

Design Proposals

An outline description of the proposals to the South Stair, Central Saloon and Gallery 37 is identified below and illustrated with a comparison of the existing photographic views and their equivalent three dimensional visualisations on the following pages. This is followed by a more detailed description of the proposed scope of work to the building fabric. Details of the proposed structure and building services are identified in a following section together with separate reports issued by Alan Baxter & Associates and TGA.

- Restoration of the original 'Smirke' interiors including ceilings, roof lanterns and the original screen wall between the South Stair and Central Saloon.
- Opening up of the north screen wall to the South Portico lift lobby in order to incorporate three openings in lieu of the current single opening.
- New floor finishes in the Gallery 37, Central Saloon and South Portico lift lobby as indicated on the visualisations on the following pages.

A more detailed description of scope of work with regard to the building fabric in these spaces can be summarised as follows:

Ceilings:

- Removal of existing ceiling, lay light and fluorescent light fitting assembly in parallel to the proposed roof removal works above the South Stair. Replacement with a new ceiling and roof lantern in the original coffer and cross beam arrangement as interpreted from archive drawings and photographs. This will include the following:
 - Ceiling coffers and beams to be formed in modern plasterboard with applied detailed mouldings
 - New vertical apron to roof lantern opening to be formed in timber/plaster to replicate mouldings on existing aprons to Gallery 37.
 - Existing cornices and mouldings to be retained and repaired where necessary.
 - Ceiling area above South Stair to be decorated in polychrome colour scheme similar to that carried out during the Great Court Project.
- Removal of existing ceiling, including modern tiles, in parallel to the proposed roof removal works above the Central Saloon. Replacement with a new ceiling and roof lantern in the original coffer and cross beam arrangement as interpreted from archive drawings, photographs and to match the existing ceiling details in Gallery 37. This will include the following:

- Ceiling coffers and beams to be formed in modern plasterboard with applied detailed mouldings.
 - New vertical apron to roof lantern opening to be formed in timber/plaster to replicate mouldings on existing aprons to Gallery 37.
 - Existing cornices and mouldings to be retained and repaired where necessary.
 - Ceiling area above Central Saloon to be decorated in a neutral colour scheme. Final colour scheme to be developed and confirmed following results of historic paint analysis.
- Refurbishment of existing original ceiling above Gallery 37 to include the following:
 - New roof lantern on top of existing apron which also requires raising slightly relative to new roof level (as described in earlier section on roof areas).
 - Repair of existing original ceiling, cornices, mouldings and roof lantern apron, where necessary, following specialist condition survey.
 - Removal of two existing strips of flat modern ceiling running alongside and parallel to the walls adjacent to Galleries 38 and 68. Replacement with new coffered arrangement as indicated on 1931 survey drawing in this area.
 - Decoration of existing ceiling and apron in Gallery 37 in a neutral colour scheme. Final colour scheme to be developed and confirmed following results of historic paint analysis.

Walls:

- New lightweight dry-lined screen wall separating the South Stair and Central Saloon to include the following:
 - Careful removal of existing free standing handrails and stone plinths to top flight of steps, installed following post-war refurbishment works. Replacement with two new freestanding handrails matching original design following construction of new screen wall.
 - New pilasters on South Stair side of screen to relate to existing original pilaster arrangement and to match size and details shown on the historic record drawings.
 - Three new openings to match size and details shown on the historic record drawings and post bomb damage photographs. These include traditional stop bead details on the stair side, linings to reveals and architrave details, matching the existing doorways to Gallery 38 and 68, on the saloon side.

