

# Orms

Project

Camden Town Hall

Status

Design and Access  
Statement

Client

Crosstree



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# Executive Summary

## Purpose of Report

The following report has been created to outline the design and access principals for the refurbishment and extension of Camden Town Hall Annex.

## Public Consultation

The team has consulted widely with the public; presenting at a Design Management Forum (public meeting), a 3-day public exhibition in the foyer of the Annex, several meetings with Camden's planners, TfL, interested parties such as neighbours and other statutory consultees. The result of these consultations has been a reduced overall building height, some amendments to the work at ground floor and a fine-tuning of the design detail of the upper levels.

## Development Overview

Camden Town Hall Annex was designed and built in the 1970s by Camden's own architects and engineers. It was designed as an office to house the council's staff and was used until 2014 when they moved to a new purpose built office in the new Kings Cross development. The building is now vacant and it is no longer suitable for modern office use as it has deep plan space, floorplates that are difficult to subdivide and poor thermal performance. A conclusion that Camden Council came to in their decision to move to a new purpose built office in Kings Cross.

The site was purchased by Crosstree in 2014 (although part of the land within the wider red line site plan unintentionally remains in the ownership of Camden Council) and it is their intention to retain the main building but reinvigorate it by changing its use into a hotel and thereby reinvigorate its use. By retaining the existing building we will avoid a considerable amount of disruption from demolition.

## Scheme Proposals

In outline it is the intention to:

- Replace the glazing at ground floor to create a better connection between the building and the public realm
- Place the entrance, retail and lobby at ground floor to create a more active street frontage
- Extend the façade line on Euston Road to reduce the overhang and improve connection with the street
- Open up the existing garden and create an east-west shared pedestrian and cycle route
- Narrow the existing ramp and repair the crossover pavement to reduce the visual impact of the ramp and to make the pavement pedestrian priority

- Remove the west core staircase and thereby open up a route down Tonbridge Street
- Replace the existing tinted windows with clear glass
- Remove the existing concrete plant room from 8th floor
- Extend the building by two floors from the existing top of roof plant with new hotel accommodation
- Provide around 270 hotel rooms and associated hotel ancillary space

## Access

The building will have universal access with level access to all public areas and 1 fully disabled accessible room from 1<sup>st</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> floor. We intend to improve the ramped access to the entrance to the hotel on Argyle Street. We are providing 2 disabled parking bays in the basement.

## Sustainability

Sustainability has been integral to the design of the building and includes the following:

- Retention of the existing sub and super structure and load-bearing concrete elevations
- Replacement of all dark single glazed windows with clear double glazing
- Thermally efficient rooftop extension
- Replacement of all the existing plant with contemporary efficient plant
- Low-energy lighting with intelligent lighting controls
- Removal of all car parking spaces except 2 disabled
- Introduction of over 70 cycle spaces

## Supporting Information

This report is to be read in conjunction with the following documents which have been produced to support the proposals of the application:

- Townscape Heritage and Visual Impact Assessment *by Tavernor and AVR London*
- Historic Building Report *by Donald Insall Associates*



# 1.0 The Site and Context

# Overview

## Site plan




Camden Town Hall Annexe is located on Euston Road and Argyle Street opposite the Grade I-listed St Pancras Station and Hotel and the recently refurbished Grade II-listed Great Northern Hotel.

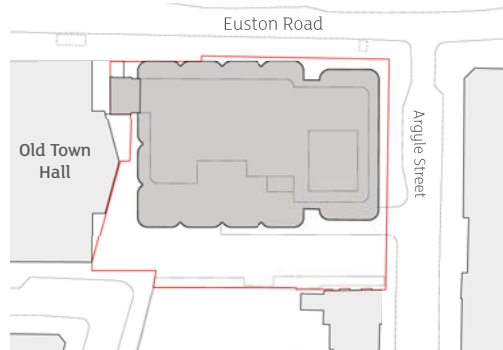
Also nearby is the 67 acre King's Cross development, which is delivering around 2,000 new homes, 23 new and refurbished office buildings as well as restaurants and shops and will have 35,000 people living, working or studying there by 2016.

To the south of the building, there is a mix of residential, pubs and bars, shops, cafes, restaurants and smaller hotels.

The area boasts a wealth of culture including the British Library, Kings Place, the Wellcome Collection and the Gagosian Gallery among others.

