



**THE BRITISH MUSEUM**

**ROOM 35 REFUBISHMENT**  
**JOSEPH HOTUNG GREAT COURT TEMPORARY GALLERY**

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT INCORPORATING HERITAGE STATEMENT  
MARCH 2022 REV\_P03

631-DJA-RP-A-10001\_P03

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## **Executive Summary**

This design and access statement incorporating heritage statement has been prepared by Dannatt, Johnson Architects on behalf of the British Museum to support an application for Listed Building Consent for the refurbishment of Room 35 (Joseph Hotung Great Court Temporary Gallery).

The British Museum is seeking to undertake refurbishment works to improve the functionality, presentation, durability and flexibility of Room 35 in its continued use as a temporary exhibition gallery. The works proposed involve replacement of the subfloor and floor finish, replacement of the ceiling and track lighting installation, and improvement to the existing walls in the space.

The application will be submitted by the Planning Lab, with Dannatt Johnson Architects acting as the British Museum's agents for architecture and historic building conservation. Proposals have been prepared by Dannatt, Johnson Architects, Alan Baxter Associates structural engineers, DHA lighting designers, and Hoare Lea building services consultants.

The Conservation Plan, produced by Purcell Architects, Final Revision, 2008 has been used a primary source of reference in preparing this statement.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

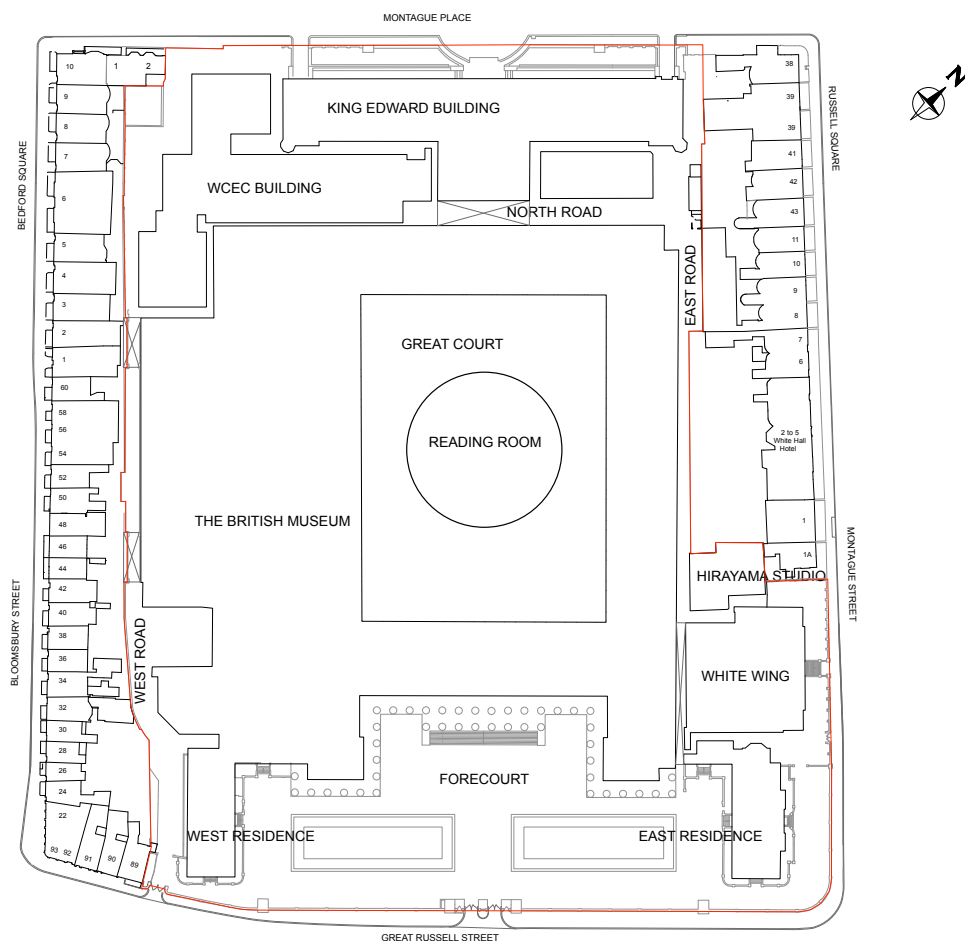
### 1.1 The British Museum

The British Museum was founded in 1753, and is located in the Grade I listed building in Bloomsbury, London. The Museum holds one of the world's greatest anthropology collections of human history, culture, and art with approximately 8 million objects in the permanent collection. The Museum is the United Kingdom's most visited cultural attraction with circa 6 million visitors per year.

The 100,000 square metre site in Bloomsbury houses the Museums key activities of curating, displaying and caring for the collection, work spanning many different periods over 250 years. The Museum is constantly adapting, and since its inception building work in the form of alterations, extension, reordering the collection, repairs, have been undertaken on an almost continuous basis.

The British Museum Bloomsbury site occupies a site bounded by Montague Place to the north, Montague Street to the East, Great Russell Street to the south and Bloomsbury Street to the west. The main entrance to the site is from Great Russell Street and the location of the contractors' desk is on the east side of the main entrance.