- New lightweight dry-lined screen wall separating the Central Saloon and South Portico lift lobby area to include the following:
 - Removal of existing modern dry lined wall and single opening into lobby area including existing access ladder up to lift motor room, formed as part of the recent Great Court project.
 - New screen wall to incorporate three new openings matching size and details of new openings proposed for adjacent new screen wall to South Stair. These include traditional stop bead details on the lobby side, linings to reveals and architrave details, matching the existing doorways to Gallery 38 and 68, on the saloon side.
 - New dropdown ladders through 2 no. existing ceiling access hatches within the lift lobby area. Adaptation/replacement of existing hatches may be required to allow full safe access from below.
- New cornices with 'console' detail above each of the central openings to both new screen walls and above the existing doorway to Gallery 40 (saloon side only). Details to match those above existing adjacent doorways to Gallery 38 and 68.
- Existing architrave around doorway to Gallery 40 (Central Saloon side) to be refurbished and repaired where necessary. Other elements of refurbishment and adaptation to this doorway are described in a later section relating to Gallery 40.
- Existing architrave and cornice above doorway to Gallery 38 (Gallery 37 side) to be refurbished and repaired where necessary. Other elements of refurbishment and adaptation to this doorway are described in a later section relating to Gallery 38.
- Existing doors, architraves, linings and cornice on both sides of doorway to Gallery 68 to be refurbished and repaired where necessary. Architrave, linings and cornice on Gallery 68 side to be adapted and extended into room with new wall surround to incorporate a 4 hour fire shutter, as required in the Museum's Fire Strategy plan.
- Repair of existing wall finishes, cornices and mouldings, where necessary, following specialist condition survey. This is to include 'making good' to match the existing adjacent finishes following localised installation of any new services and any additional fire stopping required to maintain 4 hour compartment line to Gallery 68 and Willoughby staircase.
- Remove modern timber skirtings (not original) to existing walls around the perimeter of the Central Saloon and Gallery 37 and make good to wall behind. Original plaster skirtings to base of pilasters to be retained and repaired where necessary.

- New decorations throughout all areas to include:
 - Redecoration to South Stair walls down to first cornice at top landing level to match polychrome scheme reinstated as part of the Great Court Project. This will include the element of the new screen wall and pilasters facing the stair.
 - Redecoration of Central Saloon and Gallery 37 in a neutral scheme. Final colour scheme to be developed and confirmed following results of historic paint analysis.
- Making good of existing walls and decorations within the Willoughby staircase and adjacent store.

Floors:

- Removal of all existing modern vinyl floor finishes and supporting plywood/timber substrata within the Central Saloon and Gallery 37.
- Removal of existing limestone flooring within the South Portico lift lobby installed as part of the Great Court Project.
- Careful localised removal of existing stone and concrete screed around base of circular columns between Central Saloon and Gallery 37.
- Replacement with new solid oak strip flooring with decorative insert in the Central Saloon and Gallery 37 as indicated on the proposed layout drawings. Final layout and pattern to be developed in the next stage of design development together with potential locations for recessed floor boxes for electrical services.
- New stone flooring, matching the existing in the South stair and Gallery 37, to be installed around the base of the existing circular columns, along the east and northern perimeter of the Central Saloon and through the new openings into the South Portico lift lobby.
- Existing stone flooring at top of South Stair and within Gallery 37 (including slate duct covers) to be repaired where necessary and carefully cleaned to an approved sample.

Appraisal of Design Proposals

The following is a summary appraisal of the proposals in the South Stair, Central Saloon and Gallery 37 in the context of the existing historic building, with particular reference to the Museum's Conservation Plan and the agreed conservation and design strategies for this project.

- In line with the Museum's Conservation Plan, the current proposal to reinstate the original ceilings, roof lantern configuration and screen wall in this area restores the 'coherence of the upper exhibition galleries' by reintroducing the scale, orientation and rhythm of the original 'Smirke' interiors. This also helps to reinforce the pivotal importance, hierarchy and spatial organisation of these spaces in the sequence of the upper galleries.

