

Institute of Education Heritage Statement

One of the founders of the Modern Architecture Research Group (MARS), Denys Lasdun was a pioneer of post-war modernism in Britain. With a distinct architectural language, Lasdun designed some of the most recognisably Brutalist architecture in the UK including:

Grade II* listed Keeling House

Grade I listed Royal College of Physicians, London (1960–64)

The core buildings of the University of East Anglia, Norwich (1962–68)

The Lasdun Building, a residential block located in Stamford Hall, at the University of Leicester

Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, Institute of Education

The library of the School of Oriental and African Studies, Bloomsbury

New Court, Christ's College, Cambridge (1966–70)

Grade II* listed Royal National Theatre, South Bank, London (1967–76)

Phase 1 of the European Investment Bank, Luxembourg (1974–80)

IBM Building, South Bank, London (1979–83)



Royal National Theatre



University of East Anglia



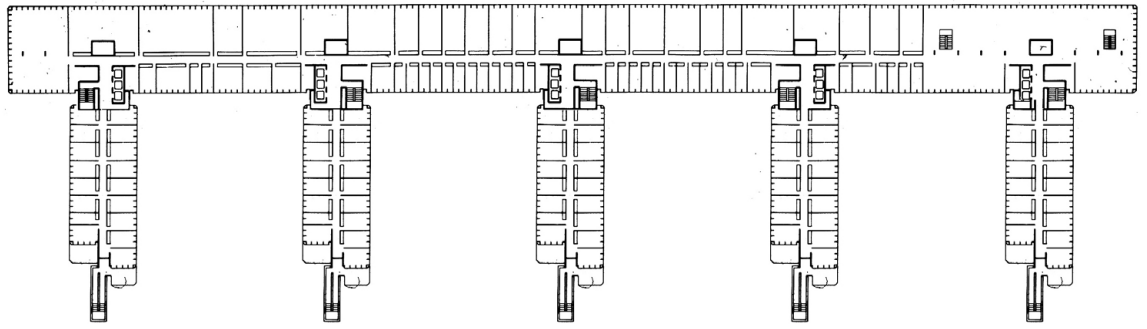
Keeling House

Between 1975–79 Lasdun designed and built the Institute of Education, which is the focus of this statement. The Institute of Education forms one complete side of Bedford Way and makes no apologies for juxtaposing with its context. A mix of concrete, metal and glass the building was once deemed 'the only public monumental building in anything like the style of the seventies'.

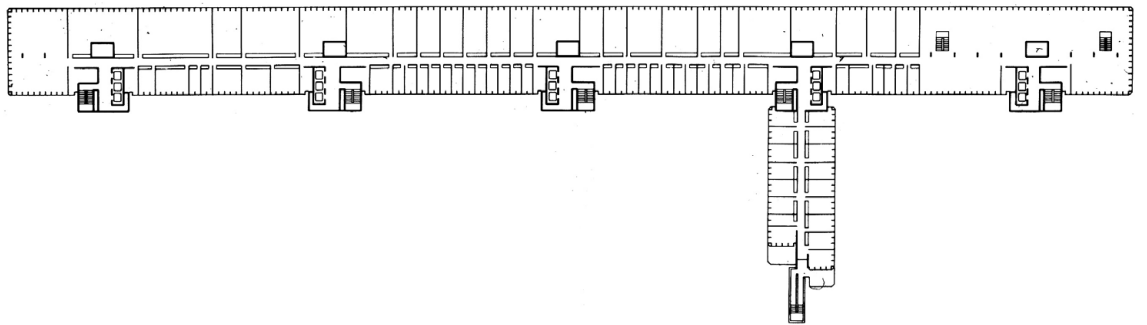


View of the Institute of Education from Bedford Way

Original Intention



Realised Building



Despite its apparent prominence, Lasdun's intentions for the Institute were never fully realised; Lasdun originally intended the Institute to have five wings protruding from the main spine. Only one of the five wings was ever built, reducing the intended impact of the building.



