

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Senate House is a grade II* listed building.

The building has a distinct hierarchy in terms of the importance of the internal spaces. It has suffered from the gradual accretion of surface mounted cabling and communications infrastructure.

Senate House South Block is to undergo a substantial refurbishment programme to secure its long term future in academic use and comply with Health and Safety Regulations. This application forms part of the 'Enabling Works' that have to be undertaken in advance of the refurbishment. The majority of the Enabling Works do not require the benefit of listed building consent.

This application concerns the creation of

- new basement trenches; and
- riser enclosures in various locations.

The location for the risers was tested through an impact assessment. The assessment looked at the effect upon the character and appearance of the building as well as the technical requirements for the provision of infrastructure.

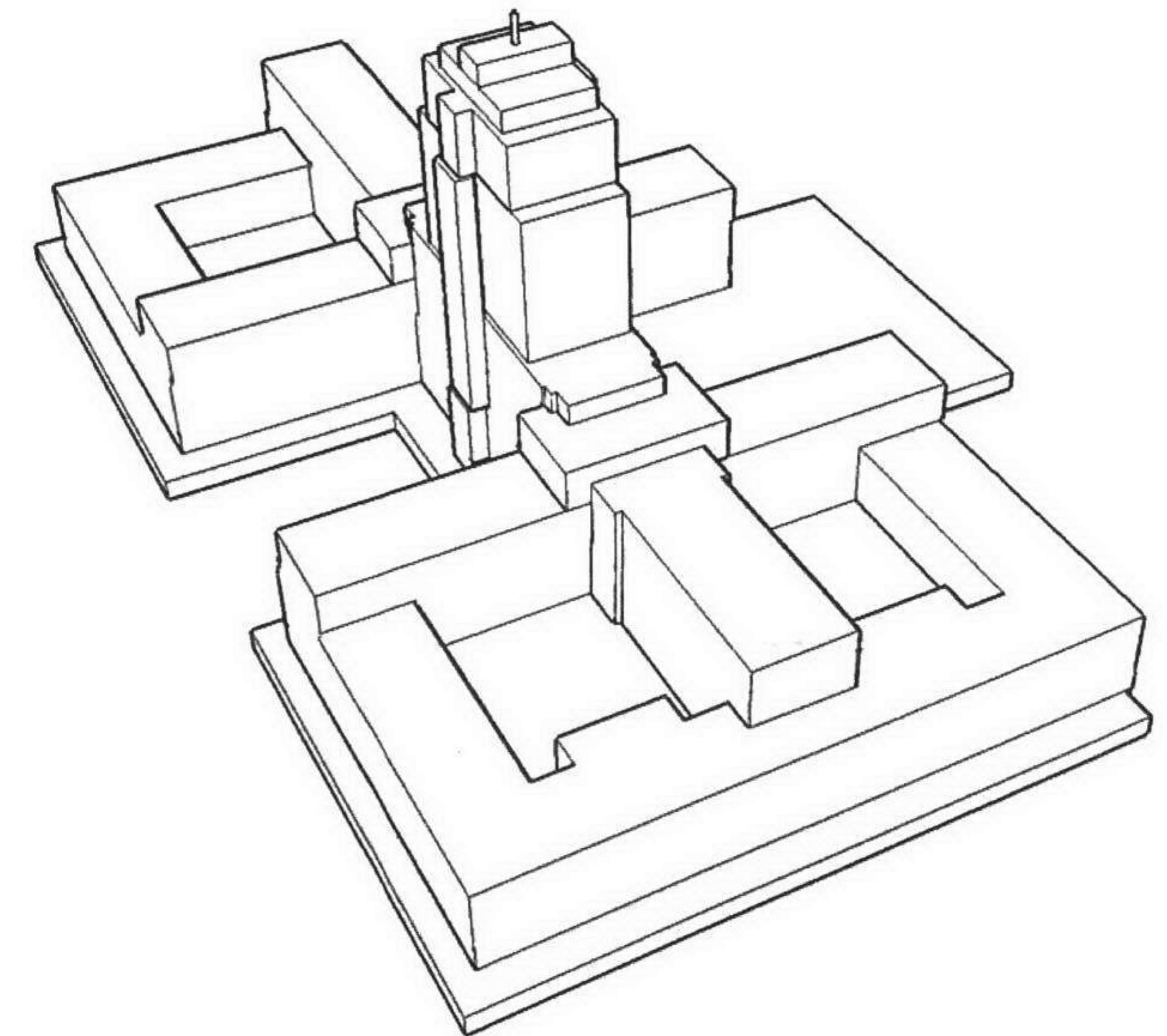
The works are necessary as they will firstly provide staff and students with state-of-the-art communication systems but secondly facilitate the removal of all unsightly surface cabling. The overall impact upon the building is positive.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Senate House is the principal building of the University of London in both functional and physical terms. It is divided into three main elements; the north block, south block and library tower. Aside from the library, a mixture of teaching and administrative staff occupy these elements.
- 1.2 Adjacent, and internally linked to Senate House, is Stewart House, a 1980's building that until 2004 was leased to Edexcel. With the expiry of that lease the opportunity presented itself to decant staff from Senate House to a refurbished Stewart House. This has, in turn, permitted Senate House itself to be refurbished. Upon completion of that refurbishment, staff from the numerous outlying Institutes will occupy Senate House. This will ensure that Senate House remains the University's academic focus.
- 1.3 To allow the refurbishment programme to take place a number of Enabling Works are required. Currently, all heating, ventilation, power and lighting services powered by electrical plant. The electrical installation dates back to the 1930's and health and safety concerns over recent years have required that a complete rewire of the building is undertaken to provide a safe / regulation compliant installation. As part of the rewire there are opportunities to provide improvements in power, data, lighting, fire alarm, emergency lighting and heating systems. This will provide the University with a modern facility appropriate to the function of the Senate House building as a major academic and research centre.
- 1.4 The Enabling Works include partial removal of existing power and data services, surveys to establish the feasibility of rewiring using original