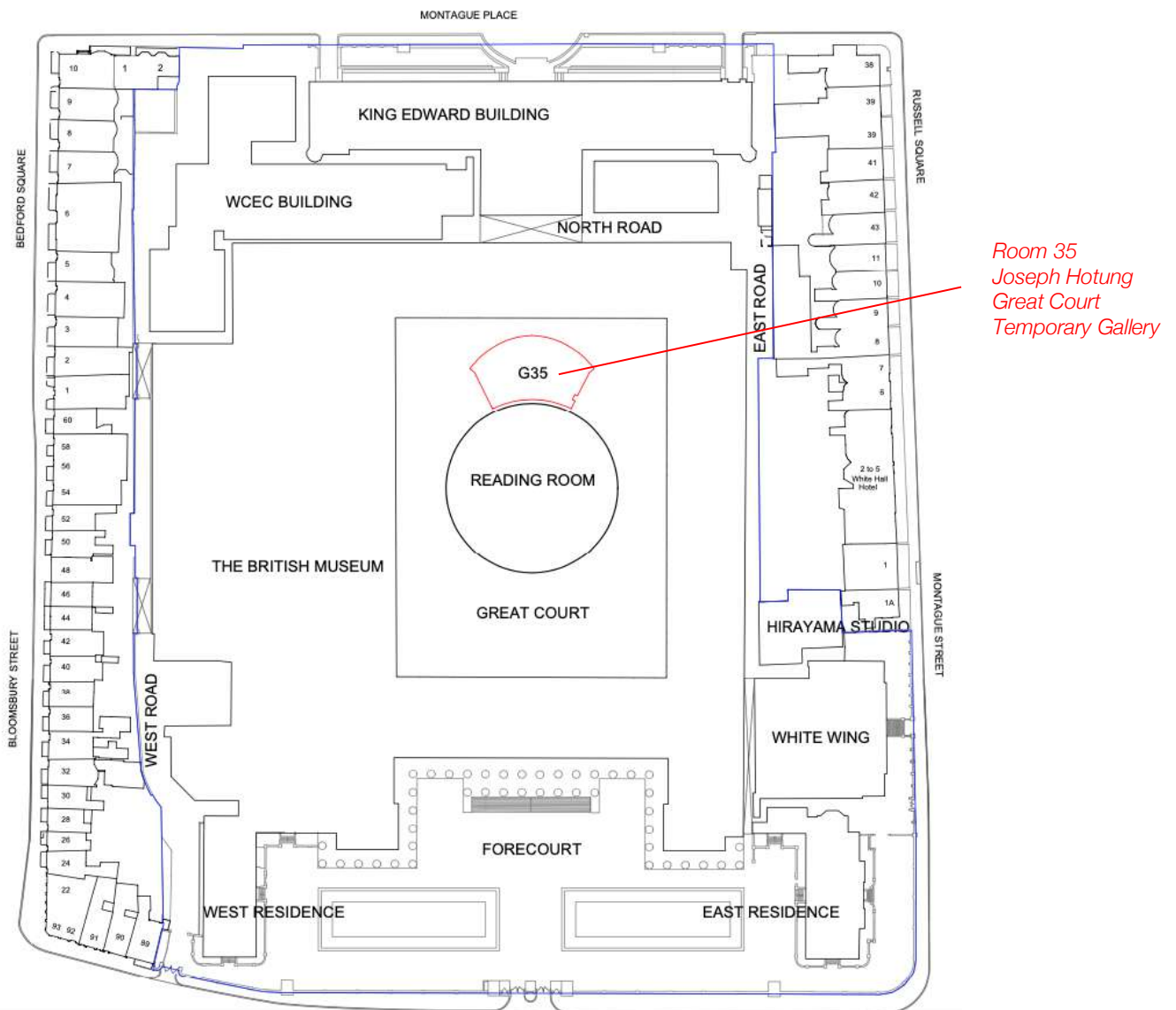
The Museum is Grade I listed, embedded in the Bloomsbury Conservation area in a very busy area of Central London.



*Location Plan of the British Museum*

## 1.2 Room 35, Joseph Hotung Temporary Exhibition Gallery

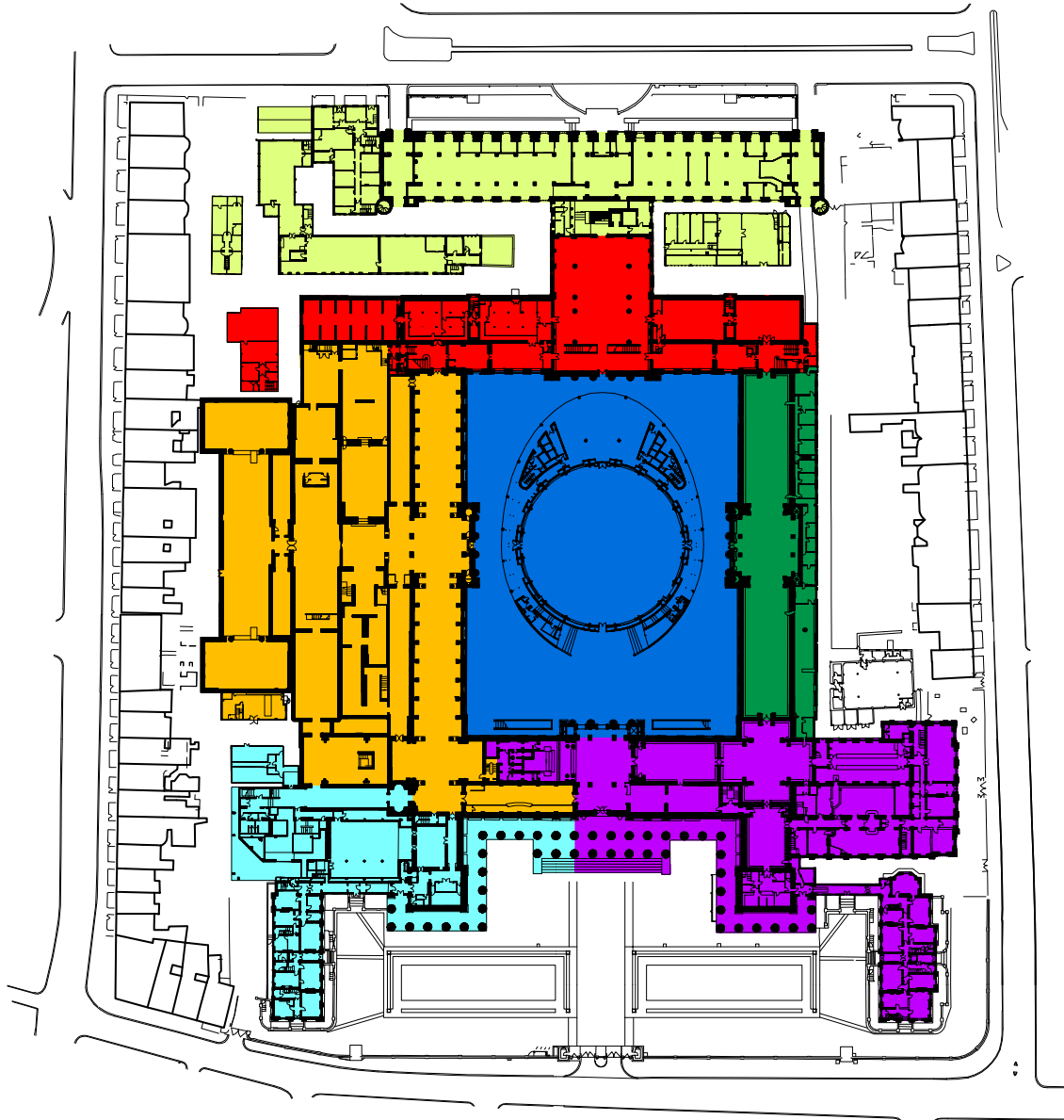
Room 35 is a temporary exhibition gallery located on Level 3 of the British Museum, within the reinforced concrete-framed building constructed as part of the Great Court refurbishment, designed by Foster and Partners and completed in 2000. It is a self-contained space, not physically part of the more significant Round Reading Room. Immediately above the gallery at Level 6 is the restaurant. The gallery comprises a large crescent-shaped space of circa 400 square metres, with an overall ceiling height of 4.72m (increasing to 5.77m adjacent to the south wall) and with retail space in the south east corner adjacent to the gallery exit. In the immediate context the gallery has main entrances doors on the east and west sides and four additional doors giving access to storage rooms / spaces. Immediately adjacent are lifts lobbies, WCs and service risers.



