SOAS, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Gas Metering Kiosk

Heritage Statement

10 March 2017

FAITHFUL+GOULD

Document Status					
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01	09.03.17	First issue	A Saunders	R Stocking	G Charlson
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Contents

1.0 Introduction and Background 3
2.0 Building Description and Historical Summary 4
3.0 Proposed Works 8
4.0 Heritage Values 11
5.0 Historical Impact to Significance 14
6.0 Conclusion 18
7.0 References and Appendices 19

1.0 Introduction and Background

This heritage statement has been prepared to accompany a combined Planning and Listed Building Application, completed and submitted by Faithful+Gould for the proposed works defined within this document. This supporting statement should be read and referenced in conjunction with other submitted documents as part of this application.

This statement is prepared in accordance with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Area) Act 1990, hereafter referred to as 'the Act' and also considers the effect on setting and context of the proposed development as detailed in Section 66 and Section 72 of the Act. This statement also uses Historic England (formally English Heritage) Guidance 'Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance' (2008) to assess the significance of the University of London School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) Philips Building.

The purpose of this supporting statement is to:

- Identify, assess and provide evidence and justification on whether the proposed works will adversely affect the special architectural and historic importance of the building.
- Provide sufficient information and justification for the submitted information to be assessed and verified by London Borough of Camden Conservation Officers, Historic England and any other amenity societies or advisory bodies consulted in relation to the application and proposed works.

The Philips Building has served its original design intent as a dynamic library, office location and teaching space at the heart of the University of London School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) since its completion in 1973. The building is still in active use; however, changes are required to allow the building to retain its current function and continue to be sustainable into the future. The proposed changes have been designed with careful attention to the Philips Building's architectural and historic interest, intending to preserve the buildings significant elements whilst enhancing the buildings design and functionality, also limiting any potential effect on the setting of the Philips Building, or surrounding heritage assets.

This proposal is for the installation of a new external Gas Metering Kiosk for the Philips Building, adjacent to the Holden Building.

Principle information and sources:

- English Heritage (2008) Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance
- Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Area) Act 1990
- Historic England (2011) Philips Building, School of Oriental and African Studies – List Entry Summary
- Historic England (2000) Institute of Education – List Entry Summary
- Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Strategy 2011
- 1019-SOAS Meter Room – Design & Access Statement 2017

2.0 Building Description and Historical Summary

2.1 Building Location and Status

- Location: Philips Building, Thornhaugh Street
- Ownership: School of African and Oriental Studies, University of London
- Architect: Denys Lasdum (1914 – 2001)
- Date: 1960 – 1973
- List Entry Number: 1401342
- National Grid Reference: TQ2988582061
- Status: Listed Building (Grade II*) / Conservation Area

Location of the Philips Building

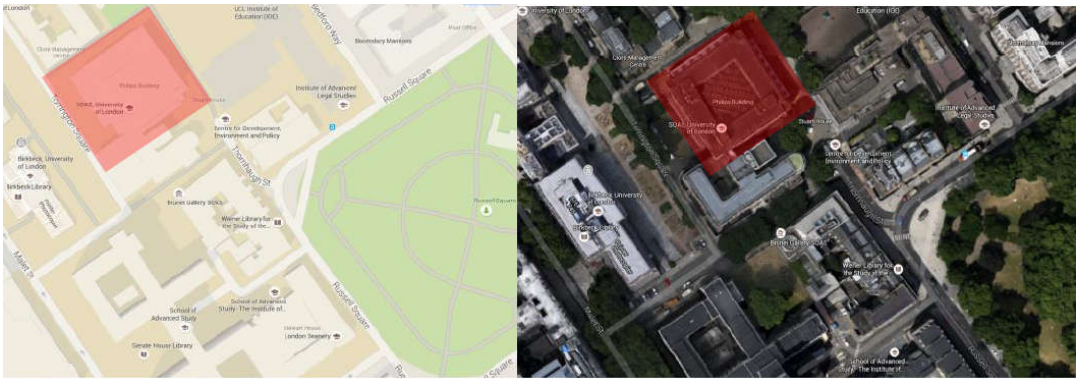

Fig 1 and 2: Plan and aerial photograph highlighted in 'red' shows the location of the Philips Building between Torrington Square and Thornhaugh Street.

2.2 History of Building

The current University of London buildings were constructed in the 1960's – 1970's and were developed from a historic Georgian plan - with formal squares and housing. LCC Architects Sir Leslie Martin and Trevor Dannatt developed a masterplan for the area in 1959 known as the 'spinal development plan'. The plan created a vision of a linear development pattern, built though the Bloomsbury area. The full plan was later deemed to be both bold and 'foreboding' was never fully realised due to changing financial and political conditions (Historic England: 2011).

In the early 1960's the Architect Denys Lasdun was recommended to design the new Philips Building for the university (Historic England: 2011). Lasdun was a well-known architect of the period, designing such landmarks as the national Theatre (1964 – 1976) and the Royal College of Physicians (1958 – 1964).

The Philips Building was completed in 1973 and is a Grade II* listed brutalist building, sited within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area (designated in 1968). The Philips Building has been at the centre of the SOAS since its completion and was Grade II* listed in May 2011.

2.0 Building Description and Historical Summary (continued)

2.2 History of Building (continued)

Lasdun developed a significant style to his buildings, taking inspiration from 1930's modernism, and the development of the Philips Building was seen as one of the most 'powerful library designs of the post war period' (Historic England: 2011). The new building was designed with contemporary materials and building processes. Its design was intended to integrate with the surrounding Georgian and interwar buildings, by taking influence and responding to the tone, scale and symmetry of the existing buildings.