The building sits within the King's Cross Conservation Area. It is not listed and, although there are a number of listed buildings in close proximity, it is actually identified as detracting from the character and appearance of the conservation area.

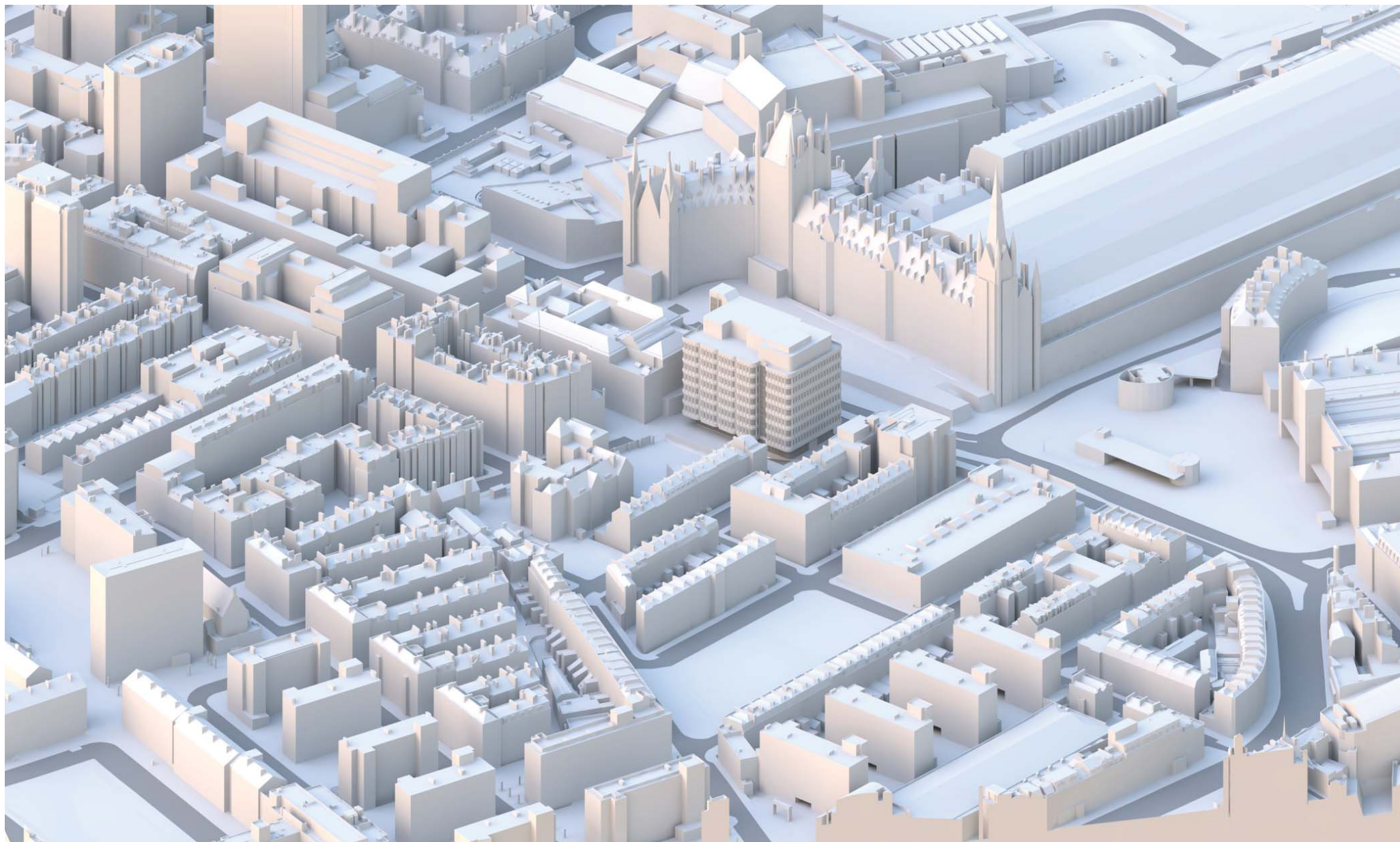
-  King's Cross Conservation Area
-  Bloomsbury Conservation Area
-  Listed Buildings