Location of Room 35, Level 3 of the Museum

The Gallery hosts a programme of major changing exhibitions which involve the installation and the removal of temporary display structures, equipment and objects. On average the museum has delivered two exhibitions in this space per annum and the gallery is stripped out after every exhibition.

The gallery is situated in Sector G of the British Museum.



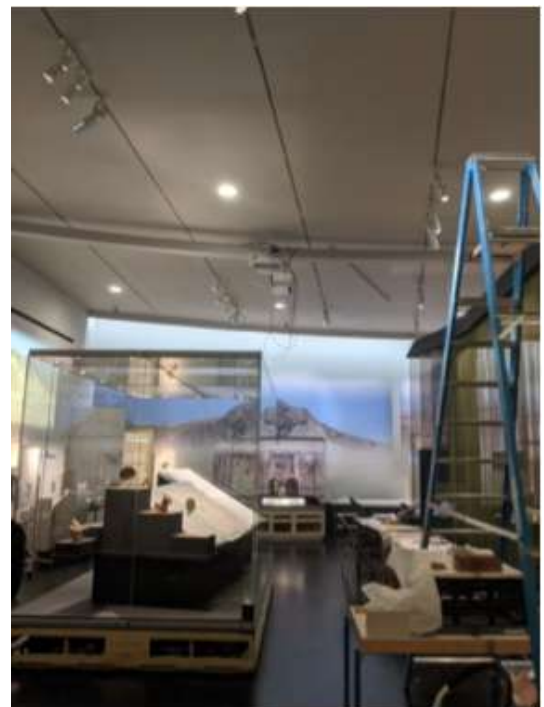
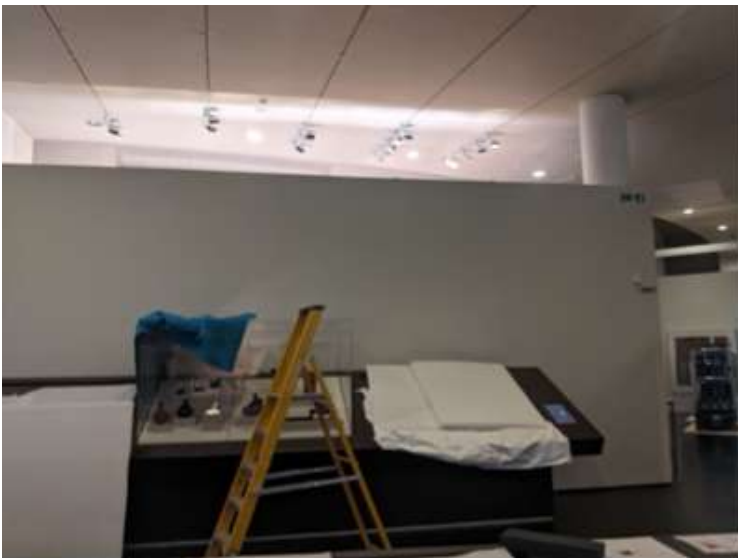
*Sector G (Great Court and Round Reading Room) shown above in royal blue.*

### 1.3 Background and Outline Proposals

Room 35 has been in constant use and over time has sustained considerable wear and tear. The existing cork floor and additional sub floor were installed in 2017 and now require complete refurbishment to ensure a robust surface and to provide vital access to power and data. The ceiling is no longer fit for purpose due to access panels not being securely suspended and no hanging points to facilitate flexible exhibition display. A more secure structure is required that will also improve access to the recessed lighting track currently embedded within the ceiling.



*Above: existing ceiling, recessed lighting track and surface mounted fixtures to painted plasterboard ceiling.  
Left: existing cork floor tile finish, with inset floor box*



*Above: view of existing retail walls.  
Right: View of existing gallery from south wall looking north to curved gallery wall.*

The aim of the refurbishment project is to improve the appearance and functionality of this exhibition space and make it fit for purpose for future changing exhibitions. The scheme will increase the longevity and robustness of the built elements of the gallery. The work proposed has been developed to align with the original design intent of the space and upgrades currently outdated systems. The project will consist of the following:

- Replacement of the timber suspended floor structure.
- Replacement of floor finish.
- Replacement of existing plasterboard ceiling.
- Replacement of lighting track.
- Distribution of power and data throughout the floor and ceiling.
- Replacement of wall linings.
- Replacement of partitions to retail area.
- Cleaning of existing modern stone curved wall.

Work proposed will not impact the historic fabric of the Museum. Room 35 is of modern construction and is a self-contained space. Unlike the more significant Foster Phase fabric surrounding Room 35, this space was designed as a temporary gallery, necessitating constant adaptation to change of exhibition housed within. The proposed works facilitate the sustained functionality and performance of this space in this temporary gallery capacity. There is no proposal to impact on historic fabric of the Museum. Existing services are to be retained as much as possible, and if being replaced are to reuse existing routes and risers so as to minimise any need for new builder's work associated with the refurbishment.

The British Museum are aiming to undertake the refurbishment work from October 2022 – February 2023 in order to coordinate with the temporary exhibitions programme.