conduit containment and building chases, installation of temporary supplies to maintain services to occupied areas, trial rewiring of a typical area, and the formation of new risers and basement trenches that provide the primary distribution routes for the new power and data systems.

- 1.5 The rewiring also allows the removal of services equipment and distribution systems that have been added to the building in a piecemeal fashion. These detrimentally affect the spatial quality of the building. By careful design, the rewiring will utilise the floor voids and the original cableways that Holden formed through the structure, both horizontally and vertically, to allow the new systems to be integrated into the building fabric.
- 1.6 Following advice from LB Camden's conservation officers, the majority of these works was not felt to affect the special interest of the building and consequently did not require the benefit of listed building consent. However, two items were identified as needing formal consent:
 - The alterations to the existing and formation of new trenches to the basement; and
 - The insertion of risers.



2. HERITAGE DESIGNATION AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

- 2.1 Senate House was placed on the statutory list of buildings of architectural and historic interest on 28 March 1969, being given Grade II* status. The list description is attached as Appendix A.

The National policy context

Planning Policy Guidance Note 15

- 2.2 Government Guidance on the historic environment, including guidance on development affecting listed buildings, is given in Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 (PPG15), 'Planning and the Historic Environment'.
- 2.3 The Guidance makes it clear that applicants for listed building consent must be able to justify their proposals. They will need to show why works that would affect the character of a listed building are desirable or necessary (para 3.4).
- 2.4 It outlines the issues that are generally relevant to the consideration of all listed building consent applications. These are:
- "i. the importance of the building, its intrinsic architectural and historic interest and rarity, in both national and local terms ('historic interest' is further explained in paragraph 6.11);*
 - ii. the particular physical features of the building (which may include its design, plan, materials or location) which justify its inclusion in the list: list descriptions may draw attention to features of particular interest or value, but they are not exhaustive and other features of importance (eg. interiors) may come to light after the building's inclusion in the list;*

- 2.5 The guidance advises that the best way of securing the upkeep of historic buildings and areas is to keep them in active use (para 3.8) and that the best use will very often be the use for which the building was originally designed (para 3.10).