The Philips Building received planning approval in 1968, but was subject to additional scrutiny, due to local objections regarding the changes the new building would impose onto Woburn Square and the requirement for demolition of a number Georgian terraced houses. Lasdun's design for the Philips Building made changes to the earlier masterplan by incorporating more 'green spaces' and pedestrian zones. He developed within the design a 'pavilion' area which helped to construct a new pedestrian square (Historic England: 2011), to retain a communal element from the 'lost' Georgian properties.

The Philips Building encompasses the SOAS library, lecture theatres and academic offices. The access route into the Philips Building is via an external footbridge connected to the Holden Building, it is constructed over eight storeys including a lower ground and upper floor plant rooms.

The Philips Building is part of a larger complex of structures within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. The buildings in the immediate vicinity of the Philips Building include:

- The adjacent [and connected] Holden Building (Grade II), which was designed and built by the esteemed architect Charles Holden between 1939 – 1945 and was purpose built for the University - designed in Holden's signature style simplified architectural form, with design dictated by function (Historic England: 1969).
- The Institute of Education - IOE (Grade II*), was built across from the main pedestrian thoroughfare from the Philips Building (also designed by Lasdun), and formally opened in 1977. The building highlights Lasdun's design style development, 'this building forms a contrasting mass to the square pavilion of Lasdun's extension to the School of Oriental and African Studies, with which it forms an exceptionally strong group' (Historic England: 2000), continuing the build use of exceptional quality concrete and expanding the 'concept' of adaptable education spaces.
- The Georgian Terraces (Grade II) in Woburn and Russell Square are not part of the immediate grouping within the Conservation Area – Sub Area 3, however are part of the wider Bloomsbury Conservation Area, and are significant in this application due to the proximity to the Philips Building and association to the University of London.

2.0 Building Description and Historical Summary (continued)

2.2 History of Building (continued)

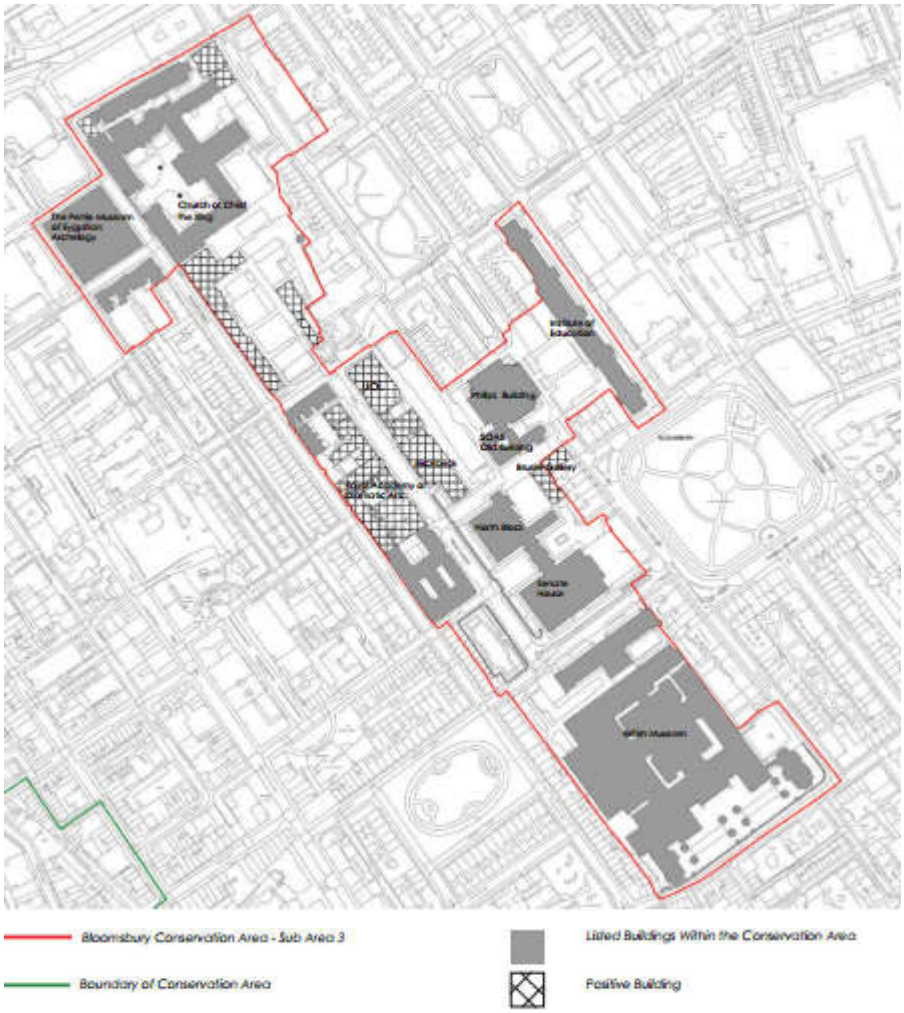

Fig 3 – Extent of Bloomsbury Conservation Area – Image: Design & Access Statement

2.0 Building Description and Historical Summary (continued)

2.3 Externals and Internals

The Philips Building is sited to the southern side of Woburn Square. The main construction of the building is a reinforced concrete frame incorporating interlocking structural pre-cast concrete panels. The building was constructed with a white cement with a limestone aggregate mix and grit blasted finish (Historic England: 2011).

