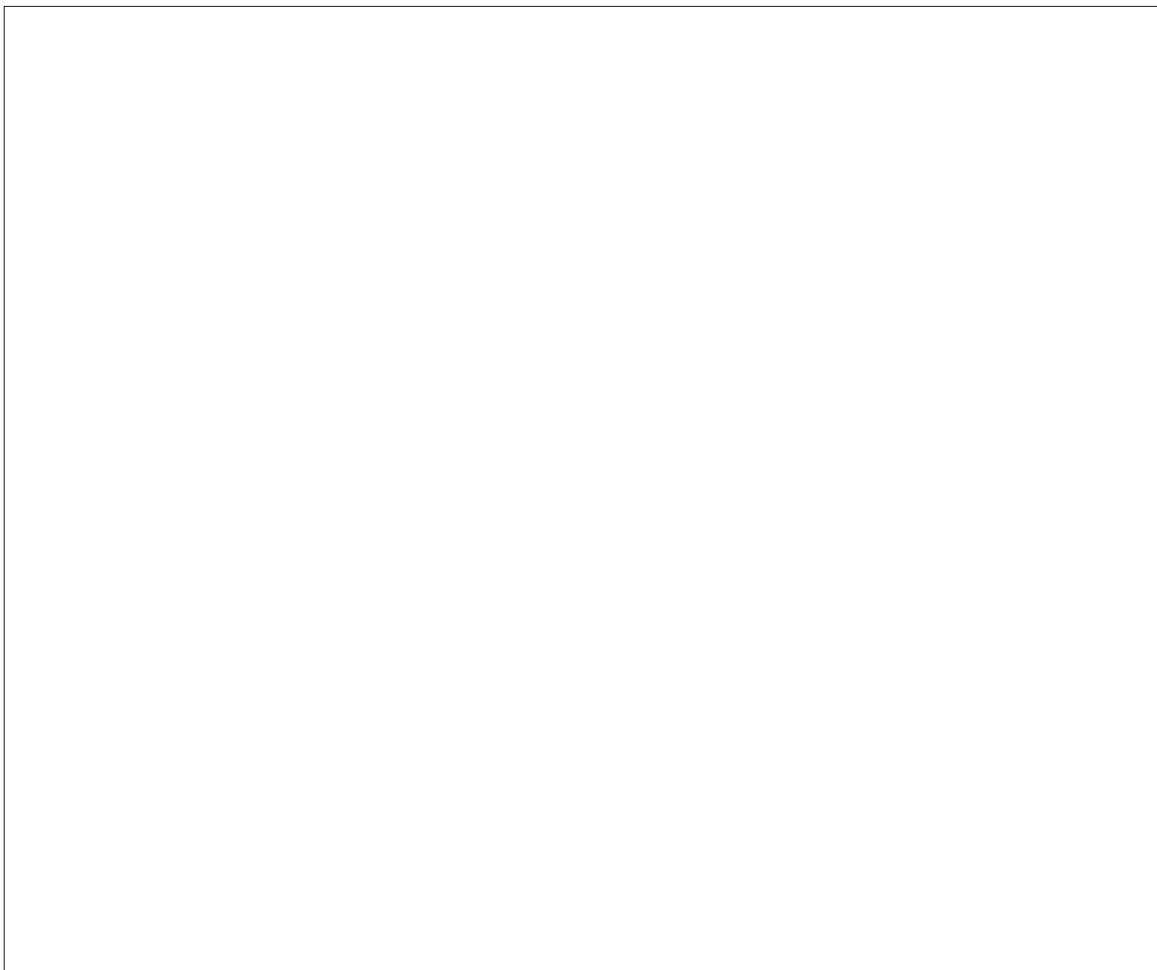


BRITISH MUSEUM: MIDDLE ROOM



DESIGN STATEMENT

September 2006

MIDDLE ROOM DESIGN STATEMENT FOR THE LISTED BUILDING APPLICATION

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION BY THE BRITISH MUSEUM	4
BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MIDDLE ROOM	5
DESIGN STATEMENT	7
SCHEDULE OF WORKS	8
MECHANICAL & ELECTRICAL SYSTEMS - ADVICE BY TGA SERVICES CONSULTANTS	11

APPENDICES

- A DRAWINGS
 - As existing
 - As proposed

MIDDLE ROOM

DESIGN STATEMENT FOR THE LISTED BUILDING APPLICATION

INTRODUCTION BY THE BRITISH MUSEUM

The Middle Room is located on the main floor of the museum to the south of the Manuscripts Saloon. The room is not currently in public use and we are proposing its refurbishment in order to temporarily house the Hamlyn Library. The Hamlyn Library will be displaced from its permanent home in the Round Reading Room by the proposed temporary installation of the First Emperor Exhibition (the subject of a separate Listed Building Consent application). As the room was originally used as a library it is already fitted with bookshelves and no changes are needed.

Minor refurbishment and the upgrading of the existing services will be sufficient to make the room fulfil the requirements for the Hamlyn Library. Loose furnishing such as reading desks, IT facilities, librarian's work stations, catalogues etc., will be positioned in the Middle Room. These will all be fittings and/or furniture that can easily be removed when the temporary use finishes. The only permanent changes will be the improvements to the lighting and heating and the redecoration of the space.

MIDDLE ROOM

DESIGN STATEMENT FOR THE LISTED BUILDING APPLICATION

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MIDDLE ROOM

MIDDLE ROOM (FORMERLY MIDDLE READING ROOM)

Built in 1827 to Sir Robert Smirke's design, the cruciform Manuscripts Saloon and the Middle and South Reading Rooms lay to the south of the King's Library. The Manuscripts Saloon was initially used as a workroom and storage area by the staff of the Department of Manuscripts, while the Reading Rooms, with space for 120 people, replaced the old overcrowded reading rooms in Montague House.

Until the South Wing was completed in 1847, entry was through the elaborate door from the King's Library or via a lobby in the northwest corner of the Middle Reading Room. There was also a plain doorway from the Manuscripts Saloon to the Reading Room and two small jib doors in the north and south walls of the east projection which lead to the assistant's rooms. A plain south doorway led to the South Reading Room. All the exterior walls had windows, and those in the Manuscripts Saloon were framed by timber pilasters which were mimicked in the bookcases where the windows are not symmetrical.

The three rooms were originally very similar in character, with walls lined with book presses at Level 2 and balconies with book cases at Level 3. The balconies and presses are similar to those in the King's Library, though the finish is cruder, the railings are simpler, and many of the shelves here have been renewed. The Manuscript Saloon railings have later brass grilles like those in the Grenville Library. The Middle Room had a small spiral staircase built out from the east wall, and a door at balcony level leading into the South Reading Room (where the balcony has subsequently been removed).