- 2.6 In judging the effect of any alteration or extension we have been mindful of para 3.12 which states,

"it is essential to have assessed the elements that make up the special interest of the building in question. They may comprise not only obvious visual features such as a decorative facade or, internally, staircases or decorated plaster ceilings, but the spaces and layout of the building and the archaeological or technological interest of the surviving structure and surfaces."

- 2.7 The guidance highlights that many listed buildings can sustain some degree of sensitive alteration or extension to accommodate continuing or new uses (para 3.13). It significantly notes that the merit of some new alterations or additions, especially where they are generated within a secure and committed long-term ownership, should not be discounted. (para 3.13)

- 2.8 It is appreciated that,

"achieving a proper balance between the special interest of a listed building and proposals for alterations or extensions is demanding...but it is rarely impossible, if reasonable flexibility and imagination are shown by all parties involved. Thus, a better solution may be possible if a local planning authority is prepared to apply normal development control policies flexibly; or if an applicant is willing to exploit unorthodox spaces rather than set a

standardised requirement; " (para 3.15)

- 2.9 Appendix C provides more detailed advice relating to specific works to listed buildings. It notes that each historic building has its own characteristics which are usually related to an original or subsequent function. It suggests that these should as far as possible be respected when proposals for alterations are put forward (para C2).
- 2.10 Para C58 explains that the plan of a building is one of its most important characteristics. It notes that interior plans and individual features of interest should be respected and left unaltered as far as possible. Internal spaces, staircases, panelling, window shutters, doors and doorcases, mouldings, decorated ceilings, stucco-work, and wall-decorations are part of the special interest of a building and may be its most valuable feature.
- 2.11 Para C69 is of particular significance to this application as it concerns the introduction of services. It notes that these can be detrimental to the structure, appearance and character of a building. In particular, long runs of surface wiring and any external gas piping should be avoided unless chasing-in would destroy historic fabric. The introduction of new services to historic interiors must also be handled with care, and any false floors or ceilings for concealing services, computer trunking, fibre optics, central heating etc, should be reversible, and not entail alterations to other features such as doors or skirtings.

The Regional policy context

The London Plan (February 2004)

- 2.12 Policy 4B.11 on Heritage conservation states that Boroughs should encourage and facilitate inclusive solutions to providing access for all.
- 2.13 Policy 3A.22 on higher and further education states that the Mayor and the boroughs should work with the LDA and the higher and further education sectors to ensure that the needs of the education sectors are addressed in Sub-Regional Development Frameworks and in UDPs. This will include:
- promoting policies aimed at supporting and maintaining London's international reputation as a centre of excellence in higher education;
 - taking account of the future development needs of the sector, including the provision of new facilities and potential for expansion of existing provision recognising the particular requirements of Higher Education Institutions for key locations with good public transport access, and having regard to their sub-regional and regional sphere of operation; and
 - recognising the distinctive locational and access needs of Further Education establishments.

The local policy context

- 2.14 London Borough of Camden, Replacement Unitary Development Plan, Adopted June 2006

Paragraph 8.18 recognises that:

The University of London and its constituent Colleges have a sizeable presence within the Borough, particularly the Central London Area. They, and other educational institutions, play a significant part in London's role as an international centre for higher education, and have an important influence on their surrounding areas. The Council will support the future growth in the University, its Colleges, and other educational institutions in a way that is sensitive to its surroundings and maintains the amenity of existing residential communities in Central London.

- 2.15 Policy B-6 (Listed Buildings) seeks to preserve or enhance the character of listed buildings as buildings of special architectural or historic interest. It notes that the Council will only grant listed building consent for:

"b) alterations ... to a listed building where it considers this would not cause harm to the special interest of the building."

- 2.16 Para 3.58 states that the Council will control ... internal works that affect their special architectural or historic interest and character. It will take into account paragraphs 3.5, 3.12 - 3.15 and Annex C: Guidance on Alterations to Listed Buildings of PPG15.

