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London School of Hygiene  
and Tropical Medicine  
Social space project

Historic Impact Assessment  
May 2023

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# 1.0 Introduction

## 1.1 Overview

This Historic Impact Assessment has been produced by Richard Griffiths Architects on behalf of Rock Townsend Architects (RTA) for the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) to inform an application for the development of the social space on the lower ground floor in the Keppel street building.

The Heritage Impact Assessment outlines the proposals prepared by RTA for the improvement of the social space for its use by the students of the school, the staff and for visitors which are the subject of this application. The report outlines the impact of the proposals on the Grade II listed Keppel street building, on the surrounding streets, and on the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

## 1.2 Description

The London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine was established in 1924. The main building of the school is a purpose designed facility located in Keppel Street in Bloomsbury. It was built between 1926 and 1929 following an architectural competition won by Percy Morley Horder with the likely assistance of Verner O Rees. The building was Grade II listed in March, 1982 and is within the London Borough of Camden.

The creation of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and the design of the Keppel Street building were two aspects of a single process and this link between the institution and its building continues today. The building contains laboratories, technical facilities, teaching spaces and offices as

well as grand spaces which reflect the international eminence of the LSHTM within its field. The location of the building in the centre of Bloomsbury and its continuing attractiveness, are key aspects of the School's identity and its ability to attract students, researchers and funding from all over the world. Maintaining the character of the building into the future is therefore a key issue for the School's corporate direction. A more detailed description of this heritage asset can be found in section 2.4 and within the Heritage England Listing in the appendix.

## 1.3 Limits of the assessment

The detailed historical development of the complete London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine site falls outside the main scope of this report and can be found in the Conservation Management Plan by RGA.

## 1.4 Objectives of the Report

This report gives a historical outline of the development of the School and in particular the areas impacted by the scope of the proposals and a summary of its significance. This is followed by an assessment of the impact of the proposals, and of their justification in the context of relevant listed building consent legislation, as required by the National Planning Policy Framework. The report has been prepared in accordance with the guidance published by Historic England (Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance for the Historic Environment, 2008). The site was visited on several occasions throughout the production of this document.

This report is to be read in conjunction with other documents submitted as part of a full planning application and listed building consent application for proposals for the refurbishment and redesign of the social space for the school prepared by RTA.

## 1.5 Richard Griffiths Architects

Richard Griffiths Architects have a long association with some of the most important historic buildings in London, and have developed a familiarity with the unique and varied character of such important sites.

Under the direction of Richard Griffiths, the practice has established a leading reputation for the repair and creative adaptation of historic buildings to accommodate new uses, and for the design of new buildings that respond sensitively to their historic context. They have also been involved in the preparation of Conservation Plans and Heritage Statements for sites throughout the UK, carrying out fabric analysis and assessing the significance of places under the guiding principles of the ICOMOS Burra Charter. Richard Griffiths is regularly called upon as an expert witness in this field. In Camden, RGA have provided advice for the King's Cross regent's quarter development and St Pancras Hotel.

The practice is especially known for its innovative approach to the layering of historic buildings, and adding a distinctive new layer to serve present and future needs in a holistic and sustainable manner. They are working closely with RTA to ensure that this sensitive approach to conserving important historical buildings and their interiors is applied to the social space project at LSHTM, so that it can be a comfortable and useful area for the staff and students.



View from Malet street



View of millenium project to the courtyard in 2001-04



View of the current social hub in the covered courtyard

## 2.0 Understanding the site

### 2.1 Location

The LSHTM is located in the Bloomsbury, on a site comprising several university buildings. The site on which the LSHTM now stands was part of a development area created by the Bedford Estate's demolition and redevelopment programme at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The university is in the south part of the London Borough of Hackney. It is boarded by Gower Street, to the east, a main thoroughfare linking Euston Station to Oxford Street. A secondary route of importance is Keppel Street to the south. The main vehicular access to the site is from Gower Street.

It is located between Russel Square and Goudge Street tube stations and many transport links are within close proximity of the site.

#### KEY







-  London Borough of Camden
-  Character Area
-  Green space
-  Buildings
-  Bloomsbury Conservation Area
-  Site area - London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine



fig. 1. | Wider Context of LSHTM

## 2.0 Understanding the site

### 2.2 Bloomsbury Conservation Area

The school is located within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area with many other heritage assets nearby, including the British Museum (Grade I), Senate House (Grade II\*) and the Bedford Square Development (Grade I).