When the South Wing was built (1841 – 47), an oak panelled door was inserted in the west wall of the Manuscripts Room to the new Grenville Library and a number of windows were altered. With the building of the East Addition (1849) a jib doorway was inserted at the south end of the Middle Room. The position of the windows in the west and south outer walls of the Middle and South Reading Rooms had to be altered in order to align with the column spaces of the new South Colonnade, built 1846 – 52. The White Wing was constructed in 1883 to the east, abutting the Manuscripts Saloon and almost the entirety of the Middle Reading Room. The affected windows were kept for borrowed light (though subsequently altered), and the northernmost window in the Middle Reading Room was converted to a pair of doors.

The Bible Room (Crawford Room) was constructed 1906 – 25 in the re-entrant southeast corner of the Manuscripts Saloon, as a staff study with shallow concrete barrel vaulted ceiling with glass block rooflights. It replaced the original south assistant's room and the 1849 East Addition. Double oak panelled doors were inserted to the Manuscripts Saloon. This space later became the Bible Room (1938) and the Crawford Room (1977). In 2000-01 a fire escape was installed from Level 2 down to the east road. The suite of exhibit cases has been removed and stored.

The Manuscripts Saloon ceiling, which consisted of a series of downstand beams with principal members spanning between brick piers, was massively strengthened in 1933. Deep, wide downstand beams and additional large columns were introduced in the north and south openings. The detail does not fit well with the original architecture.

The basement is a series of transverse brick barrel vaults with supporting cross walls, orientated east/west under the Middle Reading Room and north/south under the Manuscripts Saloon and South Reading Room. A central longitudinal passageway (East Corridor) continues from beneath the King's Library and the vaulted areas originally opened onto this passageway. There were two ancillary rooms, one in each side angle of the east projection of the Manuscripts Saloon. The east projection of the Manuscripts Saloon had three window openings. It is assumed that all other original openings in the outer walls were circular and similar to those in Sector A. The west, south and east outside walls were altered somewhat to address the various additions designed by Sir Robert Smirke from 1841 – 52. Starting in 1847 and continuing until 1998, various alterations occurred, including the segregation of the vaults for changes in use of space and insertion of services.

MIDDLE ROOM

DESIGN STATEMENT FOR THE LISTED BUILDING APPLICATION

Significance

The Middle Room should be seen in the context of the Manuscripts Saloon and the South Room. These three rooms together with the King's Library form the earliest part of the Sir Robert Smirke's design. The Middle Room remains very much as it was and although the detailing and finish of the book presses, railings, balconies, doors and ceilings are not as elaborate as those in the King's Library they retain their architectural integrity in the room as a whole. This area should be considered significant as are the original fittings although there is scope for some alteration.

The areas of original vaulted brickwork and blocked openings in the basement, (those that remain open and those that have been subsequently blocked), any remaining early stove and flue arrangements or early floor finishes have a high significance. Many of the early alterations by Sydney Smirke also have a high significance due to their relationship with the early development of the Manuscript department within the Museum as a whole.

MIDDLE ROOM DESIGN STATEMENT FOR THE LISTED BUILDING APPLICATION

DESIGN STATEMENT

The Middle Room has not been used since it was vacated by the British Library. All the original bookcases at main floor level and around the balcony remain in place and the temporary use of the room to house the Hamlyn Library provides a good opportunity for some much needed cleaning and conservation work.

It is intended to do the minimum to the bookcases, a small amount of repair work as detailed on the attached schedule and the conservation and partial repainting of the lettering on the bookcases themselves.

The bookcases at the lower level will be accessible to all readers but the balcony level will only be accessible to museum staff. The lower cases will have the glass doors temporarily removed and carefully stored for later reinstatement. The upper sliding doors will be left in place. Access to the balcony does not comply with current health and safety regulations and a temporary handrail will be fitted above the level of the current handrail to make these upper shelves fully useable. This handrail will not be attached to the existing rail and will be fully removable.

The lighting in the room will be improved with task lighting on the furniture and uplighting into the ceiling of the room. The work previously carried out in the Manuscript Saloon will be the model for this. The heating system will also be overhauled and upgraded within the existing floor trenches.

It is proposed to install the new service trunking around the gallery level which will also follow the pattern of that installed in the Manuscript Saloon. This floor trunking will provide the fixings for the temporary handrail.

The room will be fully redecorated above the level of the bookcases, the colour scheme following that of the Manuscript Saloon and King's Library. The floor will be repaired and carpeted.

MIDDLE ROOM DESIGN STATEMENT FOR THE LISTED BUILDING APPLICATION

SCHEDULE OF WORKS

1.0 Lower Book Presses

Allow for levelling and repair existing shelves. Carefully remove and safely store existing glass doors.

- 1.1 Activated charcoal and / or silica gel will be placed in the display zone as required to reduce the effects of off-gas-ing and to control humidity fluctuations (by the BM).
- 1.2 Repair damaged oak frames of the book presses where seriously damaged only (allow a provisional sum) clean and revive the French polish. Characteristically this is where the vertical frames of the presses are damaged by keys beneath each keyhole. This may involve a light sanding in some cases and in one instance a small section of oak needs piecing in. Retain the black-painted case numbers. At the skirtings allow for removing surviving painted case numbers behind the socket outlets. Revive painted case numbers where damaged generally.
- 1.3 Retain in position and protect from physical damage the remaining leather dust flaps at the tops of presses, but these are not to be conserved in this phase.

2.0 Upper Book Presses

- 2.1 Clean and lacquer the brass frames of all the doors.
- 2.2 Allow for overhauling only defective sliding door gear.
- 2.3 Apply security film to the front surface of the glass.
- 2.4 Apply safety film to the rear surface of all of the glazed fronted book presses at Level 2.
- 2.5 Retain shelves within the book presses and if necessary re-level them on their existing support keys at a consistent spacing around the balcony.
- 2.6 Repair the oak cornices and side frames where seriously damaged only and revive the stain and varnish only where damaged. Retain the black painted case numbers above the cases and allow for touching in only where seriously damaged.

3.0 Balcony

- 3.1 Remove and dispose of the mesh guarding fixed to the back of the balustrade which is thought to have been added in the 1930's. Take up the carpet.
- 3.2 Provide ? sockets set onto the floor behind the balustrade to take a temporary lightweight balustrade for use when the balcony is in use by the librarian. These and the service tray will be concealed from view from Level 2 by a 125mm high plinth set back from the edge by 100mm. It will be painted dark brown to reduce its effect.
- 3.3 The existing balustrade is to be repaired is to be painted gold.
- 3.4 Allow for cleaning and applying safety film to all of the glass floor panels.
- 3.5 The service tray is to be carried across the top of these glass panels. The tray is to be supported over the structural divisions between the panels upon spacers with neoprene pads onto the glass surfaces.