- 2.17 Para 3.59 repeats the advice contained within PPG15,

"The best way of securing the upkeep of historic buildings is to keep them in active use. The best use for a historic building is usually the use for which the building was originally designed, and wherever possible this should continue or be reintroduced if at all possible."

- 2.18 It is relevant to note that where the Council consider proposals would cause harm to the special interests of a building, for example through the loss of important architectural features, changes to the original plan form, layout or structural integrity of the building these will be,

"resisted, unless there are other overriding considerations."

3. UNDERSTANDING THE ASSET

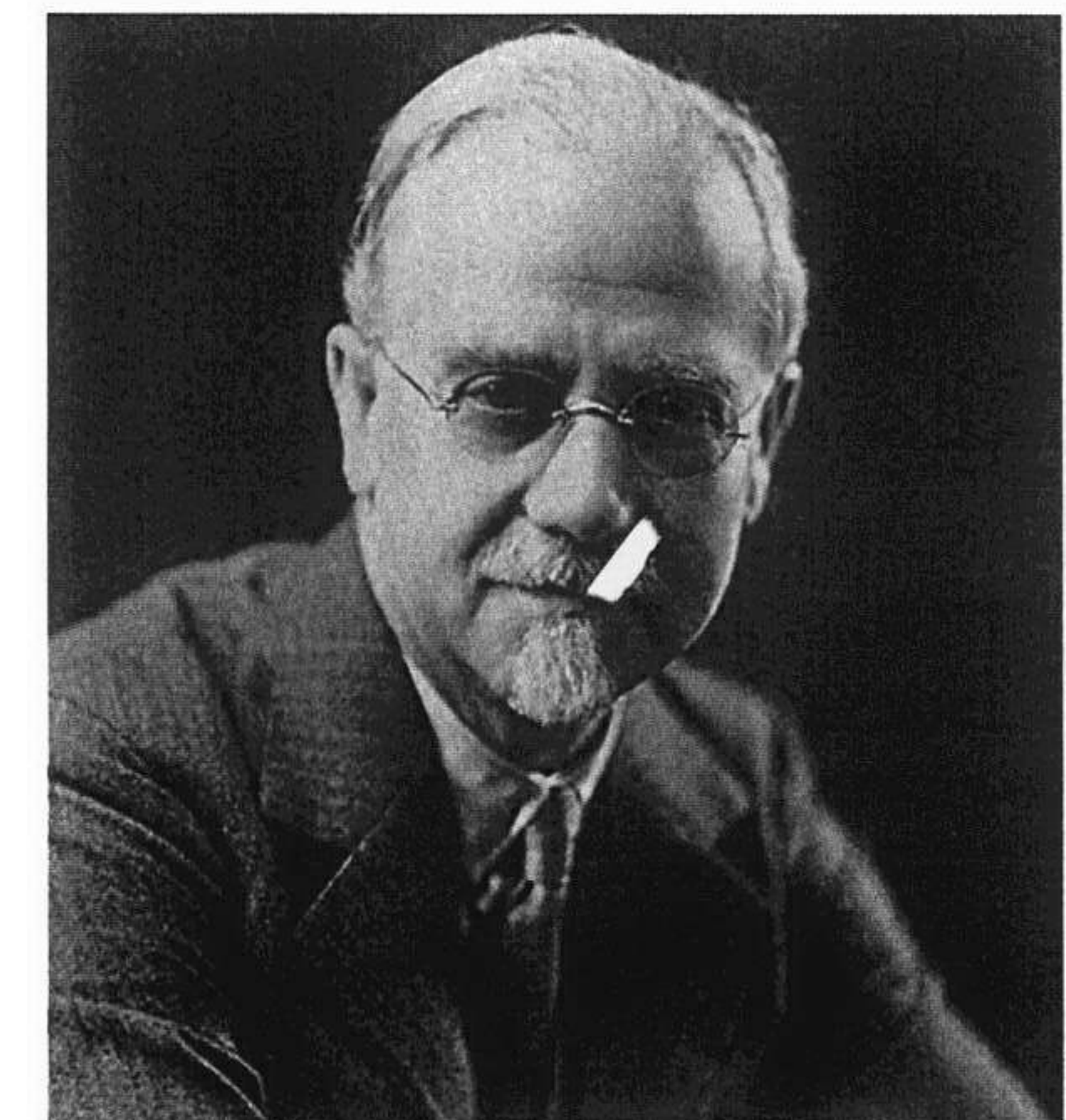


Historical Development

- 3.1 The University of London was founded by Royal Charter in 1836 and is the third oldest University in England.
- 3.2 The constant growth of the University meant a transient early history. A variety of locations including Somerset House, Marlborough House, Burlington House, a new building in Burlington Gardens (now owned by the Royal Academy of Arts), and the Imperial Institute in Kensington were quickly outgrown or failed to adequately serve the University's needs.
- 3.3 In 1909, The Haldan Commission was set up to examine the University's structure. The Commission declared that the University's accommodation was inadequate and that,
"...its remoteness has occasioned much inconvenience and loss of time to those who are concerned with the working of the University, and has exercised a harmful effect on its development".
- 3.4 In 1921, the government bought 11 acres of land in Bloomsbury from the Duke of Bedford. Under the persuasion of the Vice Chancellor William Beveridge, and the donation of £40m by the Rockefeller Foundation, the site for Senate House was acquired by the University in 1927.
- 3.5 The University needed a permanent home that could facilitate its vision to become the,
"university for the nation and the world, drawing from overseas as many students as Oxford and Cambridge and all other English Universities together".

- 3.6 A working brief was drawn up by Henry Lanchester for the appointment of an architect. This memorandum, entitled 'Instructions relating to an Architectural Design' dated 2 April 1931, contained a number of themes that were critically important the needs of the University:

- to be distinct from Oxford and Cambridge;
- to have a physical sense of solidity, durability and a landmark presence; and
- to have an internal layout that would accommodate changing future needs.



