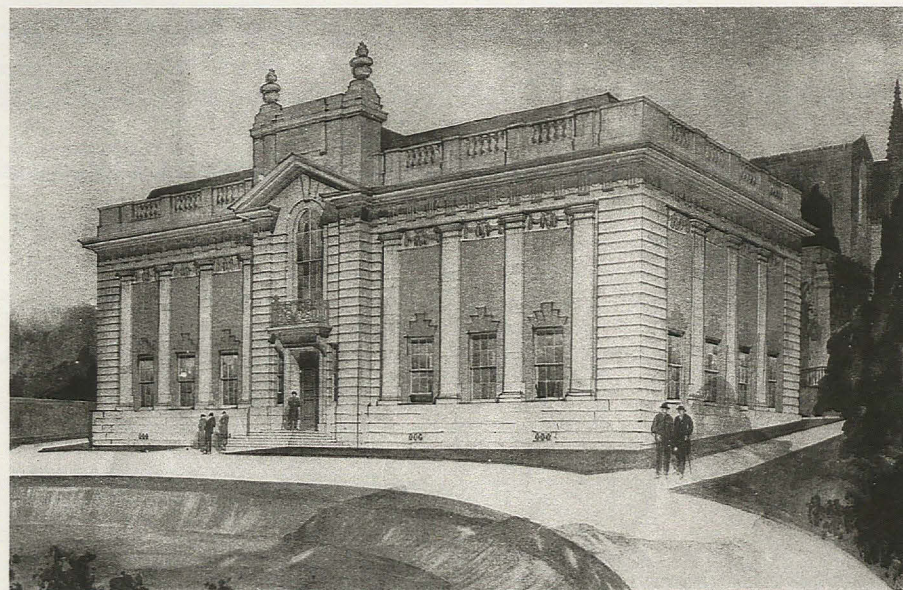


CAMBRIDGE ARCHITECTURAL RESEARCH LTD

CONSERVATION PLAN FOR THE **USHER GALLERY, LINCOLN**

March 2004



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Conservation
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PREFACE

The Usher Gallery

The Grade II* listed Usher Gallery is owned by the City of Lincoln Council and managed by Lincolnshire County Council, with facilities management contracted to HBS. The building is located within the City of Lincoln's Cathedral and City Centre Conservation Area, and its setting is within Temple Gardens. This Conservation Plan was commissioned by Lincolnshire County Council and prepared by Dr William Fawcett and Katie Thornburrow of Cambridge Architectural Research Ltd and Richard Fellows of Huddersfield University between November 2003 and March 2004.

The Conservation Plan covers the original Blomfield building opened in 1927 plus the attached Curtois Extension of the 1950s and Coin Gallery of the 1970s, as well as the detached caretaker's bungalow (now the Gallery's administrative offices) and the paths and steps immediately adjacent to the building. Temple Gardens, within which the Gallery is located, is considered only as the context for the Gallery itself.

The project was guided by a steering committee with the following members:

Jeremy Webster (Principal Keeper, Usher Gallery)
Jonathan Platt (Education and Cultural Services, Lincolnshire County Council)
Arthur Ward (Head of Heritage, City of Lincoln Council)
Craig Duncan (HBS)

Comments on the drafts of the Conservation Plan were received from:

M J Jones (City Archaeologist, City of Lincoln Council), John Holland (Principal Architect, City of Lincoln Council), Dr Beryl Lott (Conservation Services, Lincolnshire County Council), English Heritage, Lincoln Civic Trust Ltd, Friends of Lincoln Museums and Art Gallery.

Panther Hudspith, architects of Lincoln's new City and County Museum, provided CAD drawings of the Usher Gallery as existing.

INTRODUCTION

Scope and objectives

Since it was opened in 1927 the Usher Gallery has been the main art gallery in Lincoln, displaying both a permanent collection and temporary exhibitions, as well as hosting lectures, concerts and other functions.

Today the Usher Gallery is facing dramatic change with the construction of the new City and County Museum on an adjacent site. To respond to the presence of this new, much larger Museum, and to modernise aspects of the Usher Gallery that no longer meet present day standards, a major refurbishment of the Gallery is planned for the near future. This brings opportunities and threats for the Gallery.

This Conservation Plan aims to provide a guide for the care and development of the Usher Gallery so as to retain its significance. This has many aspects including:

- retaining the character and quality of the various architectural elements;
- permitting adaptations and compatible new elements which will make the Gallery more effective in its fundamental purpose;
- identifying elements which adversely affect the Gallery and which are in need of modification or removal;
- providing an approach to maintenance and the replacement of deteriorated elements;
- drawing attention to the need for co-ordination and continuity of conservation decisions;
- giving recognition to the significance of the building in its location and setting, both within a Conservation Area and within Temple Gardens.

