3.3 Existing building assessment

Key observations — sense of arrival



Market Square entrance
This is the primary face of the building however, the sense of arrival from Market Square is underwhelming. There is a distinct lack of footfall through the main entrance doors. The primary entrance doors were in a closed position, detracting from a sense of openness and welcome.

The reception area is uninviting and lacks natural light. This detracts from the impressive stair and foyer to first floor. The film to the foyer first floor windows blocks views out and daylight in, creating a closed and gloomy feeling.

The entrance is not accessible. Accessibility from Market Square needs to be addressed to make the Guildhall's main entrance fully inclusive.



Guildhall Street entrance
The current entrance for the Assembly Halls. The sense of arrival is underwhelming once inside, undermining the building as a premium events space.

There is no obvious reception point and no sense of arrival, grand foyer or drinks forum commonly needed for large organised events.

The entrance is not accessible.



Peas Hill entrance
The entrance previously serving the Tourist Information Centre, gift shop and coffee shop. Originally the entrance to the sessions court.

This is a more intimate entrance to the building leading to an independent set of rooms from the main Guildhall.

There is some sense of arrival, provided by the character and materials of the foyer, however, there is no obvious reception point.

The entrance is accessible.

3.3 Existing building assessment

Key observations — accessibility & vertical circulation



To improve inclusivity, wheelchair access should be provided at the primary entrance from Market Square.

As a public sector organisation, the Council will be required to anticipate access needs under the Equality Act and should make provisions where possible within the constraints of the listed building.

A sympathetic platform lift could be accommodated in this area.



Vertical circulation is provided with two lifts and a good distribution of stairs.

The lifts are provided in strategic locations on the building plan arrangement adjacent to stairs and serving both side of the building. They run from the basement to the fourth floor, serving all levels of the building.

The lifts do not appear to be Part M compliant and should be replaced with fully accessible lifts.



The building is well served through generous, high quality stairs strategically placed around the building.

The use of the stairs should be encouraged to promote health and well-being.

3.3 Existing building assessment

Key observations — horizontal circulation and wayfinding



Internally, there are many long corridors with little connection to the outdoors or natural daylight. Many feel like service corridors.

Artificial lighting is poor. The corridors feel dimly lit and tired.

The use of unsympathetic modern floor finishes detract from the character of the original building in several corridors.



The corridors are of a generous width and provide good levels of accessibility for wheelchair users.

There are numerous cross-corridor doors that are heavy and awkward to operate for those with mobility or accessibility issues.



Many of the windows have film applied, or a stippled glass that obscures views and daylight and get in the way of navigation.

The corridors lack connectivity to the outside, and the repetitive nature results in a loss of orientation. Removing stippled glass and internal walls will provide stunning views out across the skyline of Cambridge whilst improving orientation and wayfinding.

3.3 Existing building assessment

Key observations — underutilised and undervalued spaces



The two atria serving the ground to fourth floor do not provide benefit to the internal spaces of the Guildhall. They are overlooked, naturally lit spaces which could be activated to provide amenity, interest, break-out spaces and improve the general outlook.

As the atria do not extend to the basement, the opportunity for providing natural light here has been lost.

The existing atria are fitted with unsightly pipework from the WCs.



The basement is vast and occupies the full building footprint. As it is poorly lit with little to no natural light, it is unusable in its current form for office accommodation.

The generous soffit/ceiling heights and structural column grid provide ample opportunity for creating quality, flexible commercial office accommodation with the additional of natural light.

Some of the basement is occupied by plant areas and a large section is given over to archive storage. A CCTV room and Streets Team welfare area is provided.



The rooftop over the western elevation benefits from vistas over the Cambridge skyline. With it's height and central location, the Guildhall provides a unique opportunity in this respect.

The rooftop currently carries telecommunications equipment and plant serving the restaurants however, there is significant opportunity to relocate some of this and free up space for a rooftop intervention that provides additional area, value and commercial opportunity.

3.3 Existing building assessment

Key observations — historic spaces



The Session's Court, former Tourist Information Office and gift shop are of historic architectural value, with timber marquetry and original light fittings and finishes.

The Sessions Court in particular is difficult to re-purpose in its current state due to floor level changes and a fixed seating arrangement.

The adjoining former Tourist Information Office has been cleared of internal fixed furniture and the floor has been raised to provide level access from the corridor, giving more opportunity for reuse.





The Council Chambers are of high architectural interest, however the fixed nature of the furniture restricts the flexibility of use of this space.

This space remains, mostly, untouched since the 1930's. Modern interventions will need to be sensitively incorporated.

The Large Hall is of high architectural interest, with the original organ in-situ and original light fittings. The current route from the street to the hall is underwhelming and devalues the spaces as primary venues, reducing the revenue opportunity the halls provide. There is no sense of arrival or reception from the entrance from Guildhall Street. There is no level access at the Guildhall Street entrance.

The connection to the Small Hall provides flexibility for larger events.

Heating, cooling and ventilation to both halls requires review and updating.