Charles Holden

- 3.7 Charles Holden won the commission, principally on the success of his London Transport Headquarters, and began to design develop a series of alternative proposals. The finalised plans envisaged a series of buildings far exceeding the extent of the existing building; a dominating series of buildings from the British Museum to

Byng Place comprising 17 courtyards and 2 towers.

- 3.8 The first part of the scheme for Senate House, as built today, was approved in 1932. By 1937, all the other plans had been abandoned. At the time,



this was probably the most significant building in London; it was the tallest except for St. Paul's Cathedral and was referred to as 'London's first skyscraper'. This created the desired distinction between the University and Oxbridge.

4. ASSESSING SIGNIFICANCE

General Significance

- 4.1 Senate House is unquestionably a building of national architectural and historical importance. Its status as a Grade II* listed building is a simple confirmation of this. There is debate as to whether the building is the finest example of Holden's work. It is certainly the project to which his office devoted the greatest amount of time. Holden himself was working on the building from his appointment until his death in 1960.
- 4.2 In architectural terms, the building exemplifies Holden's principle of,
"When in doubt, leave it out."



- 4.3 Externally, the building is dominated by the tower. This sits in the building's centre upon a base of four larger floors. The granite ground floor façade gives the building a sense of permanence. The proportions of solid Portland Stone to fenestration openings has a simple

regimented rhythm. This is enhanced by the simple detailing.

- 4.4 Its judicious use of ornamentation, boldness and sense of permanence are typical of Holden's work. The building's success comes from not only its appearance but also the nature of its construction. The University realised that to create a permanent home required a building that was well constructed and durable but also one that was able to accommodate change. Accordingly, Holden rejected steel frame construction in favour of load bearing external walls.
- 4.5 Senate House embodies Holden's beliefs in what architecture should be;

"I discovered the significance of form as distinct from the tricks of architectural ornament. The building would take on a character of its own often requiring little in the way of embellishment and finally confirmed my slogan 'when in doubt leave it out'...I don't seek for a style, either ancient or modern.

