

## Design and Access Statement

### Senate House Ground Floor South Block – Partition Removal

The University of London has two distinct guises. On the one hand it is a federation of 17 self-governing colleges and ten smaller specialist research institutes which between them have around 170,000 students (*circa* 115,000 based at the colleges and institutes and *circa* 54,000 on the external services department's distance learning programmes). On the other hand, there is the *central* University of London - a constituent part of the federation which, as well as having direct responsibility for the ten specialist research institutes, provides a suite of academic support and professional services, including space and associated facilities, for the independent colleges.

The Charles Holden-designed Senate House is the headquarters of the central University of London, but it is also of considerable significance for the Colleges. One of the specific objectives of the central University of London's strategy (2014-2019) is to make Senate House a vibrant academic hub for the whole federation. Much of the building (the upper floors of the tower, and large parts of the basement for example) is used to store books and other materials that would be better stored off site. Releasing that space would allow us to create teaching, learning and research space for the Colleges. The demand for this sort of space is very real: it is recorded in the University's Estate Strategy (2014-2019) as being in excess of 26,500m<sup>2</sup>.

We have had two pre-applications with Camden covering our ambitions for the Senate House tower and basement and we are currently developing our proposals for the basement. In summary we wish to remove the stored material and reconfigure the basement to create space for our own administrative departments, which in turn would free up space which is more appropriate for academic/public use (lectures, seminars, events) than for back-of-house staff. We are working towards a more detailed pre-application for the basement within the next couple of months. In the meantime, as a pilot study to prepare staff for the flexible, activity-based, desk-sharing, open plan approach which they will experience in the basement, we have moved one group of staff from the ground floor to space on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor. The vacated space is one of the two wings that are the subject of this listed building application, and we wish to make the space more suitable for seminars and teaching by removing three internal partitions. We still have staff in the other wing and removing three partitions there will serve as a second pilot study area as well as creating a layout that can be used for seminars and teaching as soon as the staff move out.

Although only four of the six partitions that are to be removed appear on the original, 1930s drawings of Senate House, all six appear to date from the time of construction or shortly thereafter. It is proposed that nibs and downstands will be retained in all six cases, as a reference to the past. There are other examples of complete suites of cellular offices on the upper floors and we believe that within the overall context of the building the loss of six on the ground floor is acceptable.

The rooms which are the subject of this application were created as University administration offices and that use has continued to the present day but, as indicated above, they are no longer ideally suited to modern ways of working, and other, more appropriate uses need to be found if they are to be kept in active use. Using the rooms for University teaching and seminars and the like would ensure that they remain active. This is an approach entirely in keeping with PPG 15 and Camden's adopted policies.

*Martin Burchett, 11<sup>th</sup> May 2015*