

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE : Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure

DATE : 31 May 2012

DIRECTOR: Gordon McIntosh

TITLE OF REPORT: Marischal College – Broad Street Access

REPORT NUMBER: EPI/12/089

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report has been produced in response to a motion presented at Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure committee (31 Jan 2012) on Broad Street access arrangements for mobility scooters.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that committee:-

Agree that as an operational matter the gate between the main structure and the pend column be opened during business hours as an 'alternative' straight-on means of access and that, subject to obtaining relevant consent an additional 'left hand operation' push pad be mounted on the main structure wall at an appropriate distance from the access door. In addition, consideration could be made to rehand the existing gate to minimize any perception of an obstruction. This constitutes minimal intervention and minimal cost for minimal need. See photograph hereunder:-



3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Minimal and contained within existing capital budget.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

None

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

5.1 The motion has put been in the following terms, "That officers are instructed to prepare a report on proper access for disabled people using mobility scooters at Marischal College, and such a report be remitted to the appropriate Committee." The subject of the motion relates specifically to access/egress via the Broad Street entrance to Marischal College.

5.2 Marischal College is a grade A listed building and as such was subjected to, not only attaining Planning Consent but also Listed Building Consent via Historic Scotland. Planning consent, et al, was applied for and is referenced as application A8/0898-9. Any intervention requires to be viewed in the context of mitigation of impact upon internal environmental control and the listed building status of Marischal College and consents for the existing configuration.

5.3 Aberdeen Access Panel/Aberdeen Disability Advisory Group

5.3.1 The Aberdeen Access Panel, Aberdeen Disability Advisory Group commented on the detail of the application via letter dated 12 June 2008. The comments received are noted below (with original reference numbers):-

(6) Powered doors should be controlled by either an automatic sensor, such as motion detector, or by manual activation device, such as a push pad. Any manual control should be located at a height between 750mm and 1.0m above ground level and at least 1.4m from the plane of the door, or where the door opens towards the direction of approach, 1.4m from the leading edge of the door leaf. A manual control should contrast visually with the surface on which it is mounted.

(8) All principal entrance doors must contain a leaf which provides a clear opening width of at least 800mm and have an unobstructed space on the side next to the leading edge of at least 300mm except where the doors open via automatic controls.

(11) Where the principal accessible entrance comprises a revolving door, there must be provided an adjacent side hinged or automatic door.

5.3.2 Holmes Partnership, the appointed architect and lead design consultant, issued a written response to the observations of the Aberdeen Access Panel, Aberdeen Disability Advisory Group dated 03 November 2008. This document contained the following:-

(6.0) There will be a powered door at the main entrance to Broad Street. The Broad Street door will be activated by a manual activation device. Controls will be located between 750mm and 1000mm

(8.0) All principal entrance doors will have a clear opening of at least 800mm with an unobstructed 300mm clear space to the leading edge.

(11.0) The revolving door to Broad Street is supplemented by 2 powered doors, immediately to either side.

5.3.3 The Disability Advisory Group met on 04 February 2009. At item 5 of the minute the Marischal College Development was discussed and recorded as follows:-

'The Group had before it a note dated 03 November 2008, prepared by the Holmes Partnership, Architects for the Marischal College redevelopment, setting out responses to observations and recommendations raised by the Disability Access Group'

It goes on to record: 'The external glass doors on Broad Street will be operated by a push pad. Automatic doors cannot be installed because of the wind levels. Concern was expressed by members of the Group with visual impairment that it can be difficult to locate the push pads and the point was also made that guide dogs are not trained to negotiate revolving doors. In response, the Group was advised that Council staff will always be on hand at the main entrance to assist visitors'

Finally the Group resolved: '(ii) that dialogue with the Group and the Access Panel be maintained; and that in particular any proposed changes to the design of the development be highlighted at an early stage'.