# Overview

Site aerial view



# Existing and emerging context



Great Northern Hotel



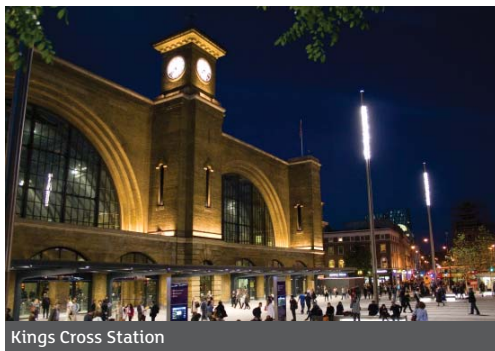
The British Library



View looking north towards the site



Argyle Street School



Kings Cross Station



St Pancras Station



The Granary Building



New office developments in Kings Cross



View looking south along Argyle Street

# Site History

## The site's history

The first records found by the team show that the site of the annex and Camden Town Hall were once occupied by clusters of terrace houses. In the 1910s the sites were cleared and the Town Hall was constructed and on the annex site a theatre was erected. There seems to have been little or no bomb damage during WW2. During the early 1970s the site was cleared to make way for the new Annex building.



View looking north along Argyle Street 1970



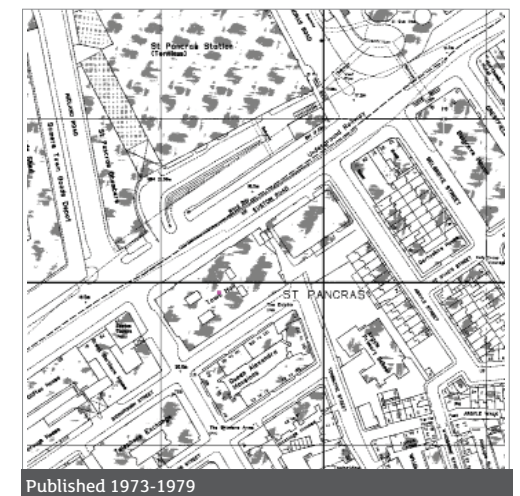
View of corner of Argyle Street



Published 1874



Published 1965



Published 1973-1979



## 2.0 The Existing Building

# The Existing Building

## History and construction

### The building's history

The building was designed and built in the 1970s by Camden Council Architects as an extension to the Town Hall and to create more administrative space. It was built on the site of a theatre. Until recently it has been used as offices for Camden Council and a library.

### Why was it sold?

The building is beyond its original design life and no longer meets the demands of a modern office. The council estimated that just to replace the plant in the building it would need to spend in excess of £15m. Camden therefore took the decision to sell the building.

### How was it built?

The building's structural frame was built from in-situ concrete whilst the cladding was made from structural precast panels. The in-situ frame is designed like a table with a metre deep first floor that cantilevers and supports the structural facade above. The west stair core provides lateral support to the whole building. Above the first floor the floors are constructed as waffle slabs that span from the central table legs of structure to the perimeter cladding.