MIDDLE ROOM

DESIGN STATEMENT FOR THE LISTED BUILDING APPLICATION

- 3.6 Over the service tray laid onto the balcony fix an MDF walkway formed of hinged panels supported on softwood battens along both edges. Hinges to be 100mm cranked hinges fixed into the softwood with wood screws and into the MDF with appropriate MDF screws. Two hinges per panel
- 3.7 Infill the balustrade side of service tray walkway with MDF cut to shape and supported on rough framing.
- 3.8 Paint the top surface of the service tray covers and the adjacent raised floor with anti-slip paint.
- 3.9 Remove the cables and junction boxes fixed along the underside of the west bay balcony, and French polisher to make good.

4.0 Doors

- 4.1 Take doors off their pivots and hinges. Allow for overhauling and greasing both. Allow additionally a provisional sum for making new parts or complete new pivots or hinges. Allow for adapting fixing locations of hinges and pivots to allow for wear and to achieve correct alignment if instructed.
- 4.2 Retain, overhaul, clean and lacquer Smirke rosette knobs.
- 4.3 Carry out the following door repairs: (If needed)
- The shrink gaps in the panels will be filled with intumescent mastic to within 2mm of the surface, both sides. The surface of the cracks will be made good by the French polisher.
 - Piece in damaged oak at lock plate ready to take new escutcheon.
 - Make good chipped oak beside lock plate.
 - Make good stop where damaged by lock tongue.
- 4.4 Strip (including removing any lettering applied to the doors), revive stain and varnish the doors.
- 4.5 Install PIR sensors.
- 4.6 Carry out the following fire upgrading: (TBC)
- 4.7 Repair and overhaul the door surround and door frame.
- Take off plinths, strip varnish. Pack behind at the gaps to give continuous support, and reinstate.
 - On the east side reinstate top to plinth between architrave and fluted square column including making good plaster.
 - To east fluted square column make good cracks in flutes with plastic wood.
- 4.8 Install new locks and emergency push bars as required.

5.0 Windows

- 5.1 Allow a provisional sum for minor overhaul including repair of sash lock, piece in where damaged. Allow for brass plates adapted as necessary to the surviving handles, as for exterior windows.
- 5.2 Allow for temporary blocking up of window WF01C.

6.0 Floor

Retain existing state insertions and ventilation grilles. Carpet to be specified for the rest of the floor at both levels.

MIDDLE ROOM

DESIGN STATEMENT FOR THE LISTED BUILDING APPLICATION

7.0 Skirtings

- 7.1 There are ? locations where electrical power socket outlets have been installed. These same locations are to be re-used for the new power sockets.

8 Heating Grilles

Retain existing heating grilles.

9 Room Lighting

- 9.1 Install new ambient luminaires to the balconies to illuminate the ceilings.
- 9.2 Task lighting will be provided on all reading desks.

10 Security Devices

- 10.1 PIR at doorways
- 10.2 PIR room detectors.
- 10.3 Door Contacts
- 10.4 External window contacts
- 10.5 CCTV at doorways which are to be set behind glass in book presses adjacent to doors in locations to be agreed.

11 Fire Precautions

- 11.1 Emergency Lighting.
- 11.2 Fire detection.
- 11.3 Fire sounders and lights.
- 11.4 Speakers.
- 11.5 Fire Exit sign

12 Redecorations

- 12.1 Paint the ceiling and all plasterwork with matt emulsion.
- 12.2 Paint the walls.
- 12.3 Allow for a specialist French polisher to carry out the following works:
- To attend and carry out stripping process by hand on site where scheduled.
 - Neutralise and prepare using cabinet scraper and abrasives as appropriate, course to fine.
 - Dust off, seal in with shellac sanding sealer, denib, tak rag clean, fill where necessary, seal in and touch in to repairs and damage using pigments and special pale polish.
 - Cut back and body up to a full body open grain finish using special pale polish

MECHANICAL & ELECTRICAL SYSTEMS - ADVICE BY TGA SERVICES CONSULTANTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Middle Room is a double height library space incorporating a balcony that passes right around the room at level 3. It was formerly occupied by the British Library and has not, subsequently, been open to the public.

The general philosophy of the proposed development of the building engineering services is to minimise any impact of the historic fabric by running services in existing voids or else mounting them on the surface but in such a manner as to be concealed from view.

This approach has recently been carried out successfully on the Manuscripts Saloon which is a very similar space immediately to the north of the Middle Room.

2.0 PROPOSED MECHANICAL SERVICES WORKS

The existing mechanical services in the Middle Room are described below:

- Heating is by two rows of pipe coils below cast iron floor grilles
- The pipe coils are fed from level 1 below
- The source of heat is Calorifier Room No. 7
- The pipe coils and associated pipe work are very old and should be replaced
- Windows are provided at balcony level

The proposed scope of mechanical work is as follows,

- Remove existing pipe coils and all pipe work at level 1 below
- Replace pipe coils and pipe work back to Calorifier Room 7
- Provide new automatic control system for heating via BMS. Control valve located in Calorifier Room. Temperature sensors located within the room

3.0 PROPOSED ELECTRICAL SERVICES WORKS

The Middle Room contains very little in the way of existing electrical services. Those which are present include uplighters and self contained emergency lights mounted off the level 3 balcony along with a limited number of socket outlets mounted on the walls / bookcase pedestals at floor level and within hatches cut into the floor of the room.

It is proposed that the Middle Room would be treated in much the same manner as the adjacent Manuscripts Saloon which is very similar in design and has been recently refurbished, i.e.:

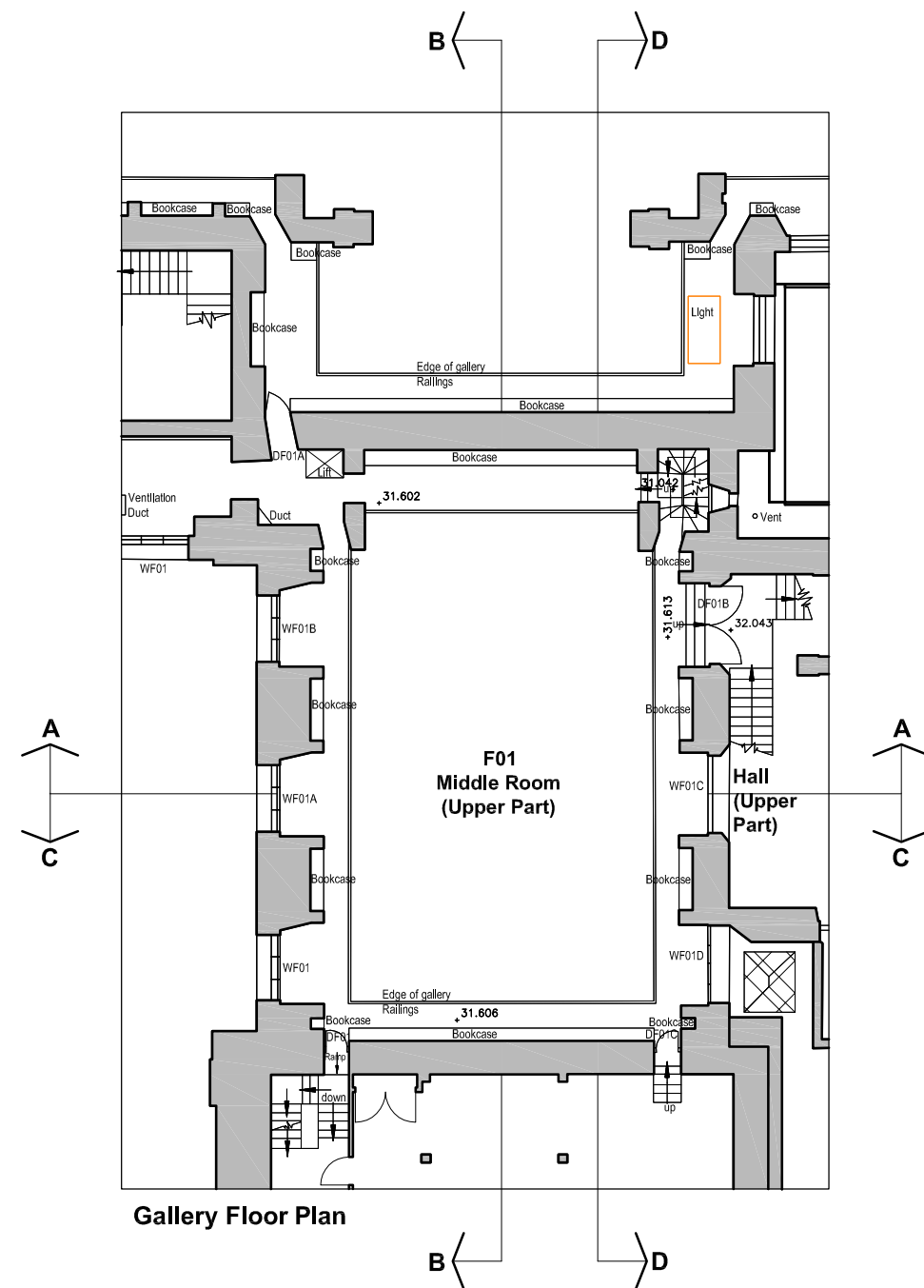
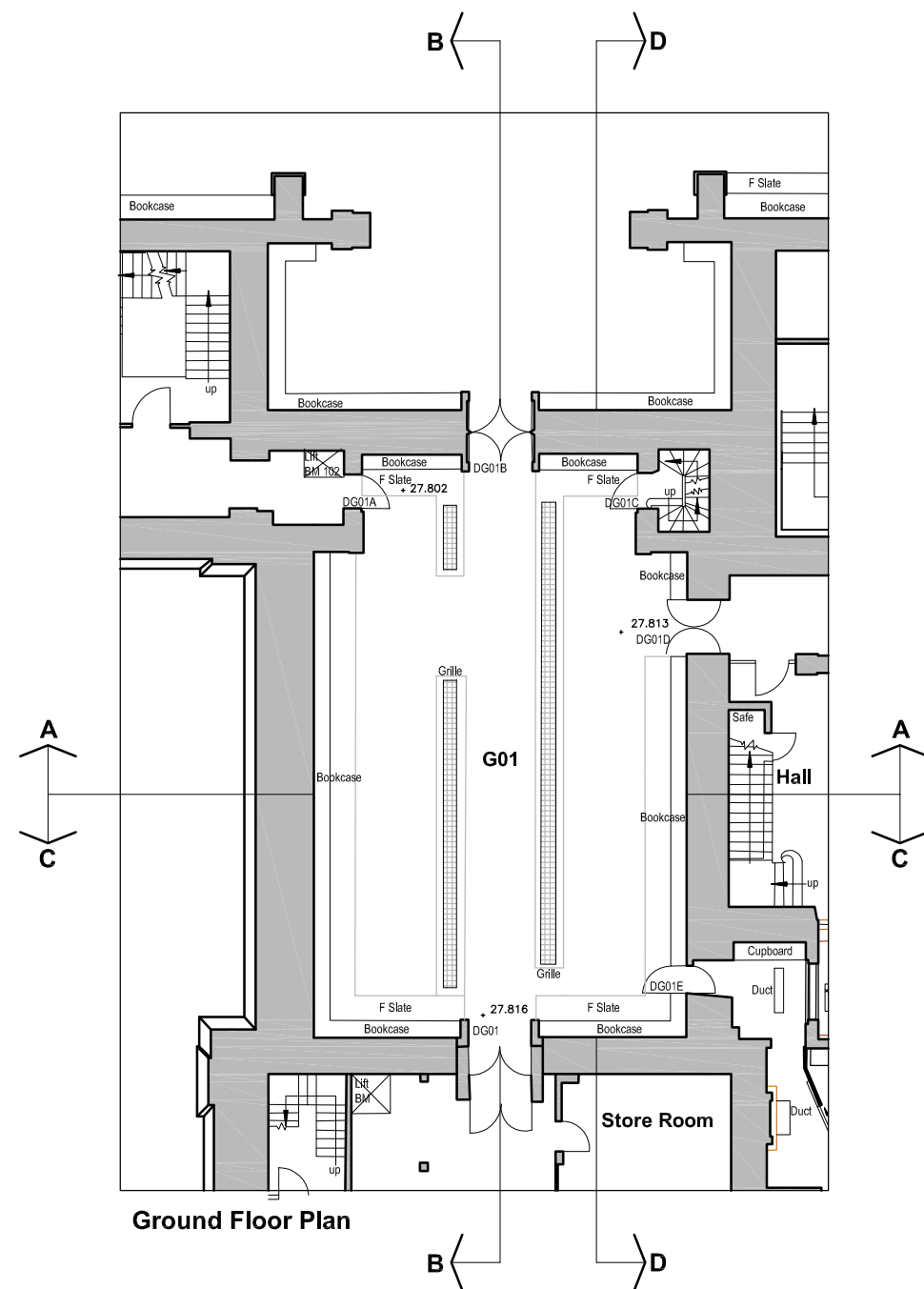
- A new electrical supply with dedicated lighting and power distribution boards will be established adjacent Riser B2 at level 3 or else in Riser B3 at the same level. (Riser to be used to be confirmed at Outline Design Stage according to the availability of space for mounting electrical control equipment. – All such equipment will be located so as not to be visible from within publicly accessible locations)
- Cable Trunking systems will be routed around the high level balcony serving electrical services on the balcony and at ceiling level.
- New voice alarms, emergency lighting and general lighting will be provided from the balcony via narrow speakers, directional spotlights and uplighters respectively. Where visible, such equipment will be selected so as to be aesthetically acceptable and will be painted to match background colours.