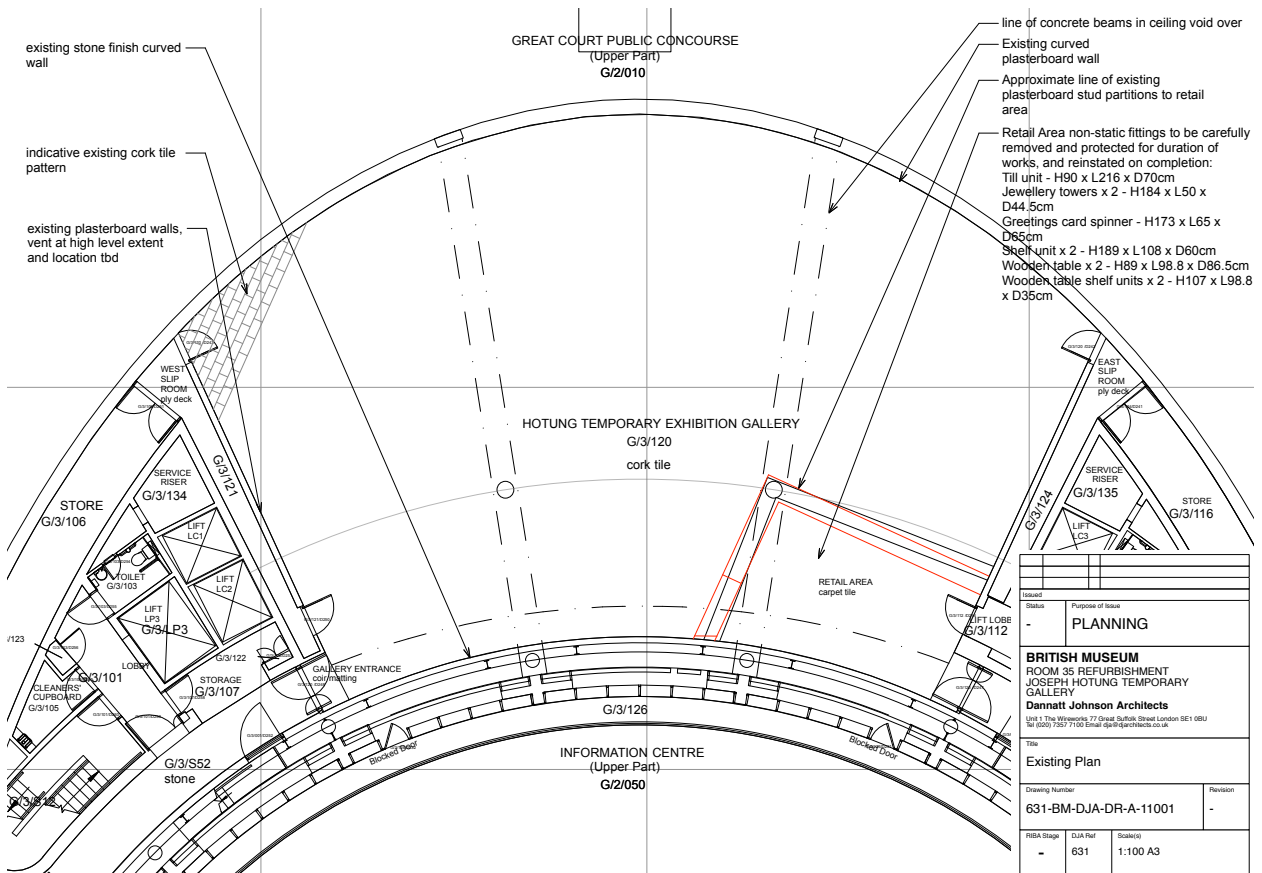


## 2.0 DESIGN PROPOSALS

### 2.1 Floor

The existing floor is a suspended timber-framed structure of 4" x 2" joists, lined with 24mm and 6mm ply board. The timber structure is set on 20mm timber packing battens on the existing concrete slab. The existing construction depth varies 130-150mm. The existing electrical installation is run in metal conduit through this construction to 13 number floor boxes set into the floor with recessed covers.

The floor has a cork tile finish of 300 x 600mm tiles with a dark varnish finish.

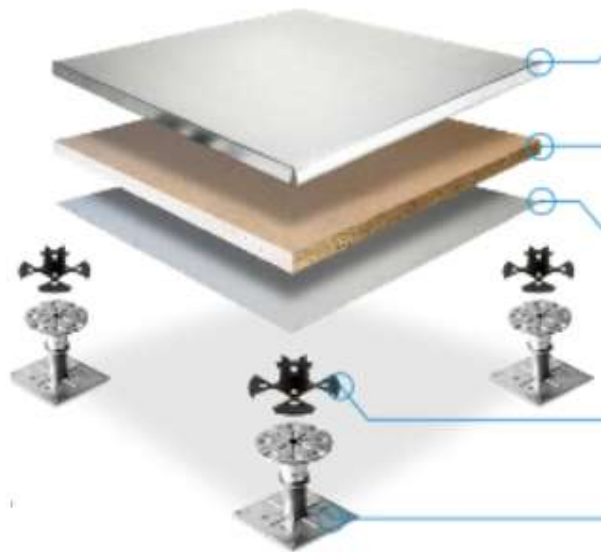
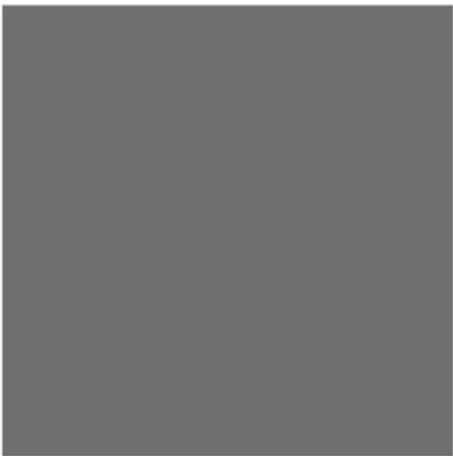
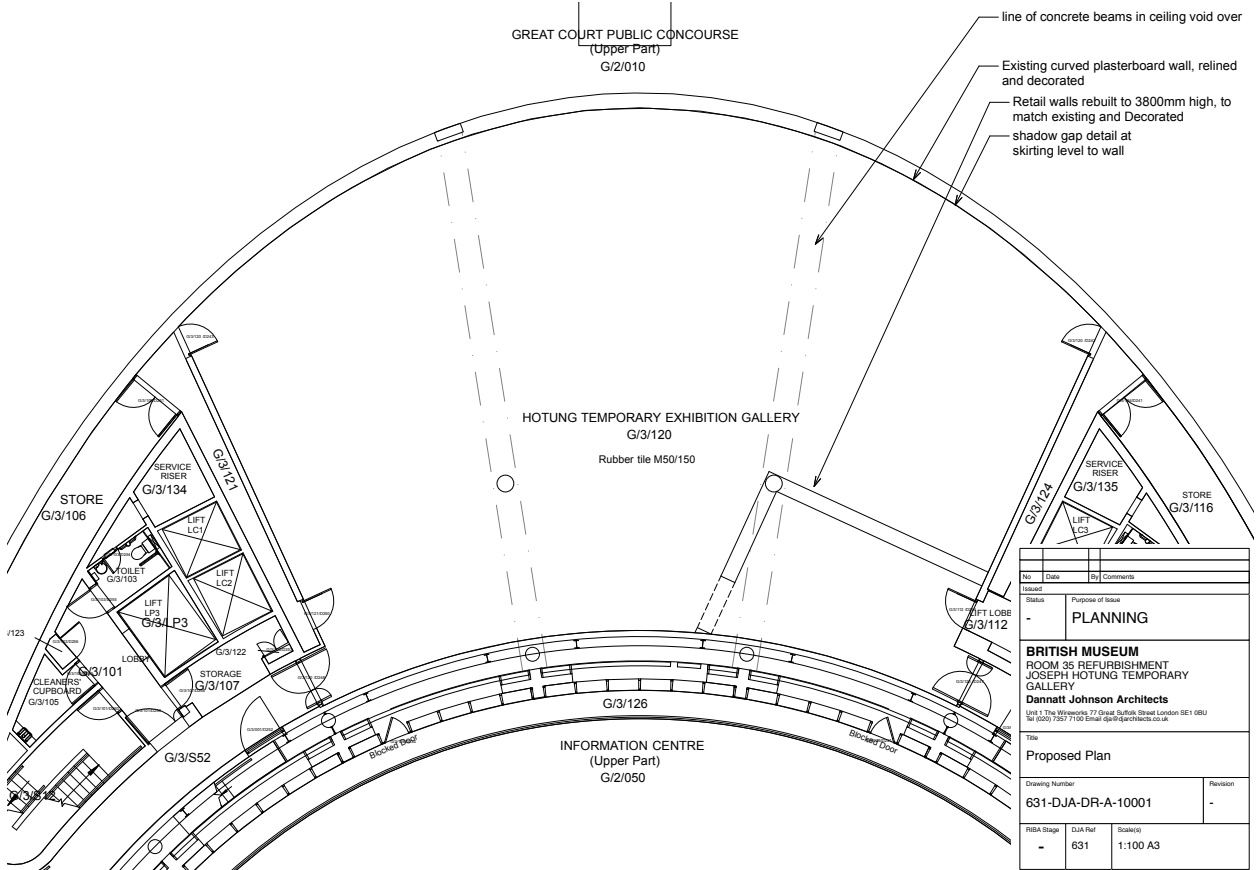


