

—The British Museum
Contractors' Toilets Refurbishment

Design Access Statement
Heritage Impact Statement
R02

10 September 2024

The British Museum
Contractors' Toilets Refurbishment
Design and Access Statement
Heritage Impact Statement
Rev 02

Issue Record

Rev	Date	Comments
00	15/07/24	Draft Issue for British Museum Review
01	27/08/24	Draft Issue for British Museum Review
02	10/09/24	Planning and Listed Building Application

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Introduction—

Project Team

Client: The British Museum
Architect: Nex
MEP Engineer: Webb Yates
Structural Engineer: Alan Baxter Associates
Civil Engineer: Alan Baxter Associates

Introduction

The Contractors’ Toilets are located in the far north-western point of sector E of the British Museum, located at level 1. The toilets are in an extremely poor condition, last used by contractors completing the WCEC project, which finished in 2014, and the British Museum wishes to undertake some refurbishment works to these toilets to bring them back into use and upgrade the facilities to contemporary standards

The works include the removal of the some of the existing toilet cubicles, all toilets, cisterns, sinks, and counters and replacement with new modern fittings throughout.

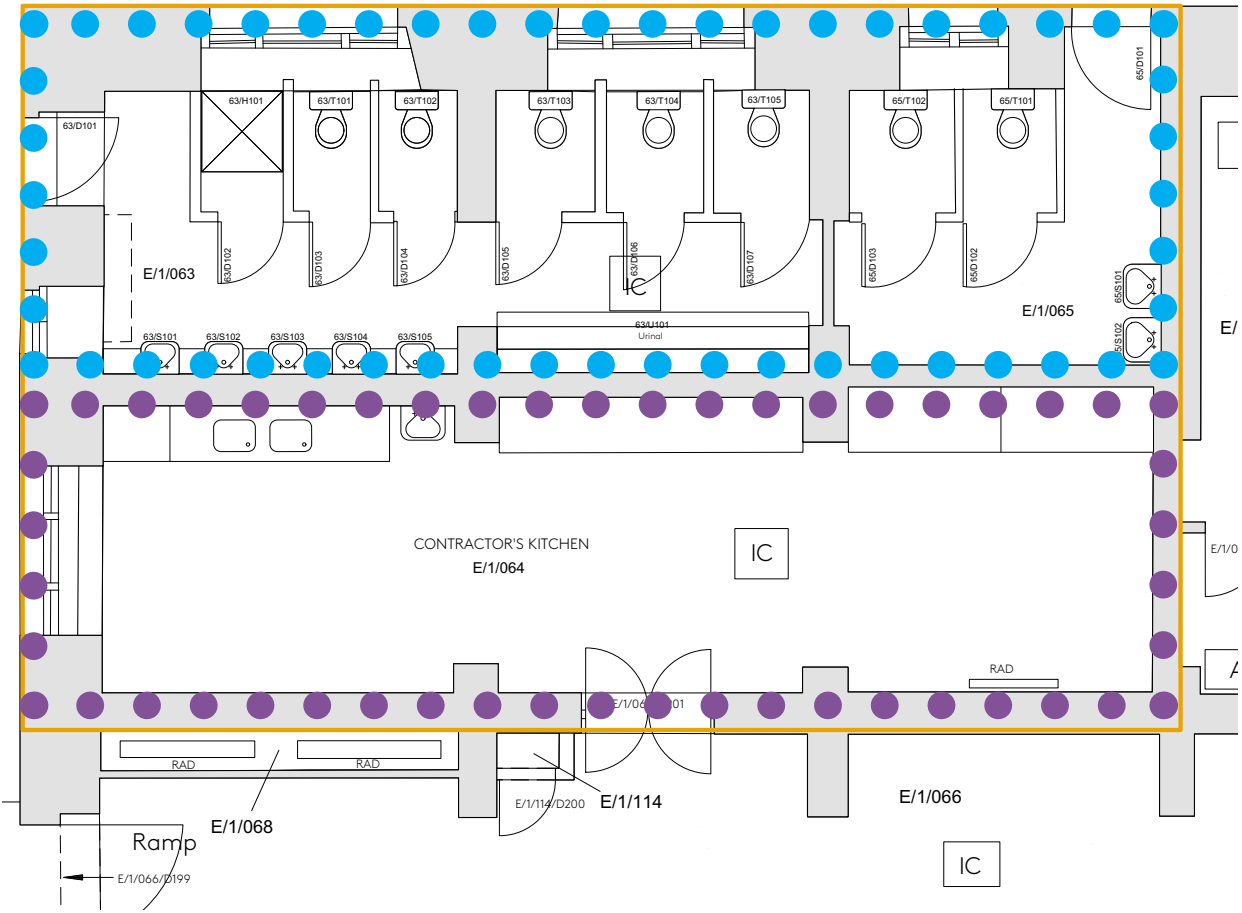
The intention is to retain and rejuvenate the character of the spaces and bring them up to contemporary washroom standards. New lighting will use LED fixtures, new resilient finishes and improved functionality are proposed. Most of the works will replace non-original toilet infrastructure, not impacting any historic fabric. The existing wall linings are a mix of painted plaster over brickwork and white tiles over brickwork. The tiles are in a varied condition with wall plugs fixed through in some areas. The proposal will predominantly leave tiles in place, repair where possible and replace others like for like. Plaster and paint work will be repaired and repainted. Some new tiles may be added behind sinks and urinals but these are not considered to impact the historic fabric.

The space where the toilets are located is identified in the BM 2023 CMP as being of ‘high significance’. This high significance status relates to the main brickwork walls. The internal toilet cubicles, while shown on the 2023 CMP plan, are not given any significance as modern insertions.

Overall, the works are not considered to impact the highly significant fabric, instead they are focused on removal and replacement of non-original insertions. The proposed works will include painting and tiling which will improve the usability of the spaces and not harm the architectural or historic interest of the listed building.



Site Location Plan - site outlined in yellow, British Museum outlined in red



Site Plan - Primary site outlined in blue (toilets). Kitchen area included in scope for addition of new MEP outlined in purple