The building has a square pavilion-plan, which points in a north-westerly direction and has 'nine external bays featuring set back corners on the four lower storeys' (Historic England: 2011). The ground floor was initially built with integrated open balconies and terraces, however these areas were altered and glazed in 2007 (north and east elevations). To ensure natural light was provided to the basement levels, a service moat around the full perimeter of the building was included. It is understood that the main principle elevation is the north-east from Thornhaugh Street (Historic England: 2011).

The flat roof with concealed rainwater system was designed with a series of diagonal north-facing roof lights which are not visible from external views and has a modern asphalt covering. The windows are mainly horizontal sliding sashes with an aluminium and bronze anodised finish, set back from the concrete pre-cast interlocking frame panels (Historic England: 2011).

The library space is the central point for the Philips Building internally and a principal reason for the Grade II* listing 'it lay at the heart of the Schools endeavours' (Arnold: 2003), and still remains of high importance as a usable space and as an inspiring design development of the period (Historic England: 2011). Internally, the library has three levels of concrete fronted balconies which allow natural light to enter through a diagonal grid of trim concrete ceiling beams, to light the space from the top. A mezzanine level is divided by concrete fins and the lower level provides smaller rooms which lead off to provide study and tutorial facilities. Concrete partitions both frame openings and support the floors, whilst the main internal full height stairwell features a concrete parapet with a fixed metal tubular hand rail (Historic England: 2011).

3.0 Proposed Works

3.1 Current Issue

The Philips Building currently houses a number of oil fired boilers that supply a district heating system which provides heating for a number of buildings across the university campus (including the Philips Building). There is a requirement to upgrade the gas supply as the existing system is over capacity, and does not have sufficient supply to fully service the existing plant. Whilst there is restricted future capacity for upgrades to this system.

3.2 Proposed Works - Detail

A feasibility study was carried out to assess a number of alternative options for the location of the new Gas Supply Metering Kiosk - to provide a new gas supply and to future proof the heating system going forward. A number of constraints and issues were considered as part of the study, please see document - 1019-SOAS Meter Room – Design & Access Statement.

Option D was considered the most suitable after a number of alternative option were considered.

The works would allow a cleaner form of energy to be used, with existing oil fired boilers being replaced with gas.

The 'Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Strategy: 2011' details that a number of views from in and around the Philips Building are important (see Page 17 of Design and Access Statement – detailed above). The proposal seeks to maintain and respect these views, whilst providing a suitable facility to enhance the use of the Philips Building, and surrounding buildings which are served by the district heating system.

An impact assessment has been made of the following proposed works to assess the significance of the area and identify potential impact upon that significance, which is detailed in Section 4.0.

List of Proposed Works	
Creation and installation of new external Gas Metering Kiosk	To build a submerged Gas Metering Kiosk, to increase current gas supply to both enhance and future proof the Universities district heating system.
Provide new landscaping proposal	To conceal (as far as practicable) new Gas Metering Kiosk and provide new access for students, improving the overall setting of the area. Protecting the existing Sycamore Tree and providing a new location for existing memorial tree and stone.

The images below highlight the proposed works areas:

3.0 Proposed Works (continued)

3.2 Proposed Works - Detail (continued)

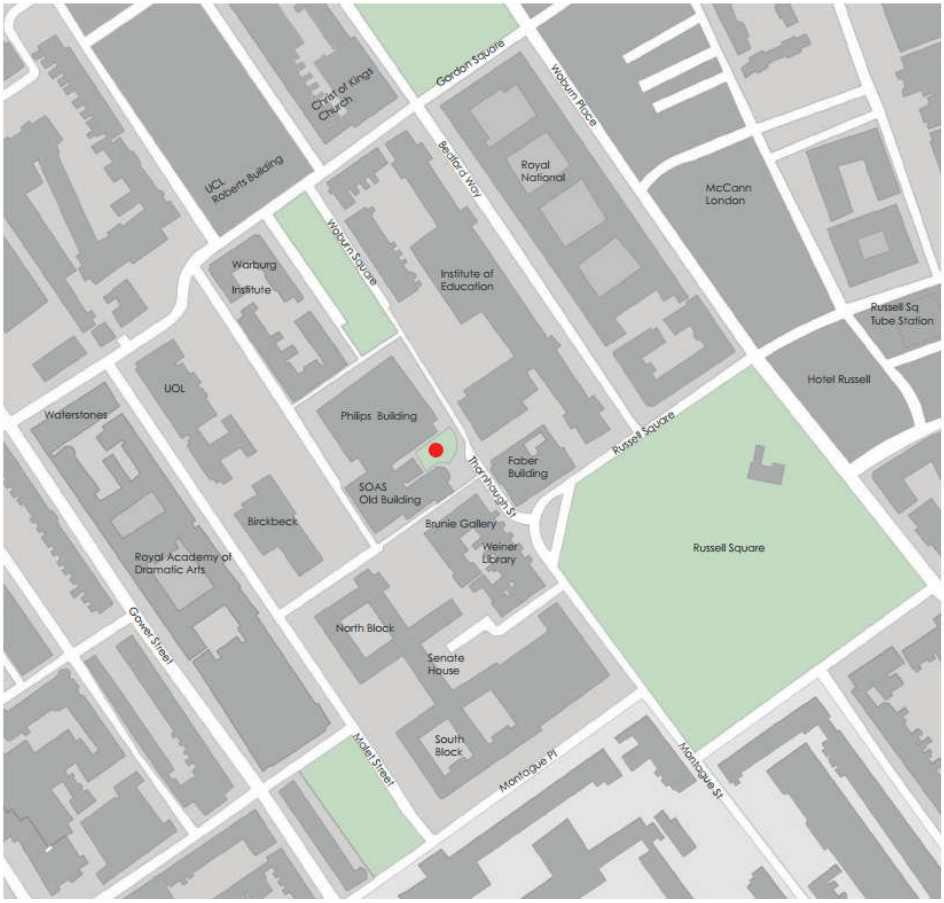

Fig 4 – Location of Proposed Gas Meter Kiosk - Image: Design & Access Statement

3.0 Proposed Works (continued)

3.2 Proposed Works - Detail (continued)

Fig 5 – View towards the Philips Building from Thornhough Street – Image: Design & Access Statement

Fig 6 – Option D – Full Planning Application – 2017 – Image: Design & Access Statement

4.0 Heritage Values

4.1 Significance

Principle 3.2 of English Heritage's (2008) Conservation Principles states:

'The significance of a place embraces all the diverse cultural and natural heritage values that people associate with it, or which prompt them to respond to it. These values tend to grow in strength and complexity over time, as understanding deepens and people's perceptions of a place evolve'.

Understanding the significance of the Philips Building at the School of African and Oriental Studies and the various values that contribute to it are crucial when considering change and how best to manage that change.

'Significance lies at the heart of every conservation action…unless we understand why a place is worthy of conservation, the whole business of conservation makes very little sense'.

The sum of the various values that people place upon a given heritage asset equates its significance. In heritage terms, significance has been defined as:

'The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest' and as 'the sum of cultural and national heritage values of a place'.

In essence, significance is an understanding of what makes a place special. What is important to note is why understanding significance is vital. The following assessment of significance is intended to form the foundation for understanding the heritage values of the Philips Building, in order to inform proposed works.

Faithful+Gould assesses significance using the 'value-based' approach that underpins the 2008 Conservation Principles.

Four primary categories of heritage value	
Evidential Value	The potential of a place to yield significant evidence, usually from physical remains about past human activity.
Historical Value	The way in which the present can be connected by a place to people, events and aspects of life in the past.
Aesthetic Value	The ability of a place to provide sensory and intellectual stimulation.
Communal Value	The meanings of a place for people who relate to it – a collective experience or memory. A shared cultural frame of reference.

4.0 Heritage Values (continued)

4.1 Significance (continued)

The significance of the Philips Building has been assessed using a scale of significance ratings ranging:

Significance ratings	
Very High Significance	This represents the most valuable themes, features, fabric or characteristics of the SOAS building. These elements are considered to be essential to the understanding and appreciation of the building and as being key contributors to its overall character as well as its local, regional and national importance.
High Significance	This can be attributed to a theme, feature, built fabric or characteristic which has a high cultural value and forms an essential part of understanding the historic value of the SOAS building, while greatly contributing towards its character and appearance.
Medium Significance	This can be attributed to a theme, feature, built fabric or characteristic which has some cultural importance and helps to define the historic value, character and appearance. These elements are often important for only a few values, for example it may be either the survival of physical built fabric or association with an historic use, but not both.
Low Significance	This can be attributed to a theme, feature, built fabric or characteristic which has minor cultural value but which may, even to a small degree, contribute towards the character and appearance of the SOAS building and its constituent parts.
Neutral Significance	Elements of neutral significance typically do not possess any heritage values which are important to the SOAS building and its constituent parts. As such, they neither contribute to – nor detract from – its overall character and understanding.
Intrusive	Elements that are Intrusive to heritage value have characteristics which detract from the overall significance and character of the SOAS building and its constituent parts.

4.2 Evidential Value

The potential for the building and site location to yield significant evidence about past human activity has not been explored by way of a desk top assessment, as the proposed works are unlikely to impact any such potential, if present.

Evidential value is normally associated with historic assets even though all buildings will encapsulate information about their historic development and chronology. The Philips Building was built just over 40 years ago and the external elevations have had little change over this period; this is with the exception of retrospective glazing carried out to the balconies in 2007 and some upgrades to Mechanical and Electrical services.

The Philips Building, along with a number of other buildings designed by Lasdun, is important due to the use of concrete as an architectural material during the post war period. The building displays an experimental use of concrete, as both cast in-situ and pre-cast. Highlighting varied finishes, developing the design and craftsmanship of the material. In addition to the above the relative evidential value of the building is related to the aesthetic and historic values, detailed below.

The evidential value of the Philips Building is considered to be MEDIUM.

4.0 Heritage Values (continued)

4.3 Historic Value

The Philips Building has a high historic value, due to the relationship with the esteemed and prolific Post War Architect Denys Lasdun, as well as its association with the internally recognised University College London's School of African and Oriental Studies. Also, of importance is its relationship in context with the wider surrounding SOAS University Building landscape.

The Philips Building is an important example of the brutalist style of the period.