MIDDLE ROOM

DESIGN STATEMENT FOR THE LISTED BUILDING APPLICATION

- New automatic fire detection will be provided using optical beam detectors, located at high level, served from the balcony
- CCTV cameras and security sensors can also be served via the balcony. Facial recognition cameras will be concealed within bookcases adjacent access points to the Middle Room while pan and tilt cameras will be hung from the face of the balcony. It is likely that intruder alarm presence sensors will be provided at high level adjacent external windows with contacts on doors to the space. Final details of CCTV and Security systems will be determined by the British Museum's Security Consultant.
- Low level power and data will be provided via new floor boxes using flexible conduits routed from level 1 below into and through the floor void. Floor boxes will be located below removable floor traps set into timber sections of the Gallery floor.

APPENDIX A **DRAWINGS**
- AS EXISTING
- AS PROPOSED

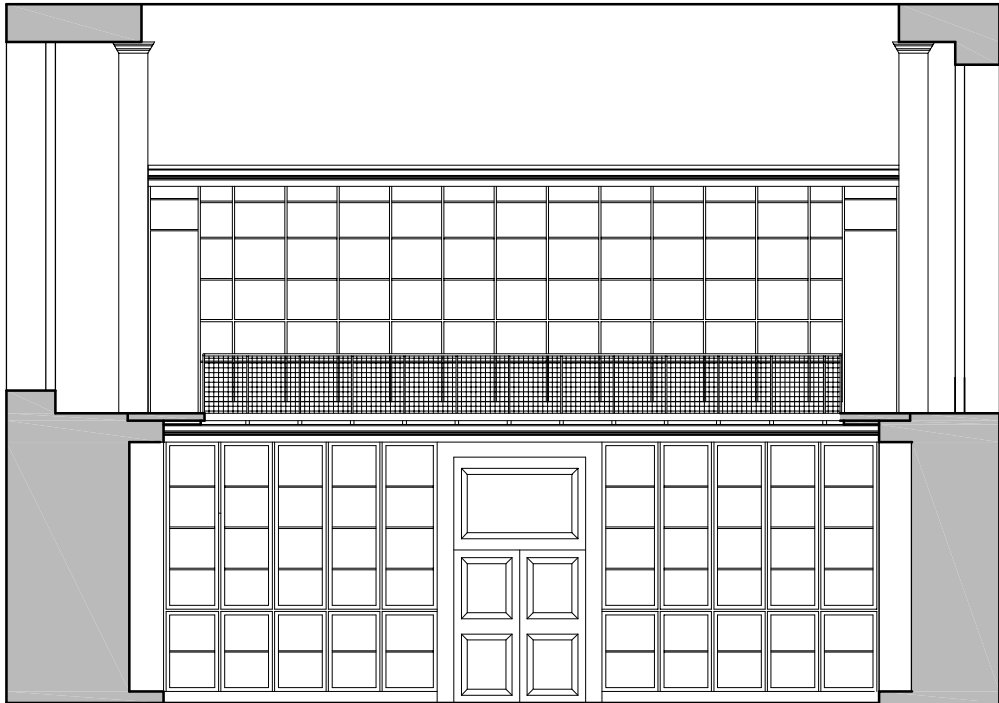


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DRAWING TITLE	Plans as Existing	JOB NUMBER	DRAWING NO.	REVISION		
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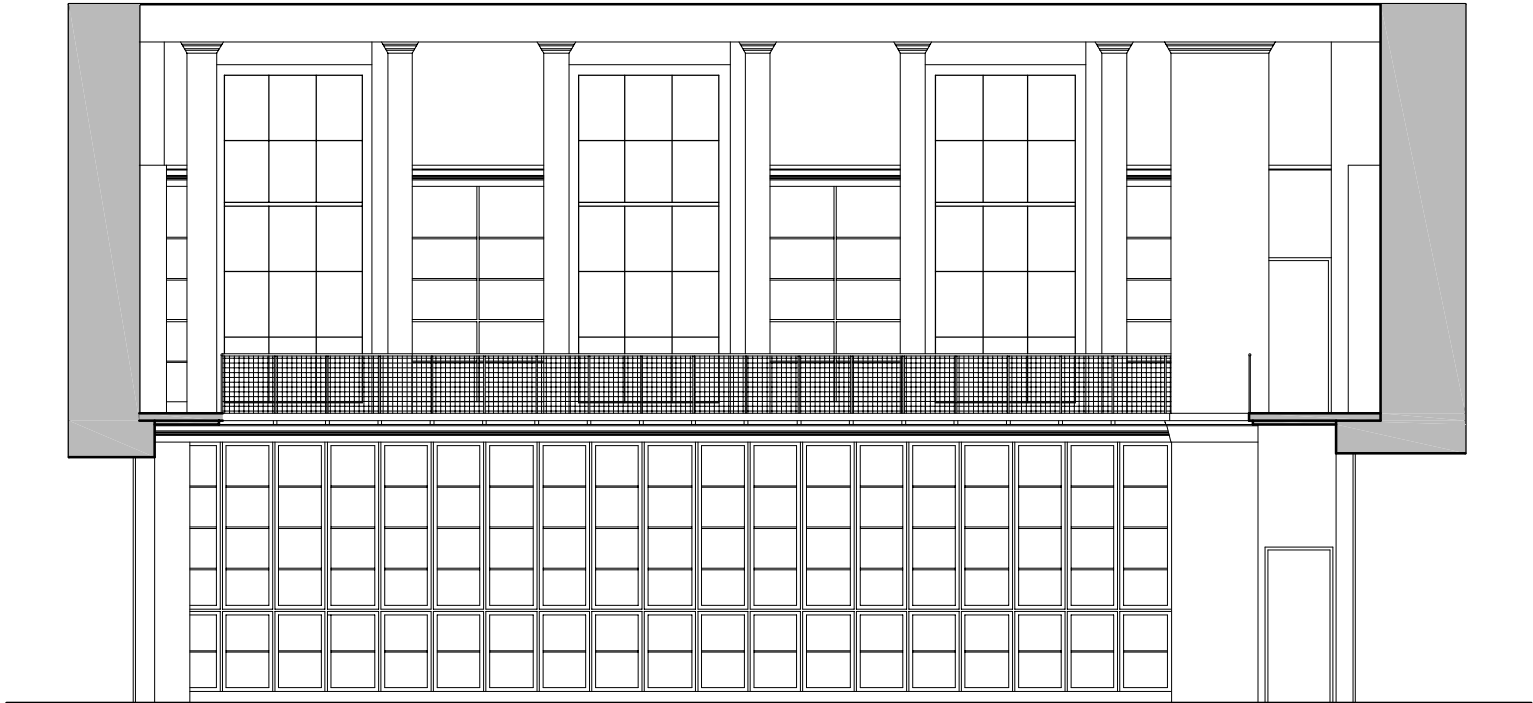
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Section AA