The Small Hall is of architectural interest with roof lights and timber flooring. However, like the Large Hall the current route from the street to the hall is underwhelming and devalues the spaces as primary venues.

The association with the catering kitchen and bar to the hall is beneficial however, the bar in particular is dated and requires updating and relocating to better serve the hall.

The Small Hall can act as a refreshments area for the Large Hall, supporting its use.

3.3 Existing building assessment

Key observations — office accommodation





The office accommodation within the Guildhall varies in quality.

The highest heritage spaces, such as the Chief Executive's timber panelled office and the Mayor's Parlour, may better serve communal uses, such a meeting room.

The majority of office accommodation to the upper floors is tired and drab with poor lighting quality and lack of daylight. Fittings and furniture require updating to make the spaces appealing.



Wide uninspiring corridors serve the office accommodation at the upper levels of the building. These corridors prevent cross-ventilation, making the use of natural ventilation more difficult. They also reduce the benefit of natural daylight to the office accommodation.

Underutilised space contribute to a poor net-to-gross.

Locker and storage provision to the perimeter offices spills out into these space, further adding to its unappealing nature.



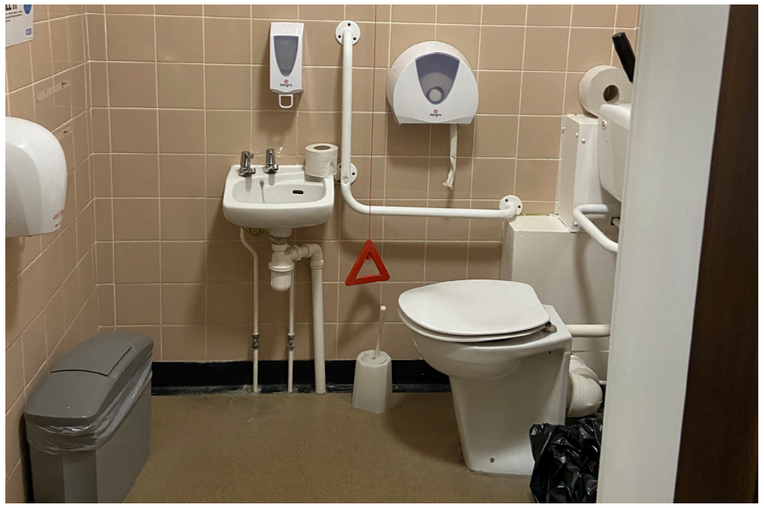
Original features are undervalued in some of the office accommodation, detracting from the special interest of the building.

All the existing office spaces benefit from a concrete ceiling, which provides high levels of thermal mass, helping to reduce peak temperatures in summer.

Modern floor finishes conceal the potential of original timber flooring.

3.3 Existing building assessment

Key observations — provision for cyclists, staff amenity and refuse





WC provision is provided with a combination of historic terrazzo and modern fit-outs. The quantum and accessible provision is inadequate by modern standards and will require increasing in number and quality.

Tea points and kitchenettes are provided in a range of individual rooms and corridor standpoints. Neither provision is desirable, and the corridor provision in particular detracts from the historic character of the building.



Cycle storage and changing provision is provided in the lower ground level of the Guildhall with changing at ground floor.

Access to these areas is difficult with numerous steep ramps and steps.

The current cycle storage and changing provision is inadequate for the future use of the Guildhall. It does not meet modern standards or the requirements of the council.



On site refuse is accommodated within the Guildhall stair core. The location is compromised and detracts from the quality of use of the entrance for other purposes.

The refuse storage provision is inadequate to accommodate the refuse and recycling requirements of the Guildhall.

3.4 Heritage Assets and Strategy

Key assets

The Guildhall is a Grade II Listed Building. It was erected in two phases, either side of the Second World War to the designs of the architect Charles Cowles-Voysey (1889-1981). He was an accomplished designer of public buildings (including town halls in Watford, Bognor Regis, Bromley and Worthing). The job architect was John Brandon-Jones (1908-1999) who had joined the practice in 1933.

The historic interest of the Guildhall derives from its standing on a site which has been occupied by municipal buildings probably since the C14. The building and its predecessors have been at the heart of matters affecting the City for many centuries.

The architectural interest of the Guildhall derives from its stripped-Classical 1930s form and symmetry (particularly the north elevation and despite its two-phase construction, visible in the slight change in brick colour). The rather austere external detail is enlivened by the entrance doorways, rusticated plinth and balconies and the attic storey with deep cornice and partly balustraded pediment. The homogeneity of the building materials (Clipsham stone, Williamson Cliffe brick and bronze windows) adds to the architectural quality of the building.

The interior adds much to the architectural interest of the building, as reflected in the list description and identified on the plans of heritage significance (see Appendix 3). Of particular note are the entrance / stairhall with its accomplished use of marble and bronze and the Council Chamber which leads from it. The Committee Rooms, Members' Rooms and also the Chief Executive's office all have walnut used for wall panels and in the furniture (not part of the listing). The small hall with its barrel-vaulted roof and Neoclassical detailing is also of note.The furniture in some areas has remained unchanged since the spaces were originally constructed.

