England's bullion reserves.
- 4.4.2 At a local level the building is historically important for its connections with trade and commerce, and for the role it played in the economic prosperity of the city during its period of global mercantile influence in the 19th and early 20th centuries which justified Liverpool's inscription as a World Heritage Site.

4.5 Scientific Value

- 4.5.1 One of the most interesting aspects of the building is the successful integration of architecture and technology. Whilst modernist architects of the interwar period

were keen to express the functional nature of their buildings stylistically, and eschewed ornament in favour of machine-like aesthetics, their buildings, ironically, were often built in a traditional manner. In contrast, Rowse developed a highly functional building, using the latest methods of construction and engineering, but dressed it in a historicist style. What is more, the workings of the building – the steel and concrete structure, the mechanical and electrical equipment, and the services – form a fully integrated element of the whole, to the extent that technological changes can be accommodated without harming the aesthetic character of the building or its operational efficiency.

- 4.5.2 In this way, the building is significant for the sophisticated manner in which aesthetic and functional considerations are resolved, whilst the minimal number of alterations made since its construction is evidence of the forward-looking nature of the design.

4.6 Social Value

- 4.6.1 The building is one of the most cherished monuments to Liverpool's maritime mercantile history. It is popular with local people who are keen to see the interior on the occasions when it is opened to the public. It features in architectural guides and heritage walks, where the sculpture strikes a particular resonance.

5 ISSUES AND CONSTRAINTS

5.1 Heritage Issues

- 5.1.1 The building's values as defined in the statement of significance above are potentially vulnerable to change. Development therefore demands a sensitive design approach, with the key heritage issues being:

- Whether the change of use offers a sympathetic and sustainable future for the building
- Conservation of the significant historic character and fabric of the building
- Whether development preserves or enhances the special character of the building and its setting

5.2 Heritage Opportunities

- 5.2.1 Change of use of the building offers the following opportunities:

- **Re-use**
The building is substantially vacant and in need of a sympathetic new use that will justify major investment. The absence of an accessible main entrance, the vast scale and opulence of the banking hall, the shared use of the interior, and the complexities of circulation are all factors that make it difficult to accommodate alternative uses. Considerable efforts have been made in recent years to find a suitable new use, with the present proposal offering the most viable and sympathetic solution.

- **Repair and conservation**

A high quality new use will provide the means to conserve the significant elements of the listed building for the future.

5.3 Heritage Constraints

5.3.1 The cultural significance of the building poses the following constraints:

- The external form and character of the building is highly distinctive. Since every elevation has been carefully designed, from street level up to roofline, there is limited scope for alterations or extensions without causing harmful impact on views of the building from surrounding streets.
- Certain areas of the interior too are vulnerable to change. The banking hall is capable of accepting some interventions, but these should not adversely affect the integrity of the space or the quality of its architectural fabric and decoration.
- There should be minimum alterations to other public areas such as the subsidiary entrances, rotundas and main staircases. The Board Room and Directors' Dining Room should both be conserved and not be subdivided. Within the first floor administrative offices, timber panelling, doors, fireplaces and other architectural fittings should be retained. The general office spaces, basement rooms and service areas can accept alterations provided they do not damage significant historic fabric or have a harmful impact on the external appearance of the building by blocking windows.
- Wherever feasible and taking due account of energy efficiency, use should be made of the original servicing systems, including built-in heating, risers, duct runs, cabling and plumbing so as to avoid disrupting the historic fabric or exposing additional equipment. Whilst the original service infrastructure is unlikely to be reusable, replacements and any additional service ducting or cabling that cannot be accommodated within existing voids should where possible be concealed.
- The tiled lightwell is a significant space within the building, which could benefit from protection from the elements. Any cover, however, should be as lightweight as possible and avoid damaging fixings. The lightwell should remain naturally ventilated and continue to read as an external space.
- The roof top colonnade serves to unite the two plant rooms with a consistent roof line. Any enclosure of the colonnade to bring it into beneficial use should not adversely affect the balance of the facades when viewed from street level.
- It is important that the conversion respects the social significance of the building, and that any historic fabric of special historic or associational interest is suitably conserved.
- Any change must protect the special interest of the building, whilst making its own aesthetic contribution.