Existing Condition: Male Toilet—

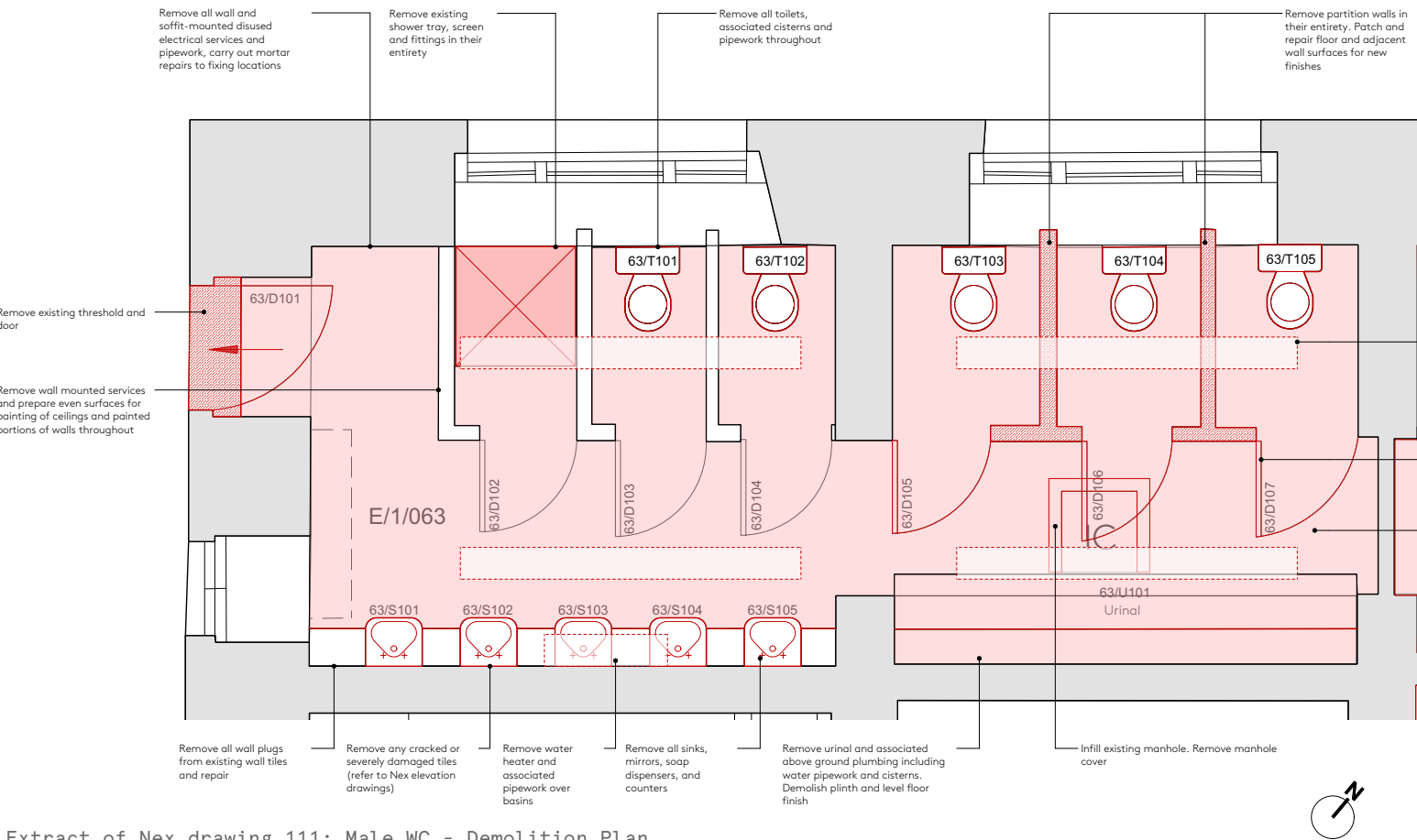
The male toilet (Room E/1/063) is the larger of the toilets, with 5no. toilet cubicles, 1no. shower cubicle, a run of urinals and 5no. basins. The sanitaryware appears not to be from the 1930s conversion of the space (see Heritage Impact Statement in this document for more details) but instead dates from a later refurbishment. The sanitaryware is generally of low quality and not up to modern standards of water use, much of it has fallen into a state of disrepair with cracks, stains and leaks observed, and so is all proposed for removal.

The existing floor tiles are also proposed for removal. They are terracotta in colour - possibly dating from the 1930s conversion, although the CMPs do not comment - and are in a poor condition, with many areas worn and cracked, with severe cracking to the tiles around a filled in manhole by the urinals.

The majority of the walls are covered with white glazed wall tiles, which although not original to the 1830s construction of the space, are identified in the 2023 CMP as be part of the 1930s toilet conversion, as 'tightly jointed white ceramic tiling of good quality' with some bespoke tiles installed around a circular window inserted into the space in the 1930s. The tiles are in a mixed condition, with some cracked or containing drill holes. Where in good condition, the tiles are proposed to be kept, with repairs and replacements made to damaged/broken tiles respectively. Where in poorer condition, the tiles are proposed to be replaced like-for-like.

The upper parts of the walls and ceiling are finished in plaster, presumably over the masonry. The existing services and light fittings are surface mounted, running in a series of ad-hoc conduits, or face fixed. All of the services are life-expired and proposed for removal and replacement

Several panes of glass to the windows are either cracked or have been replaced with mismatched glass.



Extract of Nex drawing 111: Male WC - Demolition Plan



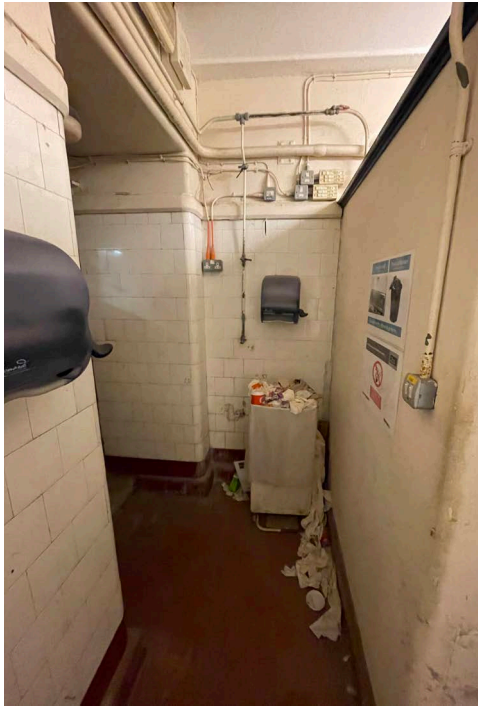
View looking east



View looking west



WC cubicle



Entrance



Tiling around existing window



Cracked windowpane



Existing services and penetrations



Lifted manhole cover

Existing Condition: Female Toilet—

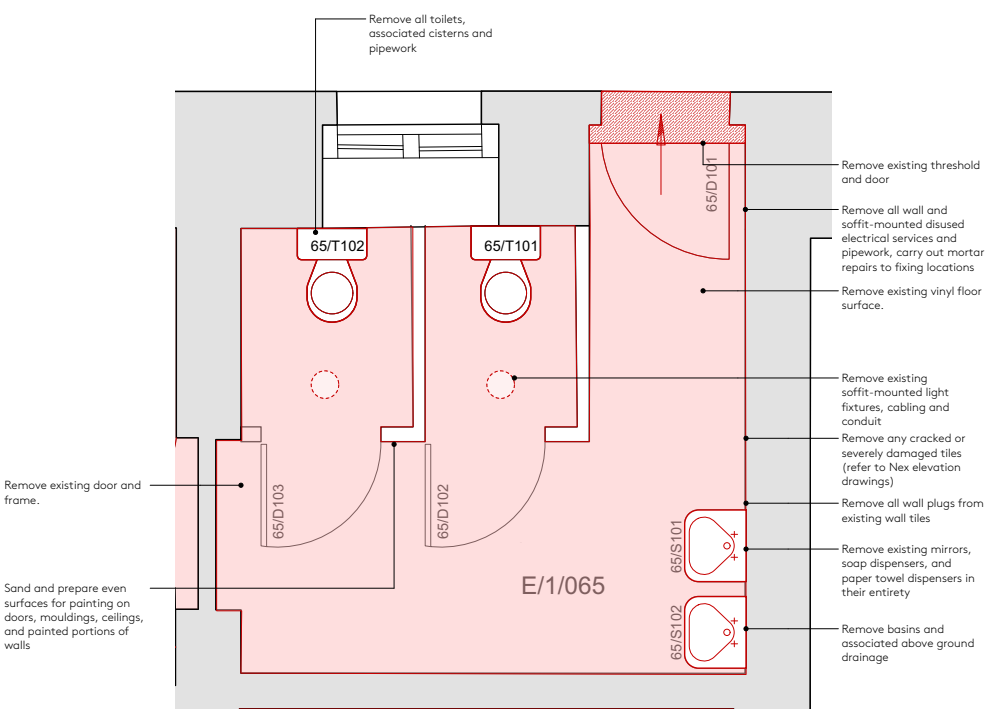
The female toilet is smaller then the male, with 2no. toilet cubicles and 2no.basins. Again, the sanitaryware is not original to the conversion nor of high quality, and has fallen into a state of disrepair, and so is proposed for removal.