The building was designed with a clear hierarchy and with an eye on the level of use. The principal entrance and rooms are therefore of the highest quality materials. The secondary entrance and other spaces, rather than having marble, therefore have terrazzo, whilst the Guildhall Street entrance and stairs, which gave access to the public halls, were covered with rubberised finishes by Dunlop.

Whilst the building retains may of its original features, there are areas which have been altered and are of little architectural interest. These include the ground floor reception area, which has been altered several times, some of the altered WCs, the lifts (added later) the atria and basement areas. Although the latter has not been particularly heavily altered, it was never built with any architectural pretension. Exceptions in the basement, which are of higher significance include the steps down from the dock in the Sessions Court and surviving cells.

The exterior of the Guildhall, its principal rooms and stairs and lobbies to the civic spaces are considered to be of high heritage significance. The service areas and much altered spaces are of low significance whilst the general offices, secondary areas are considered of moderate significance.

Please refer to the Turley Stage 2 Heritage report for further, more detailed information, this can be found in Appendix 10.

Heritage significance has been translated to a set of plans — please refer to Appendix 3.

Our Approach

Our approach to working on the Grade II listed Guildhall can be summarised as follows;

- Preserve and restore areas of high heritage significance, limiting works to these spaces which could cause harm to the heritage asset.
- Modernise areas of lower heritage significance, e.g. through the removal of walls, to allows spaces to be better utilised.
- Remove later, low quality, additions to the space which detract from the Guildhalls use and appearance.
- Insert high quality, beautifully designed, modern interventions that can be read as such.



Source (top down): Large Hall in 1902 https://capturingcambridge.org/museum-of-cambridge/museum-exhibit-stories/guildhall/, Council Chamber https://capturingcambridge.org/museum-of-cambridge/museum-exhibit-stories/guildhall/

3.5 Design Development
Council Office Accommodation

Cambridge City Council Office Accommodation

Following engagement sessions with Cambridge City Council Staff, the following key requirements were identified:

- Currently, the Council is split between two main buildings; Mandela House and the Guildhall with a hybrid working approach (and a smaller operations office in Cowley Road). An average of 109 individuals attend Mandela House on the busiest weekday.
- The Council requires 150 workplace settings for its staff and shared service partners, with a range of environments, from focused work through to collaboration space. This could include drop-in desks, bookable team zones, quiet zones, drop-in meeting rooms, bookable meeting rooms, phone booths, meeting booths and laptop working booths.
- The exact number of meeting rooms required is to be developed further with the Council. The rooms should vary in size with the largest accommodating 30 people (meetings of this size are currently held in the Chamber but a smaller space is needed) and the smallest designed for 1:1 meetings. Re-use of existing furniture where possible in line with the Council's Use of Space principles.
- Breakout spaces - current provision in Mandela house is a large canteen. Smaller kitchenettes have been requested for each floor which are separate from the office space. Preferences for these spaces include dining tables, lounge areas for informal chatting, soft seating and recreational facilities.
- An open plan, modern working environment is of high priority with an emphasis on maximizing natural light, and having an uncluttered space. There should be comfortable spacing between desks. A range of different work settings will be provided. Flexibility is crucial as staff choose their workspaces based on their tasks for that day.

Design Development:

- The initial design proposal positioned the Council office space on levels 3 and 4, with commercial office space allocated to the basement, ground, and first floors. In the current proposal, this arrangement has been reversed, placing the Council office space on the ground and first floors, while the commercial offices are now located on the upper levels. Throughout the design iterations, the inclusion of gender neutral toilets, kitchenettes, breakout spaces, and bookable meeting rooms on every floor has been preserved.
- A key iteration in the design process (Revision August 2024) was the removal of long-term Council workplace settings from the basement level. This was a result of dialogue with Council staff and concerns raised about the quality of the work environment. Within the Stage 2 proposal, the basement level is split between Council and commerical office usage, predominantly occupied by meeting rooms, along with breakout space and some agile workplace settings in the atrium space, for short-term use.
- In dialogue with Max Fordham, some areas initially allocated for Council Office space are now required for plant equipment. This has particularly impacted the basement layout with the length of the west wing and majority of the east wing being allocated to plant. Layout changes involve relocating the Council WCs from the East wing to shared facilities at the central rear of the building, allowing access for commercial office staff as well.