The entire area of the site was declared a Conservation Area in November 1968. It is of international significance, and is described by Camden as being their 'most prestigious' Conservation area. It covers all of Bloomsbury proper, whilst spreading as far south as Chancery Lane. It is rich in architectural heritage and social history.

The area around LSHTM has a wealth of historic architecture including the a vast number of the squares and residential buildings which were built during the Bloomsbury development. Some buildings which are not listed are considered significant and contribute to the heritage and architectural appeal of the borough. These are located on the adjoining plan (fig.2).

#### KEY

- Grade I Listed Building
- Grade II\* Listed building
- Grade II Listed building
- Building of positive contribution
- Building of negative contribution
- Bloomsbury Conservation Area
- Site area - LSHTM

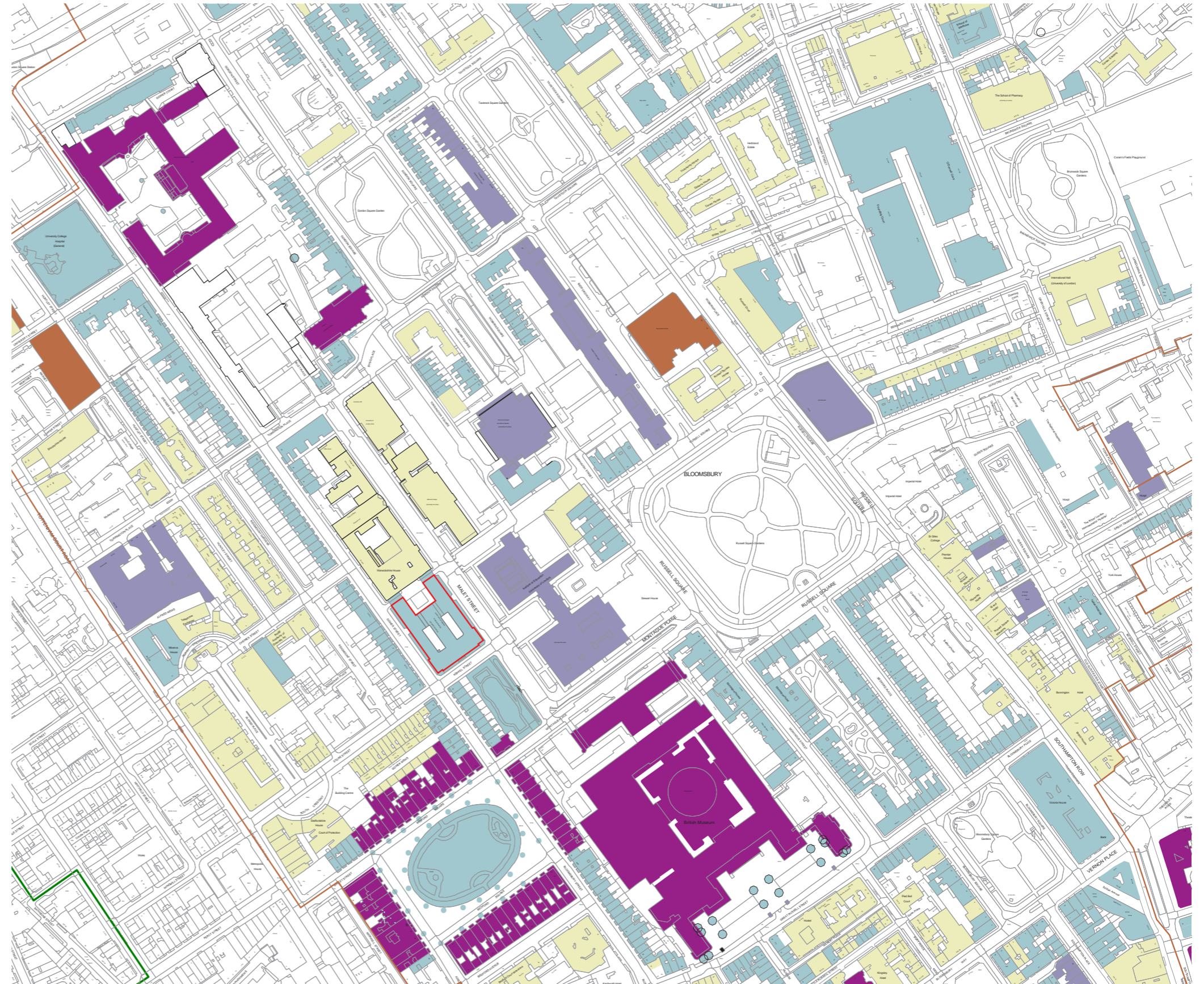


fig. 2. | Heritage context

## 2.4 Site Description

This section provides a brief description of the exteriors and interiors of the area of study with their current uses. It is intended to provide an overview as to the character of the building and internal areas of the scope of the project- lower ground floor in particular.

The social hub is located on the lower ground of the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, some of the lightwells along Keppel Street and the covered courtyard.

The Keppel Street building was designed in the shape of a capital A by competition winners P Morley Horder and V Rees. Two large open courtyards were originally designed to give air and light to the surrounding rooms. The building has undergone a series of piecemeal major and minor alternations over time that have altered the quality of the spaces and in particular the lower ground floor areas. Although the façade of the building has remained unchanged since 1929, there have been several internal transformations and modernisations. The Malet Street wing, in which the author Graham Greene undertook wartime firewatching duties, was damaged by a bomb in 1941 and was not restored until 1951. New floors were added and redeveloped in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. The terrazzo main foyer was partially restored in the 1990s.

In February 2004 a new building within the North Courtyard was opened. This seven-storey building is set within a glass atrium and provides office, research and meeting space for over 100 staff, enhancing some of the original inner courtyard.

The South Courtyard development was opened in May 2009. This five storey building accommodates state of the art lecture theatres, teaching and research space and social space for staff and students. The building uses many energy efficient technologies and is an excellent example of how low and zero-carbon technologies can be incorporated into an urban setting.