The existing floor finish is marmoleum, which is worn and lifting in places, and is proposed for removal.

The majority of the walls are covered with same white glazed wall tiles as the male toilet, again a mixed condition, with some tiles cracked or containing drill holes.

The upper parts of the walls and ceiling are also finished in plaster, presumably over the masonry behind. The existing services and light fittings are surface mounted, running in a series of ad hoc conduits, or face fixed. All of the services are life-expired and proposed for removal.

Several panes of glass to the windows are either cracked or have been replaced with mismatched glass.



Extract from Nex drawing 112: Female WC - Demolition Plan



View looking east



View looking west



WC cubicle



1930s wall tiling

Proposals—

The spaces will remain similar in arrangement, with two non-original partitions removed in the male WC to allow for two new showers, and two basins moved in the female WC to allow space for passing.

New sanitaryware, including toilets, showers, basins and their associated fittings will be installed, in line with contemporary water use standards. New lockers and benches will be installed, replacing the urinals in the male toilets and making each space suitable and spacious to provide comfortable and sanitary changing facilities for contractors at the museum.

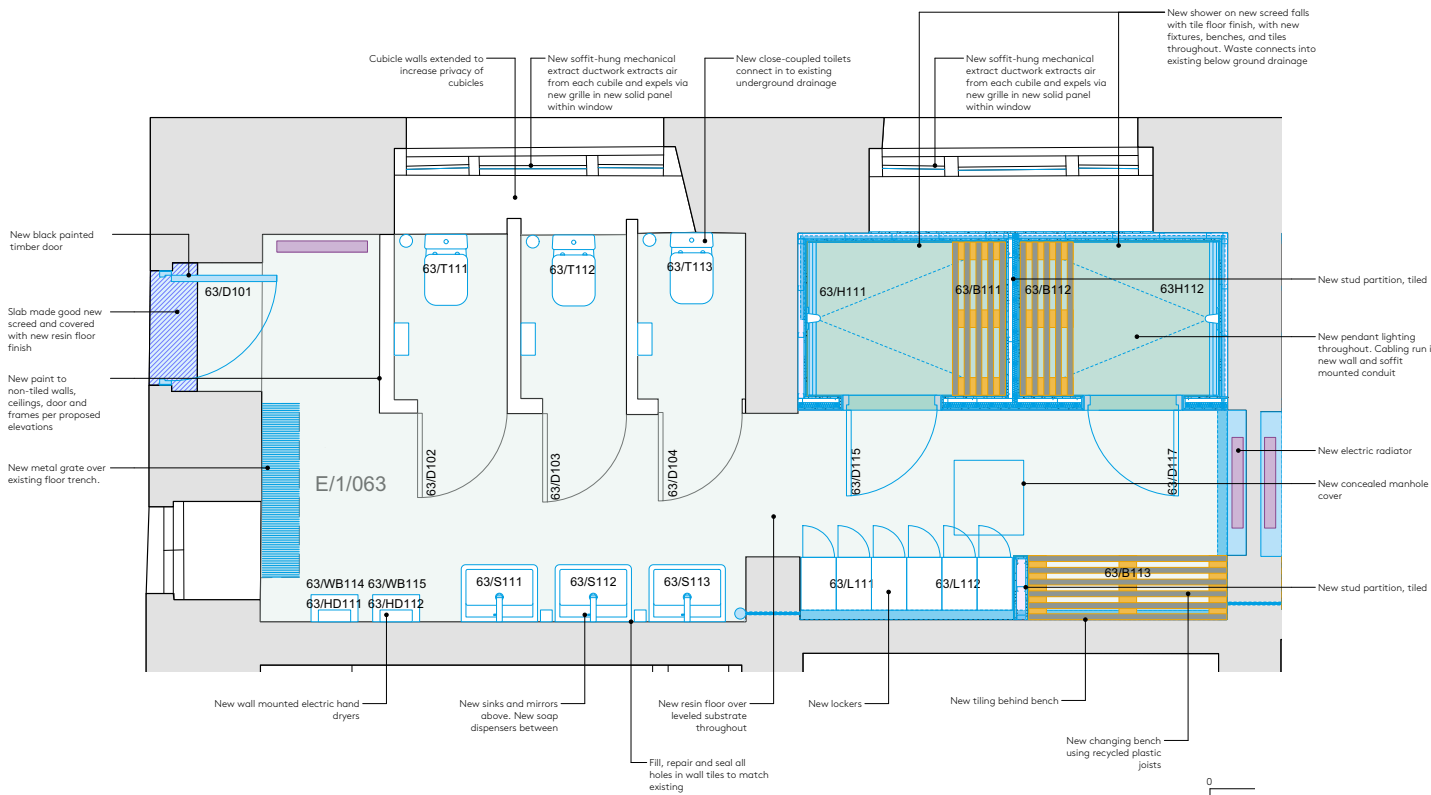
The rooms will retain their character (defined by the jack arches and circular/arched windows), proportions and the majority of the wall tiles. All of the new fittings and materials have been chosen to compliment the heritage of the existing spaces - both of the original building and notable 1930s conversion.

Where currently plastered, walls will be cleaned and re-plastered where damaged before being painted. Tiled walls will be cleaned and re-grouted, retaining as many tiles as possible, with only cracked or damaged tiles replaced with like-for-like tiles. The walls of the new shower will be lined and tiled to ensure a waterproof lining, with new tiles the same size as the existing to pick up on the existing detailing, but in a different bond and colour to distinguish them as new. A total of 12no. cracked and mismatching windowpanes will be replaced with panes matching the most common obscured pattern - which is horizontally striated.