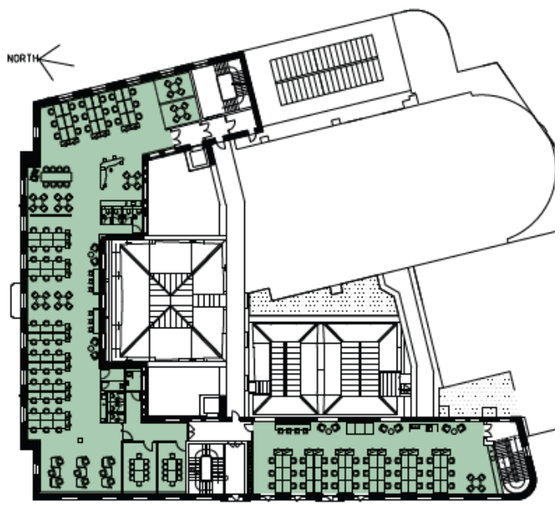
Key spaces requested

- **Flexible meeting spaces**
- **Staff only 1:1 meeting spaces**
- **Staff only larger meeting spaces**
- **Breakout space**
- **Area for fitness activities**
- **Cycle storage**
- **Staff WCs**
- **Staff showers**
- **Staff changing rooms**
- **Flexible office space**
- **Cloakroom**

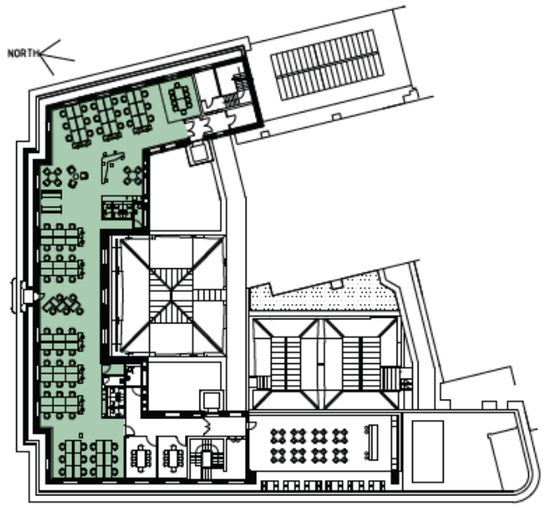
3.5 Design Development

Council Office Accommodation

Initial Allocation



Level 3



Level 4

150 Council workplace settings located on levels 3 and 4

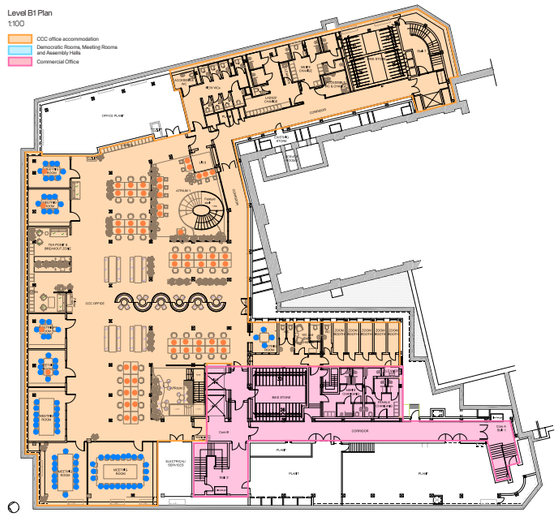
Revision June 2024



Basement Level

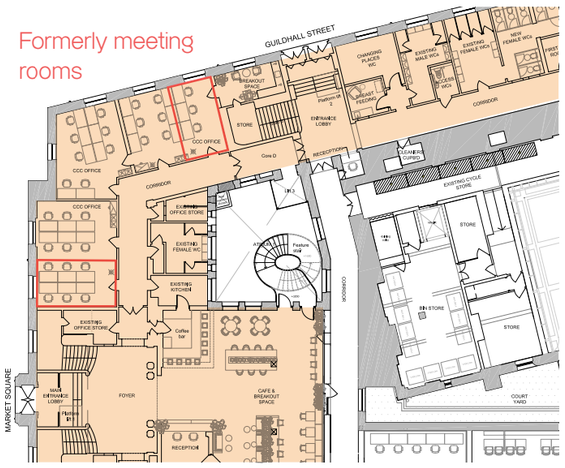
Long-term Council workplace settings located at basement level

Revision August 2024



Basement Level

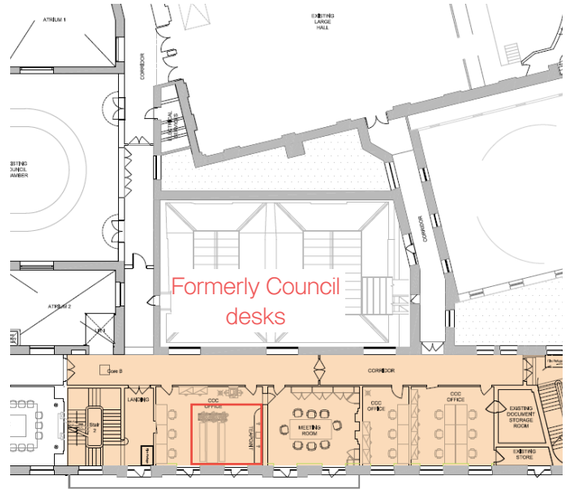
Long-term Council workplace settings located closer to the atria for increased light levels. Meeting rooms are located at the exterior edge of the basement as they are for shorter-term use.



Ground Floor

Meeting rooms removed from Ground Floor to basement level. This allows for more long-term workplace settings at ground level with increased light levels.

Revision August 2024



First Floor

Tea points introduced to every cluster of Council workplace settings.