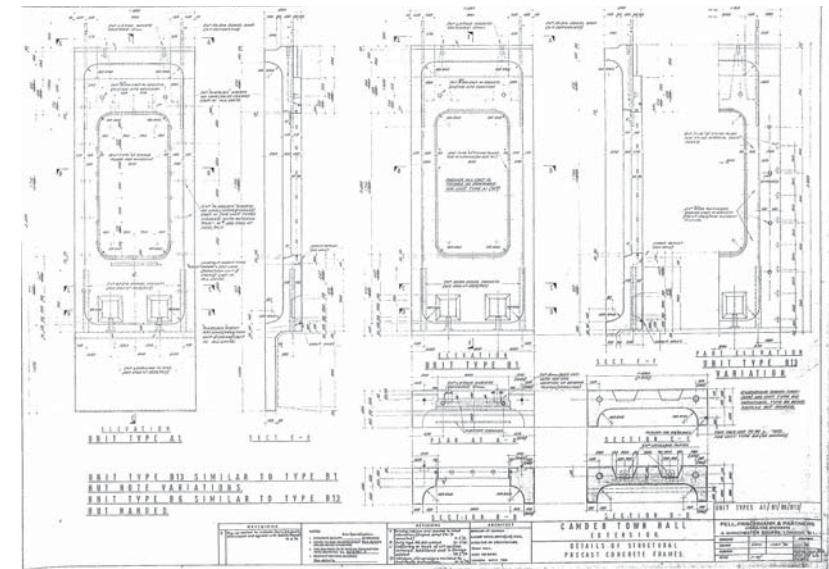
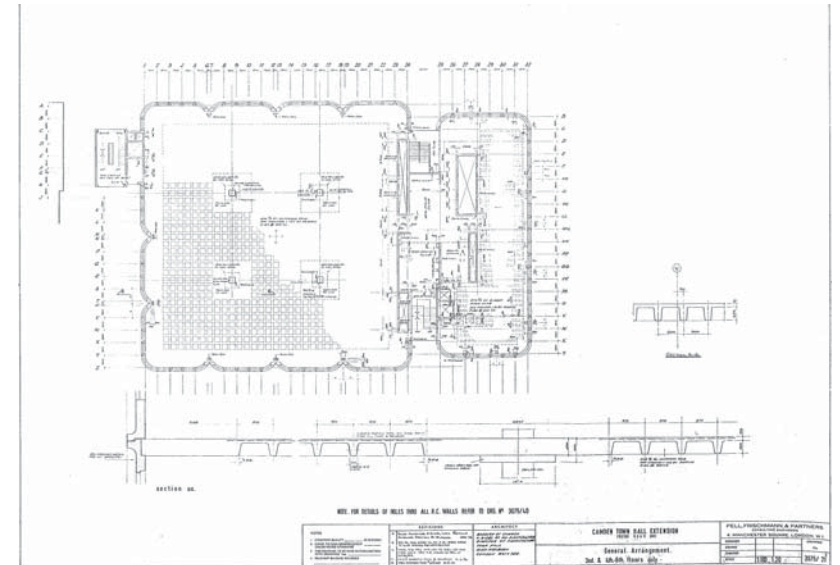
The building is relatively complicated to adapt due to the inherent constraints of the way it was constructed.

### The building's shortcomings

- It was built without flexibility in mind and with its existing layout is difficult to adapt
- It has deep floor plans that are not suitable for contemporary offices
- The existing services are no longer fit for purpose and it has high-energy consumption
- The building has poor public realm with unwelcoming facades that turn away from the street
- The west stair core blocks the route and view from Tonbridge Street to Euston Road
- In its current form it is a negative contributor to the conservation area