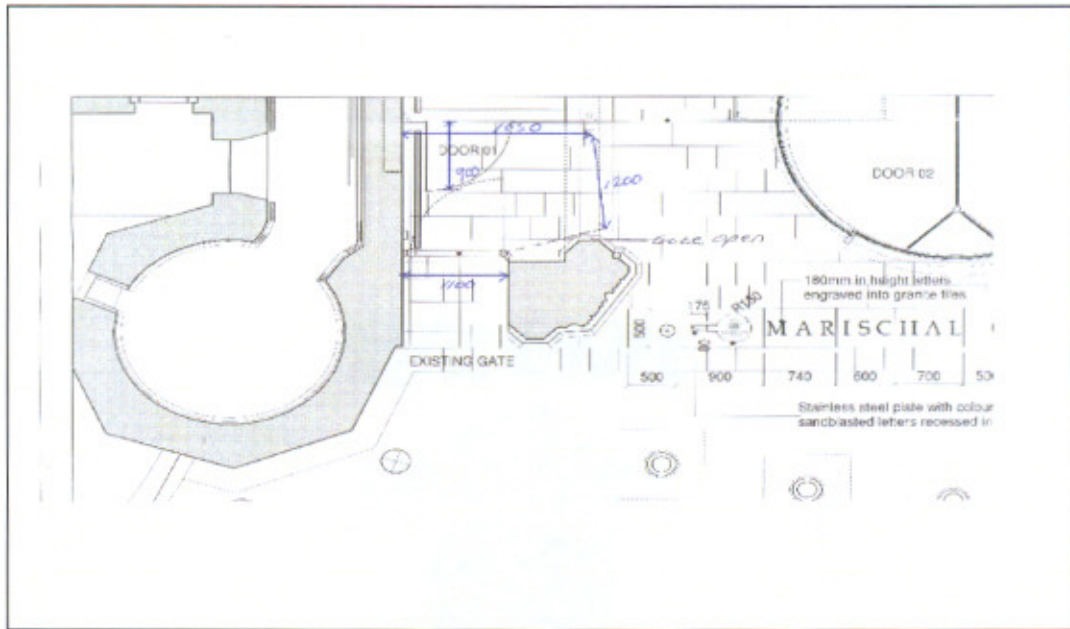
Based on the above it is contended that the design proposals had been accepted by the Group.

5.4 Planning/Listed Building Consent

5.4.1 Planning and Listed Building Consent was duly obtained and at item reference LBC.2 of said consent the following condition was stipulated:

'No construction in respect of the glazing of the courtyard entrance pend shall take place unless fabrication details of the glazing system and its fixings have been submitted to Historic Scotland, and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. Such details include specifications and/or details of any letterboxes, intercoms etc, that will be fixed to the glazing, and that are required for the operation of the building, and the work shall be carried out in accordance with the details so approved – in the interests of the character and appearance of the listed building.'

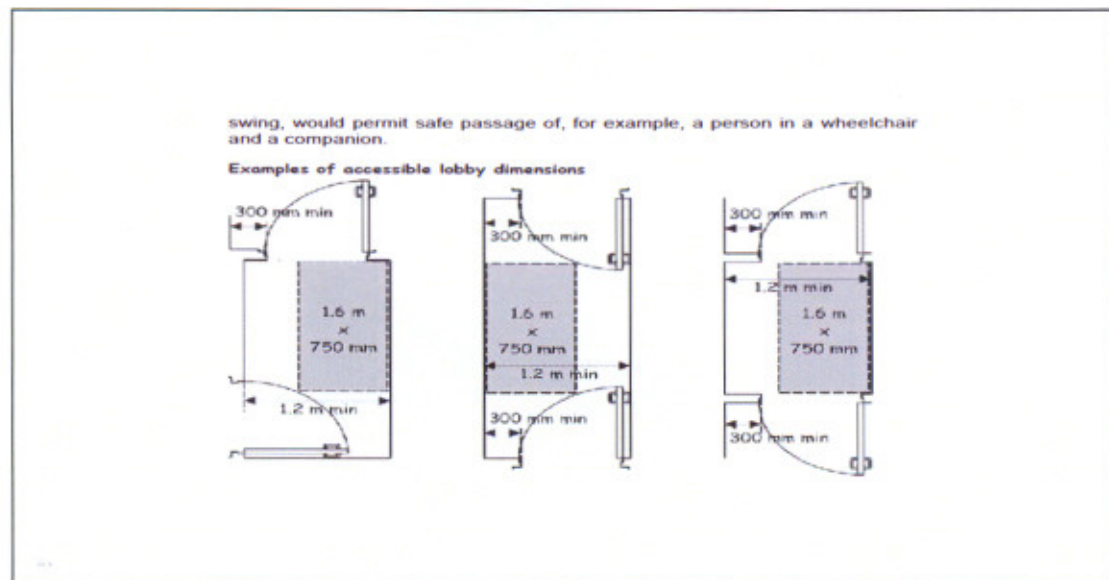
A more detailed representation of this issue is as shown below. Also indicated is the 'gate' in an open position.