Council Office Accommodation

Council Office Accommodation

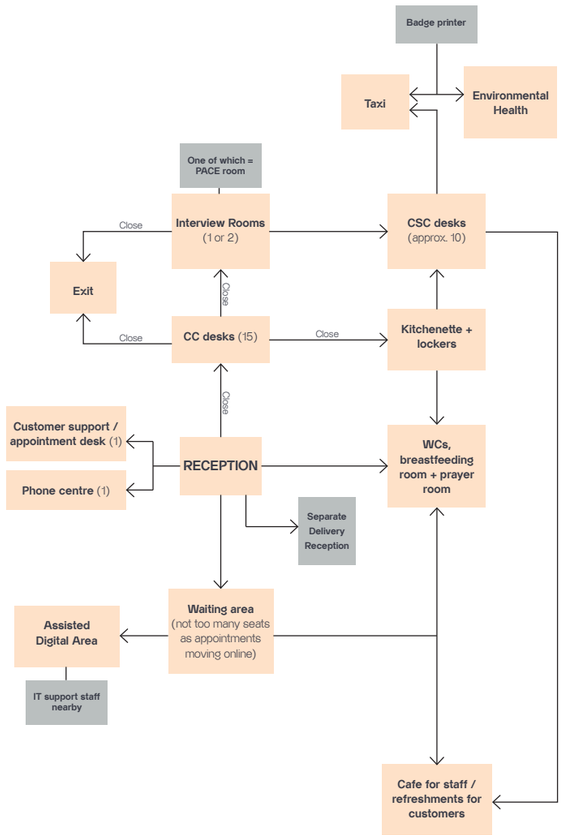
3.5 Design Development

Customer Service Centre (CSC)

Customer Service Centre Accommodation

Design Development:

- Throughout the design development process, the majority of the CSC space has remained on the ground floor for easy accessibility. Initially planned for the rear of the west wing, the Stage 2 proposal now places it at the front of the west wing to have a shared entrance with Council Staff and the public.
- Considerations were made to split the CSC between ground and basement level with a connecting stair in Atrium 2. However this was discounted, primarily due to staff concerns about proximity of office space to the CSC and also the working environment in this section of basement.

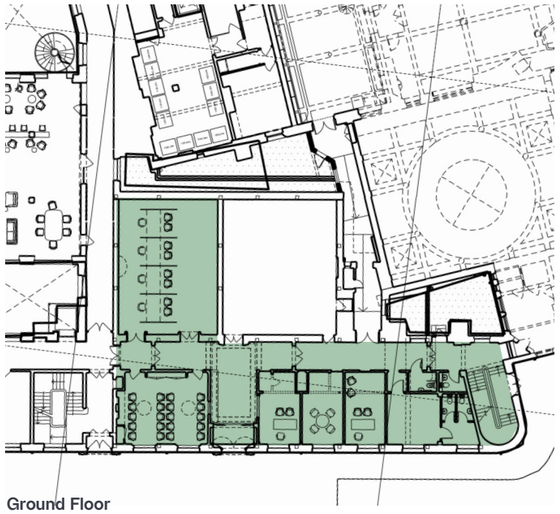


Desired spatial adjacencies as requested by CSC Staff

Key spaces requested

- Publicly accessible meeting spaces
- Breakout space w/ kitchenettes
- Office space
- Secure storage
- Staff WCs
- Public WCs
- Cafe
- Breastfeeding room
- Assisted digital area
- Phone centre