- The reinstatement of the screen wall plays an important part in helping to re-establish the original hierarchy and spatial sequence from the Front Entrance Hall, up the South Stair and into the Central Saloon. Although there is currently no specific brief for the use of this space the intention is that this will become an 'orientation' space linking through to the upper galleries at this level. The new screen wall helps to achieve this by providing:
 - A clear distinction between the South Stair, part of the main entrance space below, and the Central Saloon, an intermediate 'hub' or 'orientation' space linking through to the upper galleries.
 - A more satisfactory termination of the polychrome colour scheme, reinstated as part of the Great Court Project in the Front Entrance Hall below and up the South Stair, and further emphasising the distinction between the two spaces.
 - A stronger spatial relationship between Gallery 37 and the Central Saloon, reinforcing the north-south axis between these two spaces and the views into the Great Court.

- The South Portico lift lobby space currently appears detached from the Central Saloon and Gallery 37 even though there is an opening with views through into the Great Court beyond. Although no smaller than the doorway into Gallery 40, the relative dominance of the South Stair space within the Central Saloon significantly weakens this connection.

Similarly, even though it provides access to the main public lifts on this side of the Museum, the lift lobby area (pg.21) has the feel of a residual corridor off the main circulation route and is quite easily missed when passing through the Central Saloon.

The proposals to open up this lobby with three new openings, detailed as the adjacent new staircase screen wall, aim to improve the spatial relationship with the Central Saloon and more effectively incorporate this space as part of a reinforced north-south axis with improved orientation towards the Great Court.

- The reinstatement of the original 'Smirke' interiors in this area includes details such as the doorway cornices (with console detail) above the central opening to the new staircase screen wall and the existing doorway into Gallery 40. These would match the existing original cornices above the doorways to Galleries 38 and 68. The introduction of a cornice of the same design above the central doorway to South Portico lift lobby would complete the arrangement and further help to emphasise the views into the Great Court.

- The current proposals aim to generally refurbish any existing historic features and reinstate those which may have been lost. These include the elements of joinery which form part of the doorways into the adjacent galleries. Whilst the most of these details appear intact on the Central Saloon and Gallery 37 side, there is a requirement, as part of the Museum's overall Fire Safety Plan, to incorporate a 4 hour fire shutter into the doorway leading to Gallery 68. A similar shutter has been previously incorporated into the equivalent door directly below at ground level (pg.43)

In order to retain the original door leaves and reveals and to avoid alterations to the existing structural lintels above, this will involve building out the surrounding wall on the Gallery 68 side by about 200mm to allow incorporation of this shutter. As part of this, the existing reveal will also need to be adapted and extended and the architrave and cornice above moved out onto the face of the new surround. The typical detail of this will be similar to the drawing on page 43 which shows how the proposed new glazed doors are to be incorporated into the existing doorways in Galleries 38 and 40.

- The proposals for the new floor finishes within the Central Saloon can be seen on the three dimensional visualisations (pg.29) and are primarily based on the evidence indicated on archive photographs, both before and after the Second World War bomb damage. These clearly indicate timber strip flooring throughout, although the current proposal may also introduce a decorative insert around the perimeter. A detailed layout of this will be developed in the next stage of design.

It is, however, not clear if there was ever a continuous stone border around the Central Saloon as is still evident in Gallery 37. Although further sub-floor investigations may help to confirm this, major structural work to this floor after the war may have altered the original supporting arrangement and the design team will need to review whether it is possible and practical to incorporate a stone border in this space.

The current proposals (pg.29) indicate a thin stone (matching the South Stair and Gallery 37) border around the Central Saloon formed by the existing stone tread (top step) on the west side, the existing stone or screed border at the base of the columns on the south side and new stone borders on the east and north side, completing the perimeter arrangement.