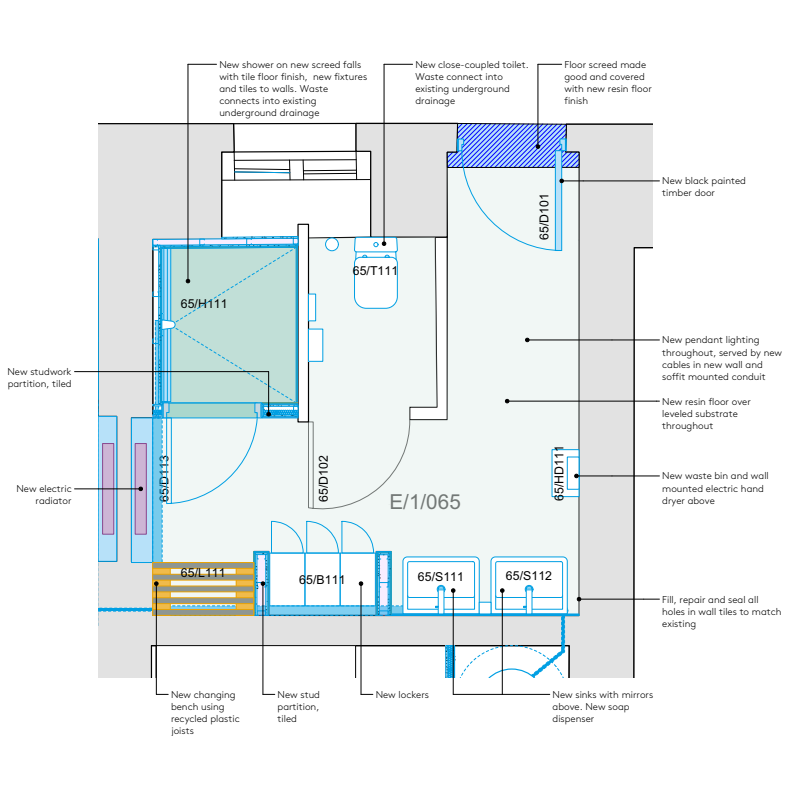
The existing tiled and linoleum floors are to be replaced with a new resin floor covering over repaired screed. New light fittings will be introduced, and cabling for light fittings and all other electronic services - including fire alarms and smoke detectors - will be replaced with new cabling in new steel conduit.

Mechanical services will also be replaced in their entirety, with a new hot water system and newly run cold water pipework. A new mechanical ventilation system will provide extraction from each cubicle to the outside, via new grilles in the existing windows, replacing either existing grilles in these windows or mismatched glazed panes (shown in Nex drawing 263, extract on page 7).

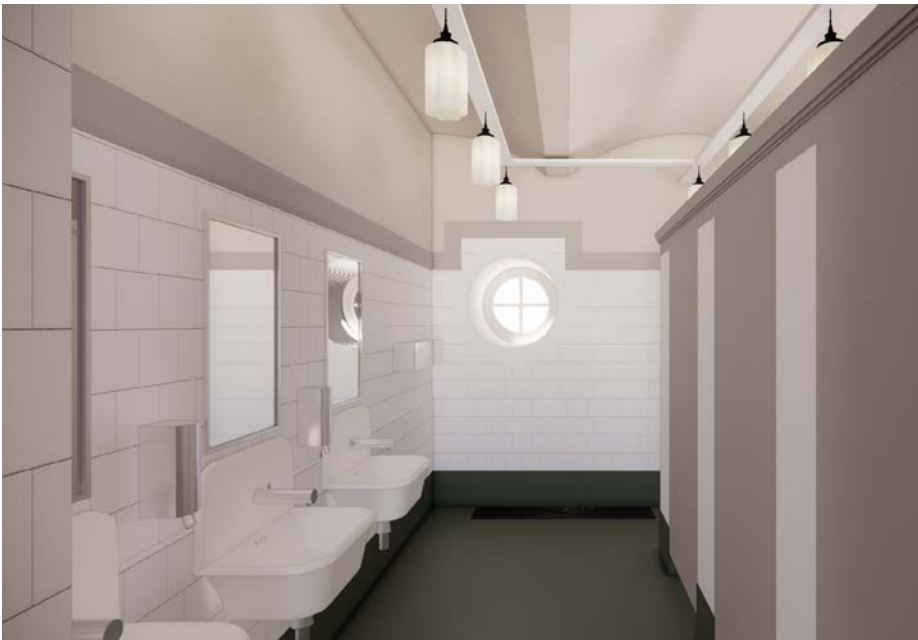
A new hot water cylinder will be installed in the adjacent Contractors' kitchen, as detailed on page 8.