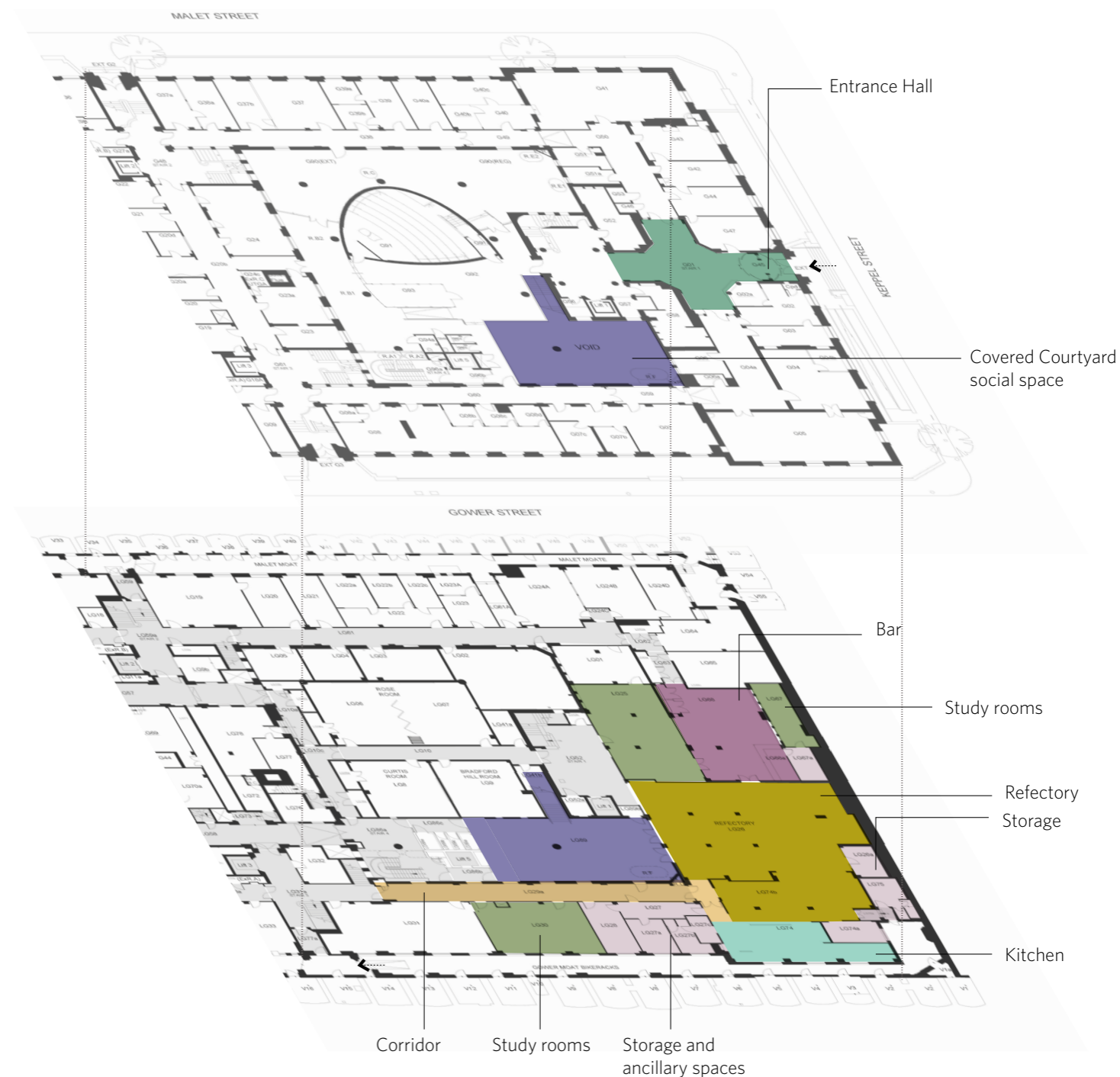


fig. 3. | Axonometric of the social space for LSHTM

## EXTERIORS

### 2.4.1 Entrance and Hall

The main entrance to the school is accessed via Keppel Street to the south. Steps lead up to the entrance hall, with a ramp set behind the Portland Stone parapet wall which was a later addition to the 1929 scheme. On either side of the entrance are lightwells which provide light to the lower ground floor. The door has impressive original carvings in the stonework, a marble infill panels to the door reveal, and the school's name in gold letters. The opening leads into the original hall with terrazzo floor and walls and its specific octagonal shape. Alterations were made to the entrance hall and porter's lodge, as part of the 1962 building programme. Further changes were made to the entrance hall as part of the courtyard infill scheme of 2001-04. However the original overall form of the space, and in particular the floor decoration, remain.

### 2.4.2 Keppel Street and Gower Street elevations

The building was designed in the Art Deco style with a frieze surrounding the exterior containing 23 names of pioneers of public health and tropical medicine. Gilded bronze vectors of disease such as mosquitoes, flies, lice and rats can be seen on the first floor balconies.

### 2.4.3 Lightwells

On both Gower Street and Keppel Street (as well as Malet Street), there is a moat providing light to the lower ground floor rooms. This space is currently used for bicycle storage on Gower Street, with some access provided through doors and a staircase. On Keppel