6 THE PROPOSAL

- 6.1 The objective of the proposal is to bring back into commercial use the principal areas of a major listed building that is currently vacant and in need of refurbishment.
- 6.2 The scheme involves converting the principal areas of the building to a 5* hotel, restaurant and spa.
- 6.3 The design principles are clearly set out in the architect's Design and Access Statement.

7 HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 PPG 15

PPG 15 requires that applicants for listed building consent justify their proposals, and provide the local planning authority with full information to carry out an assessment of the likely impact of their proposals on the special architectural or historic interest of the building and its setting.

7.2 Use of the Building

- 7.2.1 Paragraph 3.8 of PPG 15 states that *the best way of securing the upkeep of historic buildings is to keep them in active use*. This, it argues, *must mean economically viable uses if they are to survive, and new, and even continuing, uses will necessitate some degree of adaptation*. Paragraphs 3.9 and 3.10 set out the principles against which changes of use should be assessed. *Whilst the best use will often be the use for which the building was designed, not all original uses will be viable or even necessarily appropriate. Judging the best use requires balancing the economic viability of possible uses against the effect that any changes they entail would have on the special interest of the building in question*.
- 7.2.2 In the age of telephone and internet banking, the building is no longer required for bank use. A number of business appraisals have been undertaken in recent years to explore alternative uses. These have included offices, pub and club use, a casino, and an 80 bedroom boutique hotel. Each has been subject to technical and economic viability evaluation, and none have proved viable in current market conditions.
- 7.2.3 A feasibility study commissioned from Tri Hospitality Consulting has, however, identified a gap in the hotel sector in Liverpool at the top end, and demonstrated that conversion to a 5* hotel could be viable in this location. The proposal for a commercial hotel incorporating up to 150 bedrooms, 10,000 sq ft of conference and banqueting facilities and a destination spa of 12-15,000sq ft has generated a positive response from two major branded international "five star" operators. Discussions have also been held with an international spa operator and international chef and restaurateur. The City Council has been supportive of the principle of up market hotel conversion which complements Liverpool's tourism strategy.

- 7.2.4 Hotel use of this calibre also offers the best opportunity to preserve the special character of the listed building.

7.3 Alterations

- 7.3.1 In considering the effect of any alterations to a historic building, paragraph 3.12 of PPG 15 states that *it is essential to have assessed the elements that make up the special interest of the building in question*. Paragraph 3.15 continues - *Achieving a proper balance between the special interest of a listed building and proposals for alterations or extension is demanding and should always be based on specialist expertise; but it is rarely impossible, if reasonable flexibility and imagination are shown by all parties involved*.
- 7.3.2 The special interest of the Martins Building is set out in the Statement of Significance above. This Statement has informed the design approach to the conversion of the listed building.
- 7.3.3 The impact on particular areas and special features of the building is analysed in the schedule set out below:
- 7.3.4 Provision of an Accessible Entrance
- It is considered essential to provide a DDA compliant access from Water Street both to the front of the hotel and also for office tenants. A number of detailed options have been considered and assessed in terms of functionality, convenience and impact on the special interest of the building, and these are described in the accompanying Design and Access Statement.
 - The preferred option involves the introduction of a simple ramped approach within the public footway, rising up to the level of the first landing at the existing office entrance, and then entering the building through a new opening in the side wall of the entrance way.
 - The scheme requires a number of interventions including moving one flight of existing steps, cutting an opening through the stone facing to the side of the entranceway, and the provision of a platform lift connecting with the level of the existing foyer in the banking hall.
 - The ramp is designed as a simple structure with a horizontal stone plinth following the lines of the building and a glass and metal balustrade.
 - Within the foyer, which will become the hotel reception area, a new opening will be formed through the south wall. This will be cut on the line of the existing travertine facing blocks, and lined with a timber architrave to match other existing door openings within the building. An additional platform lift on the east side of the foyer gives access to the level of the main banking hall making use of an existing closet.
 - This proposal would provide a dignified and accessible entrance for both hotel and office users, with minimal alteration to the building, and avoids change to the more significant main entrance. The Water Street elevation will

remain unaltered except for the ramp, whilst the internal alterations are restricted to the new opening through the south wall of the foyer and the platform lift. The alternative options are more disruptive since they involve interventions within areas of higher significance or greater visibility.



