

Heritage, Planning, Design & Access Statement

Display of three Banners – Senate House and College  
Main Building

School of Oriental and African Studies

May 2025

## 1. Introduction

This Heritage, Planning, Design and Access Statement (HPDAS) has been prepared on behalf of the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in support of applications for Listed Building Consent and Advertising Consent for the erection of two banners on the College Building, SOAS (Grade II Listed) and one banner on Senate House (Grade II \* Listed).

Retrospective Listed Building Consent and Advertising Consent is sought for the following:

**Proposed display of the erection of 2x banners to the south-western corner of the College Building; erection of 1x banner to the northeastern corner of Senate House (Paul Webley Wing).**

- 2x banners measuring 1,600mm x 10,000mm will be installed on the south-western corner of the College Building. These banners will display SOAS branding in purple and orange.
- 1x banner measuring 5,000mm x 12,750mm will be installed on the northeastern corner of Senate House and will feature SOAS branding in purple and green.

The PDAS is structured as follows:

1. Introduction
2. Site Context
3. Planning Policy Framework
4. Planning History
5. Pre Application Engagement
6. Proposed Scheme
7. Planning Assessment
8. Heritage
9. Conclusion

## 2. Site Context

### 2.1 Background

#### SOAS

SOAS is home to leading research and expertise on the global issues of today. Students engage with academics on these issues throughout their study. It is uniquely placed to inform and shape current thinking about the economic, political, cultural, security and religious challenges of our world.

Its decolonial outlook on education allows it to strive for a more equal and just world through its teaching and research. It is committed to building bridges within the global communities and forging equitable global partnerships. It challenges perspectives, broaches debate and empowers its students to question the global status quo and find solutions to the issues facing the world today.

Its programmes are taught by respected international academics with inter-disciplinary expertise. These scholars are engaged in fieldwork and research that influences governments, industries, and communities across the world.

SOAS has a very diverse student base, from over a hundred different countries, and has a number of unique courses. SOAS cater for approximately 5,400 students on campus with a further 1,500 distant learning students - Supported by 1,180 academic and professional services staff.

#### College Building Context

The original College building was designed in the late 1930s by Charles Holden as a continuation of his work for the university; however, the Second World War interrupted construction so it was not completed until the 1950s. Following the war SOAS apparently struggled to raise funds for the original masterplan which resulted in the scheme being altered and a new plan created by Holden. Holden was said to have chosen to construct the new proposed buildings in traditional masonry to ensure the longevity of the buildings.

#### Senate House

Senate House, constructed in 1932-38 faced in Portland Stone in Art Deco style is a Grade II\* listed University of London building by Charles Holden and a key focal point in Bloomsbury. It is used as the ceremonial and administrative home for the University of London. There are plain facades, and detailed doors. The roofs are flat and hidden behind parapets. The frontage is set back from Malet Street behind tall railings and mature trees.

### 2.2 Site & Surroundings

### The College Building

The College building is Grade II – listed and forms part of the SOAS central London Campus, it is connected to the Philips Building which is grade II\* and is within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. The College building forms the northern frontage to the thoroughfare together with the southern end of the Birkbeck College. They share a palette of materials (pale red brick with stone banding), together with building heights and the rhythm of vertically proportioned windows.

The building was designed by Charles Holden and was constructed from 1939-45. The building is five storeys over a basement, the principal south facing elevation has 17 windows and there is a curved corner bay to the eastern end. The building is constructed from brown brick and has Portland Stone dressings, windows have flush metal frames with horizontally set panes. The building is linked to the Philips Building designed by Denis Lasdun via link corridors on each floor.

### Senate House

Senate House is a grade II\* listed building designed by Charles Holden and constructed between 1932 and 1938. The building is of a brick load-bearing construction with Portland stone facing. The building has a symmetrical design, comprising a central tower flanked by two courtyard ranges to either side.

### 3. Planning Policy Framework

This proposal must be determined in accordance with the Local Development Plan and National Planning Policy. The following key documents and policies apply:

#### **London Plan (2021)**

- Policy D4 Delivering good Design
- Policy HC1 Heritage Conservation and Growth
- Policy D8 Public Realm

#### **Adopted Camden Local Plan (2017)**

- Policy D1 Design
- Policy D2 Heritage conservation and growth
- Policy D4 Advertisements

#### ***Camden Planning Guidance:***

- Design (2021)
- Advertisements (2018)
- Amenity (2021)
- Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy (2011)

#### **Camden Core Strategy 2010-2025**

- Policy CS14 - Promoting high quality places and conserving our heritage

#### **English Heritage 'Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance' 2008**

#### **Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990**

#### **National Planning Policy Framework 2024**

#### **Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy - Adopted 18 April 2011**

#### **Regulation 17 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007]**

## 4.Planning History

A summary of the relevant planning history for the site, including:

EN24/0828 – for the erection of banners.