I want an architecture which is through and through a good building. A building planned for a specific purpose, constructed in the method and use of materials, old or new, most appropriate to the purpose the building has to serve." (The Kind of Architecture we want in Britain, Charles Holden, 1957)

- 4.6 Internally, the building has a number of easily definable areas of great importance that provide the sense of durability, longevity and gravitas of the institution. These are spaces of significance in terms of decoration, size, function and location. Of particular interest are the William Beveridge, Macmillan and Chancellor's Halls, the Senate

room, Court room and anterooms. These rooms largely remain intact. All have a quality of finish and level of detail in their design that suggests an intention of permanence.

- 4.7 The large floors of the first, second and third floors feature partitioned office and teaching spaces. These spaces are simpler in character and have been much altered through the building's history. They are generally characterised by their teak floors, high ceilings, white glass pendant lights, tall windows, simple detailing of the natural wooden doors and frames and Travertine radiator panels on the perimeter walls.

- 4.8 Holden was tasked with designing a building that could accommodate change through a flexible internal plan and a services supply that could be adapted without the need for extensive and costly alterations. He noted,

"The building which I have in mind is one that will be built substantially and will have all the services...permanently installed-the remainder of the floorspace would be in the form of a shell which would be capable of infinite variety of subdivision by means of light partitions."

- 4.9 Holden's power distribution solution at floor level to facilitate this flexibility was simple and innovative. The majority of floors were 28 mm thick solid Senate House from the South West teak timber strip floors supported off the slab on softwood joists. The void below was designed at approximately 200mm. On the column lines there were paired up stand beams at approximately 2725mm centres. Across the width of a floor plate, Holden introduced cast in conduit into the up stand beams at six or seven

4. ASSESSING SIGNIFICANCE

locations depending upon the width of the floor plate. At these locations, Holden designed the teak floorboards to be accessible as can be seen from the drawings below.

Particular Elements

High significance

4.10 The Listed Building Management Guidelines produced by Adams Holden Pearson Partnership in June 2004 identifies elements of the building considered to be of greatest significance. These are listed below:

Exterior

- restricted palette of high quality materials, reductive detailing and lack of ornament
- symmetrical composition of the blocks and tapering profile of the tower
- landmark significance from neighbouring streets and in distant views
- repetitive rhythm, pattern and proportion of the metal framed windows and doors
- glazed 'slot' at the junction between the north and south blocks with the tower, created by the large multi-paned windows with semi-circular heads.
- balconies and painted wrought iron balustrades
- cast lead rainwater hoppers and down pipes with gilded crest and dates
- decorative cast and gilded spandrel panels and backlit canopies on the tower

- low parapet walls enclosing the basement areas around the external perimeter
- painted wrought iron railings and gates with stone piers and sleeper walls, around the perimeter of the site, enclosing areas of grass and ground cover planting
- external light fittings and floodlighting of the tower

Interior

- entrance vestibule below the tower, including natural and artificial lighting
- formal circulation spaces on the ground and first floors, including north and south



entrance halls, galleried ceremonial hall and processional staircase in south block.

- absence of bright colours and ornate

textures

- wide corridors in the wings with plain decoration, simple mouldings and lighting
- general staircases, including landings and low balustrade walls moulded and clad in terrazzo with cast bronze handrails
- 'public' rooms on the ground and first floors of south block, including William Beveridge Hall and Macmillans (formerly the Macmillan



Hall), Chancellor's Hall, Senate room, Court room and anterooms.

- library entrance hall and catalogue areas, special collection and reading rooms on the fourth floor.
- integrated services, including heating panels and riser ducts adjacent to windows
- internal courtyard areas
- original furniture and fittings in the public rooms, ceremonial areas and library