Water Street elevation with existing office entrance

7.3.5 Additional South East Entrance

- An additional entrance is required from Exchange Street West, providing level access for hotel users outside office hours, and serving also as a separate access to the basement spa, and a safe means of escape in case of fire.
- The alteration involves removal of the stone apron below the existing window and the introduction of a doorway matching the existing one at the northern end of the facade.
- Internally a ramp will bridge over a flight of steps that lead from ground floor to basement level, with the steps remaining in situ.
- The external alterations to the form the new doorway will maintain the symmetry of the elevation, whilst the internal works affect a subsidiary staircase and are reversible.



Exchange Street West elevation showing existing window and doorway that is to be matched

7.3.6 Enclosure of the Light well

- In common with many commercial buildings of the 19th and early 20th centuries, the light well at the centre of the building is clad in white glazed bricks. A terracotta frieze and entablature runs around the top of the light well, surmounted by two courses of Lombardic half-round ridge tiles, which were replicated in GRP in 1985 due to structural failure. The flat arched window openings in the walls of the light well are formed in bricks placed on end, reinforced by steel bars and grooved to accept a bed of cement putty.
- Whilst the tiles are in reasonable condition compared with other buildings of the period, inspections carried out in 1996 and 1998 have revealed evidence of deterioration from the effects of weather and pollution⁷. This includes extensive crazing of the glazed brickwork in general, and in particular to the lintels, pronounced cracks in the lintels, hairline cracking at pilaster positions, and undulations in the verticality of the panels. There is a tendency for a high incidence of surface run off down the elevations due to the impervious nature of the tiles, and as a result hairline cracks may admit a higher volume of water than might be the case for stone surfaces. This correspondingly means that water can become trapped behind the glazed brickwork and saturate the concrete/brick backing. In such conditions, embedded steelwork is prone to corrosion. Whilst the observed rate of deterioration appears to be relatively slow, it is likely to accelerate over time, particularly if water gets into the lintels and causes corrosion of the steel reinforcement.
- In order to protect the tiles and the terracotta wall surfaces, it is proposed to install a lightweight transparent roof covering over the light well. This would be naturally ventilated but would allow for improved climate control of the offices and lead to an overall reduction in energy consumption.
- The lightweight structure would be supported from the existing plant roof walls. Rainwater would be collected in valley gutters and discharged at the four corners of the roof into existing downpipes.
- The roof would be set at the level of the roof of the colonnade and would not be visible from any public viewpoint or even from the majority of windows within the light well. The impact of the light weight roof structure would thus be negligible, and would not restrict light or natural ventilation to the office interiors. It would conserve the original fabric and be reversible.



Light well

⁷ *Building Survey*, Edmund Kirby, January 2009; *Building Survey*, Edmund Kirby, October 1998

7.3.7 Conversion of the Banking Hall

- The banking hall will be used for hotel reception, bar and restaurant. This mix of functions will allow the space to be retained as a single volume with only minimal subdivision. Functional subdivision, however, always existed between the different sectors of the bank, and this separation has been used to define the elements of the conversion scheme. Hence the kitchen is placed at the rear of the hall in the former office area behind the arcade and the bullion hoist; the function suites are located behind the screens to each side of the hall; the main dining area is enclosed within the horseshoe shaped tellers' counter; and the hotel reception occupies the foyer.
- The location of the kitchen was given careful consideration. Two possible options emerged – the lower ground floor and the rear of the banking hall. The lower ground floor would avoid the needs to partition off the rear of the hall, but was considered unviable by potential operators because of the logistical problems of transferring food between floors. In a high quality restaurant with a large number of covers, separate function suites and different classes of dining, it is vital that the kitchen be situated at the same level as the main dining and function areas.
- The kitchen must also be enclosed – for health, safety and environmental reasons. This is achieved by constructing an insulated and fully ventilated 'box' within the former office space, surmounted by a mezzanine floor. The mezzanine dining area is projected out into the main space, with an open staircase to one side. The projection is set back so as to allow unobstructed views of the arched windows in the north wall of the banking hall, and to maintain the proportion of the space. The 'box' will be independent of the enclosing walls of the banking hall, so as to avoid damage to the fabric of the building, and will be fully reversible.
- Within the main hall, the existing counter will be retained with only two small cuts through it at the southern end to provide permeability, and the modern aluminium and glass screens will be removed. The original writing desks that surround the counter will also be retained.
- The former offices to each side of the banking hall will be used as function spaces, and separated by glass screens set behind the original screens.
- An escape doorway is needed at mezzanine level through the travertine clad section of side wall above the kitchen. This will be formed as a jib door, and either faced in travertine or marbled to match the appearance of the wall.
- Where the mezzanine meets the tall windows in the rear wall, a gap will be left so that the windows are not obscured.
- The hotel reception desk and office will be formed with low partitions, so as to avoid subdividing the space.
- The travertine wall surfaces will be cleaned and the decorative plasterwork restored throughout. Historic light fittings will be retained, supplemented by discreet concealed modern lighting.
- The conversion of the banking hall is sympathetic to the special qualities of the interior and retains all features of special interest. The new mezzanine is