Extract from Nex drawing 211: Male WC - Proposed Plan



Extract from Nex drawing 212: Female WC - Proposed Plan



Male WC - Proposed CGI, looking west



Female WC - Proposed CGI, looking south

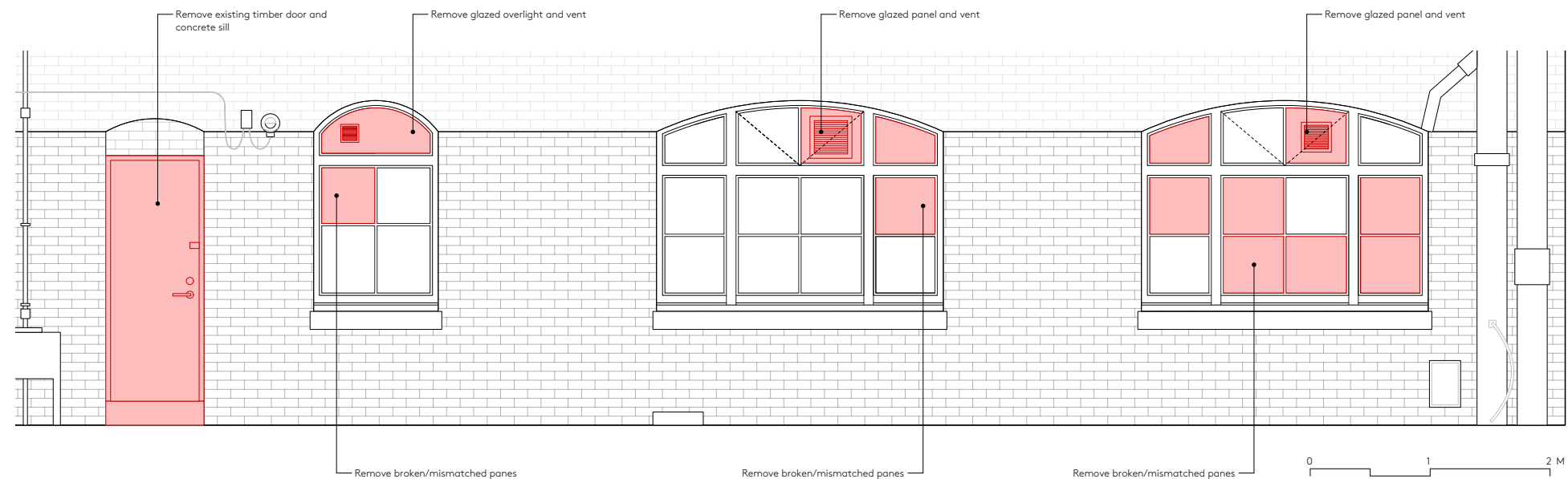


Male WC - Proposed CGI, shower cubicle

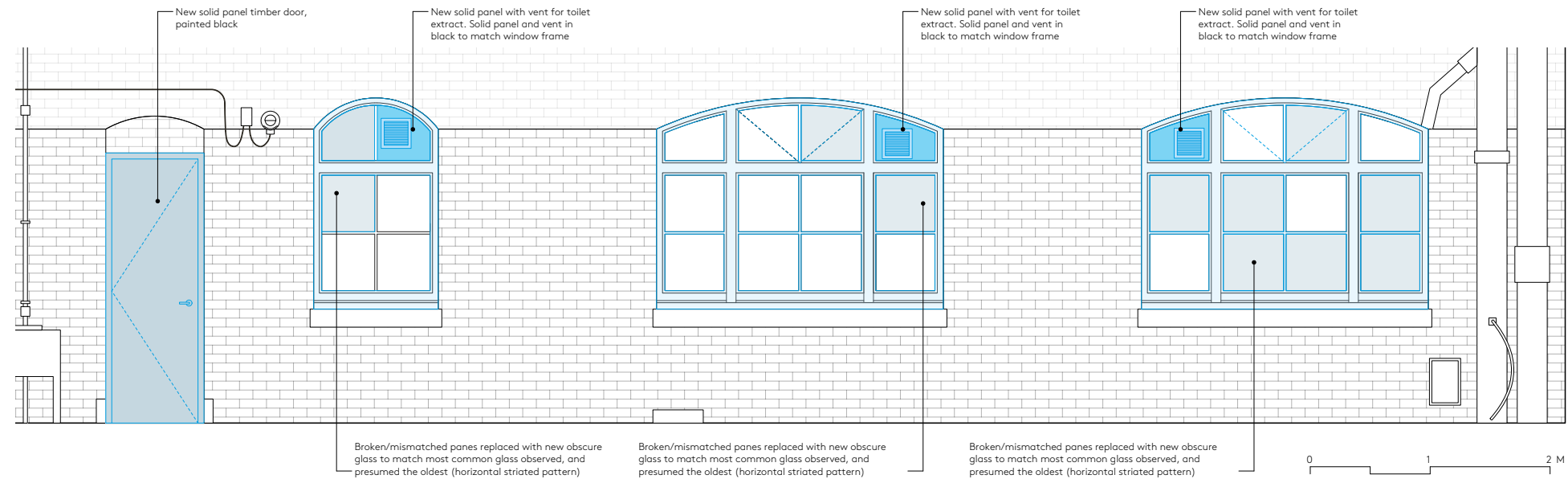
Proposals—

Externally, the concrete threshold step to each doorway will be removed and the non-original doors replaced to suit the new openings. New, black-painted timber doors are proposed to be installed in the existing, lowered apertures, to provide the WCs with level access.

The extent of broken and mismatched windowpanes proposed for replacement can be seen on the elevations below. 1no. vent grilled will be situated in each window, matching the quantity in the existing arrangement.



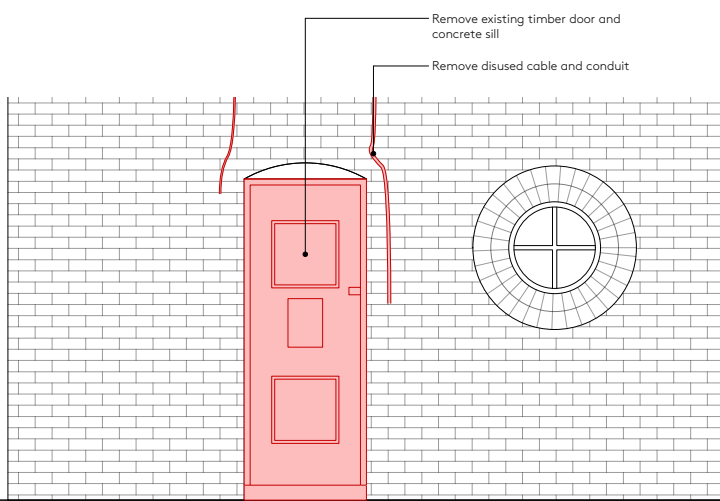
Extract from Nex drawing 134: External access passageway north elevation - Existing



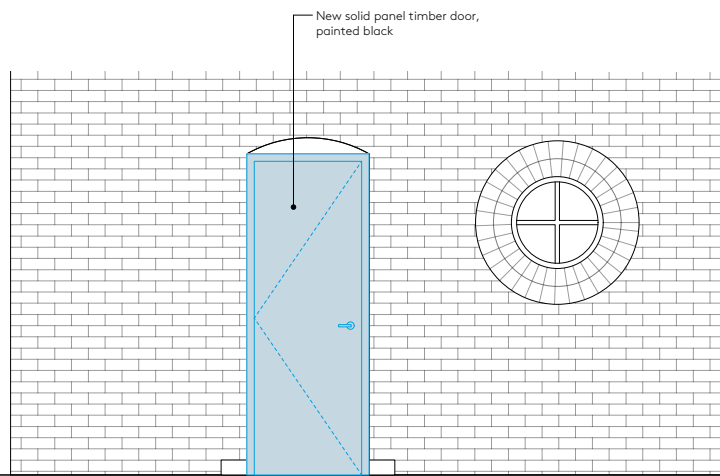
Extract from Nex drawing 270: External access passageway north elevation - Proposed



External access passageway north elevation - photograph



Extract from Nex drawing 134: External access passageway west elevation - Existing



Extract from Nex drawing 264: External access passageway west elevation - Proposed

Proposals—

To provide enough hot water for the toilets, a new hot water cylinder is proposed to be installed in the neighbouring Contractor's Kitchen (E/1/064). This will act in place of the removed heat on demand system currently positioned at high level within the male toilet, which is life expired.

The hot water tank will be enclosed within a new cupboard, formed of a plasterboard and metal stud wall and painted timber door. The pipe penetration into the female WC will pass through an existing service penetration into the female WC, which will be fire-stopped with an intumescent batt.

New insulated pipes providing hot water will be surface mounted at high level to the walls, with penetrations through masonry only made where there are existing penetrations have already been made.