Section BB



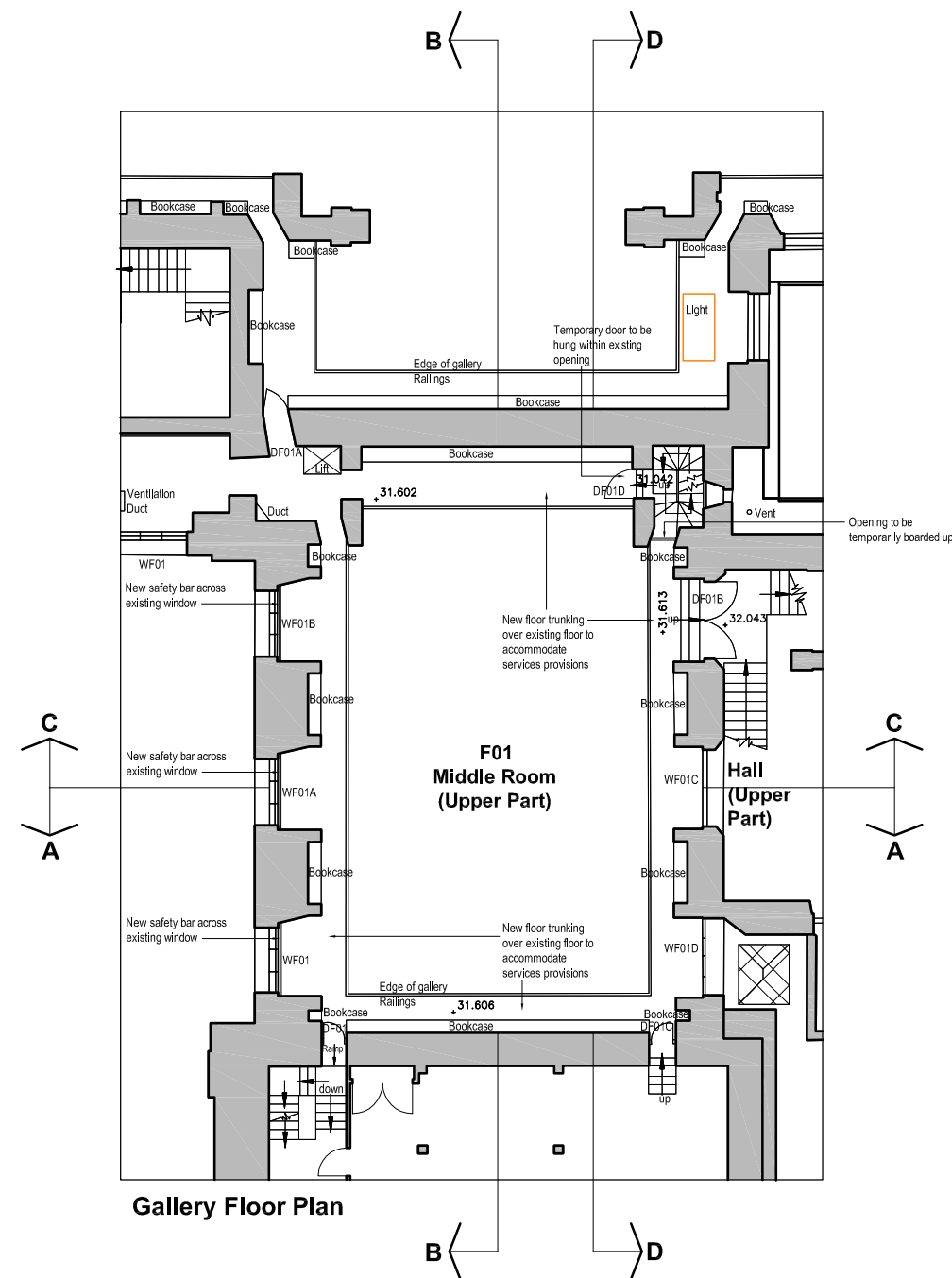
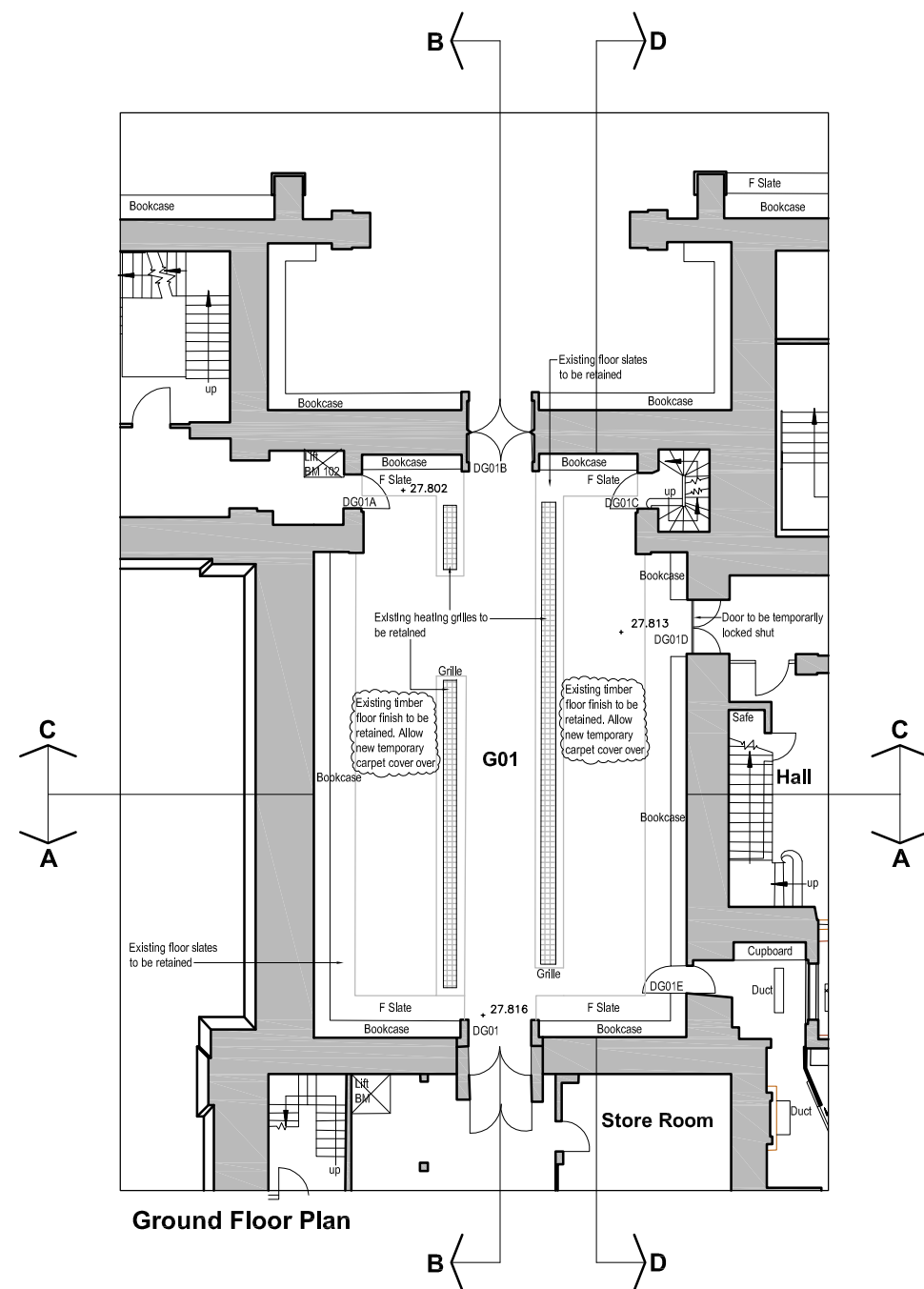
Section CC