Dimensions indicated (open door):-

- (1) Structural opening by existing gate = 1100mm
- (2) Access opening towards door (with gate in open position) = 1200mm
- (3) Door size = 900mm
- (4) Structure to push pad = 1650mm

5.4.2 Building Standards recognises that for non-domestic buildings, at section 4.2, that lobby arrangements can accommodate a right hand turn subject to the configuration below:



The left hand diagram indicates compliant construction in terms of making a right angle turn.

5.5 Trial

5.5.1 Notwithstanding all of the above background information Aberdeen City Council's Strategist (Disability, Faith & Race Equalities) conducted an informal trial which was witnessed by a representative of the Planning service of Enterprise, Planning & Infrastructure. His report on this exercise is stated hereunder verbatim:

'Together with a senior planner, Enterprise Planning and Infrastructure, and a motorised wheelchair user we conducted a trial of entering and exiting through the side opening door at the front of Marischal College.

The trial was successful in highlighting to the senior planner and myself the difficulties experienced by wheelchair users trying to negotiate the entrance. The first problem was that the push pad was located so close to the door opening that the feet supports of the wheelchair were within the arc of the door as it opened and obstructed the door opening so that when the pad was pressed the user then had to reverse smartly out of the way of the door to allow it to open.

The next problem was the manoeuvring space was barely sufficient to permit the chair to pass through the door opening. This was a distinct problem as the wheelchair user had to move very close to the glass panels in order to press the push pad and then had to move back and forth to get the proper swing room to get through the door. In fact, for someone not having attempted this operation a number of times to "practice" it by the time the chair is lined up properly, having hit the side of the glass panels a few times, the door began to close and hit the chair. This can cause the chair to become trapped by the door and would need an assistant to press the push pad to release the door from the chair. This can be alarming to a wheelchair user and also somewhat degrading as the element of independence is being removed from them.

The number and position of the push pads is also an issue. If a user of a motorised wheelchair has an ineffective right hand/arm as ours did, then operating the push pad was very difficult. Having a push pad on each side, thus allowing flexibility for users who have physical disabilities on one side would allow them the opportunity to use the pad on their good side.

The option that presented the best solution for access, and the one recommended, would be a door similar to the present side opening door but moved to a position immediately to the left of the revolving door, as viewed from the outside of the building, so that wheel chair users could approach the door in a straight line and have easy and clear access. Providing left and right push pads for users placed so that they stop outside the arc of the door opening is also recommended.

Finally, we were told of the problems of access for wheelchair users being dropped off from a car/taxi at the front of Marischal College. There is no dropped or lowered kerb in front of the entrance so when a wheelchair user is being dropped off by taxi that has a rear access door and ramp the wheelchair user is dropped down on to the road with no access up on to the pavement. This does not apply to side access door taxis as the wheelchair ramp is placed down on to the pavement. It was considered that a dropped kerb should be available in front of the entrance on Broad Street'.

5.5.2 A number of issues arise from this report:-

- (1) That the hitherto accepted design solution is not now seen as acceptable.
- (2) That the trial exercise is deemed as typical which is open to question.
- (3) It is acknowledged that use of the revolving door is inappropriate.

(4) The issue of the drop kerb has been rejected previously on grounds of road safety and provision is made on Queen Street for safe drop kerb utilisation.

(5) Installation of another door would, critically require Listed Building and Planning Consents and would represent a significant number of construction issues.

(6) Installation of another door would lead to further compromise of attempts to control the environmental conditions within the pend, and reception area i.e. staff and visitors would tend to routinely use this door.

5.6 Historic Scotland

- 5.6.1 Historic Scotland was consulted on the issue but at this juncture did not express a view relative to acceptability or otherwise on any issue related to reconfiguration.

6. IMPACT

An Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment was undertaken and is included with this report.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Incorporated within the report.

8. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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