The existing floor is inflexible in terms of power and data layout which inhibits the design of exhibitions in the space. The cork finish is robust but requires recoating between exhibitions, a wet process which requires the space to be cleared and additional drying time. The timber subfloor has been altered, notched, cut into and repaired for past exhibitions to the extent that the Museum cannot be confident of the performance of the floor and have concerns over vibration and loading.



Above: existing timber subfloor.  
Right: existing varnished cork tile floor finish.

The proposal is to remove the existing timber framed suspended floor, ply subfloor, recessed floor boxes, and cork floor finish and replace the existing subfloor power and data installation. A new proprietary raised access floor system is proposed to match existing floor level, to improve the performance and loading of the floor and provide flexibility in access to power and data across the entire space. A dark rubber tile finish is proposed as a close translation in appearance and durability to cork, and removes the requirement for wet re-finishing process between exhibitions.

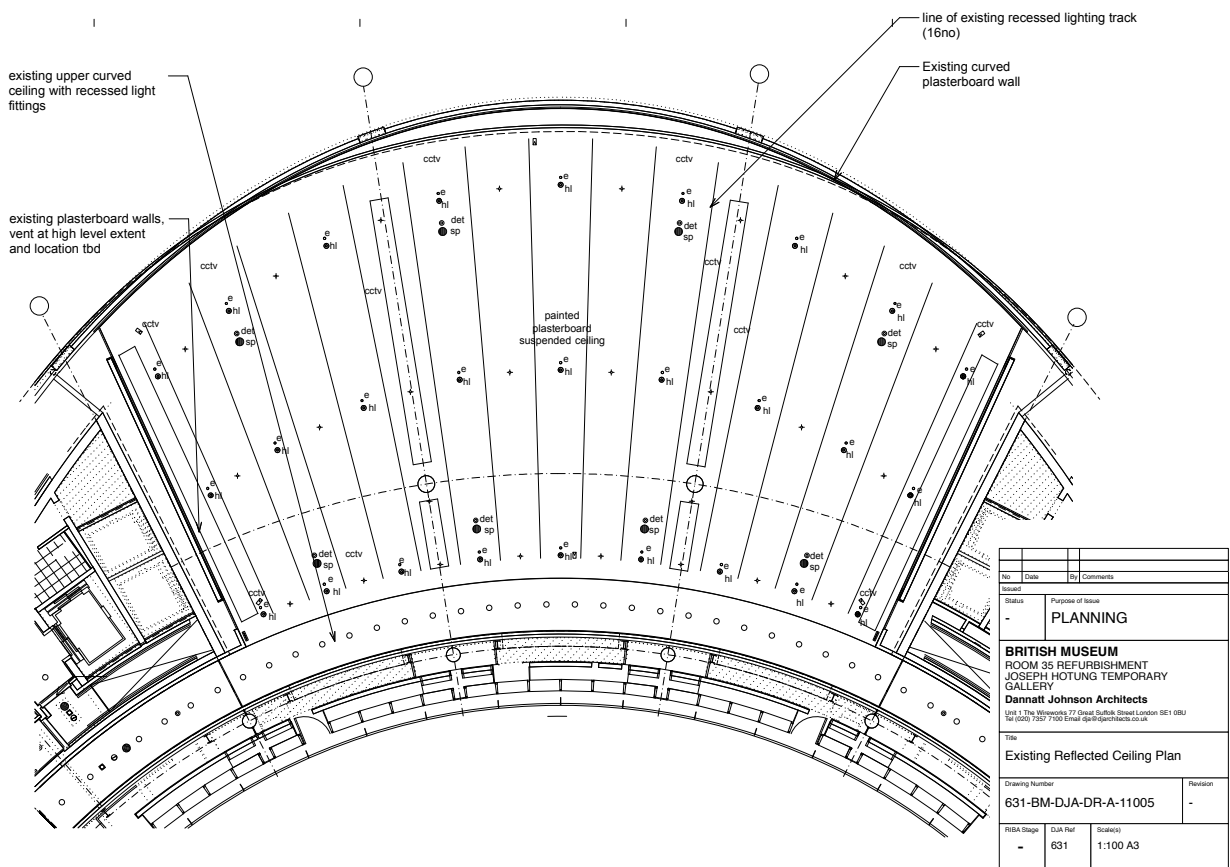


Above: proposed rubber tile floor finish.  
 Right: diagram of proposed raised access floor system.

## 2.2 Ceiling

The main ceiling in Room 35 is 4.7m high, constructed of painted metal access panels and painted plasterboard with 16 recessed linear lighting tracks in a splayed 'fan' arrangement. There is a raised section of painted plasterboard ceiling running 1.7m width parallel to the curved south wall of the gallery, at approximately 5.7m above finished floor level. This upper ceiling has recessed ceiling lighting installed.

The ceiling is currently inflexible in terms of lack of access to power and data and limited ability to accommodate AV installations and hanging of graphics and objects as part of an exhibition design. A number of temporary structures have been constructed for past exhibitions including curved beams, these structures add 'clutter' to the appearance of the exhibitions and the presentation of the gallery space. The current arrangement of access to the ceiling void is by push fit metal access panels. A number of these have failed and so access at high level for gallery staff is difficult to manage and dangerous.