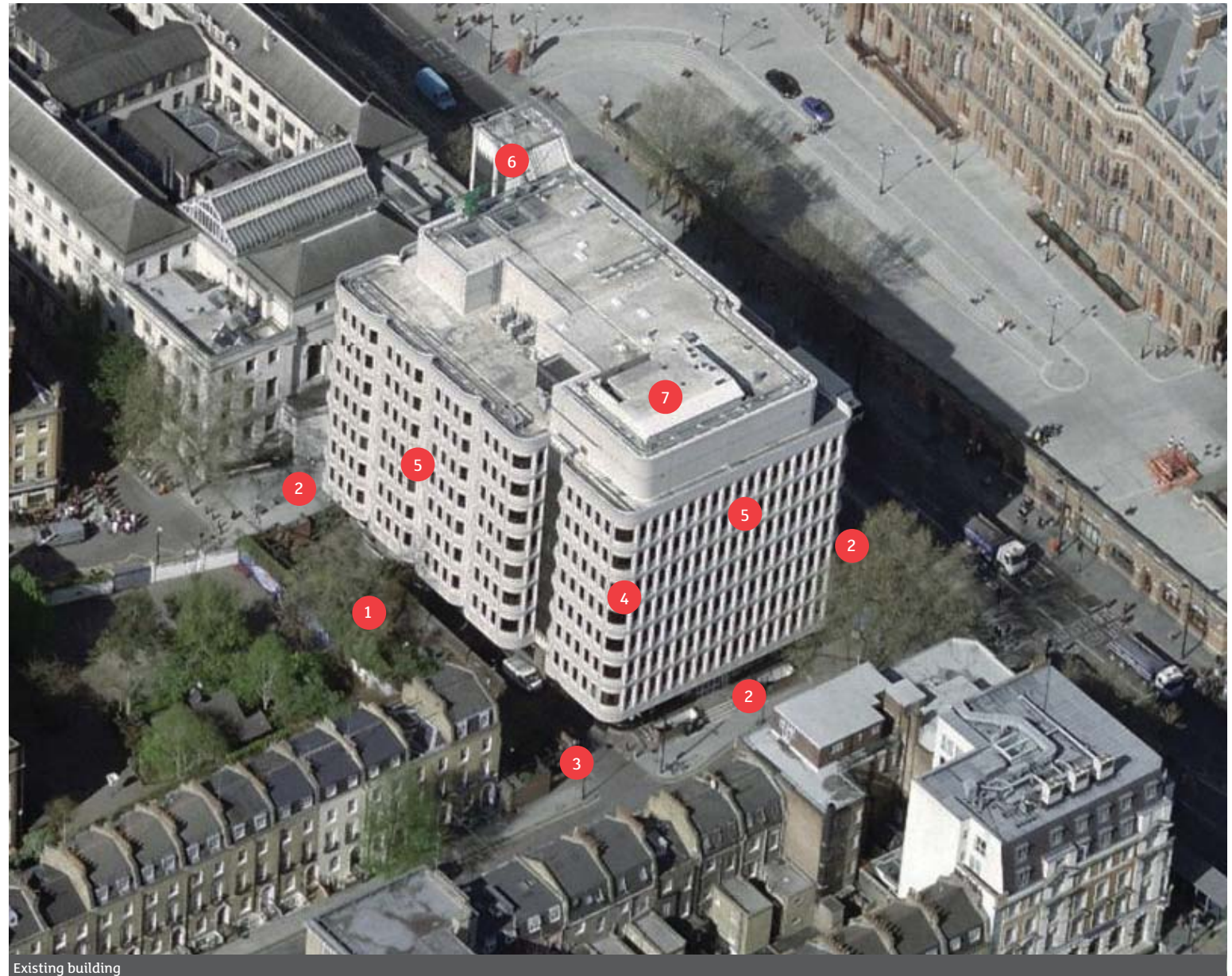
Building during construction



# The Existing Building

## Challenges

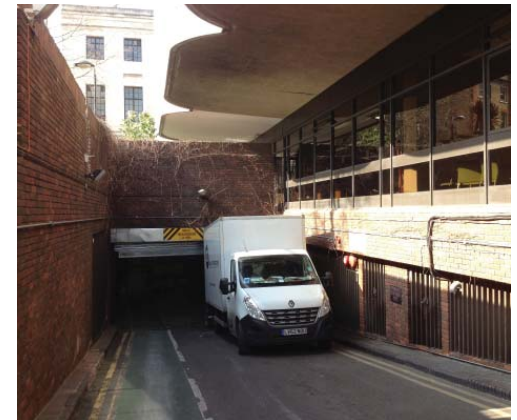
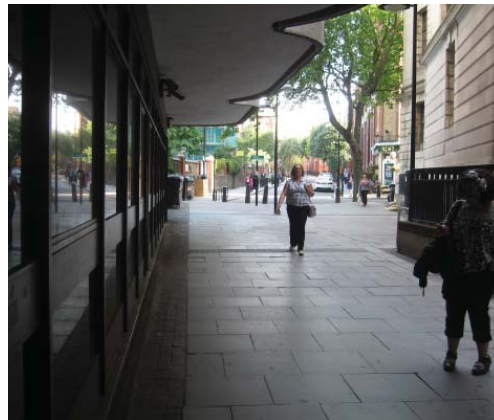
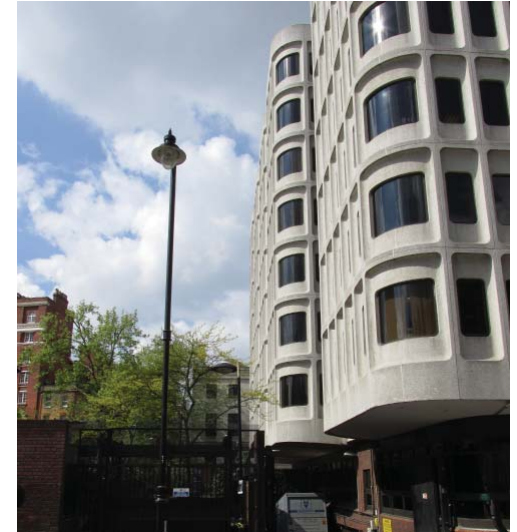
- 1 Existing garden is completely closed to the public
- 2 Poor public realm on Argyle Street, Euston Road and Tonbridge Walk
- 3 Ramp access to basement is 6m wide and creates unsightly opening to street
- 4 Black glass to openings creates blank facades
- 5 Concrete and single glazed facades do not perform well environmentally
- 6 West core and link into the Old Town Hall creates a visual and physical break to the link between Tonbridge Walk and Euston Road
- 7 Plant room is large and clad in concrete



Existing building

# Existing Building

## Photographic Analysis



The building's concrete elevations have a sculptural form and are characteristic of the Brutalist style. The proportions of the building are rather squat and the plant forms a visually unsuccessful crown to the building below.