SOAS received an enforcement letter that stated that the banner advertisements are being displayed without the benefit of advertisement consent. As such, there is a planning breach, and the advertisements are unauthorised. This promoted SOAS to engage with the Conservation Officer through pre application advice and was advised to remove the banners.

## 5.Pre-Application Engagement

- Online meeting with Conservation Officer – 13<sup>th</sup> January 2025
- Pre application letter - 24<sup>th</sup> February 2025

During the pre-application meetings, the Conservation Officer expressed support for Banners 1 and 2, located on the corner of the College Building, acknowledging their sensitive placement. It was noted that these banners could be acceptable on a temporary basis, particularly at the start of the academic year. The precise duration remains subject to negotiation but could potentially extend to the first half-term or semester.

Regarding Banner 3, which is positioned on the flank wall of Senate House, the Officer confirmed that its placement does not interfere with any architectural detailing. Consequently, temporary display of this banner would also be supported, specifically during the beginning of each academic year. Therefore, the engagement notes the Conservation Officer's support for this application.

## 6. Proposed Scheme

### 6.1 Vision

The banners are proposed to be installed to serve as was a wayfinding tool and as part of place making efforts to reinforce SOAS's identity within the academic cluster of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

The banners play a key role in enhancing the visibility and accessibility of the SOAS campus. As a central institution within the academic cluster of Bloomsbury, SOAS benefits from clear and consistent branding to guide students, staff, and visitors across its dispersed campus. The banners contribute positively to this goal by reinforcing the campus's role within the broader Bloomsbury Conservation Area, as well supporting efforts to attract new students to the University and Camden more broadly.

### 6.2 Proposed Location and signage

Two banners measuring 1600mm x 10000mm will be installed on the south-western corner of the College Building. These banners will display SOAS branding in purple and orange. One banner measuring 5,000mm 12,750mm will be installed on the northeastern corner of Senate House and will feature SOAS branding in purple and green.

All banners will be high-resolution digitally printed, made from close-knit mesh, single-sided with reinforced welding tape hems & eyelets every 500mm approximately every 500mm all around. The banners will be fixed using screws and a washer in the mortar joints to minimise any harm to the fabric of the buildings.

The proposed banners are intended to enhance the visual identity of the site by reinforcing its academic function, in keeping with the historic significance of both buildings as institutions of learning. This aligns with the character of the Bloomsbury Sub-Area 3: University of London/British Museum, where large-scale institutional buildings dominate the townscape. The banners will therefore complement and contribute positively to the established academic atmosphere of the area. See Figure 2 for visuals.

### 6.3 Use

The use of the building will remain the same, an academic building.

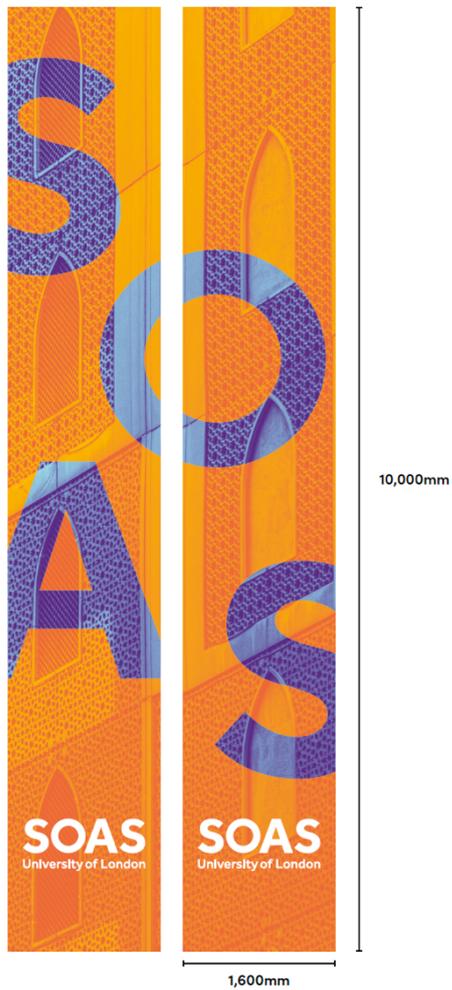
### 6.4 Appearance

Interior the same, exterior positively enhanced

## 6.5 Access

The proposed development will have not negatively impact access. Instead, it will enhance the wayfinding and improve movement within the immediate area.