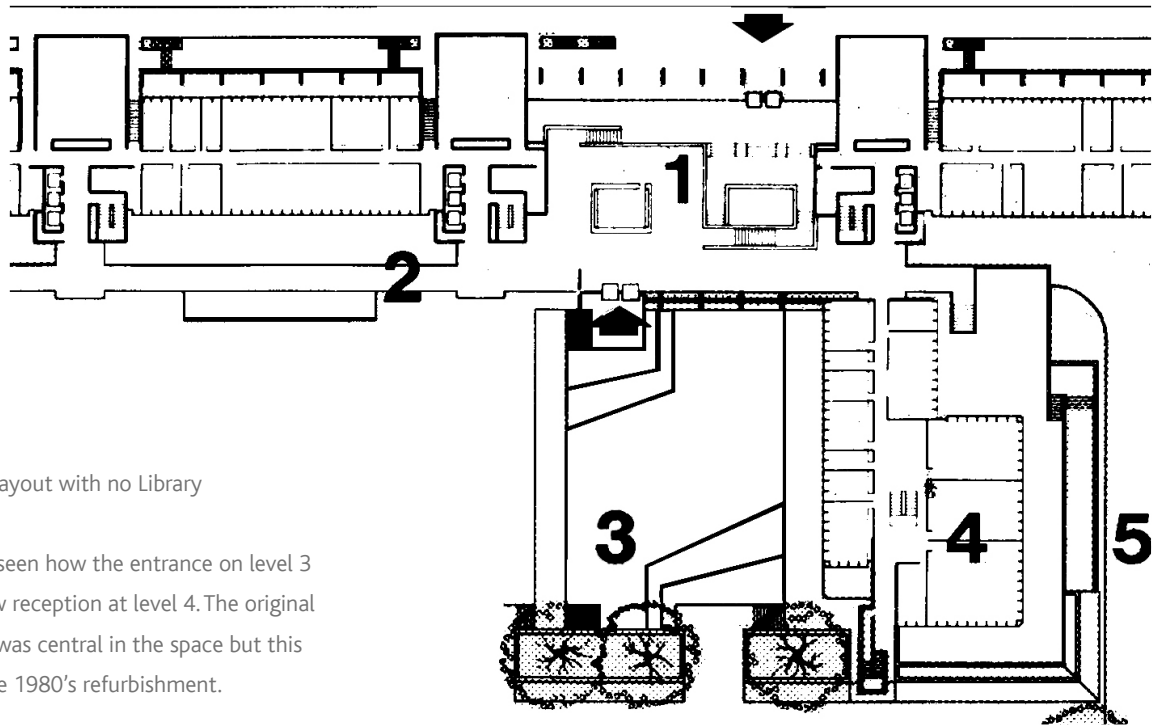
These images from the RIBA archive demonstrate how this fine example of Brutalism originally boasted a large entrance hall featuring exposed concrete throughout but over time this finish has been hidden behind layers of plaster. The impact of the space has been significantly reduced from Lasdun's original design.

The addition of entrance steps in the 1980's means that the original entrance doors (shown in the left hand image) are now a secondary point of access. Users now enter onto level 4, an under utilized space with a low ceiling. Over the years the building has deteriorated into a tangle of signage and a space which no longer has it's original impact.



The Institute of Education's internal layout has gone through several iterations before arriving at its current appearance. Originally the main entrance led on to Level 3 and a grand, double height space. There was no Library intended on level 4, instead a concourse running between the cores was planned. Woburn Square had large feature steps, designed to be a space of congregation.

