

At the beginning of the year the West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust was invited to visit Old Curzon Street Station in Birmingham. The site forms part of the enabling phase of works associated with High Speed 2 (HS2), Britain's brand new railway which will serve over 25 stations connecting around 30 million people.



HS2 is currently working closely with Birmingham City Council to protect the building and achieve agreement on a proposal to restore and occupy it for the period of the new HS2 railway station construction. The proposal under discussion is for the building to be refurbished for joint use as an HS2 community engagement and exhibition space; for Birmingham City University's 'STEAMHouse' project, which will see local students and international businesses cultivate their embryonic ideas in a university linked and business supportive environment; and for Historic England's West Midlands regional office. Planning permission was granted in July 2017 and the detailed design phase is currently underway.

**OLD CURZON STREET
STATION,
BIRMINGHAM**

TRUST VISIT
29th JANUARY 2018

Curzon Street Station was designed by Philip Hardwick as the Birmingham terminus for the London and Birmingham Railway Co. (L&BR) line that ran from Birmingham to Euston Station in London. The building was opened on 9th April 1838 and was completed later that year. It was originally designed to function as the boardroom and offices for the L&BR with limited waiting facilities for railway passengers, although part of the ground floor was soon used as a refreshments area.



Hardwick designed the building in an Ionic style, spread over three storeys and a basement, with symmetrical façades composed of three bays within a square plan. The west façade forms the principal elevation, with four giant Ionic order columns stretching from the stone podium on the ground floor to the entablature. The entablature wraps around all sides of the building and is composed of a stepped architrave, blank frieze and dentilled cornice. A blind attic in the central bay rises above.

The structure is composed of ashlar sandstone, with rusticated stonework to the ground floor and a projecting string course below the first floor windows. Although Hardwick originally intended to construct a symmetrical porte-cochere on both the north and south elevations, site constraints meant that only the north carriage entrance for 'departures' was built. On the south elevation, a narrower sandstone arch was built instead for 'arrivals', filling in the space between the new station building and the adjacent houses.

Soon after its completion, the building was converted for use as a 'hotel' serving refreshments only. In July 1841 a new hotel wing with bedrooms was designed by Robert Benson Dockray and was built on the north side of the original structure. The porte-cochere, originally attached to the building's north elevation, was demolished to make way for the new extension.

Curzon Street Station's function as a passenger railway station was short-lived as passenger services were diverted in June 1854 to the newly constructed and more centrally located New Street Station. The 1860 Curzon Street engine shed closure resulted in the Curzon Street Station building being converted into the main Birmingham goods depot for the London and Northwest Railway (L&NWR), with conversion works completed in 1865. In 1870 the houses to the

south of the structure were demolished. An oil bomb and incendiary damaged the building in August 1940 and some repairs were carried out following this. The layout of the building remained largely unaltered until the goods depot was closed in 1966.



After the goods depot shut down, British Rail sought permission in 1978 to demolish Curzon Street Station. This was refused and in 1979 the building was taken over by Birmingham City Council. Between 1979 and 1982, some repair and alteration works were carried out to the original building and the north hotel wing was demolished. The remaining building was subsequently occupied for a period of time by various charitable organisations.

Attendees were given a tour of Old Curzon Street Station by representatives of the Heritage Architect, Rodney Melville and Partners and LM JV - the Contractor responsible for delivering HS2's enabling works contract. The visit included a presentation on the

history and condition of the building and an overview of the current proposals.

Mark Balkham