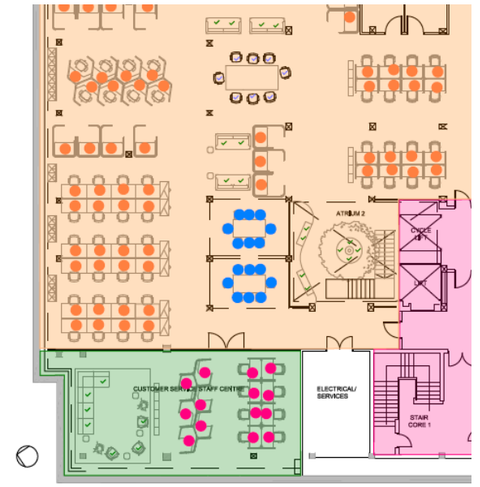
Initial location of CSC



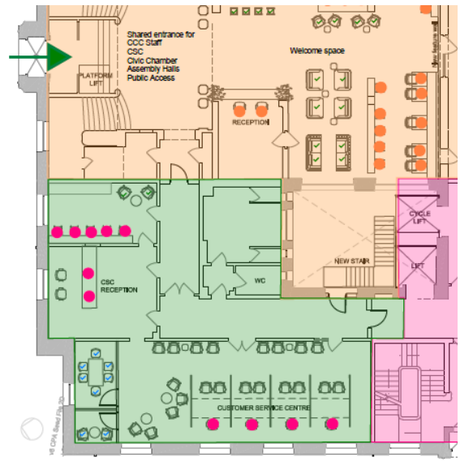
Ground Floor

CSC Office Accommodation

Revision July 24



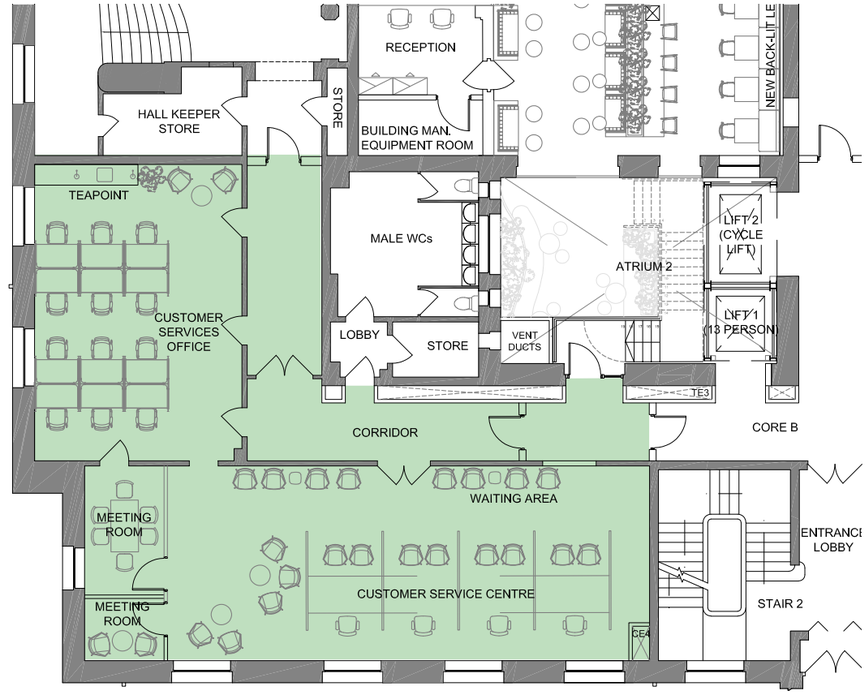
Basement level



Ground Floor

CSC Office Accommodation

Revision October 24

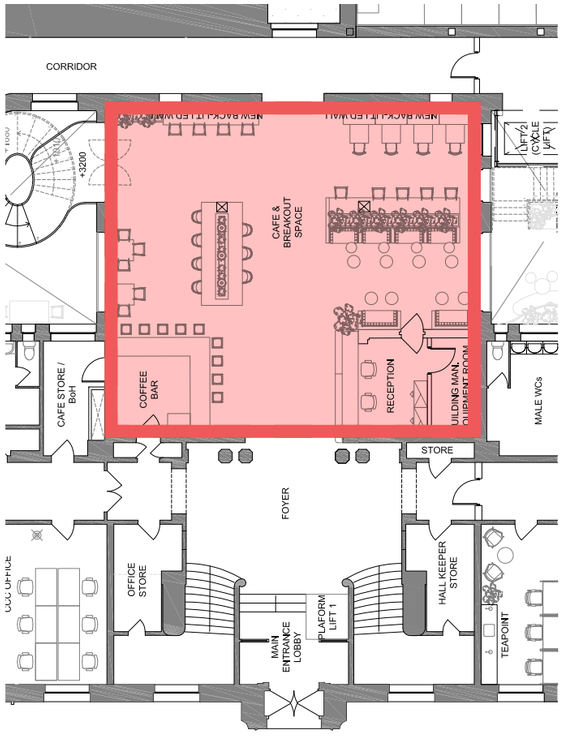


3.6 Design Outline

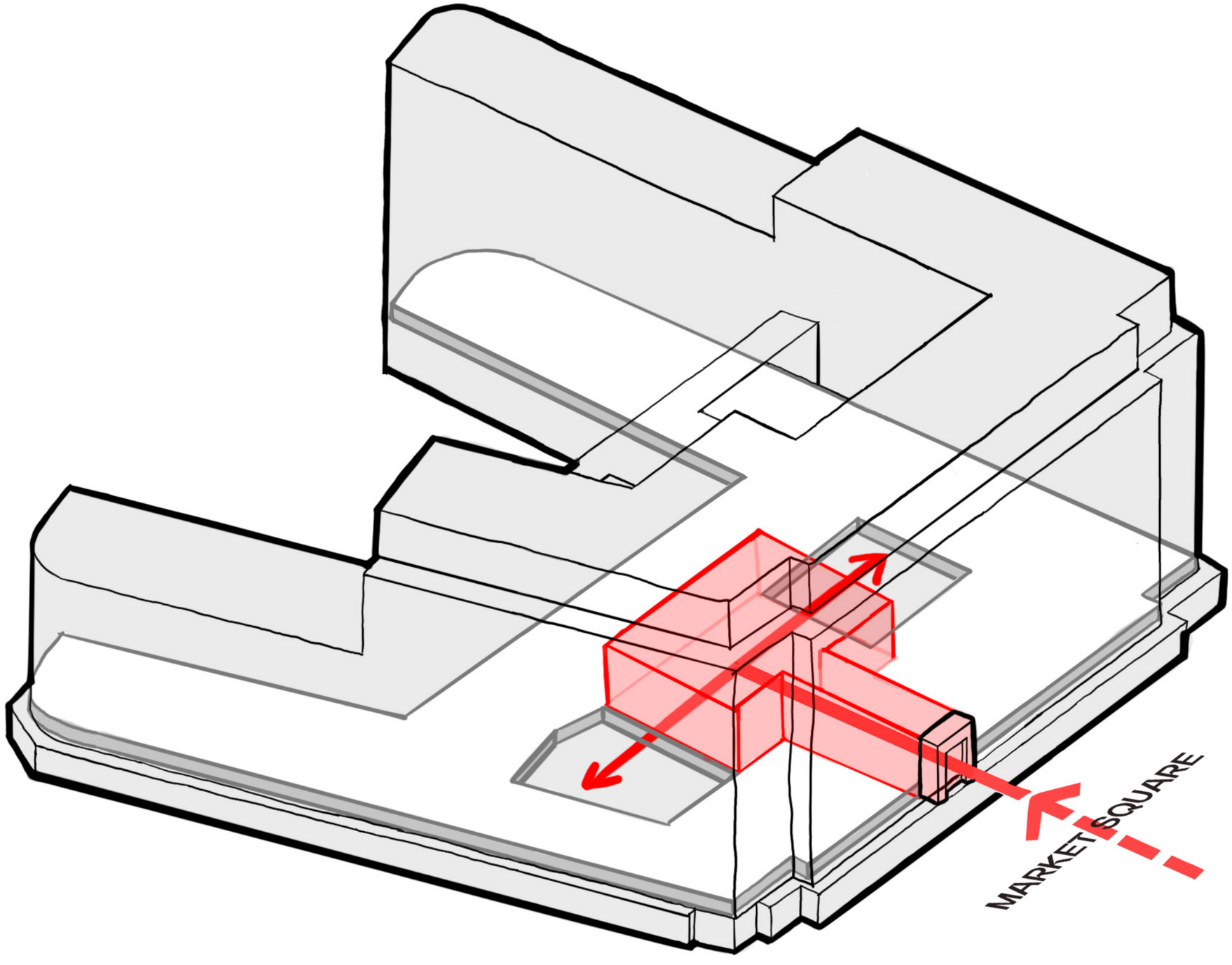
The 'Heart' and Atria

One of the key design proposals within the Guildhall is the newly created 'Heart' space on the ground floor. This area is currently occupied by the Allia reception and has had several unsympathetic interventions inserted into it over the life of the Guildhall.

Our concept is to open the space up, removing later additions, and create a multifunctional open entrance space for the Guildhall. This will create a space that can be used by all, being publicly accessible but also accessible to Council