Main building exterior  
Corner banners



Senate building exterior



Figure 2: proposed visuals of the banners

## 7. Planning Assessment

Policy D4 of the Camden Local Plan 2017 (Advertisements) states that adverts which preserve the character of the area and preserve or enhance heritage assets and conservation areas will be supported, and requires that adverts respect the form, fabric, design, and scale of their setting.

Supporting text for Policy D4 states:

*'Advertisements in conservation areas and on or near listed buildings require particularly detailed consideration given the sensitivity and historic nature of these areas or buildings. Any advertisements on or near a listed building or in a conservation area must not harm their character and appearance and must not obscure or damage specific architectural features of buildings.'*

Policy D1 of the Local Plan (Design) is aimed at achieving the highest standard of design in all developments. Policy D1 requires development to be of the highest architectural and urban design quality, which improves the function, appearance and character of the area and development should respect local context and character.

Policy D2 (Heritage) seeks to preserve and, where appropriate, enhance Camden's rich and diverse heritage assets and their settings, including conservation areas and listed buildings. Development must conform to conservation area appraisals and management strategies and must not harm an area's character or heritage assets.

In relation to banners, guidance contained within CPG 'Advertisements' 2018, states:

*'Banner advertisements on buildings will only be permitted in the following circumstances: **They relate to landmark or unique buildings, such as festival venues, museums, and do not detract from the appearance and form of the host building or the surrounding environment.** In some commercial areas, flags or banners may be considered a suitable form of display. Within residential areas, conservation areas, and on or near listed buildings we will be primarily concerned with safeguarding the amenity, character and appearance of these areas and buildings and therefore it is unlikely that such advertisements will be supported'* (Page 7, emphasis added).

The CPG 'Advertisements' 2018 further states that

*'Advertisements and signs should respect the form, fabric, design, and scale of the host building and setting. All signs should serve as an integral part of the immediate surroundings and be constructed of materials that are sympathetic to the host building and the surrounding area'*. (Page 3).

With regards to signage in conservation areas, the CPG states 'Advertisements in conservation areas and on or near listed buildings require detailed consideration given the sensitivity and

historic nature of these areas or buildings. Any advertisements, of whatever type, on or near a listed building or in a conservation area must not harm their character and appearance and must not obscure or damage specific architectural features of buildings.'

It is acknowledged that the banners are located on Listed Buildings within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area, where the guidance suggests (but does not prohibit) that advertisements will not be supported. However, the banners directly relate to the "landmark buildings" on which they are located: the Main College building and Senate House. The historic significance of both buildings is specifically as academic institutions. This aligns with the character of the Bloomsbury Sub-Area 3: University of London/British Museum, where large-scale institutional buildings dominate. The banners reinforce the significance and character of these academic buildings by emphasising the academic function of these buildings. The banners complement the academic atmosphere of the area.

Furthermore, the banners have been carefully designed and situated so that they do not detract from the appearance and form of these host buildings or the surrounding environment. The location and size of the banners has been selected to compliment the scale and the architecture of the buildings. Their installation does not obscure or damage specific architectural features.

In accordance with Regulation 17 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007, local planning authorities must have special regard to amenity. "Amenity" includes the effect of advertisements on the appearance of the building or on the visual amenity of the locality. The banners are considered to preserve and complement the character and appearance of the host listed buildings and surrounding conservation area. Their scale, positioning and materials are sensitive to the architectural context, and they do not obscure or damage any significant architectural features. As such, the proposals are considered to meet the amenity considerations under Regulation 17.

**In summary, we consider that the banners respect the visual and historical significance of the surrounding Conservation Area and Listed Buildings and contribute positively to the area's amenity by enhancing SOAS's visual identity and aiding in wayfinding.**

## 7.1 Public Safety

Policy D4 of the Camden Local Plan 2017 states that "Highway safety, with focus on vulnerable road users should be considered. Advertisements will not be considered acceptable where they impact upon public safety including result in glare and dazzle or distract road users because of their unusual nature, disrupt the free flow of pedestrians or endanger pedestrians".

Regulation 17 also requires consideration of public safety. The banners are securely affixed to the buildings, located above pedestrian level, and do not overhang the highway. They are non-illuminated, static, and not of a form or scale that would distract motorists, cyclists, or pedestrians. Their positioning avoids any interference with pedestrian or vehicular movement

and does not obstruct sightlines. The advertisements are therefore not considered to pose any risk to public safety and are fully in accordance with Regulation 17, as well as Policy D4 of the Camden Local Plan 2017.