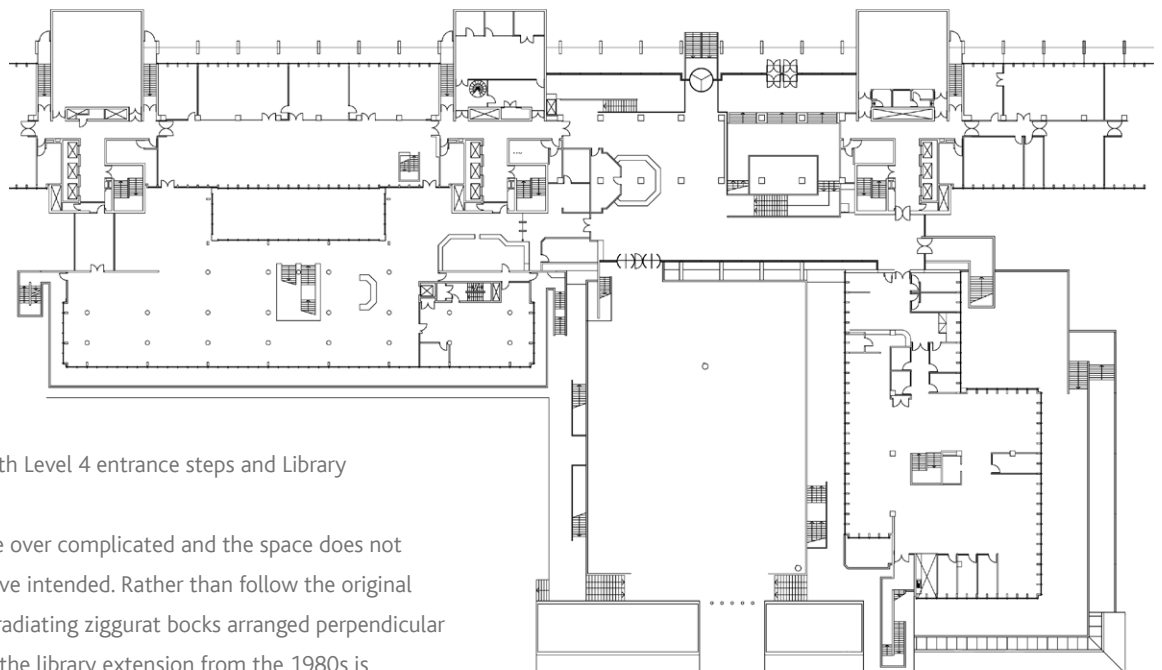
The diagram was much cleaner and the circulation routes more apparent.



Original Reception Hall layout with no Library

From this plan it can be seen how the entrance on level 3 was used to rise to a new reception at level 4. The original institute reception desk was central in the space but this was altered as part of the 1980's refurbishment.

Today, a flight of stairs lead to a new entrance on level four from street level on Bedford Way. These stairs are part of a later adaptation of the building by Lasdun's office. A large reception desk and security booth dominate the space while a cafe, an afterthought, has been incongruously placed into a small space to the south end of the hall. The library is located directly off the reception space. Woburn Square's feature steps have been levelled to allow for disabled access.



2012 Realised Layout with Level 4 entrance steps and Library

The diagram has become over complicated and the space does not flow as Lasdun would have intended. Rather than follow the original concept of a spine with radiating ziggurat blocks arranged perpendicular towards Woburn Square the library extension from the 1980s is arranged along the rear. After the construction of the original building, planning policy changed and the heritage importance of listed buildings increased in significance. When the library was proposed for construction, the remaining terrace of georgian houses facing Woburn Square and Gordon Square were considered too important to be replaced by the Lasdun masterplan. The library was therefore arranged north-south along the rear of the Institute of Education avoiding the terrace footprint and to protect rights of light to rooms within.

These images illustrate the main Level 4 reception hall as it stands today. The space is dark and cluttered with users commenting that *'The space feels claustrophobic'* and *'It's a space to walk through, not to stay in'*





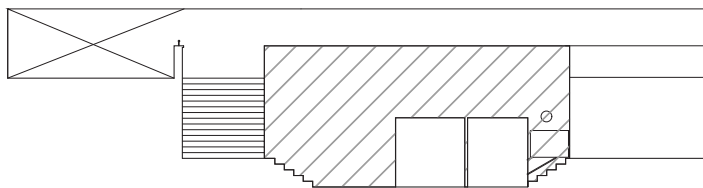
Original Staircase



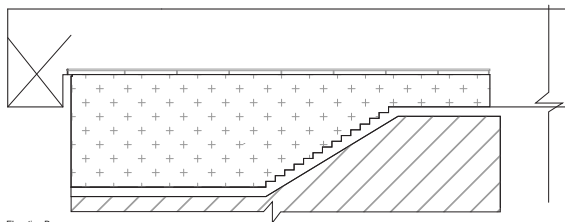
Existing Staircase

From the outset it has been our main intention to carefully strip back the layers of the reception space to reveal what was once deemed 'the only public monumental building in anything like the style of the seventies'. Our design approach is based on an interrogation of the original building as conceived by Sir Denys Ladsun and developing an understanding of its 'grain'. We have previously presented this proposal to the Institute of Education as an engaging space that benefits from both original architecture and contemporary interventions. The proposed design seeks to work with the language of the existing building and, where possible, return it to its original intent. By revealing what we know to already be there, it is possible to reveal its original impact. Where new interventions are proposed they are consciously contemporary in clean, highly durable materials and are clearly expressed as pieces of furniture within the space. Installations are conceived as room dividers rather than having to construct rooms themselves. In this way, new interventions have a delicate touch on existing fabric.