The group value of the collection of buildings in the area (including the Philips Building) have significant architectural and historical importance, including the adjacent Holden Building (Grade II), the Georgian Terraces (Grade II) and Institute of Education - IOE (Grade II*), the latter also designed by Lasdun. Camden (2011) Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Strategy details the area 'is noted for its formally planned arrangement of streets and the contrasting leafy squares… the Philips Building, and the Institute of Education are seen as a group in views from Torrington Square, Woburn Square and Thornhaugh Street…they share a common [architectural] vocabulary … part of the established character of the Conservation Area. The open spaces to the rear of the building provide a green link between Woburn Square and Thornhaugh Street'.

The Philips Building was designed to house the university's extensive collection and archive. The original library design layout survives, it provides an insight into the hub of the university and a rare war-time example of a brutalist library.

The historic value of the Philips Building is considered to be HIGH.

4.4 Aesthetic Value

The Philips Building is constructed of contrasting horizontal planes of architectural detailing, highlighting the signature style of Lasdun. The scale and massing of the building is also important to consider with the wider Conservation Area landscape. Lasdun developed the plan for the Philips Building in conjunction with the existing Georgian terraced properties, but in a contemporary contrasting style – highlighting post-war modernism.

The Institute of Education Building (IOE) was later designed by Lasdun, by reaffirming the style of the Philips Building, emulating 'massing and materials' (Historic England: 2011) and it important in the overall building landscape of the SOAS University buildings.

Also, within the overall landscape concept 'a common 'green' link was provided between buildings, this emulated similar 'green' areas within the Conservation Area, such as Russell and Woburn Squares (Camden: 2011).

Internally, the Philips Building library area is exceptional, featuring a complex range of internal concrete terraces which highlights the design intent to enhance the use of natural light entering the diagrid ceiling and the quality internal finishes.

Aesthetic is therefore deemed to be VERY HIGH and a particularly important part of the overall significance.

4.5 Communal Value

The Philips Building was a purpose built library, lecture and office facility for the university. It is therefore of value to students, lecturers and the wider university community. The building has had continual use as an educational space, and still fulfils (in part) its original design intent.

The Philips Building is understood to have a HIGH social value, providing a community facility for the School of Oriental and African Studies.

5.0 Historical Impact to Significance

The work items identified within the proposed work section of this statement are revisited and expanded to determine their potential for impact on the identified significance. The two keys below define the various levels of significance. It is hoped that this will provide an additional way of quickly identifying those fabric elements of highest value and significance and the resulting impact.

The level of impact upon significance is felt to be self-explanatory requiring no further explanation. The colours for each level of impact are identified in the key below. The elemental impact assessment is appended to this statement. The impact assessment refers to the acronym CoBRA, detailed as a Conservation Based Research Assessment, to gain further knowledge in making a decision on the impact, significance and mitigation of the works.

Significance of the Fabric Affected Key	
Very High Significance	This represents the most valuable themes, features, fabric or characteristics of the SOAS building. These elements are considered to be essential to the understanding and appreciation of the building and as being key contributors to its overall character as well as its local, regional and national importance.
High Significance	This can be attributed to a theme, feature, built fabric or characteristic which has a high cultural value and forms an essential part of understanding the historic value of the SOAS building, while greatly contributing towards its character and appearance.
Medium Significance	This can be attributed to a theme, feature, built fabric or characteristic which has some cultural importance and helps to define the historic value, character and appearance. These elements are often important for only a few values, for example it may be either the survival of physical built fabric or association with an historic use, but not both.
Low Significance	This can be attributed to a theme, feature, built fabric or characteristic which has minor cultural value but which may, even to a small degree, contribute towards the character and appearance of the SOAS building and its constituent parts.
Neutral Significance	Elements of neutral significance typically do not possess any heritage values which are important to the SOAS building and its constituent parts. As such, they neither contribute to – nor detract from – its overall character and understanding.
Intrusive	Elements that are Intrusive to heritage value have characteristics which detract from the overall significance and character of the SOAS building and its constituent parts.

5.0 Historical Impact to Significance (continued)

Impact Key:

HIGH IMPACT
SOME IMPACT
LOW IMPACT
NO IMPACT

5.1 Heritage Impact Assessment

Please see the Heritage Impact Assessment below for a full breakdown of assessment against each item of work.

Heritage Impact Assessment						
Item	**Location**	**Proposed Work**	**Significance of Fabric Affected**	**Potential Impact of Work**	**Cobra Information**	**Mitigation Measures**
01	External –Philips Building	Removal of existing street furniture and paving to allow for excavation for proposed location of Meter Kiosk	Removal of paving setts which are laid on sloped retaining wall. Not part of physical building, but part of overall curtilage. Original fabric removed and change of original external plan design to lower ground service area LOW significance	Some impact, will change the sunken design detail to corner of building.	None	Will maintain sloped detail adjacent to new proposed kiosk area. New design will retain footprint of existing sunken zone. New retaining wall coordinated with landscaping design to reduce impact on Philips Building and surrounding heritage assets.
02	As above	Relocation of memorial tree and stone	NEUTRAL significance to building fabric	No impact to building fabric	None	Relocation to suitable location