## 8. Heritage

### 8.1 Policy Context

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 provides the statutory framework for the protection of heritage assets.

Section 66(1) states that:

*"In considering whether to grant planning permission [F1 or permission in principle] for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses."*

Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 sets out that local planning authorities should pay special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of historic or architectural interest which it possesses when considering applications.

Section 72 states that:

“General duty as respects conservation areas in exercise of planning functions.

(1) In the exercise, with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, of any [F1 functions under or by virtue of] any of the provisions mentioned in subsection (2), special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

(2) The provisions referred to in subsection (1) are the planning Acts and Part I of the M1 Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953 [F2 and sections 70 and 73 of the Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Act 1993].

Section 72 of the same Act states that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas.

Both the site's historic fabric and the surrounding environment have been carefully considered in the development of the proposals having regard for the statutory legislation set out below.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024:

The NPPF echoes these statutory duties. Paragraph 202 states the importance of heritage assets as an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their

significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations.

Paragraph 203 sets out the positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment. This includes heritage assets most at risk through, neglect decay or other threats. Local Authorities should take into account:

the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation; the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring; the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.

Paragraph 207 requires applicants to provide a proportionate and detailed assessment of heritage assets, including their significance and setting. This should be based on relevant historic environment record and appropriate expertise.

Paragraph 210 sets out that Local Planning Authorities must consider the importance of sustaining and enhancing heritage assets, their role in supporting sustainable communities, and ensuring new developments positively contribute to local character and distinctiveness.

Paragraph 212 emphasises that great weight should be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets when assessing development proposals, with more significant assets warranting even greater consideration, regardless of the level of harm.

Paragraph 215 states that where development results in less than substantial harm to a designated heritage asset, this harm must be weighed against the public benefit of the proposal, including securing the asset's optimal viable use.

### 8.3 Significance of the College Building

The SOAS building is grade II listed and forms the northern frontage to the thoroughfare together with the southern end of the Birkbeck College. They share a palette of materials (pale red brick with stone banding), together with building heights and the rhythm of vertically proportioned windows. The curved semi-circular east end of the block, which signals the entrance to the university precinct from Thornhaugh Street, is a distinct streamlined feature reminiscent of the architecture of Holden's famous London Underground stations

*(Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy 2011)*

University school. c1939-5. By Charles Holden. Brown brick with Portland stone dressings. 5 storeys and basements (4th floor set back). Main south front with 17 windows and curved corner bay (5 windows) treatment at east end. Single storey, 2 window projection at east end. Central

entrance with plain stone surround and plaque with name of school over. Flush frame metal windows with horizontally set panes. Stone band and sill string at 1st floor level, echoed by dressing to parapet above 3rd floor. Cartouche with coat of arms centrally at 2nd floor level. Lead rainwater heads and pipes, dated 1940. INTERIOR: not inspected.

(Historic England, listing entry)

As a grade II listed building, the School of Oriental and African Studies is a heritage asset of national significance. The building forms the entire study site and therefore contributes towards the setting of the building. The external features of the building have remained largely unchanged since the building was constructed.

## 8.4 Significance of Senate House

Senate House, also designed by Charles Holden and constructed between 1932 and 1938, is a landmark of interwar architecture. Clad in Portland stone and rising as a bold, stepped tower, the building is one of London's most iconic examples of stripped classical and Art Deco design. It holds a dominant visual presence across Bloomsbury, visible in long views along Store Street, Russell Square and Torrington Place. Senate House forms part of a wider academic composition with nearby listed buildings such as the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

*The University of London continued to develop its precinct to the north of Senate House between 1955 and the 1960s with the School for Oriental and African Studies (1939- 45) Senate House forms a prominent focal point within the surrounding streets. Its tall, stepped tower is a visible landmark in the wider Bloomsbury area and beyond; it can be seen in a variety of long views including the vista looking east along Store Street, looking south from Torrington Place across Torrington Square, and looking west from Russell Square. Faced in Portland stone, it was constructed in 1932-38 in a strippeddown Art Deco style to the designs of Charles Holden. Essentially the facades are quite plain, featuring vertically proportioned window openings with recessed steel frames.*

The Art Deco influences can be seen in the modelling of the building, in particular the bold, stepped form of the central tower, and in the detailed design of secondary elements such as doors and metalwork. The predominantly four-storey frontage is set back from Malet Street behind tall boundary railings and a line of mature trees, which are significant elements in the streetscape. It should be noted that the north-east wing of Senate House was never built due to WWII, and this portion of the site remains undeveloped to this day, with the rear of the building taking on an asymmetrical plan form. Senate House is seen as part of a group of buildings providing a strong sense of enclosure on the east side of Malet Street and the north side of Keppel Street, which is home to the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (listed grade II), completed in 1929 to the designs of Morley Horder and Verner Rees. The stone four storey street frontage adheres to a stripped neo-classical style, with vertical proportions.

