

**UNIVERSITY OF LONDON**

**SENATE HOUSE, PHASES 1 AND 2**

**ACCESS STATEMENT**

**DECEMBER 2006**

**TURLEY**

## CONTENTS

1. Policy Background	1
2. Senate House: History and Use	4
3. Summary of Existing Access: South Block	6
4. Professional Advice Taken and Technical Standards	8
5. Design Development and Consultations Undertaken	9
6. Access Proposals	10
7. Departures from Best Practice	12
8. Management and Maintenance Policies	13
9. Longer Term Improvements	14

### Appendices:

#### Appendix 1 – References

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## **1. Policy Background**

### **Equal Opportunities Policy**

1.1 The following is an extract from the University's Equal Opportunities Policy:

*"The policy of the central University is that in all its dealings with actual or potential students, staff, those to whom it seeks to offer a service, or those from whom it seeks to require a service, the primary consideration should be that the individual/organisation meets or is likely to meet the requirements of the programme, course, post, contract or service agreement. Such assessments must be made on merit and judged by reference to the skills, abilities, qualifications, aptitude and potential of the individual/organisation.*

*On this basis, the University will take all reasonable steps to ensure that no actual or potential student, employee, or other contact or visitor will suffer unfair discrimination on the basis of gender, race, colour, ethnic origin, nationality, disability, sexual orientation, marital status, parental status, caring responsibilities, age, social origins, political opinion or association, trade union membership and activities, religious or similar philosophical beliefs, or other beliefs/lawful preferences privately held on any matter".*

### **University Disability Statement**

1.2 The following is an extract from the Overview of the University's Disability Statement on the University web site:

*"Potential students who have a disability are encouraged to apply to the University of London. The University and its constituent Colleges and Institutes are all committed to providing first-class educational opportunities to anyone who could benefit from them.*

*... the University is striving to ensure that all of its premises and facilities are accessible in the widest sense. A programme prioritizing any building work has been established, with appropriate funding provision, to enable the central University to meet its responsibilities under the DDA".*

## Inclusive Environments

1.3 The University of London is committed to the principles of inclusive design and to achieving an inclusive environment for its students, staff and visitors.

1.4 An inclusive environment has been defined as:

*"...one that can be used by everyone, regardless of age, gender or disability. It is made up of many elements such as society's and individual's attitudes, the design of products and communications and the design of the built environment itself. It recognises and accommodates differences in the way people use the built environment and provides solutions that enable all of us to participate in mainstream activities equally, independently, with choice and with dignity".<sup>1</sup>*

1.3.3 The Mayor of London supports the creation of inclusive environments. The London Plan states:

*"The Mayor will require all future development to meet the highest standards of accessibility and inclusion. UDP policies should integrate and adopt the following principles of inclusive design that will require that developments:*

*can be used safely and easily by as many people as possible without undue effort, separation or special treatment  
offer the freedom to choose and the ability to participate equally in the development's mainstream activities  
value diversity and difference".<sup>2</sup>*

1.5 The Mayor favours the "social model of disability" as a means of achieving inclusive environments: Accessible London, (London Plan supplementary guidance) observes:

*"Society is organised in a way that takes little or no account of people who have impairments. Barriers such as poor design, inadequate information or discriminatory attitudes can exclude people who have impairments. If disabled people are to participate in mainstream society, which is their human right, the way society is organised must be changed. Removing these externally imposed barriers will bring about this change".<sup>3</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> ODPM Planning and access for disabled people: a good practice guide, 2004, para 3.1.1

<sup>2</sup> London Plan, Policy 4B.5 Creating an inclusive environment.

<sup>3</sup> Greater London Authority; Accessible London, para 1.1.1

- 1.6 It can be seen therefore that the design of buildings is moving away from the separate provision for people with disabilities, to a more inclusive model. This document aims to demonstrate how inclusive design principles have been taken account of in the design of the refurbishment of Senate House, and how inclusion will be maintained and managed when the building is in use.