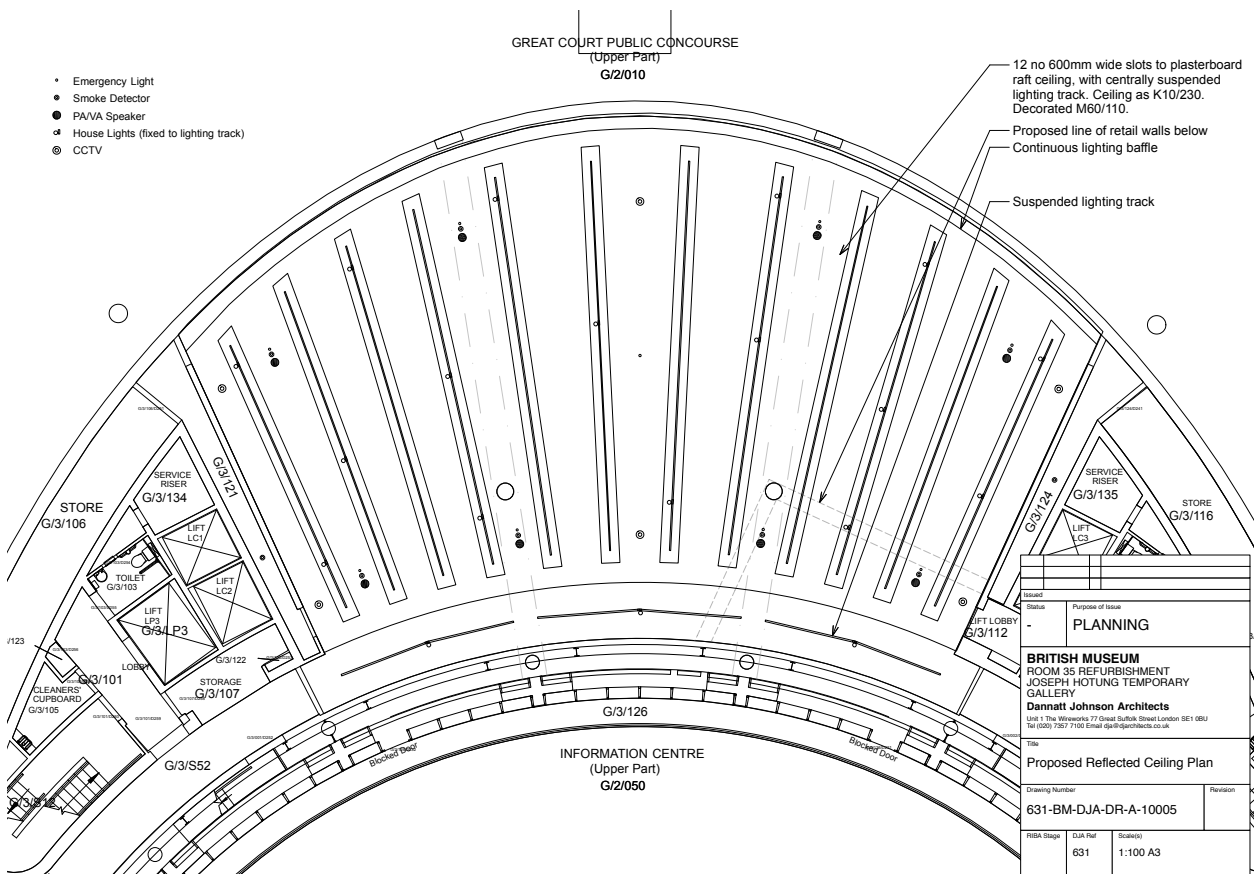


The proposals are to remove the existing plasterboard ceiling, recessed track lighting and ceiling mounted accessories and install a suspended ceiling to match level of existing. Twelve slots, in a splayed 'fan' arrangement would be formed into the ceiling, with new suspended lighting track to the centre of each slot. A system of power and data is proposed to be installed into the ceiling void with ease of access through the slot arrangement, to remove the need for any unsightly access panels to the ceiling.

Services installations in the ceiling void will be made visually recessive, painted out or overlaid to bring uniformity to the presentation of discreet areas of the void that may be visible through the new slot arrangement.

To the north of the gallery, a lighting cove detail is proposed to enhance the curve of the wall and provide functionality to display possibilities for the north wall. The introduction of this detail removes the need for the Museum to form temporary curved lighting baffles at ceiling level.

