



# Refectory Roof Terrace Birkbeck, University of London

## Design & Access Statement

10 May 2011

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ARCHITECTURE • INTERIOR DESIGN • COMMUNICATIONS

# 1.0 Introduction

This report has been prepared to accompany the temporary planning application for the refurbishment of the 5th floor roof terrace to The Extension Building at Birkbeck, University of London, and the installation of a new retractable awning. The report should be read in conjunction with the planning application drawings.

A temporary planning permission for a period of 5 years is being sought by Birkbeck. Over the next 5 years the university anticipate the possible relocation of services currently located in The Extension Building, including the 5th floor refectory. If this comes to fruition there will no longer be a requirement for the awning and use of the roof terrace. In these circumstances Birkbeck will look to relocate the awning to make use of it elsewhere, submitting a new planning application where necessary.

## 2.0 Context

### **Birkbeck, The University of London:**

Birkbeck is a self governing college that forms one of the 19 individual colleges and institutes that comprise The University of London.

It is a world-class research and teaching institution and London's only specialist provider of evening higher education. Recognised as a 'global elite' university, Birkbeck ranks among the top 200 in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2010. Over 90% of Birkbeck academics are research-active and many are renowned experts in their fields. Birkbeck has a vibrant research culture with centres of excellence in the arts, humanities, social sciences and natural sciences.

Birkbeck has been London's only specialist provider of evening higher education since it was founded in 1823.

The main campus is located in central London in the conservation area of Bloomsbury with a smaller campus in Stratford, in East London.

### **The Extension Building:**

Birkbeck's Extension Building is located on the

central London campus between Malet Street and Torrington Square and adjoins both The Main Birkbeck Building and the University of London's Student Union Building. The Main Birkbeck Building sits to the south east of the site and the Students Union Building sits to the north-west.

The Extension Building, built in the 1960s, is a split level building which incorporates a number of roof terraces. The front block of the building (to Torrington Square) is 4 stories high, the perpendicular central block is 5 stories high, and the rear block is 6 stories high.

On the 5th floor of the rear block there is an existing refectory which is accessed from the ground floor via an enclosed stair core and 2 adjacent lifts. The refectory employs 7-10 members of staff and has Monday to Friday opening hours of 10am - 8pm.