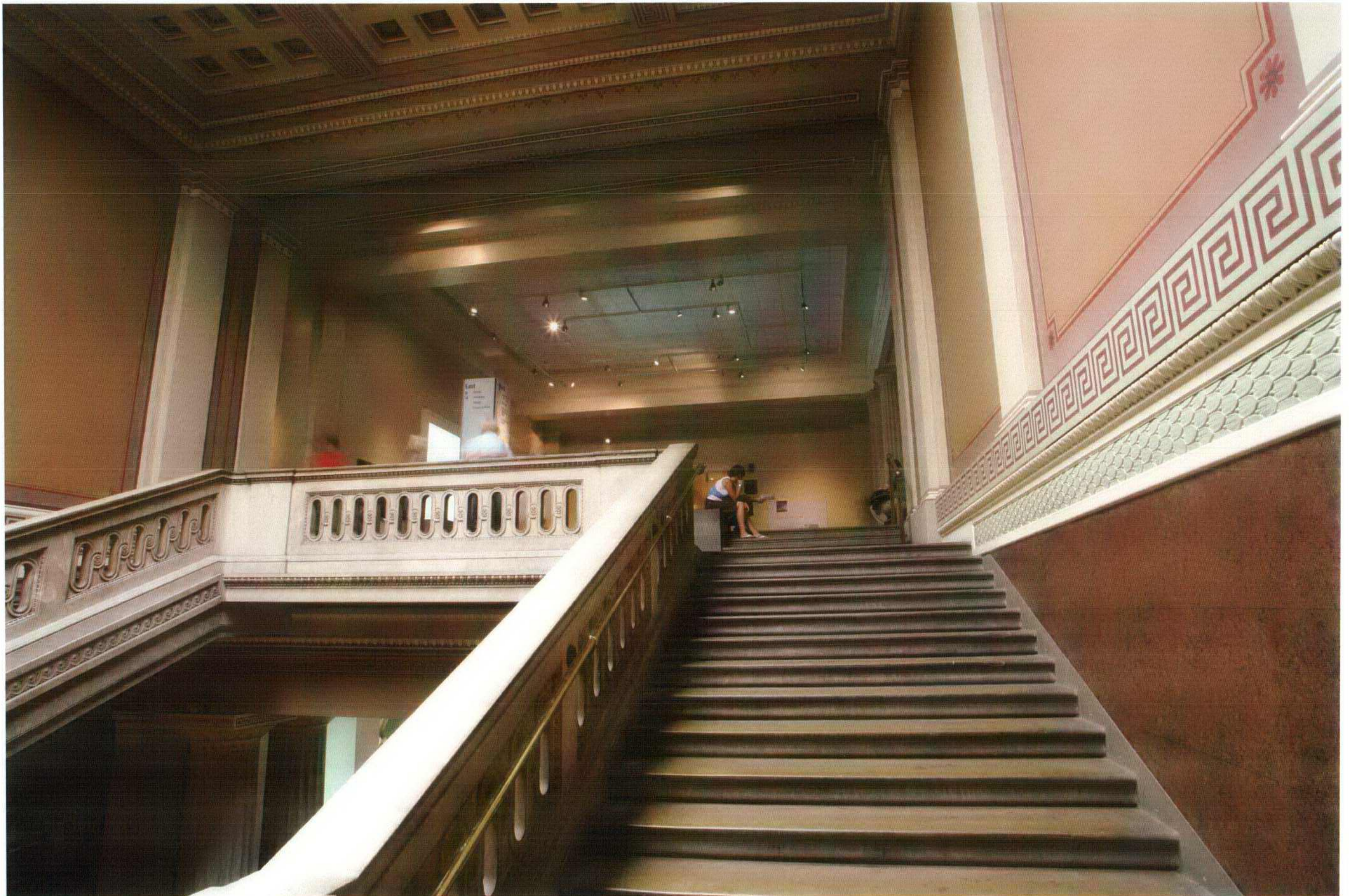
In addition, this new stone would run through the new openings into the South Portico lift lobby, replacing the existing light limestone and therefore further helping to incorporate this as part of the Central Saloon. Similarly, the same stone would run through the doorway threshold into Gallery 40 as currently happens between Gallery 37 and Galleries 38 and 68.



Existing view from South Stair landing towards Central Saloon



Proposed view from South Stair landing towards reinstated Screen Wall to Central Saloon.