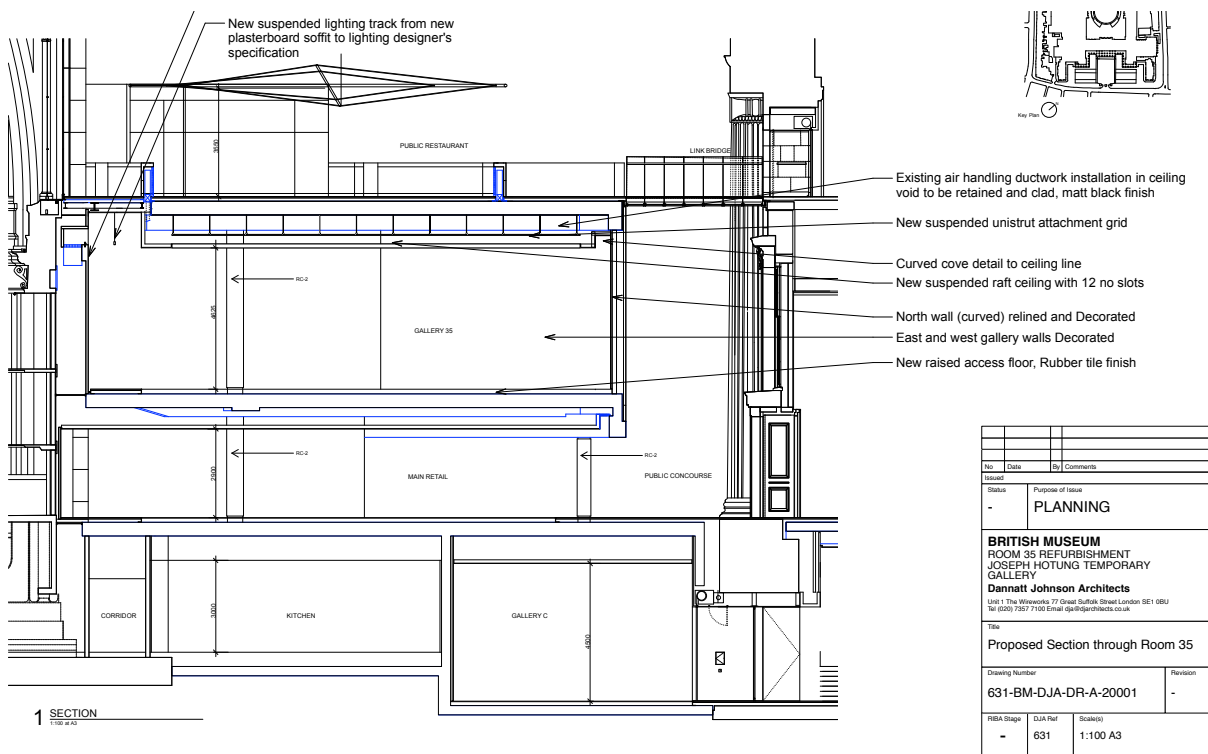
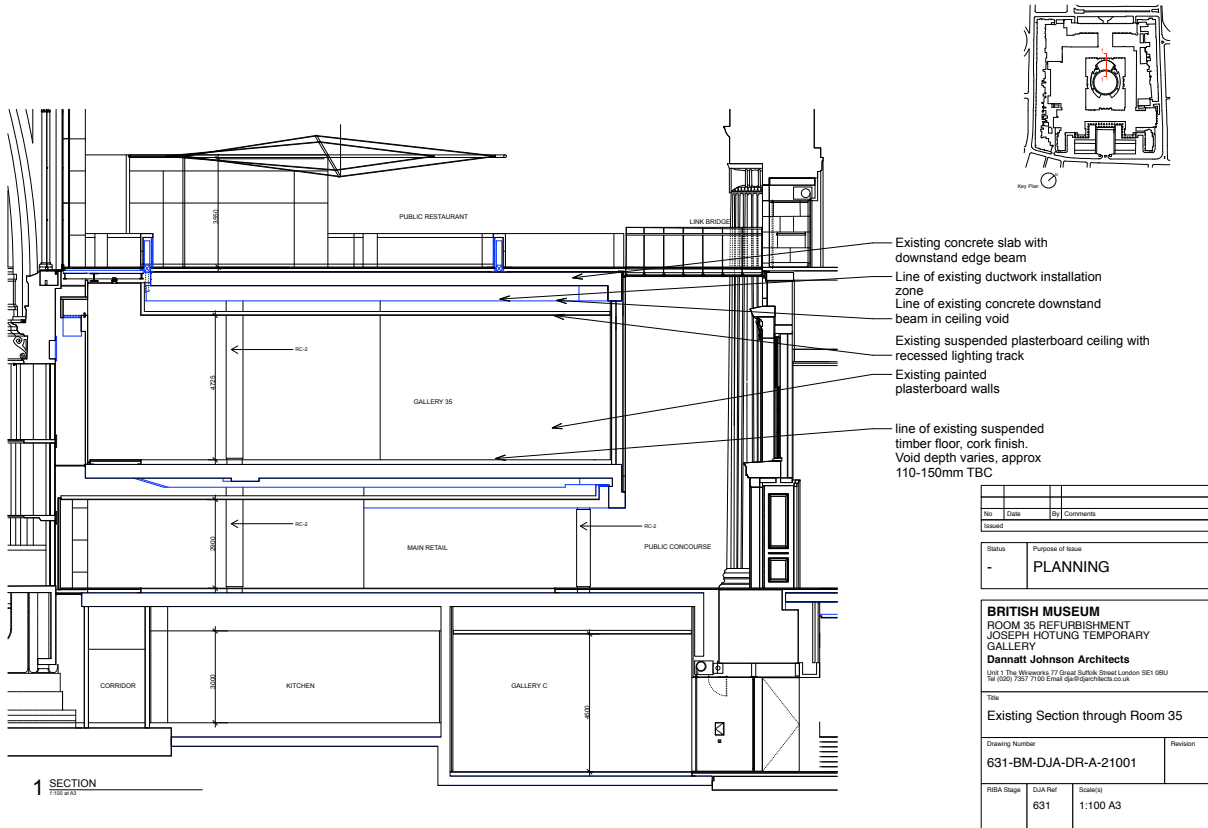
To the south, the flat plasterboard ceiling and recessed lighting will be removed and a smooth plasterboard ceiling proposed with suspended track lighting to improve the functionality of the lighting arrangement in the space.



### 2.3 Walls and Doors

The existing gallery walls are generally of painted plasterboard with a 40mm high, 70mm deep shadow gap detail at skirting level, which is painted black.

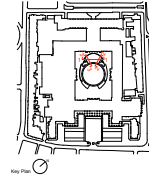
Temporary installations and fixings for display are repaired between each exhibition, and walls are redecorated.



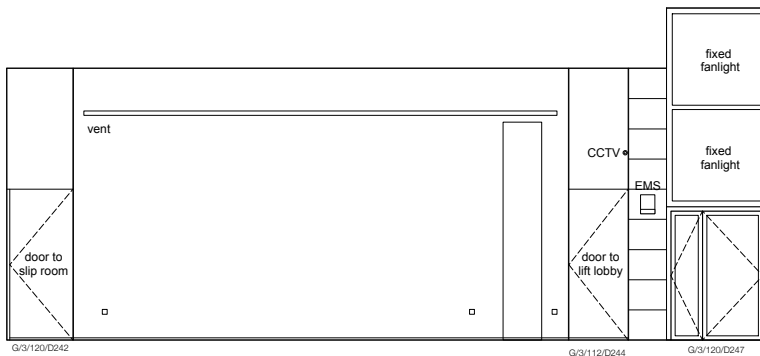
### 2.3.1 North wall

The north wall is a curved arc in plan, with shadow gap detail at skirting level. The wall is constructed of 12,5mm plasterboard on a 12mm ply backing which is supported on metal furrings fixed to the existing concrete blockwork wall. The wall is the main architectural feature of Room 35 and a key element in the design for temporary exhibitions in the space. The wall has been compromised through a number of temporary interventions that have been repaired but are causing cracking to what is otherwise a smooth and unbroken curved surface.

The proposal is to remove the damaged plasterboard facing to the wall and repair the ply substrate. To improve the robustness of the wall, a new lining of plywood will be fixed under a finishing layer of plasterboard, to be taped and jointed and decorated to provide a super smooth matt high quality gallery level finish.



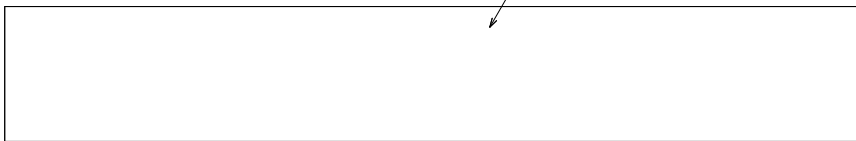
Elevation 1 - North Wall  
1:100 at A3



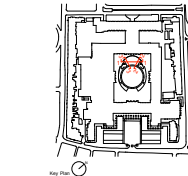
Elevation 2 - East Wall  
1:50 at A3

No.	Date	By	Comments
Issued			
Status	Purpose of Issue		
-	PLANNING		
<b>BRITISH MUSEUM</b> ROOM 35 REFURBISHMENT JOSEPH HOTUNG TEMPORARY GALLERY <b>Dannatt Johnson Architects</b> Unit 1 The Warehouse 77 Great South Street London SE1 1SU Tel (020) 7857 7100 Email dja@qjarchitects.co.uk			
Title			
Existing Internal Elevation of Room 35 - North and East Wall			
Drawing Number		Revision	
631-BM-DJA-DR-A-31001			
FBA Stage	DJA Ref	Scale(s)	
631		As Noted	