Street, the moat has been partly infilled interrupting the visibility of the façade and intersecting openings.

### 2.4.4 Walls and railings

Keppel street has a Portland stone parapet wall with moulding detail its entire length, interrupted to provide access to the ramp. On Gower Street and Malet Street, there are stone piers with horizontal metal railings fixed into the piers and into the main façade with metal brackets spanning the moat. The stone piers have the same language as the parapet wall on Keppel Street with moulding details.



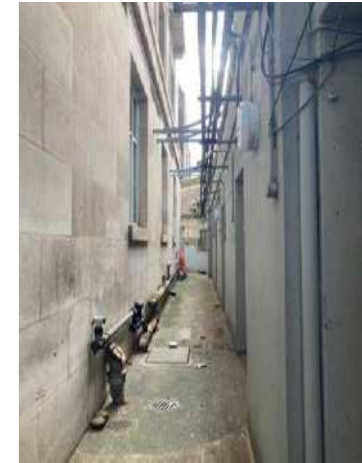
The main entrance from Keppel St



The main hall with new porter's lodge on the right



The Keppel St façade with regular openings



The moat providing light to the lower ground floor rooms



The moat cluttered with bicycles



The stone parapet wall interrupted to provide access to the ramp



Metal brackets fixing railings to stone façade



Metal railings on Gower St

## INTERIORS

### 2.4.5 Covered Courtyard

The south courtyard was covered and infilled with new floors in 2009 by Devreux Architects. Social spaces link the west side of the ground floor to the refectory at lower ground floor level. The original brickwork is exposed and some of the historic windows remain. New openings were created to allow better access between the different spaces of the social hub. The floor has a lino finish and modern fixtures and fittings have been inserted. Little of the heritage character from the original scheme remains.