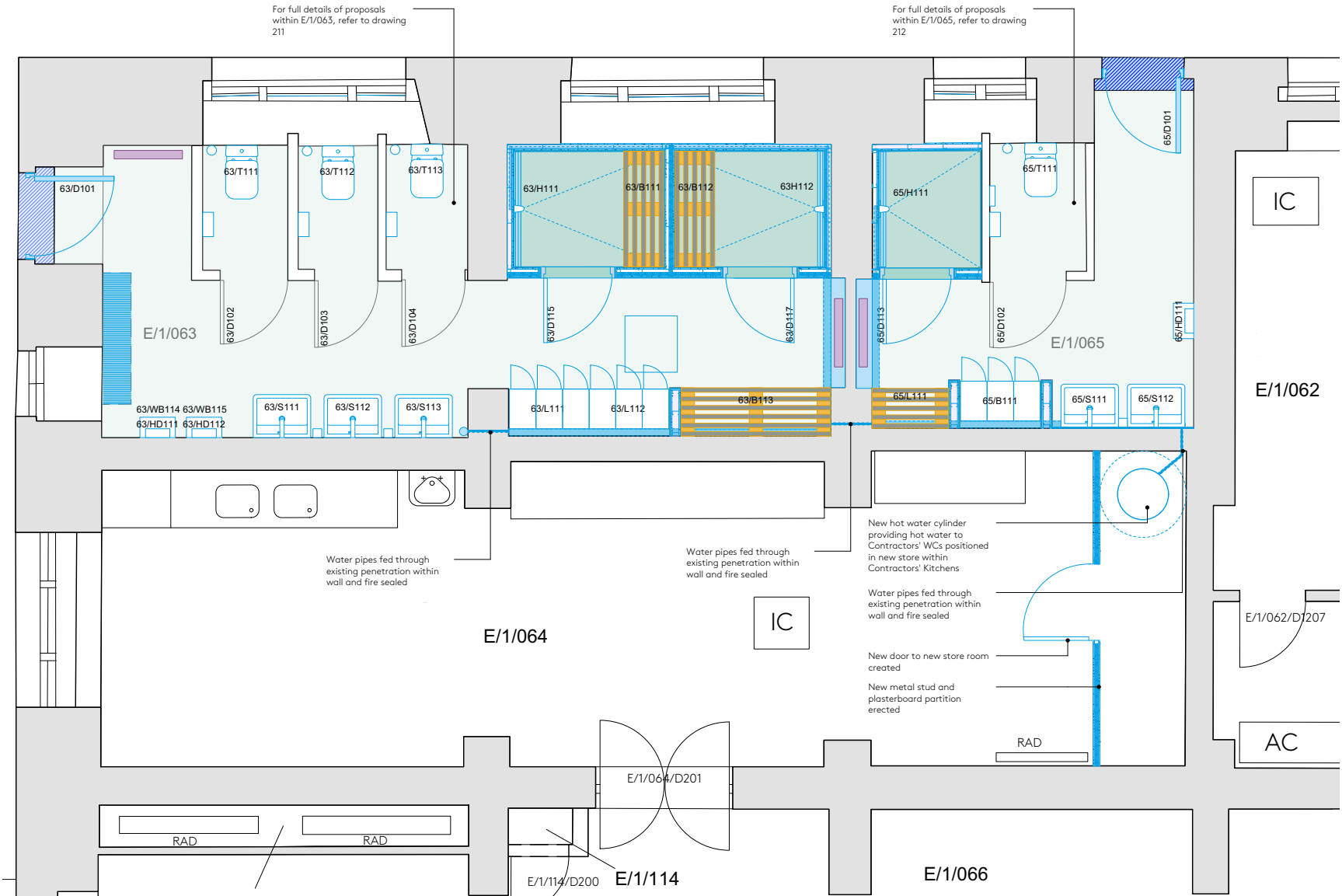
Contractors' Kitchen - View looking west



Contractors' Kitchen - View looking east



Existing service penetration



Extract from Nex drawing 210: Contractors' WC and Kitchen Plan - Proposed



Example of hot water cylinder

Proposals—

Tile Repair

As part of our proposals, Nex wished to restore the existing glazed wall tiles, in part due to their heritage value, which was picked up on in the Conservation Management Plan. Aside from their age and significance, we also felt that the tiles imbued a sense of quality in the space, specifically in their rounded detailing at corner junctions, which would be hard to replicate without significant cost.

Over their 100-year life span, the tiles have undergone a lot of damage, including drill holes, chips and cracking. To ensure that the tiles could be restored to a level which was satisfactory to Nex, the Museum and the Conservation officers, a test repair was carried out by a tiling restoration specialist, who restored two areas of tiles which were badly cracked and damaged by drill penetrations.

After a couple of different methodologies were tried, and some trial and error with different coloured pigments, the test had good results, with a near seamless finish achieved to the existing tile finish, matching in colour and sheen, and close in texture.

This sample repair has been approved by Nex and the British Museum Design Manager on the project.

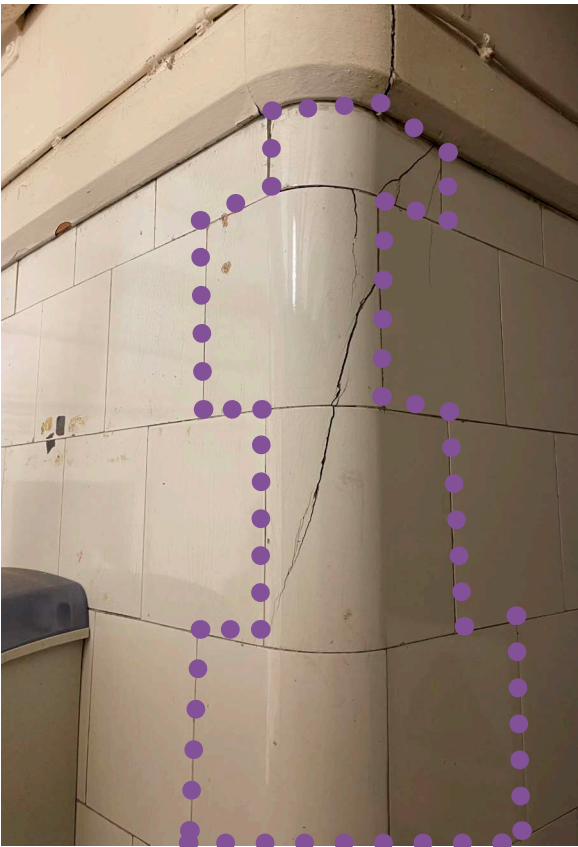
An added benefit of retaining the tiles is sustainability, by reducing waste and the need for extensive new tiling, which is a carbon-intensive material to manufacture.



Test area 1 (Before)



Test area 1 (After)



Test area 2 (Before)



Test area 2 (After)

Heritage Statement—

Approach and Methodology

This statement is aligned with the 2008 British Museum Conservation Plan (2008 CMP) Policy 2.1 which states: ‘Before considering any change to the fabric of the building carry out a thorough investigation to establish the significance of that fabric and evaluate the proposals accordingly, taking into account the Conservation Guidance in this volume when appropriate and in the Appendices Volumes A to G.’ This statement refers to the approved Conservation Management Plans from 2008, written by Purcell Miller Tritton, as well as the emerging Conservation Management Plans from 2020 and 2023, each written by Purcell.

This statement seeks to understand the historic development of the areas affected by the proposals, setting out the historical and architectural significance of these areas, to identify and safeguard heritage assets. The statement aims to assist in the process of managing proposed changes to the existing fabric; by providing a sound basis for assessing and informing the development of proposals, so that these proposals sustain the significance and special character of the British Museum.

The statement incorporates a description of the proposal areas and their heritage context, and a summary statement of significance.

Site History

The contractors' toilets and adjacent kitchen are situated within three rooms of the North Wing, constructed between 1834-1838 to the designs of Robert Smirke.

The 2023 Conservation Management Plan by Purcell (2023 CMP) notes of the North Wing: ‘its design was scaled down and more modest compared to the original masterplan. It was originally intended to accommodate the Department of Printed Books, including a book store and reading rooms. The north-west corner was built after the main North Wing and contained another bookstore strategically designed to maximise storage.’