The front façade is adorned with some unusual details including gilded insects on balconies. Both buildings overlook the sunken garden to be found on the west side of Malet Street and the south side of Keppel Street. The mature trees and landscaping within the gardens contribute to the leafy character of Malet Street and enhance the setting of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine in views from Montague Place, as well as providing views of the rear elevation of a grade II listed 19th century terrace on the east side of Gower Street. The gardens retain their original gates and stone gateposts on the east side, with the parish boundary marker on the north side.

*(Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy 2011)*

As a grade II\* listed building, Senate House is a heritage asset of national significance. The building forms the entire study site and therefore contributes towards the setting of the building. The external features of the building have remained largely unchanged since the building was constructed.

## 8.5 The proposals and their impact on the Significance of the Heritage Assets

The banners have been designed to be sympathetic to the architectural character of both Senate House and the College Building. Their placement has been carefully considered to ensure they do not obscure or damage architectural detailing, and they are to be fixed within the mortar thereby ensuring minimal impact to the fabric of the building. The proposals are entirely reversible, with no impact to the fabric of either building.

In regard to the College Building, the banners are located in a position that do not detract from the building's formal composition. Rather, they help reinforce the building's higher education identity, aligning with its original purpose and use.

In regard to Senate House, the flank elevation of Senate House, where the proposed banner is to be installed, presents an atypical façade in the context of the building's otherwise refined architectural language. This north-eastern wall was originally conceived as a party wall, intended to adjoin a now-unrealised extension to the university campus. As no further building was ever constructed, the elevation remains exposed, visually disconnected from the rest of Senate House's carefully composed and richly clad exterior. Unlike the principal elevations, which are faced in Portland stone and articulated with strong vertical lines and classical proportions, this flank is blank, and devoid of decorative treatment. The introduction of a banner in this location offers an opportunity to address this visual shortfall. Rather than leaving the wall as a void in the streetscape, the banner gives purpose, turning an architectural absence into a positive feature. It reinforces the academic identity of the building while drawing attention to its civic and institutional role within Bloomsbury. The intervention is light-touch and fully reversible, but it nonetheless provides a valuable enhancement to the building's presentation and public interface.

The temporary nature of the banners further mitigates any potential impact. Their use is proposed to coincide with the start of the academic year - a period of high footfall and public engagement- thus offering both clarity in wayfinding and enhancement of SOAS's identity within the wider University cluster.

**The proposals are considered to cause no harm to the significance of either the College Building or Senate House. They take into the character and design of the property; the appearance of the surroundings; and the external fabric of the host building. They contribute positively to the appreciation of these heritage assets within their setting, particularly in the context of an active, evolving academic environment. The interventions are temporary and fully reversible, and they offer clear public benefit in the form of improved wayfinding, strengthened campus identity, and better integration with the wider university precinct. As such, the proposals comply with the statutory requirements of the 1990 Act, the relevant policies of the NPPF, and Camden's Local Plan objectives relating to the protection and enhancement of heritage assets.**

## 9. Conclusion

The proposed temporary banners form a key part of wayfinding strategy in supporting a stronger sense of place across the SOAS estate. The advertisements are intended to clarify the University's presence, aid orientation for prospective students and visitors, and communicate its academic offer more effectively. Thus, they serve as an integral part of the immediate University campus surroundings

Importantly, the banners are carefully designed to be sympathetic to the College Building, Senate House and the wider heritage setting. Their scale, placement, and materials have been thoughtfully considered to avoid harm to visual amenity or historic character, while contributing positively to the townscape. The proposals are fully reversible and would not interfere with the architectural integrity or fabric of the buildings.

SOAS is willing to accept a planning condition restricting the time period of the banners' display. Ideally, this would encompass at least the first academic term and remain in place through the spring and summer months to align with key events such as admissions and open days. The University would be pleased to engage in further discussion to agree a suitable timeframe that balances operational needs with planning considerations.

In summary, the proposed advertisements represent a measured and appropriate intervention that supports the continued success of SOAS while remaining respectful of the area's-built heritage and public realm.