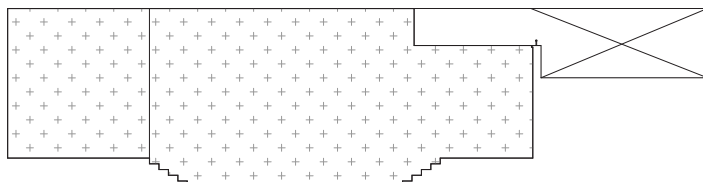
Despite the buildings presence on Bedford Way, there is little signage to indicate the Institute that lies within. This has led to a proliferation of small signs and freestanding signs cluttered around the entrance area. To reduce this clutter, we have proposed a glazed canopy to sit above these stairs within the width of the existing external columns. The sign will be centrally located, maintaining the symmetry of the building, and angled, replicating the angled shuttered concrete that features on the adjacent elevation of the projecting lecture theatre. Early discussions with Hannah Walker, principal conservation and design planner, have indicated that this proposal could be considered and it's effect would not be detrimental as long as it doesn't protrude further than the columns.



Elevation A

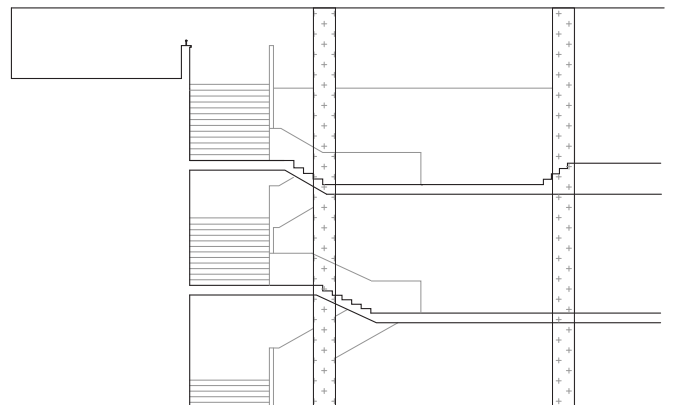


Elevation B

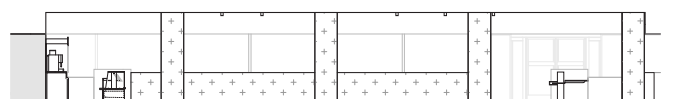


Elevation C

Scope of plaster removal works



Elevation A



Elevation B



Principle drivers for our design are as follows:

- Minimise work by retaining much of the existing fabric
- Exposing self-finished materials that have been covered or lost over time
- Understanding the grain of the existing building and working with it
- Using robust materials for new furniture elements in the public realm
- Adopting a modular approach to allow the works to be phased to suit occupancy or cash flow.

Principle elements of our design are as follows:

- Partial removal of the existing ceilings within the reception area to gain height and expose the existing concrete finish.
- Partial removal of plaster finish to previously exposed concrete
- Retain existing brick paver floor finish
- Introduction of a new accessible reception desk as a prefabricated furniture component with integrated storage.
- Incorporation of a prefabricated storage wall behind the reception desk
- Introduction of a new prefabricated display wall to facilitate art display and to include interactives/display screens and directory.
- Introduction of a prefabricated Cafe to mimic the aesthetic of the reception desk
- Integrated new, low energy LED, sympathetic lighting installation
- Clearly zoned seating area
- retained wheelchair lift
- The addition of a glazed canopy to announce the presence of the IoE in a manner sympathetic to the original building

We believe the proposed scheme will provide a reception hall which works for all its users and provides a future proof solution to a currently overwhelmed space.

We feel that the proposal can reinstate and enhance the original aesthetic while the design draws from the original Lasdun plans by reflecting the strong grain of the original design.

Every step has been taken to ensure that we avoid any adverse impact on the original building. We are, instead, trying to return Ladsun's Institute to the Brutalist spectacle it once was.