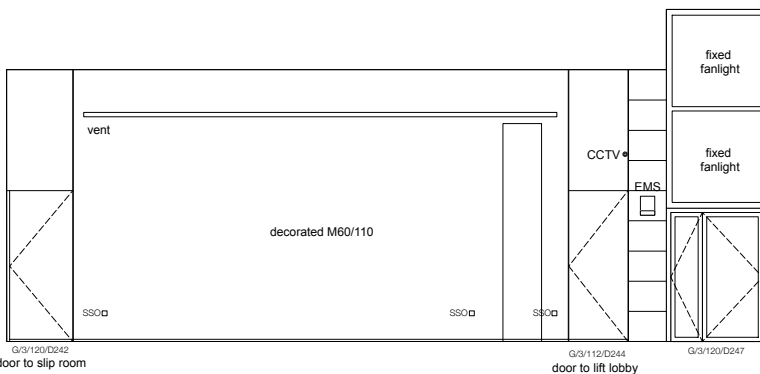
New board lining to curved north wall as K10/205.  
Fine surface treatment finish, Decorated



Elevation 1 - North Wall  
1:100 at A3



Existing flush timber fire doors D242 and D244 are to be carefully removed and overhauled. Remove existing ironmongery and repair door ready to receive new ironmongery. Prepare and refurbish door leafs and frames to achieve a high quality painted finish



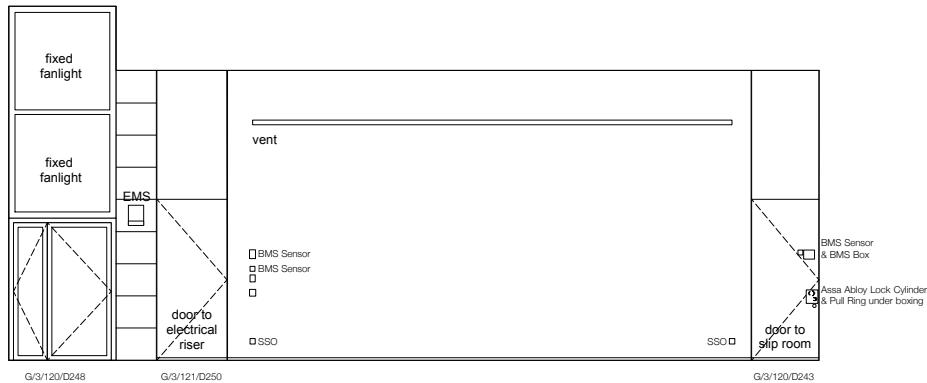
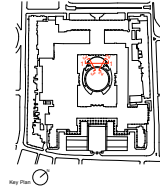
Elevation 2 - East Wall  
1:50 at A3

No.	Date	By	Comments
Issued			
Status	Purpose of Issue		
-	PLANNING		
<b>BRITISH MUSEUM</b> ROOM 35 REFURBISHMENT JOSEPH HOTUNG TEMPORARY GALLERY <b>Dannatt Johnson Architects</b> Unit 1 The Warehouse 77 Great South Street London SE1 1SU Tel (020) 7857 7100 Email dja@qjarchitects.co.uk			
Title			
Proposed Internal Elevation of Room 35 - North and East Wall			
Drawing Number		Revision	
631-BM-DJA-DR-A-30001			
FBA Stage	DJA Ref	Scale(s)	
631		As Noted	

### 2.3.2 East and West walls

The east and west walls are straight, painted plasterboard walls with a vertical band of polished white limestone to the south corner of both walls, and recessed shadow gap detail at skirting level. There is a flush timber access door to each end of each wall with a shadow gap detail running to the ceiling over; and a ventilation slot at high level which forms part of the air handling service to the space. The walls are constructed of 12.5mm plasterboard on a 12mm plywood lining, on metal studs.

The condition of the east and west walls is good and so the proposal is to improve the finish and decoration of the walls.

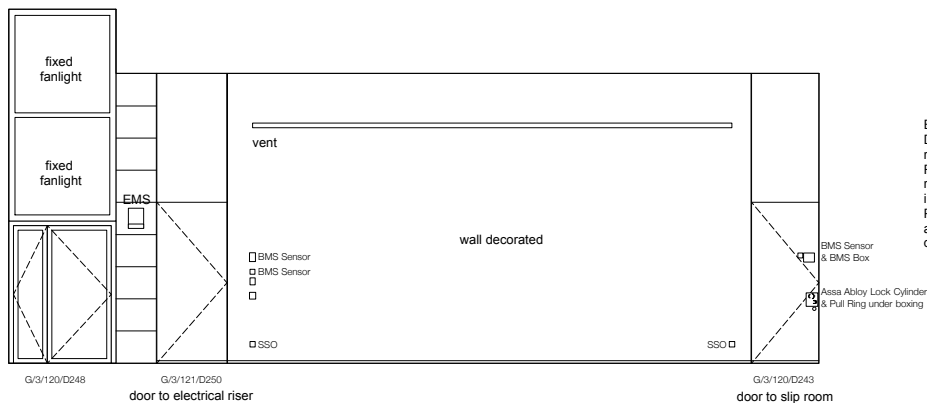


Elevation 3 - West Wall

No.	Date	By	Comments
Issued			

Status	Purpose of Issue
-	PLANNING

<b>BRITISH MUSEUM</b> ROOM 35 REFURBISHMENT JOSEPH HOTUNG TEMPORARY GALLERY <b>Dannatt Johnson Architects</b> <small>Unit 1 The Workshops 77 Great Suffolk Street London SE1 0BU          Tel: (020) 7537 7100 Email: dj@dnjarchitects.co.uk</small>		
Title		
Existing Internal Elevation of Room 35 - West Wall		
Drawing Number		Revision
631-BM-DJA-DR-A-31002		
RIBA Stage	DJA Ref	Scale(s)
631		1:50 A3



Elevation 3 - West Wall

Existing flush timber fire doors D250 and D243 are to be carefully removed and overhauled. Remove existing ironmongery and repair door ready to receive new ironmongery. Prepare and refurbish door leafs and frames to achieve a high quality painted finish

No.	Date	By	Comments
Issued			

Status	Purpose of Issue
-	PLANNING

<b>BRITISH MUSEUM</b> ROOM 35 REFURBISHMENT JOSEPH HOTUNG TEMPORARY GALLERY <b>Dannatt Johnson Architects</b> <small>Unit 1 The Workshops 77 Great Suffolk Street London SE1 0BU          Tel: (020) 7537 7100 Email: dj@dnjarchitects.co.uk</small>		
Title		
Proposed Internal Elevation of Room 35 - West Wall		
Drawing Number		Revision
631-BM-DJA-DR-A-30002		
RIBA Stage	DJA Ref	Scale(s)
631		1:50 A3