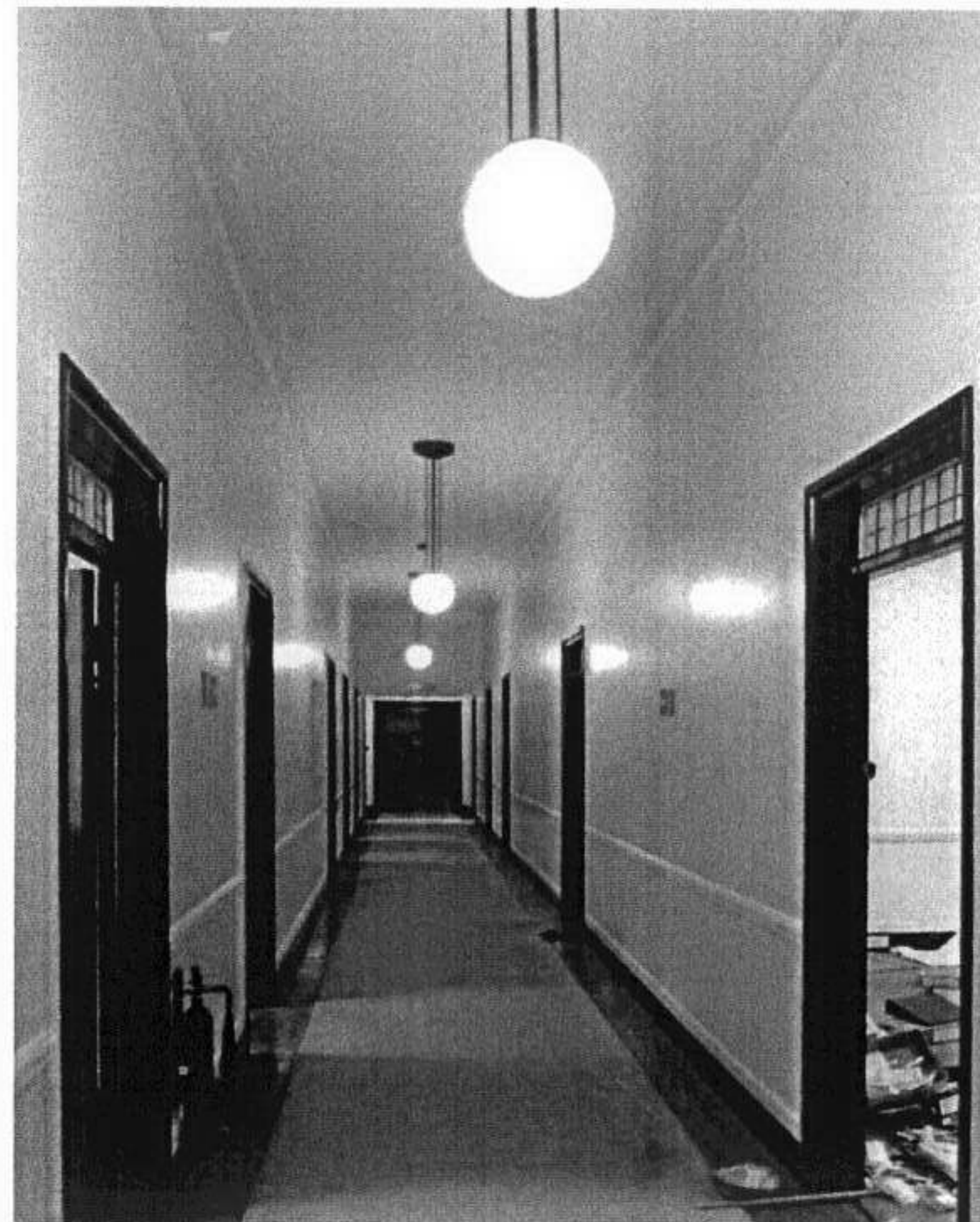
Medium significance

4.11 The majority of the floors contain subdivided office spaces and lecturers' studies. These subdivisions have been made as and when required over the course of the building's history. There is a variety in terms of the success with which this has been handled. It is evident that attention to subtle detail is lacking in much of the later work. However, these still retain a 'sense of belonging' to the building.

4.12 Within these areas of medium significance there is variation in terms of relative importance. For example the quality of finish to a number of the first floor rooms is clearly of a higher order than those of the third floor.

Low significance

4.13 The areas felt to be of low importance and least sensitive to change are the basement and the



upper floor of the library tower. These spaces are

utilitarian in nature and contain few decorative elements. That is not to suggest that they are without significance. The plainness of their detailing is an important factor for consideration when understanding the building's architectural order.