designed in a contemporary manner and will read as a simple and elegantly proportioned intervention within the large central space.



Rear area of banking hall and counter detail

7.3.8 Conversion of the Lower Ground Floor, Basement and Sub-basement

- The sub-basement will continue to be used as plant space with no physical changes. The sub-basement will be used for staff areas and additional plant space with only minimal alterations. In both these areas existing architectural detail is of no special interest.
- The lower ground floor contains two corridor systems, one servicing the bank vaults at the centre of the building, and an outer corridor giving access to staff rooms. The rotundas provide connections to both systems. The architectural detail is of limited interest, though the corridors and rotundas have simple cornices, there are a number of panelled timber doors, and the lavatories retain original finishes and floor surfaces.
- The scheme involves conversion to spa and treatment rooms, retaining the rotundas and inner corridor, but remodelling the outer corridor and former staff rooms.
- All the original doors will be salvaged for reuse within the building, but it is not possible to retain the lavatories at this level for operational and health reasons.



Basement rotunda



Lower ground floor lavatories

7.3.9 Conversion of the Existing Mezzanine Floor

- The existing mezzanine floor was used for office suites overlooking the main banking hall, together with ancillary rooms at the four corners of the building. None of these spaces contains features of special interest, apart from the decorative arches and balustrades to the banking hall.
- It is proposed to use the mezzanine for bedrooms, with corridors running behind the arched openings overlooking the banking hall. Glazed screens, required for sound insulation, will be set behind the balustrade with minimal impact on the fabric and sense of space.
- New partitions and suspended ceilings will be introduced within the bedroom areas.



Mezzanine floor and balustrade

7.3.10 Conversion of First Floor Offices

- The Water Street end of the first floor contains the former Chairman's Office and Management Suite. These rooms will be converted to bedroom suites with all their original features and decorative finishes conserved.
- The remainder of the floor has suffered alterations, including the creation of open floor office areas, removal of partitions and upgrading of facilities. Apart from original doors and door frames, there are no features of special interest, and the floor will be converted to bedroom accommodation.

7.3.11 Second Floor

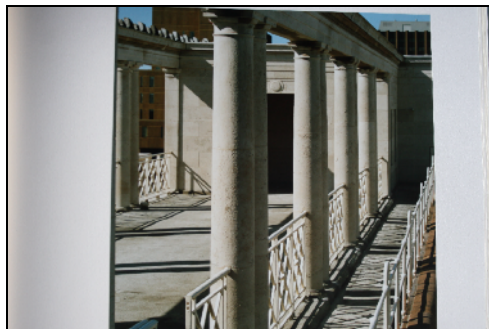
- The second floor is currently used for offices with no features of special interest, apart from one set of male lavatories which retains its original marble and timber cubicles, and some sanitary fittings.
- The floor will be converted to bedroom accommodation, with the one set of original lavatories conserved as an exemplar.

7.3.12 Eighth Floor

- The Board Room and Director's Dining Room will be used as conference and function rooms, retaining all original fittings and furnishings. Other meeting rooms are also provided on this floor, together with a forward kitchen for conference catering.
- Special consideration has been given to enhanced lighting the two principal rooms using floor mounted up lighters, concealed luminaires and through adaptation of the existing fittings.