5.0 Historical Impact to Significance (continued)

5.1 Heritage Impact Assessment (continued)

03	As above	Excavation work required to accommodate new services	The current proposal requires the Gas Kiosk to be submerged to a level similar to the existing subterranean level on the Philips Building (approx. 2 m from ground level), and not lower than the existing service duct between the Philips Building and Institute of Education Building (IOE) which at its highest point is 2.6m from ground level. It is therefore understood that the works to this area will be on made ground. NEUTRAL significance to building fabric	No impact to building fabric	See Design and Access Statement	Protection works required to local sycamore tree. Archaeological mitigation works may be required if depth increases, once service depths finalised.
04	As above	Excavation work required to achieve sunken kiosk level	As above	As above	As Above	As above
05	As above	Installation of New Gas Metering Kiosk	Installation of new 'building' within this area will change the visual interpretation and original design intent of the area to a degree. The views from surrounding buildings will also be effected. MEDIUM significance attributed to this installation	Low Impact, as a number of mitigation measures will be put in place, through landscaping and design detail to improve visual impact to views	As above	Design of Kiosk will be mitigated by sensitive placement, scale and landscaping measures. No reduction anticipated to light levels due to new kiosk location.
06	As above	Installation of new Landscaping and Street Furniture	Installation and integration of new features, effecting the setting. LOW significance	Low impact, designed to improve setting and usage of area, whilst mitigating impact of new kiosk.	As above	Design of kiosk will be mitigated by sensitive placement, scale and landscaping measures.

5.0 Historical Impact to Significance (continued)

5.1 Heritage Impact Assessment (continued)

07	As above	All works to complete proposal	The current proposal will affect the views and setting to the adjacent group value of the surrounding listed buildings. Specifically, the IoE (Grade II*) and Holden Building. MEDIUM significance	Some impact to the setting of the IoE and Holden Building, development of a visual disruption from the Philips Building over the pedestrian walkway to the IoE Building.	See Design and Access Statement	Mitigated in part through sunken design of Kiosk, and improved landscaping proposal to integrate and tie together landscaping scheme across site. Improvement to landscaping setting between buildings proposed, which should provide enhancement to the heritage assets settings overall.
08	As above	As above	The current proposal will minimally affect the views and setting to the adjacent group value of the surrounding listed buildings. Russell Square and Woburn Square - Georgian Terraced SOAS buildings. LOW significance	Low impact to Russell and Woburn Square buildings, minimal visual disruption.	See Design and Access Statement	Mitigation through sunken design of kiosk and improved landscaping, should have minimal impact on views to and from heritage assets identified.

6.0 Conclusion

Faithful+Gould are of the opinion that the proposed works and landscape changes have limited impact upon the significance and architectural and historic importance of the Philips Building, or the surrounding setting of the adjacent heritage assets.

It is our opinion that this impact should be regarded as having less than substantial harm upon the special architectural and historic importance of the buildings. The deemed impact of this proposal can be weighed against the benefit of securing a long term sustainable energy source for the Philips Building and the surrounding buildings which it serves.

The landscaping works mitigate the harm as far as practicable on the views, vistas and overall settings of the heritage assets as both individual elements and group value. This is completed in part by utilising the topography of the immediate landscaping around the area of the Philips Building to provide the new facility as partially sunken. The improved landscaping scheme is designed, to mitigate visual impact (as detailed in the Design and Access Statement detailed in Section 3.2) and enhance the visual connection between buildings 'the relationship between the spine building [IOE] and the SOAS pavilion [Philips Building] is paramount' (Historic England: 2000).

It is our opinion that the importance of the Philips Building lies in the external architectural form, use of concrete as an architectural material and most importantly the internal library design and layout. Clearly this proposal will not affect the internal features and importance of the structure, and we view the external development as having a minimal impact. We also consider that the benefits of securing a long term solution to provide a cleaner, sustainable and viable energy source to the building will assist in the overall protection of the Philips Building and library in future years.

The most difficult element of the proposal is the visual change that will occur due to the location installation of the Gas Metering Kiosk. The position of the Kiosk has been evaluated in a number of locations, and the proposed option was deemed to have the least impact and cause least harm to both the building and setting. Also, in our opinion the impact has had substantial mitigation measures proposed, including an improved landscaping proposal which will increase public benefit and use of the external area in this location, which should be welcomed.

Careful consideration has been given to the design options and it is our opinion that the proposals do not adversely affect the special architectural and historical importance of the building.

7.0 References and Appendices

7.1 References

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- Historic England (1974) Numbers 21 – 24 and attached railings [Russell Square] – List Entry Summary [online] available at: https://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1246375 [Accessed 06/03/17]
- Historic England (1974) Numbers 24 – 28 and attached railings including Institute of Education, London University (Numbers 24 – 27) [Woburn Square] – List Entry Summary [online] available at: https://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1379208 [Accessed 06/03/17]
- Historic England (2000) Institute of Education…for University College – List Entry Summary [online] available at: https://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1246932 [Accessed 06/03/17]
- Historic England (2011) Philips Building, School of Oriental and African Studies – List Entry Summary [online] available at: https://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1401342 [Accessed 06/03/17]
- Thompson, F.M.L (1990) The University of London and the World of Learning 1836 – 1986. Hambledon Press, London.

7.2 Appendices

Appendix A - Historic England Listing Detail

Appendix A

Historic England Listing - 2011

Philips Building, School of Oriental and African Studies

List Entry Summary

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

Name: Philips Building, School of Oriental and African Studies

List entry Number: 1401342

Location

Philips Building, School of Oriental and African Studies, THORNHAUGH STREET, CAMDEN, LONDON

The building may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County: Greater London Authority

District: Camden

District Type: London Borough

Parish: Non Civil Parish

National Park: Not applicable to this List entry.

Grade: II*

Date first listed: 20-May-2011

Date of most recent amendment: Not applicable to this List entry.