The cantilevered overhang onto Euston Road, with dark glass and blank facade, creates dark and unwelcoming environment.

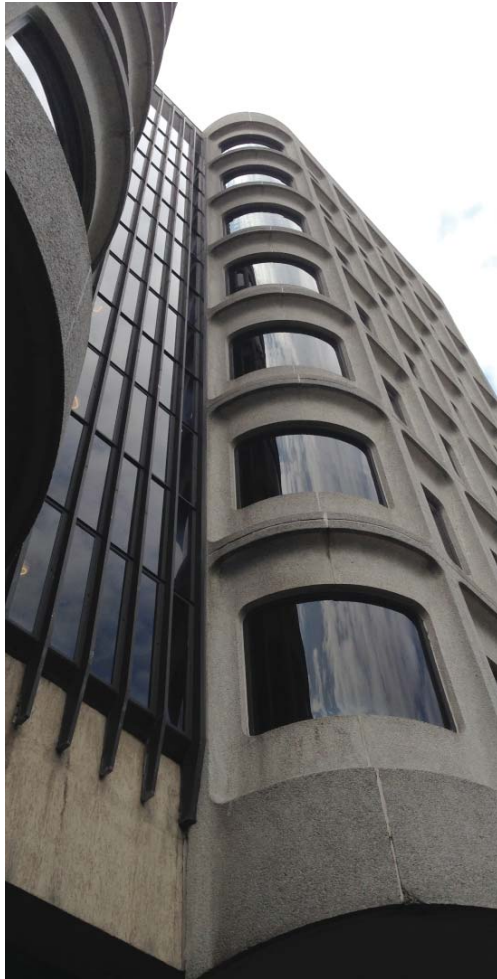
The north-south route through Tonbridge Walk is blocked visually and physically by the stair and lift core that connects the two buildings.

The vehicular access ramp to the basement is unsightly and creates a wide opening across the pavement. The poorly lit overhang adds to the gloomy appearance.



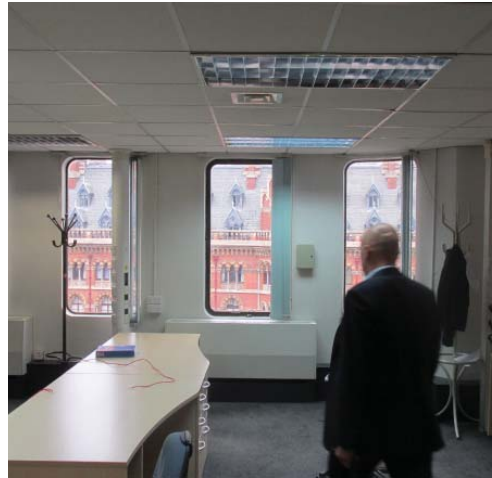
# Existing Building

## Photographic Analysis

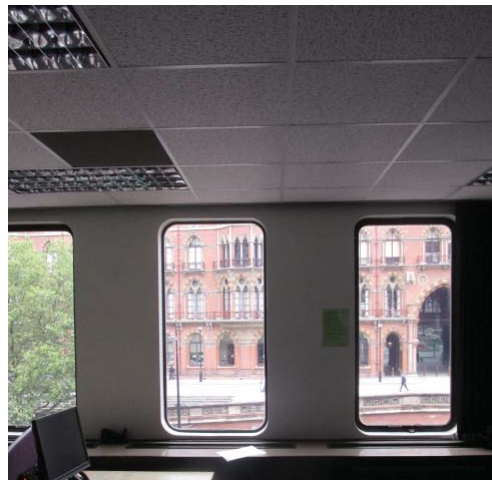


The recess on the elevations for the stairs on both the north and south elevations physically breaks the mass of the building. However, the dark glass means that there are no views into the building to help animate the façade.

The dark glass to the windows has a similar affect and creates a gloomy façade.



The interior is deep plan with tinted windows. The combination creates office space that is not fit for contemporary standards.



The ground floor was used as public space - but was inward facing with brown tinted glass around the perimeter.



The entrance on Argyle Street is unwelcoming with steps and a ramp hidden behind an entrance to the UKPN sub station.