staff. Within the space we are proposing the Council reception, provided with directly accessible BoH space, and a café bar, again provided with directly accessible storage or prep areas. The space would then offer a range of seating, tables, chairs and high benches. This would allow the public to get a coffee or Council staff to have an informal meeting or work on a laptop for short periods.



Guildhall ground floor plan



Location of the 'Heart' space at the centre of the Guildhall

3.6 Design Outline

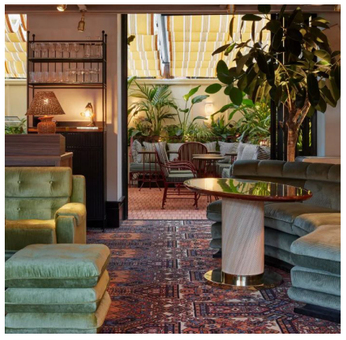
The 'Heart' and Atria

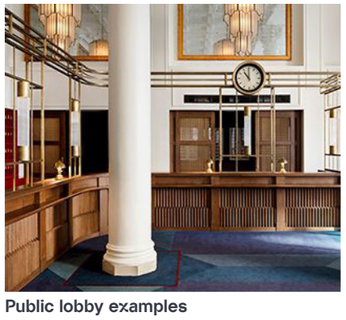


Guildhall ground floor civic heart









Public lobby examples

Sources (top down): (top two images) Cartwright Pickard, Louie London https://www.venuescanner.com/gb/venues/london/london/book/louie-london/alligator-bar-terrace, Riggs Washintdon DC https://loregroup.com/our-hotels/riggs/