Section DD

Note: This door is a jib door
(to look like book shelf).

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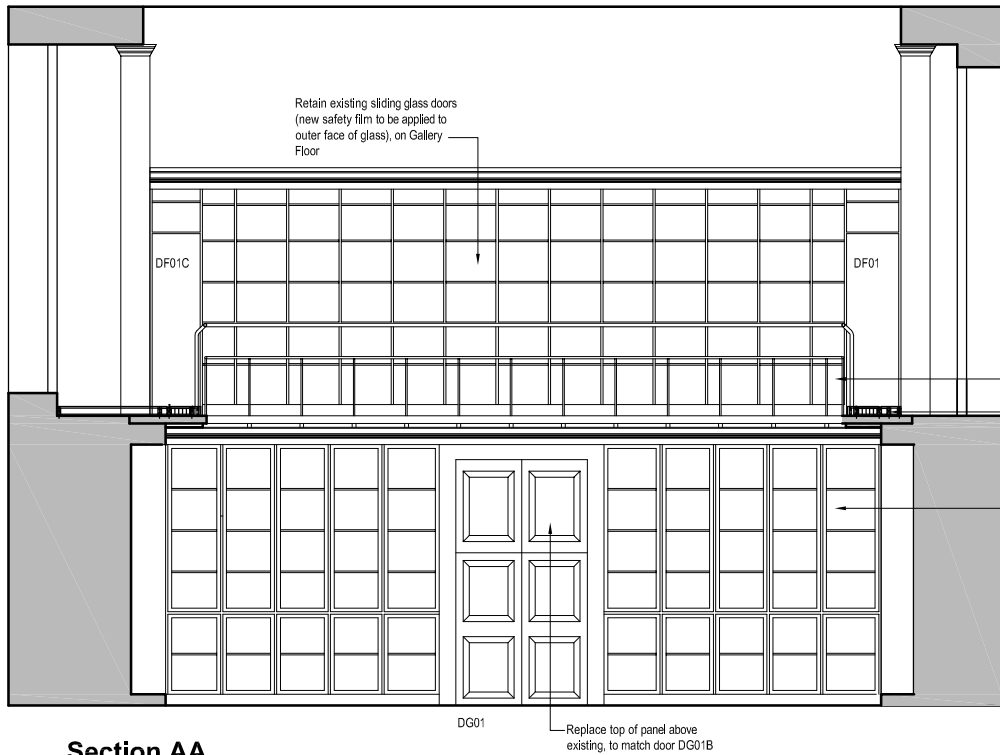


