

DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT
SENATE HOUSE – NORTH BLOCK
JULY 2017

LOCATION

Senate House (North Block) Malet Street, London WC1E 7HU

THE PROJECT

The works proposed seek to replace and upgrade the pipework serving the heating system through the flooring of the North Block Building which is currently occupied by the School of Oriental & African Studies (SOAS)

THE AREA

Founded in 1916 as the School of Oriental Studies and part of the Federal University of London, SOAS (School of Oriental and African Studies) is the only higher education institution in Europe specialising in the study of Asia, Africa and the Middle East. It has grown to become one of the world's leading institutions and has an enviable reputation. With more than 400 academic staff dedicated to teaching and research, SOAS offers an exceptional educational experience, combining language studies, cultural scholarship and disciplinary expertise with a regional focus.

This submission follows the approval of works to the North Block of Senate House for academic facilities for the expansion of SOAS.

The site is located at within the UoL campus and lies within the Central Activities Zone which is the core commercial and business district in Central London.

The building is Grade II* listed and is located within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

SCALE

Senate House consists of the Tower, the South Block and the North Block. SOAS leasehold tenancy comprises the lower ground, ground and first to third floors of the North Block. The South block has two quadrangles with courtyards and the North Block is built with only one of its quadrangles, with the second quadrangle unbuilt except for the east wing which houses the Institute of Historical Research. The South Block is the administration centre of University of London and also houses large assembly rooms which are situated in the two courtyards. In the North Block above SOAS tenancy on the fourth to sixth floors are libraries of University of London.

The North Block occupies a significant place at the end of the open space of Torrington Square and is bordered on the west side by Malet Street and on the east side by a green space which ends SOAS Brunei Gallery. The entrance to the North Block is located on this important axis.

Refurbishment and extension works to the building were undertaken following the grant of planning and listed building consent in 2014 (Ref: 2013/4415/P & 2013/4478/L). This permission secured a series of external and internal works to the building including the upgrade to the heating system which required the lifting and removing of flooring throughout the building.

APPEARANCE

The proposed internal works will not alter the appearance of the listed building.

AMOUNT OF DEVELOPMENT

No addition development or the creation of floorspace is proposed.

USE

The building will continue to be occupied by SOAS.

ACCESS

The proposed works do not affect the approved access strategy for the building.

HERITAGE IMPACT

The proposed works are minor in nature and are focussed in areas which have limited historic value and which have already been subject to works under the recently completed refurbishment programme. The proposal is not therefore detrimental to the architectural or historic setting, integrity or detailing of Senate House.

The Planning and Listed Building consents (2014) were supported by a detailed Historic Building Report prepared by Donald Insall Associates. The report assessed the historic 'significance' of the North Block and identified areas that were of 'high' or 'moderate' significance and also areas that detracted from the building's historic significance.

The proposed works include areas with low significance such as service risers, screed and paved corridors, new ceilings, basement level accessible service trenches, existing joists with plywood. An

on-site meeting with the Council's Conservation Office (Antonia Powell) confirmed that works to these areas would not affect the character or setting of the building and would not damage any original fabric.

There are however works to other areas of the building that require a detailed review with the Council and these are described below: -

- Isolated works to the original timber floor to secure access to the pipework below. The removal of sections of the flooring is considered to be more appropriate and less intrusive than the wholesale removal of the floor which would necessitate the removal of all the skirting boards.
- In isolated areas, there will be some skirting removed and the scope and methodology is addressed in the accompanying method statements.
- Travertine panels – these will be carefully removed to allow connections at the radiators and then reinstated. The work will be undertaken so that the process of removal, storage and reinstatement avoids any damage to the panels.
- Terrazzo Flooring - The access to the voids will be undertaken without affecting the terrazzo flooring.
- Works to the second floor where the flooring is timber boarding and these can be lifted and replaced without difficulty.
- It may be necessary to lift areas of the parquet flooring where the voids are not accessible through the removable covers.

The proposals listed above have been discussed on-site with the Council's Conservation Officer and were considered to be acceptable subject to the provision of method statements that would confirm the careful approach that will be taken in undertaking the works.

The DIA report provided with the original submission assessed the impact of the installation/upgrade of the building services and this is considered to be a continuation of these works. The DIA report concluded that: -

The proposals respond to the listed building's significance. They serve to preserve and complement the building's special character, and will cause 'less than substantial harm' to the significance of the heritage asset. Any potential harm that the proposals entail is offset by the overall benefits of restoring the façade, restoring and repairing important features within the building and creating a dynamic new learning space at the building's heart, as well as providing a viable future for the building which will ensure its on-going maintenance and repair. In terms of the National Planning Policy Framework, the proposals therefore should be acceptable and should be granted planning permission and listed building consent.