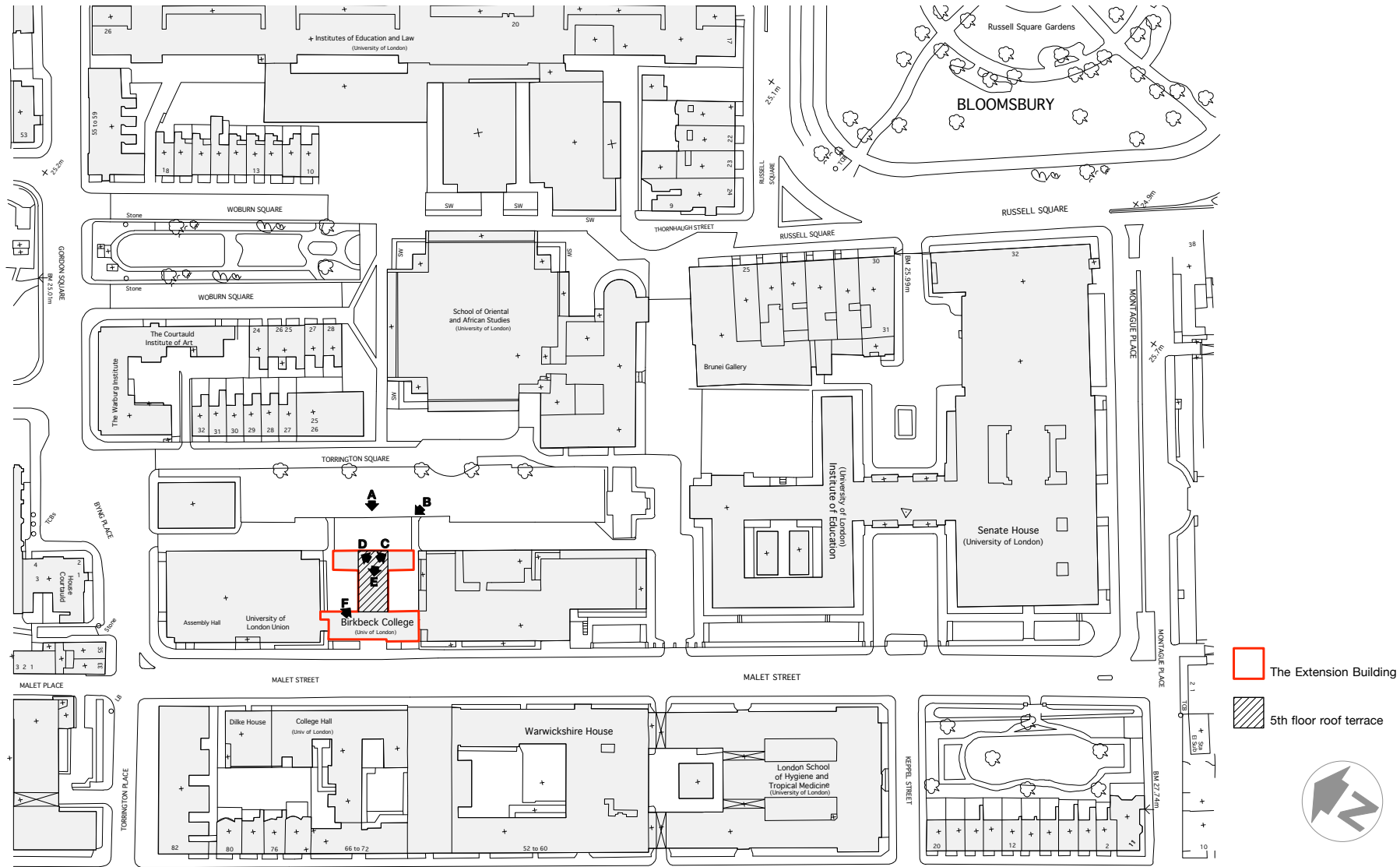
The external roof terrace to the 5th floor of the Extension Building provides external seating to the refectory; however the terrace itself is currently underused. A reason for this is that it can only be accessed via a door behind the food service counter, which greatly reduces

its use during busy times of the day. From the door, external steps lead down (approx. 850mm) onto the terrace. The overall size of the terrace is 218 sq.m, with a usable seating area of 170 sq.m. There is currently a white metal guardrail, with a light green top-rail to the perimeter of the terrace, providing fall protection. The roof terrace is finished with paving slabs.

### **Bloomsbury Conservation Area:**

Bloomsbury Conservation Area is regarded as one of the finest examples of Georgian town planning. The area has evolved from a fashionable residential area in the 17th and 18th century into an area rich with numerous cultural, educational and healthcare institutions. Bloomsbury is particularly notable for its array of garden squares.

It is our intention to draw on the conservation areas rich heritage of landscaped spaces by introducing a new external space that will serve to enhance the area, while developing a respectful relationship with the existing urban fabric.