## 2. Senate House: History and Use

- 2.1 Senate House is located between Malet Street and Russell Square. It is a late work of Charles Holden (1875-1960) one of the most renowned British architects of the early twentieth century and inter-War period.<sup>4</sup> It is an example of Holden's pared-down classical style, executed in Portland stone, built between 1931 and 1937. Senate House is listed Grade II\*.
- 2.2 The building houses the central administrative and ceremonial functions of London University as well as the university library and academic departments. The central library tower is a prominent feature on the Bloomsbury skyline. The north and south blocks are of a similar scale to surrounding Georgian terraces. There is an open loggia at the base of the tower, with a public right of way through from Malet Street to Russell Square.
- 2.3 The principal entrances to the north and south blocks are within the loggia. Other entrances are located around the periphery of the building. The ground floor was set approximately 1m below the level of the surrounding ground level, so all entrances are stepped, either internally or externally. The most significant access challenges being faced at the present time arise from Holden's decision to sink the ground floor in this way.
- 2.4 The south block contains the main Beveridge and Macmillan Halls on the ground floor and the Lord Chancellor's Hall and principal administrative offices on the first floor. Other floors contain general offices and departmental accommodation, with the examination hall in the basement.
- 2.5 The Library is located in the tower, entered on the fourth floor, extending through the fifth, sixth and seventh floors. Books are stored in the upper floors of the tower. As part of the forthcoming refurbishment, the library will be extended down to the third floor, although still entered on the fourth.
- 2.6 The south block is connected to Stewart House in the basement, and on the ground and second floors. (Stewart House was refurbished in 2005, and was the subject of a separate Access Statement.) The second floor of Stewart House and Senate House can function as one continuous departmental unit.

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<sup>4</sup> Other notable buildings by Holden include: Bristol Reference Library; Bristol Royal Infirmary; the BMA building, Strand; Law Society extension, Chancery Lane; London Transport Headquarters, 55 Broadway; Underground stations on the Northern and Piccadilly lines and St Luke's Hospital, Malta.

- 2.7 As part of the forthcoming project, the University intends to bring access provision at Senate House up to current best practice guidance, or as close as the constraints of the project and listed building will allow.



### **3. Summary of Existing Access: South Block**

- 3.1 The forecourt on the east (Russell Square) side is in a poor condition. There are no designated accessible parking bays near the entrance.
- 3.2 There are entrance steps down into the entrance loggia on the east and west sides, which are not in accordance with current best practice. For instance, there are no handrails or tactile warning surfaces.
- 3.3 There are temporary ramps over the steps into the entrance loggia on the east and west sides. The temporary ramps are not in accordance with current best practice, being at a steep gradient and without handrails.
- 3.4 The main entrance into the south block is via a pair of double swing double doors, operated manually. These are followed by an inner revolving door with an automated pass door to the side, operated by push button.
- 3.5 The reception desk in the entrance hall has lowered sections, allowing easy access and clear lines of sight. However there is no induction loop.
- 3.6 There is a pair of lifts serving floors 1-4. The lift cars are of a generally good standard with some years of service life remaining. However there is no voice announcement in the cars or on the lift landings.
- 3.7 The main stair, Stair A, is generally of a good standard, with good visual contrast to nosings (of inlaid mosaic) and handrails which are continuous at landings. Light levels are generally good.
- 3.8 Standard male and female WC's are located in two principal areas: i) adjacent to the lift and stair core and ii) in the south range of the south block, entered from the half landings of staircases 2 & 3.
- 3.9 There is a unisex accessible WC on the ground floor adjacent to Stair 1, installed a number of years ago. The university has also recently installed unisex accessible WC's on the second and third floors, adjacent to the lift lobby, and in the library on the fourth floor. These are of a good standard.
- 3.10 There are no unisex accessible WC's in the basement or on the first floor. On floors where unisex accessible WC's are installed, travel distances exceed the recommended maximum of 40m from parts of the south block.