# 3.0 The Design Proposals

# Why we are keeping it

## The building style

The building was designed in the Brutalist Style, which was relatively common in the 1970s. The style was a combination of 'constructional honesty' blended with sculptural forms. The term Brutalism comes from the French *beton-brut* which translates as 'raw concrete'.

## Keeping it as offices

Following careful consideration, the Council previously and the new owners have established that the building is not suitable to meet the needs of a modern office.

## Changing use

The building does however lend itself to becoming a hotel in one of Europe's best-connected locations and would complement the regeneration and revitalisation taking place to the north across the Euston Road.

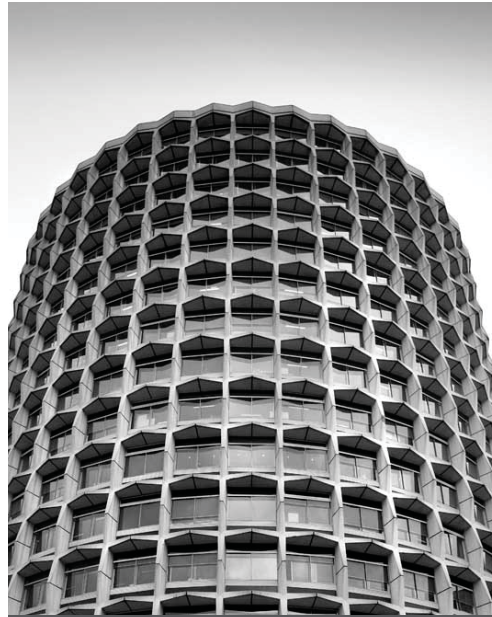
## The building's charm

The building is a landmark on Euston Road and is an interesting example of the era. Whilst many find the style hard to appreciate there is a growing admiration for good examples with several being cleverly adapted and revitalised as illustrated on page 21.

## The reasons for keeping it

We like the building and think that it has untapped potential. By keeping it we would:

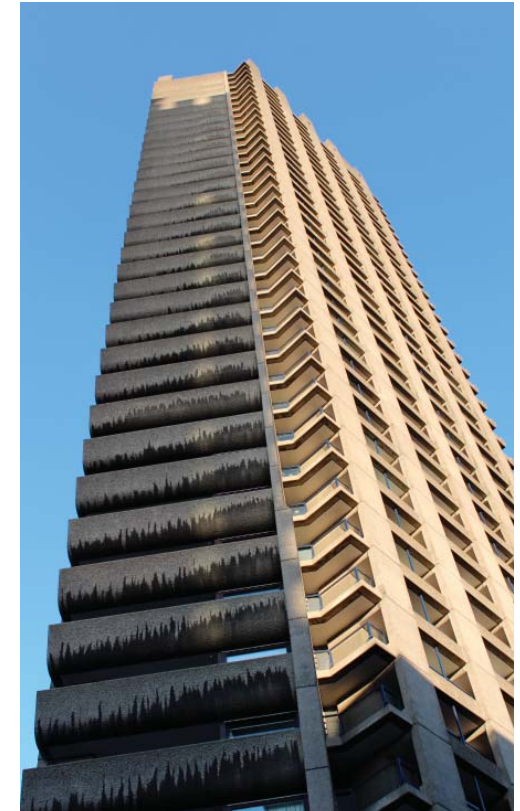
- Negate the need for demolition works.
- Significantly reduce the time, noise and disruption of the works.
- Embrace sustainable principles through reuse.
- Improve a building that has a strong identity but lacks some grace.



Space House



Barbican public space



Barbican Tower



Royal College of Physicians



Swiss Cottage Library

# Working with buildings of the period

## Examples of revitalised Brutalist buildings

Frequently the most unsuccessful aspect of this era's architecture is less to do with the strong, bold architectural form and more with the way the buildings interact with the public realm. By repairing this and by other subtle interventions, such as colour, changing window systems and planting, then these once unloved buildings can often find new life.