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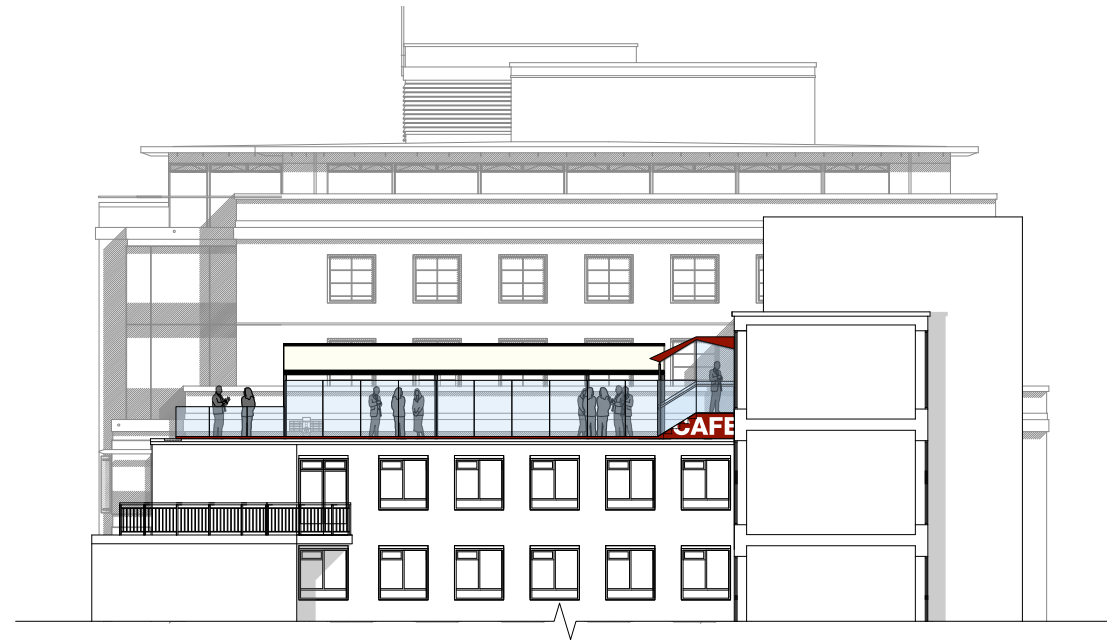
## 2.0 Design

We are proposing to refurbish the existing 5th floor roof terrace to The Extension Building at Birkbeck, University of London. In doing so, an attractive new feature will be provided for the university that will attract students and staff from all over the campus.

The proposed scheme will strengthen the relationship between the existing 5th floor refectory, the terrace and the surrounding area of Bloomsbury. Unimpeded panoramic views across Torrington Square and Bloomsbury will be provided, which will enhance the user experience, and create a new appreciation of the connection with the network of existing garden squares in the area.

As part of the scheme, we are proposing to install a retractable awning system that will provide a further sense of place and identity to the refurbished terrace. The awning will also provide a degree of weather protection to the terrace all year round.

The new design will create a vibrant external space that can be enjoyed and utilized throughout the year.





Birkbeck, University of London / Refectory Roof terrace/ The Extension Building

The proposed awning to be installed on the terrace is the Markilux 5010 Syncra fix system. The awning will be a duo-pitched structure with a maximum height at its ridge of 3255mm. It will provide a covered area of 100sq.m. (with dimensions of approx. 13.2m x 7.6m) . The Markilux system will include a sun and wind sensor that will allow the awning to respond appropriately to it's environment.

The supporting structure of the awning system will be formed of a number of unobtrusive steel posts that will be located down the centre of the terrace and will provide negligible intrusion to the terrace's usable space. The minimal structure coupled with setting back the awning from the main façade of the building on Torrington Square will visually reduce the impact at ground level.

We are proposing to relocate the door and external steps leading from the refectory to the roof terrace in order to allow unrestricted access at all times of the day. The door will be relocated from behind the food counter onto a main circulation route to encourage users to take full advantage of the new facilities.

The new external steps will be designed to Approved Document M standards and will have a permanent canopy that will provide a covered route from the refectory to the new awning.

The canopy to the steps will take a dynamic angled form, developing a relationship with the pitched design of the new retractable awning. The canopy will provide a striking addition to the roof terrace, demarcating the route between the refectory and the terrace itself.

At ground floor level however, the visual impact to the surrounding area will be minimal. This will be as a result of the massing of The Extension Building, combined with the location of the canopy on the roof terrace.

In order to further enhance the new external space we propose to remove the existing metal guardrail from the perimeter of the terrace and replace it with frameless glass screens. It is intended that this will blur the boundaries between the terrace and the surrounding environment, enhancing the views across Bloomsbury conservation area and reducing the visual impact of the existing guardrail from ground level.

The screens will predominantly be 2 metres high to provide an enclosed sheltered environment, that will restrict the impact of the elements, particularly the wind, on the users of the terrace. To the eastern end of the terrace, a break out space, accessed through 2m high frameless glass doors, will be enclosed by glass screens 1100mm high. This area of the terrace will not be sheltered by the awning and it is intended it will primarily be used during the summer.





Markilux Syncra retractable awning



Frameless glass door and screens