3.11 Signage is generally ad hoc and lacking a coherent strategy in terms of design and placement. There is a preponderance of temporary encapsulated signs put up in response to day to day requirements.

#### **4. Professional Advice Taken and Technical Standards**

- 4.1 The University has engaged the Building Design Partnership (BDP) as lead consultant for the refurbishment of Senate House and the Centre for Accessible Environments (CAE) as access consultant.
- 4.2 Scheme drawings produced by BDP were appraised by the CAE in February and March 2006. Detailed notes were circulated by CAE and subsequently discussed with University staff and BDP.
- 4.3 Technical standards. The drawings were appraised in terms of the following standards and other references:
  - i) British Standards Institute, BS8300:2001: Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people – Code of Practice;
  - ii) Approved Document Part M (2004 Edition) Access to and use of buildings;
  - iii) Centre for Accessible Environments, Designing for Accessibility, 2004.

## **5. Design Development and Consultations Undertaken**

- 5.1 The University will shortly be commencing a phased refurbishment of Senate House. Phase 1 will be the enabling works for electrical rewiring, including the switch room and transformer. Phase 2 will be the refurbishment of the south block and principal (entrance) floor of the library on the fourth floor. Phase 3 will be the refurbishment of the remainder of the library. Phase 4 will be the refurbishment of the north block and upgrading of external areas.
- 5.2 The phased redevelopment will mean that some access enhancements will be temporary in the early phases, to be replaced by permanent features later on. In particular, the access ramps within the entrance loggia to be installed in Phase 2 will be new "add on" ramps, overlaying the existing steps. These ramps will be replaced by a permanent installation in Phase 4.
- 5.3 In general, the desirability of making permanent physical alterations, rather than renewal of temporary fixtures is recognised, e.g. at external or internal entrances. This reflects an awareness that rights of access given to disabled people by the DDA is itself a permanent change in society, which will be reflected in changes to the physical fabric of buildings and urban spaces.
- 5.4 Access Group. There is no formally constituted Access Group at London University to test the proposals before a specialist user group. However the proposals will be reviewed by the University's disability co-ordinator.

## **6. Access Proposals**

- 6.1 The following access enhancements will be provided during the course of Phases 1 & 2 of the Senate House refurbishment.

### **External and entrance**

- 6.2 New ramps at the east and west loggia entrances to replace the existing steep ramps. The new ramps will be at an acceptable gradient with handrails, and in accordance with current best practice design guidance as far as possible. The new ramps will be temporary features whilst permanent modifications to the loggia, an important historic feature of the building, are considered for implementation in Phase 3 or 4.
- 6.3 Highlighting (repainting) the access sign on the push pad controlling the automated inner pass door. (The push pad is currently hard to see.)

### **Circulation: Vertical and Horizontal**

- 6.4 Renewal of the lighting system. In particular light levels in the platform lift on the first floor up to Lord Chancellor's Hall (currently poor) will be improved.
- 6.5 A new signage system. New signage is being provided as a separate contract, following on the main refurbishment contract.

### **WC Provision etc**

- 6.6 Provision of unisex accessible WC in the basement, subject to outcome of a feasibility study concerning location, servicing etc.
- 6.7 Adjustments to ground floor unisex accessible WC, including additional grab rails, repositioning of lever handle to cistern, and adjustments to location of soap dispenser, dryer etc. (See drawing appraisal notes of 28<sup>th</sup> May 2005.)
- 6.8 Provision of unisex accessible WC on the first floor, subject to outcome of a feasibility study. The most likely location would appear to be the former butler's pantry, now surplus to requirements.
- 6.9 Provision of an accessible shower facility, either integral with a unisex accessible WC or as a separate facility.