Asset Groupings

This list entry does not comprise part of an Asset Grouping. Asset Groupings are not part of the official record but are added later for information.

List entry Description

Summary of Building

University Library for the School of Oriental and African Studies. It was commissioned in 1960, full planning approval was granted in 1968, the contract began in 1970 and the building was completed in May 1973. Denys Lasdun for London University.

Reasons for Designation

The Philips Building at SOAS, Thornhaugh Street, a university library completed in 1973 to designs by Denys Lasdun, is designated at Grade II* for the following principal reasons: * Architectural interest: while relatively little-known, this pavilion library is one of the most powerful library designs of the post-war period, also of interest for being a work of this major post-war architect * Interior quality: the main library space is remarkable. Through a complex structure of terraces, a skilful employment of natural light via a concrete diagrid ceiling and good-quality finishes throughout, Lasdun created a dramatic and memorable learning environment * Planning: a manifestation of the continuous teaching building which Lasdun successfully explored; it pre-dates his designated University of East Anglia; and also managed to make an architectural set piece out of what was a truncated scheme * Group value: the library groups well with the Grade II Holden building it was built to serve, the Grade II late-C18 terraces of Woburn square (glimpses of which are caught from the impressive windows of the library); and Lasdun's own Grade II* Institute of Education, the striking massing and materials of which it emulates

History

The Philips Building at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) has its origins in the London University spinal development plan of 1959, devised by the renowned LCC architects Sir Leslie Martin and Trevor Dannatt. It was Martin who recommended Denys Lasdun (1914-2002) as the architect for the new buildings at SOAS which were to form part of the development of the central area of the University's Bloomsbury site. The University had moved its principal headquarters (at Charles Holden's iconic Senate

House, now designated Grade II*) and some of the smaller institutes, such as SOAS, to Bloomsbury in the 1930s although the war prevented implementation of the ambitious (and forbidding) masterplan that would have marched a linear spine of buildings north through Bloomsbury. SOAS was established in Finsbury Circus in order to train people working in Asia and Africa, and it received its London University Charter in 1913. Its original building was housed in the building of 1940, purpose-built also by Holden to hold what was by then a well-established school. This building was designated at Grade II just 29 years after it was built.

Lasdun accepted the commission for the SOAS library in 1960 and full planning approval was granted in 1968. The chosen site, to the north of the Holden building, infringed on the small but well-formed Woburn Square. This prompted a conservation fight of the type emerging in London at this time. It was long enough after the war for Londoners to have views on what should be preserved in the face of new building, and students, faculty and local residents protested the demolition of the increasingly-appreciated Georgian town houses. A London University Special Committee narrowly rejected the calls to preserve the square and demolition began in July 1969. The building contract officially began in January 1970 and was completed in May 1973.

Lasdun's design changed the concept that Martin and Dannatt had promoted in their master plan for the site. This resulted from his brief to create more pedestrian areas, as well as being a response to the truncated nature of the scheme when financial and conservation issues emerged. He implemented the envisioned dominant 'spine' in his impressive Institute of Education (to the east along Bedford Way, and designated Grade II*) and instead turned the library into a distinct 'pavilion' that formed part of a new pedestrianised square. The library was designed at about the same time as the library in his major scheme for the University of East Anglia (UEA).

Denys Lasdun is one of the most distinctive and creative of post-war architects. He is one of the few to have begun practicing before WWII, when he worked for Wells Coates, and after a distinguished military service he joined Lubetkin and Tecton, and Fry and Drew, before establishing his own practice in 1960 when his own style emerged. This was a synthesis of 1930's modernism with a strong horizontality derived from Frank Lloyd Wright (whose planning he came to admire in the 1950s) and an interest in expressing services that makes for comparison with another American architect, Louis Kahn. Perhaps of all British architects, Lasdun's work best demonstrates the cool, four-square and intellectually rigorous qualities of Kahn's work. Most of Lasdun's surviving buildings in England are now designated, many at high grades, such as the Royal College of Physicians at Grade I, and the nearby London University Institute of Education, the UEA Ziggurats, Keeling House and the National Theatre at Grade II*.

Details

MATERIALS: A reinforced concrete frame of in situ concrete and interlocking structural pre-cast concrete panels with a white cement and Ballidon limestone aggregate mix, with a grit-basted finish. The windows are mostly horizontal sliding sashes with aluminium and bronze anodised finish, set back from the precast panels.

EXTERIOR: The Philips Building closes the southern end of Woburn Square, and the leafy trees and late-Georgian terraces were intended to be glimpsed from the building. It is essentially a library, built to house its collection of then half a million books (now grown to over a million), also with teaching rooms and offices. The eight-storey building does not have its own external ceremonial entrance, which was always through the listed Holden block. The roofs are flat, with a series of diagonally-arranged north-facing roof lights, hidden from the outside. The central library dominates and projects on three floors with a set-back range of academic offices and classrooms (totalling 220 separate rooms) above. Each of the facades of this square, pavilion-plan building has nine bays and there are set-back corners on the four lower storeys. The ground floor formerly had projecting balconies, or terraces, but these were glazed in on the north and east elevations around 2007 (also by John McAslan and Partners, and apparently with the blessing of Lasdun, before he died). A service moat around the building provides light to the basement levels and a delivery entrance on the west side.