The North Wing has undergone extensive renovation over the past two centuries, but all of the wing's

fabric is Grade I listed.

The 2023 CMP states specifically regarding E/1/063 (Male WC), E/1/064 (Contractors' Kitchen) and E/1/065 (Female WC): *This end of the basement was designed by Robert Smirke as part of the North-West Wing development in 1838-41 to provide additional accommodation for the Department of Printed Books. In contrast to the layout of the rest of the North Wing, Smirke expanded the amount of useful book storage in the North-West Wing by moving the corridor to the far south side, doubling the potential space lit by the north-facing windows. The floor above (supporting the Arched Room) was jack-arched in brick three bays wide supported on cast iron girders carried onto the crosswalls.*

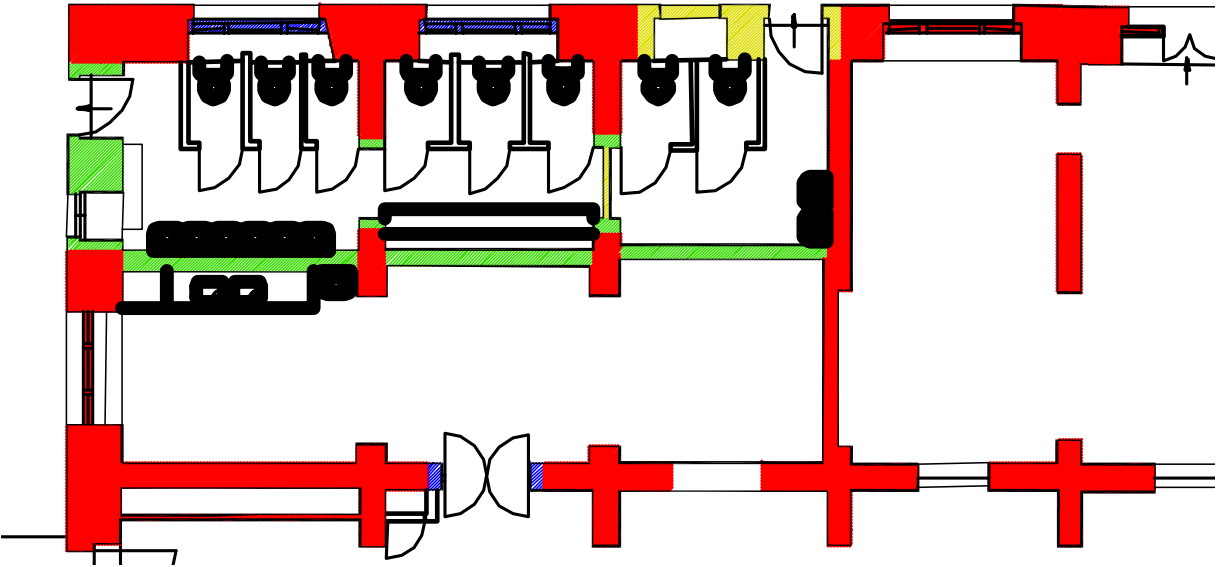
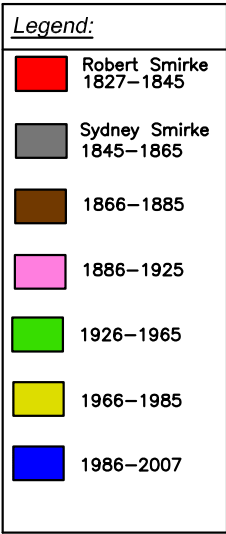
He divided the new storeroom with cross-walls into a series of bays with connecting passageway to the south, parallel with the corridor. At the west end was a window lighting the length of the passageway. At the east end was a narrow void (E/1/061) adjacent to the west wall of the North Wing. At the north-east corner a door gave access to the base of a staircase up to the principal floor of the Arched Room above, now removed. On the line of the passageway a pair of doors gave access to the basement corridor to the east.

The west window and two of the north windows have survived in their original form of timber and subdivided by two mullions, one window (central bay of E/1/062) has been adapted to provide a door between the mullions, and one (to E/1/065) has been removed. The north windows to the toilets probably date to the 1930s. The three north-western bays of the former bookstore were sub-divided in the 1930s to provide toilet accommodation (E/1/063 and E/1/065). Interconnecting doorways were formed through the cross walls. A door and circular window were formed in the west wall. The interior, including the cubicle walls, were fully tiled with tightly jointed white ceramic tiling of good quality.

At the north side of the south-westernmost bay a hot air chamber has been created, presumably to provide hot air to the Arched Room above. Other cupboards and enclosures have been formed between the piers of the arches at various dates.

On the south side of the corridor in the second bay from

the west is a fire hydrant. The three bays to the south of the WC accommodation, formerly a cleaners' mess room, was converted to the Contractor's Kitchen Servery (for outside caterers) in 1991, at which time one of the passageway arches was replaced by a lintel. A new wide double door was also formed to the south. A female WC (E/1/065) has been created out of the eastern bay of the former male lavatories, with its own access through a former window opening to the north, formed in 1991. The openings to the south of the corridor have been adapted in various ways such as the provision of new doors and frames.



Contractors' WC and Kitchen - Development Plan (2008 CMP)

Heritage Statement—

Significance and Capacity for Change

On significance, the 2023 CMP notes: *The North Wing is a very highly significant element of Robert Smirke's original quadrangle masterplan and for its long-held historical association with the library collection.*

However, following alterations in the 1930s, the removal of the library and subsequent Great Court project, this part of the Museum has seen considerable change and modern intervention. Where it survives, the vaulted structure and cellular configuration are significant original features.

On Capacity for Change, the 2023 CMP states:

- *Redundant items should be stripped before new services are installed. There should be a presumption that mechanical services are designed to fit within the existing structure, not that the structure is altered to accommodate the plant or service routes.*
- *There is reasonable scope to remove non-original partitions and doors, subject to the proposal design.*
- *Historical evidence of the former library use of this part of the Museum should be retained, so far as is practicable.*

Approach

The British Museum Conservation Plan gives Conservation guidance in relation to the estate and significant aspects of the built fabric. General overarching conservation guidance stated in the document is to:

- Retain all the original Smirke details.
- Respect the integrity of the Smirke structure.

Policy 1.2 Maintain and repair the Museum buildings so as to retain as much of their early fabric in their original form as possible, both externally and internally. The concern to retain original fabric should extend to the minor details of the building. Repair of brickwork and re-pointing on removal of redundant services installations.

Policy 2.1 Before considering any change to the fabric of the building carry out a thorough investigation to establish the significance of that fabric and evaluate

the proposals accordingly, taking into account the Conservation Guidance in this volume when appropriate and in the Appendices Volumes A to G.

Some changes will have greater impact than others. On the one hand will be the particular qualities of the part of the building affected:

- Its historical or architectural significance
- The significance of its surroundings
- Its visual or physical vulnerability
- Its scale

Weighed against this will be:

- The relative scale and impact of the proposed alteration
- The importance of the proposal in relation to the building's future use

Policy 2.2 Any proposal to change elements of the existing building or to introduce new elements into any area should be carefully evaluated for the impact the new element will have on the overall character and significance of that area.