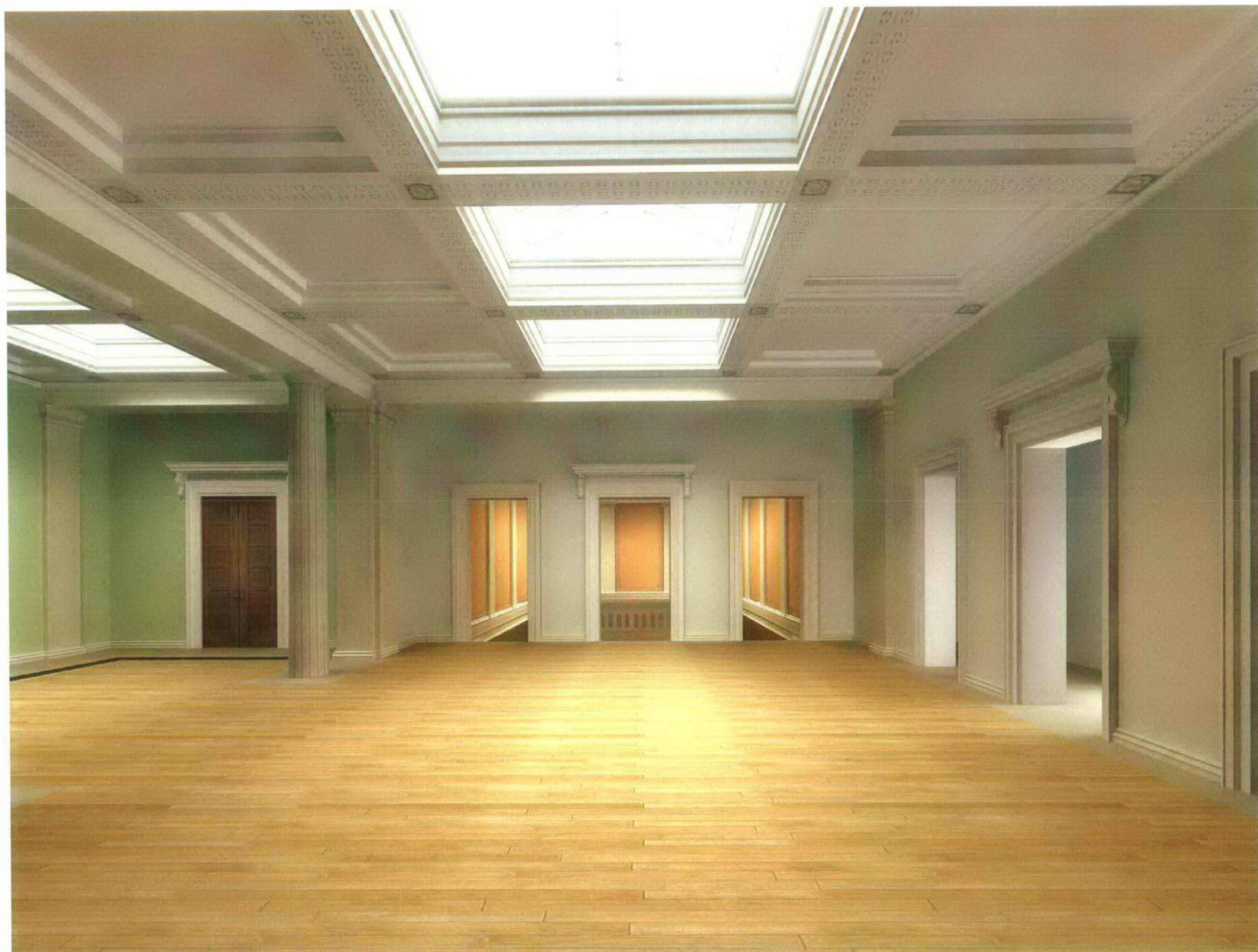
Existing View from South Stair towards reinstated Screen Wall to Central Saloon



