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Planning Potential and Heritage Potential facilitate the introduction of an exciting new restaurant and bar into the Grade II listed Royal Exchange incorporating an innovative new experience for the viewing of its famous murals.

The Royal Exchange was for centuries the centre of London commerce and one of the most important commercial sites in the country. In recent years, it has reinvented itself as a luxury retail and restaurant destination in the heart of the City of London.

Planning Potential and Heritage Potential were very excited to assist in the re-occupancy of its mezzanine floorspace for Engel and Jang - a new restaurant and bar with events space. The team aimed to ensure the optimisation of the existing floorspace, while creating a strategy to reintroduce informed public access to its historic murals.

The murals, dating from 1894 to 1922, represent the largest cycle of late 19th and early 20th century murals in London. These 24 artworks run around the perimeter wall of the courtyard colonnade and hold significant value as they depict important events in the history of trade and commerce in England.

The central consideration for the proposals was how to re-occupy the mezzanine space in a low intervention manner, to ensure a viable restaurant and entertainment operation, while safeguarding and improving access to the murals. To achieve this, the team engaged the City of London in a series of pre-application discussions to find agreement on this sensitive issue.

Early agreement was reached with officers that the new fit out would not require listed building consent as the alterations were limited to the modern mezzanine.

It was agreed to amend a historic planning permission from 2000 to deliver a new layout that can secure long term use within a broader heritage strategy. The final, amended permission reimaged a historic walkway at mezzanine level, that

Heritage Potential

London

Magdalen House
148 Tooley Street
London SE1 2TU
T: 020 7397 5212

allows members of the public a clear route to view the murals within the restaurant and bar. It provides for an operational management plan and other on-site stipulations to improve the level of information available to visitors on the murals and create a more informed heritage experience.

The new permission ensures an exciting new chapter for this landmark Grade I listed building, and a return to the limelight for its murals.

Planning Potential also assisted with securing a pavement licence for external seating on the lower terrace.

Summary of achievements

- Engagement in constructive pre-application discussions with the Council's planning, design and heritage teams.
- Re-establishing public access to the murals within the Grade I listed building through the provision of an innovative new operational management plan and walkway route to ensure improved and informed viewing of the murals.
- Facilitating the re-use of the mezzanine by an exciting new restaurant, bar with events space operator.
- Assistance with securing a pavement licence for external seating.