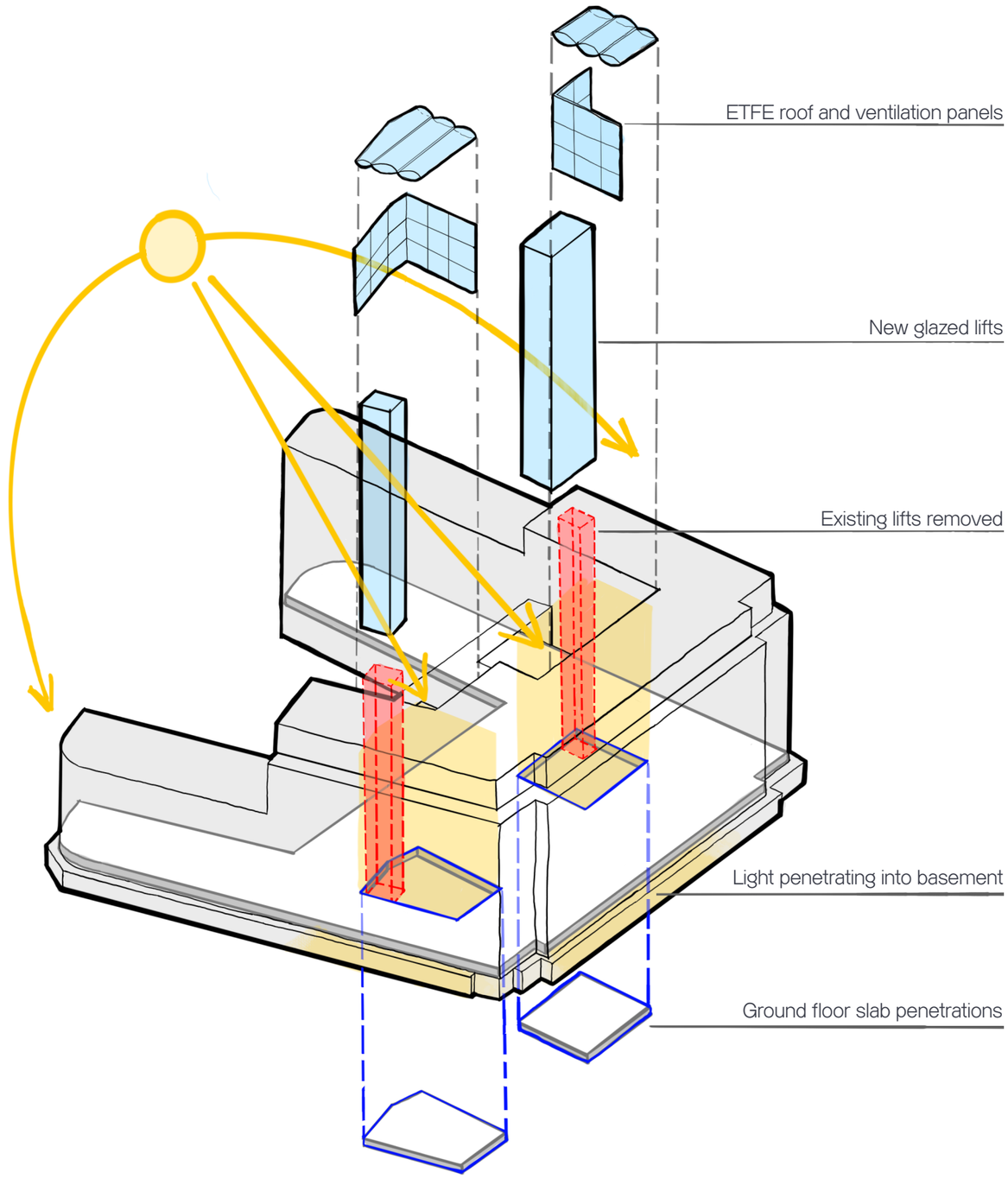
3.6 Design Outline

The 'Heart' and Atria

Directly linked to the 'Heart' space are the two newly created atria, these are formed from the existing lightwells. The ground floor slab of the lightwells will be removed to provide access and light to the basement. To enclose the lightwells a lightweight ETFE roof is proposed. This was successfully deliver at Lambeth Town Hall – see photo.

The creation of two atria is beneficial for several reason;

- Improvements to wayfinding in the building
- Bring daylight deep into the Guildhall and allowing the basement to be opened up and space utilised as lettable area.
- Reducing the extent of external wall, making the walls of the atria internal rather than external, and therefore reducing heat lost and energy use
- Creating spaces flooded with daylight that can incorporate biophilia (planting) into the Guildhall, benefiting staff well-being and mindfulness.



Design moves - creation of new atria



Lambeth Town Hall exemplar ETFE roof (Source: Cartwright Pickard)



Lambeth Town Hall exemplar ETFE roof (Source: Cartwright Pickard)

3.6 Design Outline

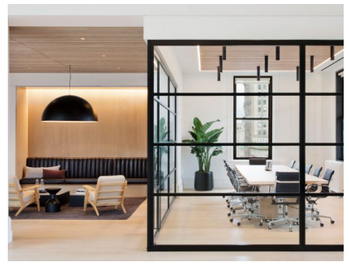
The 'Heart' and Atria



Atrium 1 - View looking down into basement office space









Office atria examples

Sources (top down): Cartwright Pickard, Kohimachi Terrace https://frameweb.com/article/nendos-newest-office-building-turns-terraces-into-private-meeting-rooms, 31 West 27th Street https://www.dezeen.com/2019/03/12/fogarty-finger-architecture-new-york-office/, VALO Hotel & Work https://www.dezeen.com/2021/11/22/valo-hotel-work-office-rooms/



Cross section through 'Heart' Space and Atria to illustrate overall concept (internal fittings are indicative)