7.3.13 Ninth Floor

- At ninth floor level, it is proposed to infill the open colonnade that connects the plant rooms on the east and west facades of the building to create additional bedroom suites. The provision of roof top bedrooms with a view over the city is considered essential to attract leisure and tourism guests, and since all other bedrooms are restricted to the mezzanine, first and second floors, where views are restricted, this is a key element of viability.
- The enclosure is designed in the form of a plain glazed skin that is recessed behind the existing double columns, allowing the architectural framework to remain visible whilst allowing sufficient space for bedroom accommodation. A simple structural glass balustrade will be fixed to the existing parapet to allow for a small balcony to be created, and a lightweight roof will be set behind the existing stone cornice.
- Whilst this will have some impact on the present open character of the colonnade, it can only be seen from a very limited number of ground level viewpoints, as identified in the Design and Access Statement, and would make positive and imaginative use of the vacant space at roof level.
- The exposed stonework of the colonnades is suffering from weather damage and requires careful conservation. Adaptive use of the space contained within the colonnade will justify expenditure on repairs and protect the fabric from further decay.
- The other feature of interest on the ninth floor is the former Chairman's apartment, which will be subdivided to form two bedroom suites. All original finishes and furnishings will be retained.



Colonnade to be infilled



Colonnade not visible from Water Street

7.3.14 Mechanical and Electrical Services

- Whilst the original heating and ventilation systems consisting of built-in radiant panels and ducted inlet and outlet air installations, are still mostly operational, they are no longer energy efficient and are technically outdated. These will be replaced and upgraded using the same service routes without need for new ductwork in areas that are visible to the building user.
- New plumbing for bedrooms will be contained within suspended ceiling voids and floor surfaces, connecting into existing risers. Electric lighting, power and telephone cables will be concealed using the existing ducting system.
- The lift shafts on the north sides of the building will be adapted to accommodate fire fighting and service risers. The pair of lifts in the north west rotunda have been vandalised and are not operational. These will have to be replaced by a single service lift. The fire fighting shaft must make use of the north east lift shaft for access from Exchange Flags, and will necessitate the replacement of the timber lift cars in accordance with the specialist report prepared by the Warrington Fire Group Consultancy. The two pairs of lifts with their original cars in the south east and south west corners of the building will be conserved and upgraded.
- M & E services to the restaurant and kitchen will be accommodated within the new mezzanine, together with lighting and power cabling. Extract from the kitchen will be at high level through existing ductwork.
- An acoustic report is being prepared to advise on measures required to improve sound absorption and insulation within the banking hall.



Poor standard of modern power and lighting installations

8 LIVERPOOL UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

8.1 Policy HD4: Alterations to Listed Buildings:

8.1.1 The policy states that 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.

8.1.2 Comment

- Care has been taken to preserve all significant elements and features of the Martins Building, and to design the alterations in a manner that does not harm its special architectural or historic interest. Thus the principal external facades will remain essentially unaltered, with the exception of the ramped entrance on Water Street and glazed infilling of the rooftop colonnade. The existing structure will not be affected. All significant internal original features, fittings and furnishings will be preserved, and the parts of the building affected by the scheme will be comprehensively repaired and refurbished. New development including the new internal finishes, fixtures and lighting installations will be in a contemporary style that is sympathetic to the form and character of the existing building.
- The design quality of the alterations will be high, and materials will be sympathetic to the aesthetic character of the listed building.
- The proposals are justified in providing a viable and sustainable future for an important heritage asset that requires new investment.

8.1.3 The scheme has been designed to accord fully with the criteria set out in this policy.

9 LIVERPOOL WORLD HERITAGE SITE SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

9.1 Paragraph 5.4: Re-use of historic buildings

9.1.1 The guidance states that maintaining viable and appropriate uses for historic buildings is an important factor in ensuring their conservation and survival. In this context the Council will generally support proposals to deliver viable long-term uses for historic buildings in the WHS where they:

- Are in broad accordance with allocations and policies within the UDP and adopted SPG/SPD
- Maintain an appropriate mix of uses
- Will not result in the loss of significant elements of historic fabric
- Will not result in the degradation of the character of the streets onto which the buildings face

- 9.1.2 The proposal will bring a viable long term use for the Martins Building which will not result in loss of significant elements of historic fabric, and will enhance the character of the streets onto which the building faces.