### 2.4.6 Refectory

Located to the south of the covered courtyard, this room is large and irregular in shape, punctuated by piers. It has no direct light and lacks in ventilation. It has modern finishes which detract from the character of the building and poor lighting which makes the space difficult to read. A servery is located on one side with modern fixtures and services which are visible in some spaces. Modern ceiling panels with recessed lights, a lino floor and modern furniture make the space unremarkable and difficult to use and navigate around.

### 2.4.7 Bar/social rooms

To the east of the refectory is a small bar area with games space and smaller meeting rooms. A glazed dividing room separates these spaces. Carpet and lino floor finishes and a lowered ceiling are not in keeping with the building. There is a lack of light in this space as the lightwell in Keppel St has been infilled.

### 2.4.8 Corridor

The long corridor to the west of the South Courtyard links the refectory to a series of rooms which are not used. Some are for storage and others appear to be social rooms. The corridor still has some of the original features from the 1929 project with some of the wooden doors and their frames remaining. A few have been altered with metal panels, new ironmongery, hinges or door closers. The corridor has lost a lot of its character as the ceiling has been lowered for services to run, blocking out the top of windows. The floor and skirting are also a lino finish. Some of the window openings have been lowered to provide access into the south courtyard.

### 2.4.9 Study rooms

The rooms along this corridor are relatively light with big windows which look out onto the moat on Gower street. These rooms retain the original proportions but the lowered ceiling, bulkheads and boxing in for services mean that it has lost any historic character. The carpets and finishes are modern and do not elevate the space. These rooms are used for storage.

### 2.4.10 Ancillary rooms (Kitchen, Storage, plant)

Smaller rooms providing amenities for the school are poorly laid out and do not provide sufficient comfort for use by all. The location of these spaces does not provide efficient use of the main rooms. Later alterations have reduced the circulation space between them and different levels make it difficult to access all areas. These areas also have modern finishes which are not in a good condition and do not enhance the fabric of the building.



The social space in the south courtyard



The refectory



The bar



The corridor



The study rooms which aren't used



The kitchen



Storage room/ staff room



## 3.0 Historical Development

The historical development of the LSHTM is outlined in this section. For a more in-depth historical analysis of the overall site please refer to the Conservation Management Plan produced by RGA. The section will focus mainly on the historical development of the Social hub area and surrounding spaces.

### 3.1 Timeline of key events

- 1923: The Bloomsbury site is acquired by the school
- 1924: The London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine is officially formed
- 1926: A competition to design the new building in Keppel Street was held involving five architects, all experienced in laboratory design and construction. Morley Horder and Verner Rees won the competition.
- July 1926: Construction begins on the new site.
- 1929: The completed building is officially open by the Prince of Wales.
- 1941: Significant bomb damage of the area to the Malet Street wing of the building. It caused a severe fire which blazed throughout the night.
- 1963: LSHTM was able to construct insectaries in the vaults under Gower Street.
- 1962-67: Major reconstruction of the Keppel Street. Developments included a new refectory and kitchen area, expansion of teaching and research space on the second and third floors, modernisation of the library and the addition of a fourth floor.
- 1982: The Keppel Street building was listed as Grade II
- 2004: The North Courtyard project is completed. It is a free-standing, seven storey building set within a glass atrium and provides open and cellular office space for over 100 research staff together with meeting rooms for research seminars and an area for more informal gatherings. The building sits within the courtyard (previously used for temporary offices and deliveries) and represented a novel approach to providing accommodation on such a restricted site.
- 2009: The South Courtyard Development is completed. It is a five storey building in the former under-utilised courtyard. The building includes space for teaching, research, two state of the art lecture theatres and function space. The building is an excellent example of how low and zero-carbon technologies can be incorporated into an urban setting.
- 2010: New building at 15-17 Tavistock Place was officially opened.
- 2017: A new research facility to be built behind the existing building in Tavistock Place is designed by BMJ Architects.
- 2018: Two floors of open plan offices in the Keppel Street North Courtyard building were converted to state of the art facilities and infrastructure for scientists.



Steelwork under construction, 1926



Keppel Street elevation study



Interior after May 1941 bombing