INTERIOR: The set piece is the central, top-lit library. This features three levels of concrete-fronted balconies and natural light comes in through a diagonally-set grid of slender concrete ceiling beams. On the lower

floors, rooms lead off to provide study and tutorial space within the library, and computer areas to which the centre of the lower level is now dedicated. Reading areas extend into the former terraces, which are now part of the library's interior, and include a mezzanine level divided by concrete fins. There are other concrete partitions within the stacks that frame openings while supporting the floors. Two original concrete book counters survive: the book issue counter on the lower level of the library, and the book return counter, now isolated in a room on the ground floor. The original model for the building is housed in a case in the basement. The main, full-height library stair has a concrete parapet with metal tubular hand rail (currently painted red, but original colour to be confirmed). The concrete here, and in the main stair outside the library, which is nestled into a concrete service core, has a fair-faced horizontal close boarded finish. A further stair from the ground floor down was added near the lifts by John McAslan and Partners around 2000. The upper corridors, which wrap around the central library, largely retain the simple grooved timber doors and architraves and some original cork floors. The original arrangement with a window at the end of each corridor largely remains, although some temporary rooms have been added to these spaces, blocking off the light and the view. The toilets were refurbished in 2009. There is a lecture hall with slatted wooden wall covering on the lower ground floor.

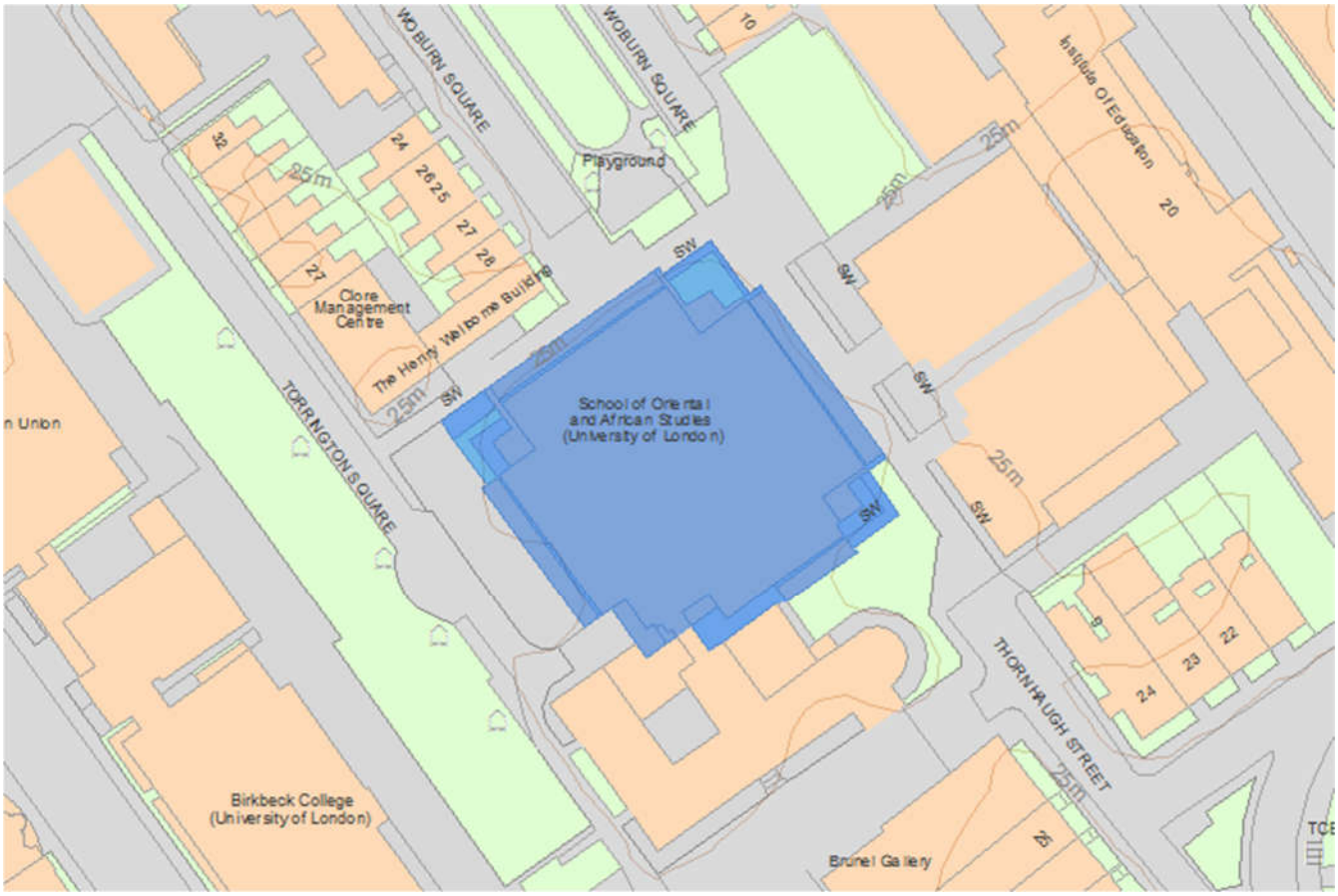
SOURCES: The Architects' Journal, (14 June 1967) 'New Buildings for London University, Bloomsbury', The Architectural Review, (March 1980) Cherry, B, Pevsner, N, Buildings of England, London 4, North (1999), 274-8.

Selected Sources

None.

National Grid Reference: TQ2988582061

Map



The above map is for quick reference purposes only and may not be to scale. For a copy of the full scale map, please see the attached PDF - 1401342 .pdf

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End of official listing

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