9.2 Paragraph 5.6: Roofscapes and Attic Extensions

- 9.2.1 The guidance states that where development of additional floor space at roof top level can be justified in order to secure a sustainable use of a historic building, it is important to ensure that any impacts are minimised through good design and that the benefits associated with the re-use of the building are not outweighed by the impact of the proposed extension.
- 9.2.2 Key issues highlighted in the guidance are:
- Impact on the character of the building's facades and massing
 - Impact on the rhythm of the roofscape along the streets on which it sits
 - Impact on the pattern of window, string course and parapet alignments along streets
 - Visual intrusion of the extension into views along the streets and views of the building itself
 - Inappropriate designs which conflict with the character of the building
 - Where consistent historic roof lines exist in a street or terrace, the impacts of additional stories or dormers on this arrangement
 - The gradual erosions of character that may arise from similar extensions in the vicinity
- 9.2.3 The alterations at roof top level will have a very minimal impact on the character of the building's facades and massing. The existing colonnade which is proposed to be infilled with a glass screen, is visible from only a few viewpoints at street level, generally some distance away. The roofscape will be unaltered, and the massing and architectural framework will remain as existing.

10 ENGLISH HERITAGE POLICY AND GUIDANCE

- 10.1 Pre-application discussions were carried out with English Heritage in tandem with Liverpool City Council. The English Heritage advice, set out in a letter dated 10 December 2009 was encouraging, accepting the principle of conversion to hotel use, but raising a number of detailed points. All these points are addressed in the PPG 15 Statement and accompanying documentation.
- 10.2 English Heritage has recently published a set of Conservation Principles which it hopes will be adopted across the historic environment sector. The purpose of these principles is to strengthen the consistency and credibility of decisions taken and to create a framework for managing change in the historic environment that is clear in purpose, and transparent and sustainable in its application. The principles state that new work or alteration to a significant place should be acceptable if all the following criteria are met:

- *There is sufficient information about the place fully to understand the impacts of the proposals on its significance*
- *The heritage values that would be affected have been identified, and their relative importance for the place understood*
- *Those values would not be materially harmed and, where appropriate, would be reinforced or further revealed*
- *The interventions aspire to a quality of design and execution, related to their setting, which may be valued now and in the future*
- *The long term consequences of the interventions can, from experience, be predicted as benign, or they are designed not unduly to prejudice other options in the future.*

10.3 It is my belief that these criteria have been met in the application scheme.

10.4 English Heritage also states that ‘Almost all of our historic buildings have been modified to some extent, and in many cases their adaptation is an important component of their historic significance. Designations that protect historic importance should allow adaptation not only to ensure that they stay in use, but because it provides the opportunity to add a further layer of contemporary architecture’.

11 CONCLUSION

11.1 The Martins Building is listed Grade II* and is considered to be Liverpool’s finest inter-war commercial building with exceptional and well-preserved interiors of high decorative quality.

11.2 The application represents a carefully considered proposal for the reuse of a partially vacant building in the city centre that is largely unusable in its present state. It needs substantial investment if it is to have a secure future.

11.2 Adaptive reuse of the building is the only option that will justify major investment and restored it to active use, and the proposal is the result of a detailed feasibility appraisal to convert it to a 5* hotel, restaurant and spa. The principle of adaptation is supported by the City Council and accords with Liverpool’s tourism strategy.

11.3 The proposal involves limited alterations to the building’s exterior, which will not harm its special townscape qualities. Whilst a number of internal changes are required, these have been carefully developed to cause minimal impact on the special character of the building and avoid harming significant architectural fabric.

11.4 Recognition of historic significance is not the limit of a building’s evolution. It is the start of constructive conservation. Considerable care has been taken to conserve and enhance the important elements of the building, such as the principal external facades, the decorative interiors, the integrated structural and M&E systems, and the internal spaces. The fabric of the lightwell will be protected by the introduction

of a lightweight protective covering. The new works provide a sympathetic and intelligent contribution to the evolution of the building.

- 11.5 The application accords with both national and local planning policy and guidance relating to the historic environment, and would bring benefits to the city by restoring a building of special architectural and historic interest to active use.