Hill Park, Sheffield - Before



Hill Park, Sheffield - After



Centre Point - Before



Centre Point - After



Brunswick Centre - Before

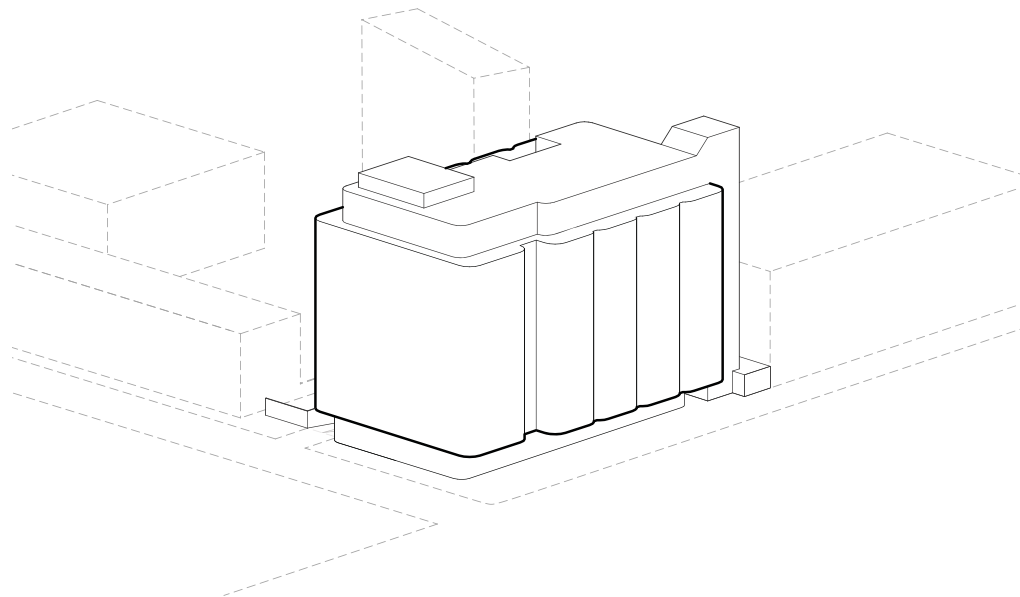


Brunswick Centre - After

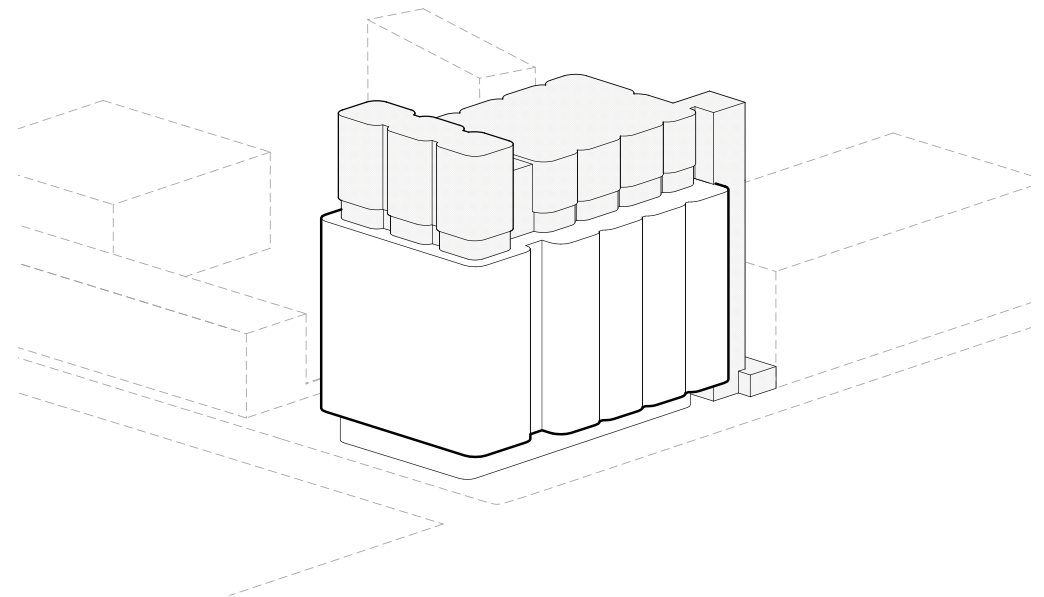
# Design Evolution

The design has been in development for several months and has been discussed and presented to the planners and their design officer, the public at both a DMF and public exhibition and to various groups and consultees such as English Heritage and 20th Century Society.

The building height has come down from where it was shown in the public exhibition. The design has developed as can be seen from the sequence of drawings below. The following pages will illustrate where the proposals for planning have been developed and refined.



1. Existing building



2. Mass above with stair retained