Policy 2.3 In buildings or spaces of high architectural significance any interventions should be subservient, discrete and reversible.

Proposals

The Museum aims to bring the contractors' toilets back into use, to provide comfortable, sanitary facilities for users.

The space where the toilets are located is identified in the BM CMP as being of 'high significance'. This relates to the main structural walls, the internal toilet cubicles, while shown on the plan, are not given any significance as they are modern insertions.

The intention is to retain the character of the space, both it's original construction, and the higher quality retained aspects of its 1930s conversion, while updating the toilets to modern standards. Most of the works will replace non-original fittings and services, while not impacting any historic fabric. The existing wall linings are a mix of painted plaster over

brickwork and tiles over brickwork. The tiles are in a varied condition, with cracks and wall plugs fixed through in some areas. The proposal will predominantly leave tiles in place, repair where possible and replace others like for like. Plaster and paint work will be repaired and repainted. Some new tiles will be added in shower areas, and in replacement of urinals and previously plastered areas, but these are not considered to impact the historic fabric.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we believe that the proposed interventions described in this application will have a positive impact and overall will result in the lowest end of the scale of 'less than substantial harm', when measured against NPFF paragraph 208. The proposals

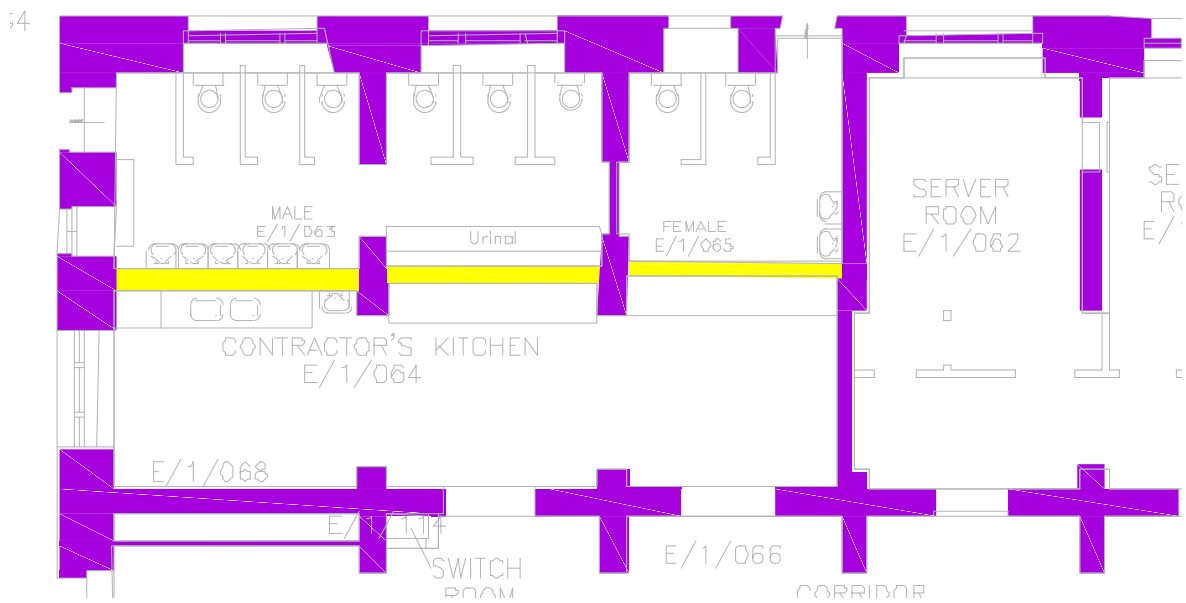
also provide substantial benefit, bringing the spaces back into use, removing non-original and ad-hoc services, and respecting the character of the spaces in their design.

The proposed works have been considered carefully, and consultants have sought to develop the most effective way to provide discreet, reversible installations to provide the improvements required balanced with least impact specific to the fabric, character and setting of the Museum.

Overall, the works are not considered to impact the highly significant fabric, instead they are focused on non-original insertions. They will improve the aesthetic and usability of the space and not harm the architectural or historic interest of the listed building.

LEVEL 1

- Very High
- High
- Medium
- Low
- Neutral



Contractors' WC and Kitchen - Significance Plan (2023 CMP)

Heritage Statement—

Bibliography

Purcell Miller Tritton LLP, The British Museum Conservation Plan 2007, Final Revision: May 2008.

Purcell, The British Museum Conservation Management Plan, January 2020.

Purcell, The British Museum Conservation Management Plan, January 2023.

National Planning Policy Framework, Section 16 ‘Conserving and Enhancing The Historic Environment’ (December 2023).

London Borough of Camden ‘Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy’ (Adopted April 2011).

Listed Building Description

The British Museum

Official List Entry

Heritage Category: Listed Building
Grade: I
List Entry Number: 1130404
Date first listed: 23-Oct-1951
List Entry Name: THE BRITISH MUSEUM
Statutory Address 1: THE BRITISH MUSEUM, GREAT

RUSSELL STREET

Location

Statutory Address: THE BRITISH MUSEUM, GREAT RUSSELL STREET
The building or site itself may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.
County: Greater London Authority
District: Camden (London Borough)
Parish: Non Civil Parish
National Grid Reference: TQ 30054 81721

Details

CAMDEN

TQ3081NW GREAT RUSSELL STREET 798-1/100/697 (North side)
24/10/51 The British Museum
GV I

Museum. 1823-47. By Sir Robert Smirke with later additions. Portland stone. Planned as a big quadrangle with open courtyard extending north from Montague House (the original museum, demolished c1840). 2 main storeys in Greek Revival style. Built in stages. East Wing 1823-26: built to house George IV's library and Angerstein pictures (later basis of National Gallery). An early use of iron beams clad in concrete by engineer John Rastrick. Fine Grecian detail to interior with scagliola walls. West Wing 1831-4: built to house antiquities. Redecorated to Smirke's original colour scheme 1980. North Wing 1833-8: built to house antiquities. South Range 1842-7: built as the principal facade following the demolition of Montague House. 7-bay centre linked to projecting wings. Ionic octastyle portico with sculptured pediment projecting from a massive colonnade running around the wings. Ionic order from the temple of Athene Polias, Priene. Pediment sculpture depicts the "Progress of Civilisation" by Westmacott. Fine interior with grand central staircase. Round Reading Room 1852-7: by Sydney Smirke. Erected to fill the open quadrangle, with domed cast-iron roof. HISTORICAL NOTE: the museum expanded north during the C19, the last main addition being the King Edward VII Gallery (qv), 1914, facing Montague Place. Some of the galleries were damaged during World War II and have been remodelled for display purposes.

Listing NGR: TQ3005981712

Conclusion—

Conclusion

The proposals within this application are designed in a considerate and careful manner, to bring the Contractors' Toilets back into use, whilst protecting the heritage of fabric with high significance and the architectural character of the spaces.

The outcome of the project will be a high-quality set of spaces, which provide comfortable facilities for users and reflect the building's heritage and protect its historic fabric.