It is important to note that conservation plans are a gathering together of good practice – the contents are not all novel. Many policies recommended in this Plan are already being carried out, and in these cases the Plan aims to reinforce the present situation and ensure it continues.

However, there are some policy recommendations in the Plan that do require changes to the current situation: these are objectives that could be achieved over different timescales. No timescale is specified for the application of the whole Conservation Plan.

The Plan deals with general principles for the care and development of the Gallery, and is not linked to any specific proposal for refurbishment. Any proposed action should be evaluated with reference to the Plan.

It is most important that the Conservation Plan should be a practical guide for action. It reflects a range of present-day informed opinion and, subject to resource and timescale constraints, it is believed that its proposals are practical and realisable, and should be acted on.

How the Plan is organised

The structure of this Conservation Plan follows the recommendations of English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund, and the pioneering work on Conservation Plans by J S Kerr. It is in five sections.

Section 1, 'Understanding', describes the building history of the Gallery in a chronological sequence, followed by a discussion of more general issues which explain the present character of the Gallery.

In Section 2, 'Conservation strategy', the broad conservation strategy for the Gallery is presented. This begins with the reasons why it has significance; then the issues that make it vulnerable are explained; and the policies that will enable the Gallery to respond to these issues without losing significance are set out. The policies do not deal in detail with particular questions affecting the buildings: the users of the Plan should apply the policies on a case-by-case basis. Finally, this section gives a method for using the Conservation Plan to evaluate any proposal for change in the Gallery.

In Section 3, 'Elements', the main elements are considered in turn. The significance of each element is assessed, then special observations are noted and, in most cases, guidelines are set out indicating how the conservation policies should be applied. These guidelines are cross-referenced to the policies in Section 2. The assessments of individual elements are intended to identify significance and do not constitute an exhaustive survey, which falls outside the scope of the Conservation Plan.

Section 4 describes the main sources of information about the Gallery. This section includes the statutory listing statements.

Section 5 contains plans showing the Gallery and setting.

How to use the Plan

The Conservation Plan is intended for a wide readership, on the proposition that the better the Gallery is understood, the better it will be treated. All users of the Plan should therefore benefit from reading Section 1, 'Understanding', even if their particular interest is focused on one part of the Gallery.

Readers who are concerned with the broad issues of policy and the development of the Gallery should read the whole of Section 2, 'Conservation strategy'. Other readers might prefer to return to Section 2 after using relevant parts of Section 3. However, all readers should aim to digest the basic conservation strategy in Section 2.

Readers who are concerned with particular elements should refer to the relevant entry in Section 3 before referring back to Section 2.

If readers want to follow up any points in the Conservation Plan in more detail, Section 4 gives a list of published sources referred to in the preparation of the Plan, and also identifies other sources with information specifically related to the buildings and site.

The plans are grouped in Section 5 so that they can easily be referred to whenever needed.

Updating the Plan

Some aspects of the Conservation Plan should remain valid for a long time, but others will become superseded by new developments. It is important that the Plan is systematically updated to ensure that it does not become irrelevant. New issues of the Plan should be clearly marked and dated, and distributed to all interested parties.

SECTION 1

UNDERSTANDING

In this section the story of the Usher Gallery is described in a chronological sequence, beginning with the Usher bequest. There is also some discussion of more general issues which explain the present character of the Gallery.

Building the Usher Gallery

The Usher bequest

James Ward Usher (1845-1921) owned a successful Lincoln jewellery shop, which he inherited from his father. His most profitable venture was making souvenirs and jewellery featuring the Lincoln Imp, based on a carving in Lincoln Cathedral. His initiative is shown by the installation of electric light in his shop in 1886 – the first in Lincoln (Wood, 1979).

Usher seems to have been a somewhat solitary man. He never married and early in life devoted himself to collecting, a hobby which became a passion. From the 1880s he frequented Christie's and other sale rooms, buying avidly but judiciously. He collected ceramics, clocks and watches, coins, enamels, miniatures and silver. He recorded the collection in lavish privately printed books, *Objects of Art and Virtù* (1900) and *An Art Collector's Treasures* (1916) featuring his own meticulous watercolour drawings, which are themselves 'objects of virtù' (virtù = rare or beautiful curios).

Usher took no part in civic life until he was made Sheriff of Lincoln in 1916 at the age of seventy, when he remarked that his collection might form the nucleus of an art gallery and museum. He said he hoped to 'leave Lincoln a little better than he found it' (Wood, 1979).