6.10 Grab rails fitted in a minimum of one standard male and female WC per floor.

## **Communications**

6.11 Provision of an induction loop at the reception desk in the entrance hall.

6.12 Induction loop systems will be installed in each of the lecture and seminar rooms e.g. those in the south block on the ground floor. NB: it was found during the Stewart House refurbishment that induction loop systems can be configured so that the system in individual rooms does not interfere with the system in adjacent rooms, so this system will be used in Senate House.

## **Means of Escape**

6.13 Systems will be put in place for the evacuation of for staff, students and visitors who may require assistance of have special needs.

6.14 Vibrating pagers will be provided to people with hearing impairments, to give alert of fire alarms and to provide information on evacuation.

6.15 Fire refuges will be established in on every floor, for use by wheelchair users and others not able to make use of the fire escape stairs.

6.16 There are two proposed locations for refuges:

- i) The main lift lobby adjacent to Stair 1. This location is selected in preference to Stair 1 itself as there is insufficient space within the stair.
- ii) The south corridor adjacent to Stairs 2 and 3. Again the location is selected in preference to the stairs due to space restrictions.

6.17 Refuges will be clearly identified with signs and will be equipped with two-way intercom facilities. Precise arrangements for the refuges are being finalised in some areas, in discussion with the fire authorities and fire consultant.

## **7. Departures from Best Practice**

### **Automation of Main Entrance Doors**

- 7.1 It was initially thought desirable to automate the outer pair of entrance doors, currently operated manually. However on further investigation, it is considered that automating these doors would be impractical. In particular, the frequency of usage would mean that the doors will be open almost continuously, causing draughts and comfort issues for staff the reception, as well as excessive wear & tear on the door opening mechanism.

### **Placement of Unisex Accessible WCs.**

- 7.2 The provision of one unisex accessible WC per floor, in the vicinity of the lift core, will leave some office areas and seminar rooms on the south side of the south block more than 40m from a unisex accessible WC. However, Approved Document M (para 5.10, h. i) states that a case for distances greater than 40m can be argued in the Access Statement.
- 7.3 It is felt that the introduction of a unisex accessible WC on the south side of the south block presents difficulties in terms of alternations to the fabric of the listed building. With the exception of the ground floor, existing WC's here are located on half landings of stairs and so could not be adapted. Converting the existing WC on the ground floor would require a new opening from the corridor due to restricted access into the WC via the stair well.
- 7.4 Given the large rooms in the south block, with relatively low occupancy, it is considered that there would be insufficient demand to justify the provision of additional unisex accessible WC's in this area. Additionally, circulation from this area to the lift and WC core is straightforward and direct. Consideration is being given to the having some corridor doors held open on electro-magnetic catches to improve access e.g. on the central north south spine corridor.

### **Upgrading of Lifts**

- 7.5 The existing lift cars will remain in use and will be replaced at the end of their design life in approximately 5-10 years. It is considered bespoke adjustments such as introduction of voice announcement in the lift cars, carried out at this time, will not be cost effective.

## **8. Management and Maintenance Policies**

- 8.1 The building will be audited periodically by the University's access consultant, and further access improvements incorporated if required.
- 8.2 This Access Statement will also be periodically reviewed and kept up to date as a "live" management document.
- 8.3 Particular attention will be paid to the demand for unisex accessible WC's. The decision (7.2.0 above) not to provide unisex accessible WC's in the south block will be reviewed in the light of experience of the building in use; for example the usage of the seminar rooms on the ground floor. Additional facilities will be provided in the south block should this prove necessary.
- 8.4 Demand for standard WC's will also be reviewed against best practice guidance and alterations made as necessary.



## **9. Longer Term Improvements**

- 9.1 Designated accessible parking spaces will provided as part of a reorganisation of the parking and delivery area, if part of the forthcoming project.
- Lift cars will be renewed when they reach the end of their design life, in approximately 5-10 years.

## References

British Standards Institute, BS8300:2001: Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people – Code of Practice.

Centre for Accessible Environments, *Designing for Accessibility*; an essential guide for public buildings, 2004 edition.

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