Proposed view from South Stair towards reinstated Screen Wall to Central Saloon



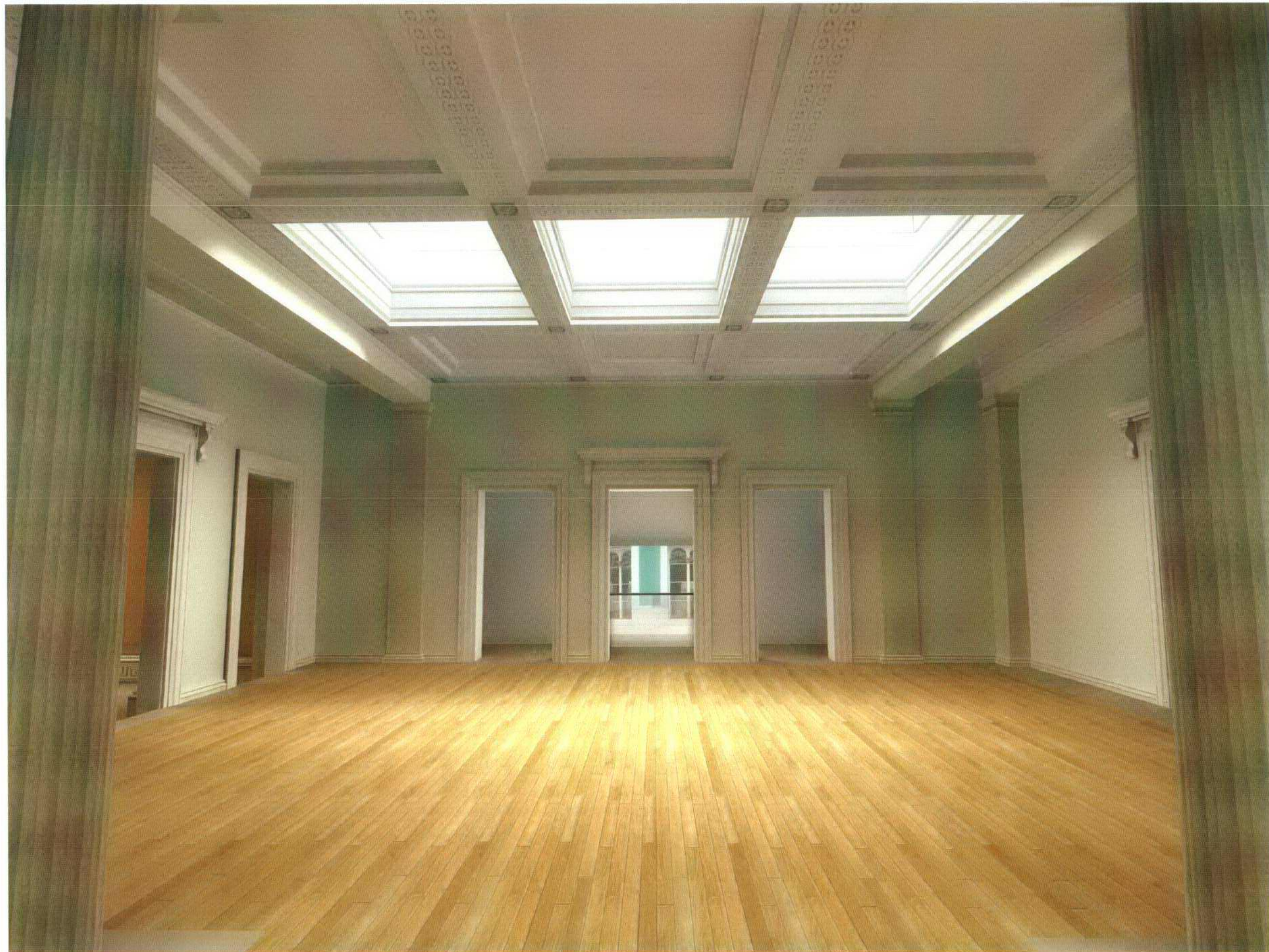
Existing view from Central Saloon towards the South Stair



Proposed View from Central Saloon towards reinstated Screen Wall to the South Stair



Existing View from Gallery 37 towards Central Saloon opening into Great Court



Proposed View from Gallery 37 towards Central Saloon and new openings to South Portico and Great Court