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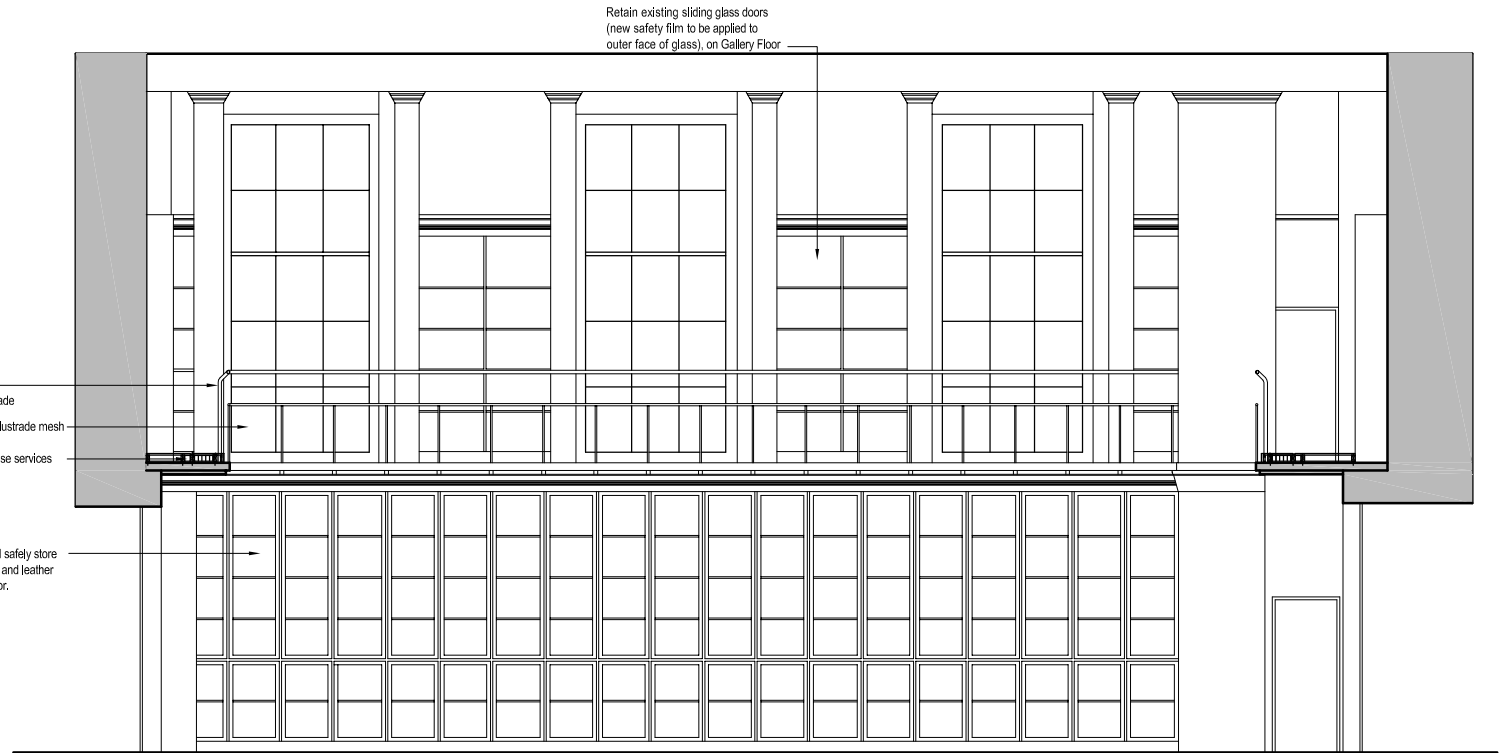
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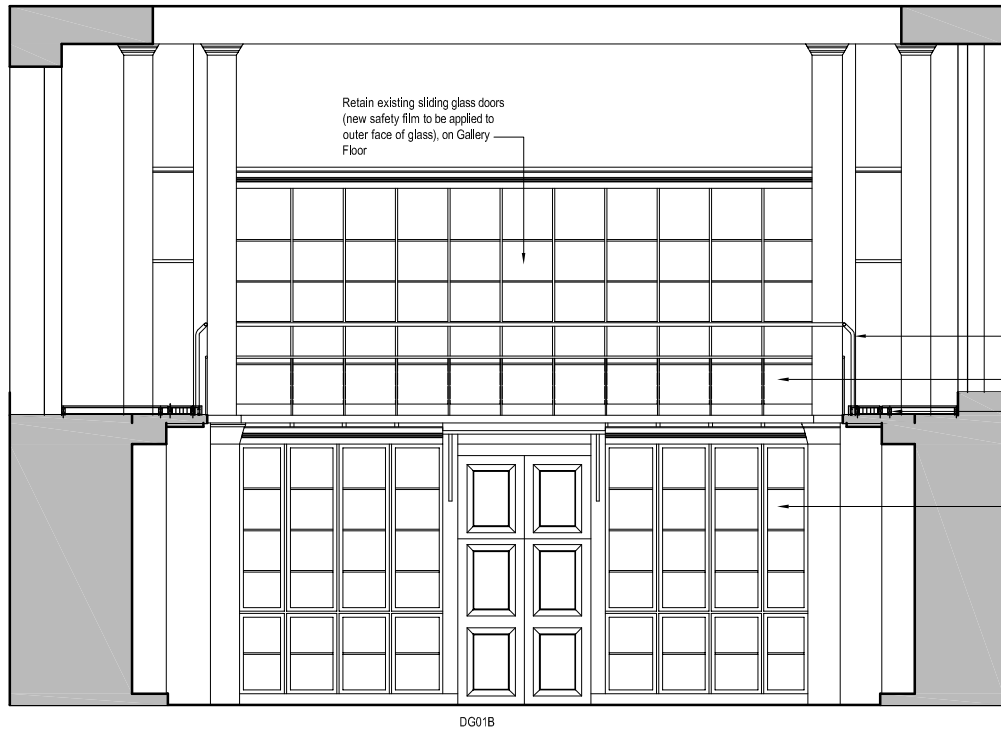
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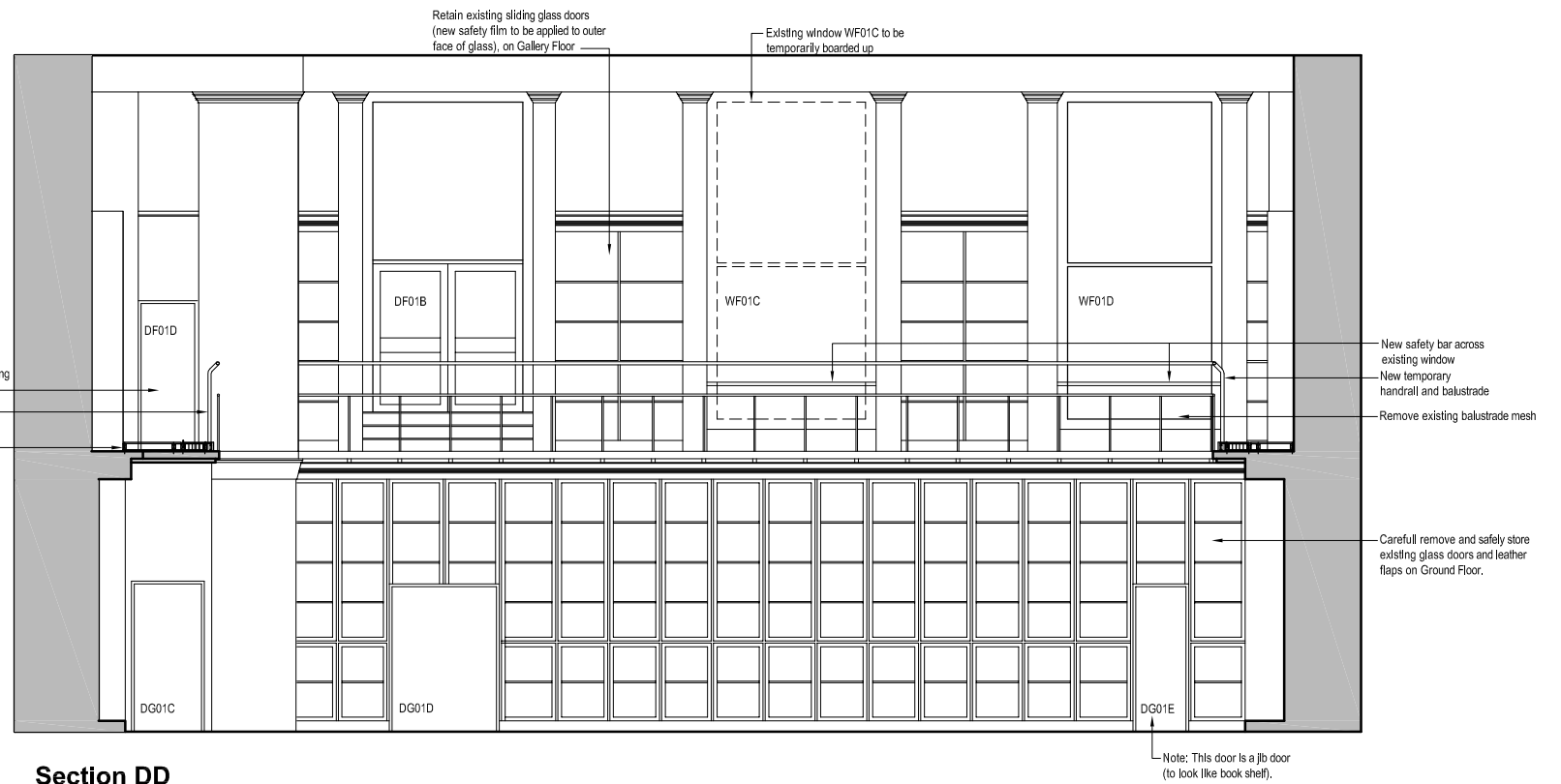
Section AA



Section BB



Section CC



Section DD

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PROJECT	Middle Room	AM	CHECKED			
DRAWING TITLE	Sections as Proposed	JOB NUMBER	DRAWING NO.	REVISION		
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