NORR

Statement to accompany LBC application for removal of ceiling linings

Project Name:	Levels Digital and Gaming Hub
Project Number:	ED3024-0055
Date:	January 2025
Proposal:	Refurbishment of listed former Whittles furniture store to create a digital and gaming hub
Site Location:	6-8 Duke Street, Whitehaven
Applicant:	BEC
Agent:	NORR Consulting Ltd

1.0 Introduction

This statement is to accompany an application for Listed Building Consent to remove existing plasterboard and lath and plaster ceiling linings.

2.0 Background

Listed Building Consent ref:4/21/2364/0L1 for the refurbishment was granted on 24.11.2021. This included Condition 5 requiring details of the extent of lath and plaster ceilings and proposals for repair.

Details were submitted to discharge Condition 5 and approval granted on 18.09.2024. These included a survey of the extents of plasterboard and lath and plaster ceilings; areas of lath and plaster ceilings to be removed to enable timber joist repairs and installation of a new lift; and confirmation that remaining lath and plaster ceilings would be retained and underdrawn with a metal framed plasterboard ceiling to provide fire resistance. Electrical and mechanical services to be installed below this.

3.0 Design development

The fire strategy developed by Hydrock Fire Engineers to comply with Building Regulations requires all floors within the building to provide 60 mins fire resistance. There can be no relaxation of this for historic buildings as it is a life safety requirement.

Different suppliers of suspended ceiling systems have been approached for detailed specifications but to comply with the latest stringent fire tests for systems installed below existing lath and plaster ceilings, voids ranging from 100 – 225mm are required between the existing ceiling and the new lining below. The developed detailed design of the mechanical ventilation system to be installed below the ceilings has resulted in restricted headroom below mechanical ventilation equipment – less than 2000mm in some areas. The mechanical services cannot be located in the void without compromising the fire integrity of the ceiling installation.

British Gypsum can offer a fully tested and certified lining system (British Gypsum reference C016009 to provide the 60mins. fire resistance required without the voids described above. This requires removal of the existing plasterboard and lath and plaster ceilings and replacement of these with two layers of 12.5mm Fireline plasterboard fixed direct to the underside of the existing joists. British Gypsum has confirmed that the fire test and certification will not allow this system to be installed with the existing ceilings still in place.



4.0 Heritage considerations

NORR Consultants has contacted the Conservation Officer Samuel Woodford regarding the proposal to remove the existing lath and plaster ceilings, his response (by email on 24.12.2024) is as follows:

"I'm not wedded to the idea of retaining the existing ceilings as I'm aware that they are variously of limited and no significance, so given the constraints of getting a suitable ceiling height and fire resistance, it appears there is sound justification for removing them throughout."

5.0 Conclusions

Based on the requirements for fire resistance and the need to maintain headroom and the Conservation Officer's agreement, the proposal is to remove all the plasterboard and lath and plaster ceilings and replace these with new linings of Fireline plasterboard. The existing ceilings will be removed carefully to avoid damage to adjoining fabric.

The new ceilings will provide the required fire resistance, acoustic separation (eg to sound recording and editing rooms) will be provided by alternative British Gypsum systems which also require the existing linings to be removed to meet sound and fire test requirements.