When Usher died in September 1921 he left the treasured collection to his native city, together with a fund of £61,000 (about £15m in today's values) to defray the cost of caring for the collection and displaying it to the public. His intentions were carried out, and Lincoln has continued to benefit from this public-spirited gesture.

The site and the architect

Having received the bequest, Lincoln Corporation had to decide where to display the collection and how to use the fund to establish an art gallery. In May 1922 the Council

A PRICELESS HERITAGE.

Lincoln Citizens Witness Opening Ceremony of Usher Collection.

ART GALLERY SITE SELECTED.

Lincoln is now happy in the possession of one of the most magnificent and valuable collections of art and vertu in the country, and although for the time being it cannot be displayed to the public gaze to the best possible advantage, that defect, it is gratifying to note, is to be remedied with the minimum of delay.

The collection, which includes many articles of historic and national interest, and whose intrinsic worth must run into many thousands of pounds, is all the more valuable to Lincoln in that it represents a lifetime's devoted care and effort on the part of one of her most honoured sons, and has been freely bequeathed by him to the city, together with a sum of money sufficiently large to build and equip a fitting "gallery" to house these wonderful treasures.

"The Usher Collection," the legacy of Mr. James Ward Usher, who died a little over a year ago, has been temporarily housed in the Lincoln Public Library, and an event of historic importance took place on Wednesday afternoon, when, in the presence of a distinguished body of citizens, the Mayor (Coun. W. H. Kilmister), using a silver-gilt key especially made for the occasion, formally declared the collection open to the public.

Dwelt Amongst the Treasures.

The Mayor, in opening the proceedings, said it was his duty and pleasure to introduce Dr. Geo. C. Williamson, a personal friend of Mr. Usher, and himself an



[Photo: HARRISON, Lincoln.
The late Mr. J. W. Usher.]

The Usher collection was displayed in the library until the new Gallery was built. This report is of the opening in the library (*Lincolnshire Chronicle*, 21 October 1992).

considered buying a large vacant house, Hatfield House, in Lindum Road, but instead decided that '...Sir Reginald Blomfield [should] be consulted as to a suitable building for the collection...' (Lincolnshire Chronicle, 6 May 1922). There were rumblings about the expense of an out-of-town consultant, and a counter-proposal to use the fund for a new town hall which could include display space for the Usher collection. Meanwhile the collection was displayed in a room in the City Library, with a former employee of Usher as the attendant.

Despite stormy council meetings at which the temperature was raised with personal invective, the art gallery project went forward. Blomfield presented his first sketches in October 1923, a site was purchased in 1924 and tenders for the new building were received in July 1925. Savings had to be made, and then the contract was awarded to the local firm of W Wright & Son Ltd. Construction started in August 1925.

The site chosen for the gallery was Temple Gardens in Lindum Road. Formerly a private garden and described in the 1920s as 'a delightful oasis', it is a site of great archaeological importance, containing an important fragment of the Roman ditch that surrounded the original city (City of Lincoln Council, 2003). From Lindum Road the Garden winds up the steep hillside towards the Cathedral. Blomfield set the new building fairly high in the site, with the rest of the Garden becoming a public park. Blomfield's scheme included entrance gates, perimeter railings, a drive and steps.

The Council wanted to spend £34,000 on the building but it eventually cost £39,200. The site cost an additional £8,400, leaving a residue from Usher's bequest to provide income for maintenance. The Council also established a fund to buy works of art to add to the collection.

The foundation stone was laid in March 1926 and the new Usher Gallery was opened by the Prince of Wales in a ceremony of appropriate civic splendour on 25th May 1927.

Subsequent developments

There seems to have been little change at the Usher Gallery until an extension was built to the west of Blomfield's building in the late 1950s. This extension was named after Ella Curtois, an artist and native of Lincoln, whose marble sculpture of a kneeling boy is part of the Gallery's permanent collection. She lived in Paris and left the Gallery a bequest of £14,000 in 1945. The Curtois extension provided an additional display gallery, as well as a lift, workshop and store –



The opening of the Usher Gallery by the Prince of Wales on 25th May 1927

facilities which had not been included in Blomfield's building. A caretaker's bungalow was built at the same time, replacing old cottages on Danesgate to the south-west of the Gallery.

An additional, smaller extension was added in the 1970s at the junction of Blomfield's building and the Curtois extension, funded by the Hill bequest, to provide a gallery for the Usher's coin collection and the coin collection that Sir Francis Hill gave the gallery. The Coin Room is effectively a windowless strongroom with a massive, secure door.

Otherwise, despite numerous small changes, the Usher Gallery remains substantially unchanged. Its future is now bound up with the new City and County Museum, currently under construction on an adjacent site to the west of Danesgate.



The brand new Gallery photographed on 20 May 1927.

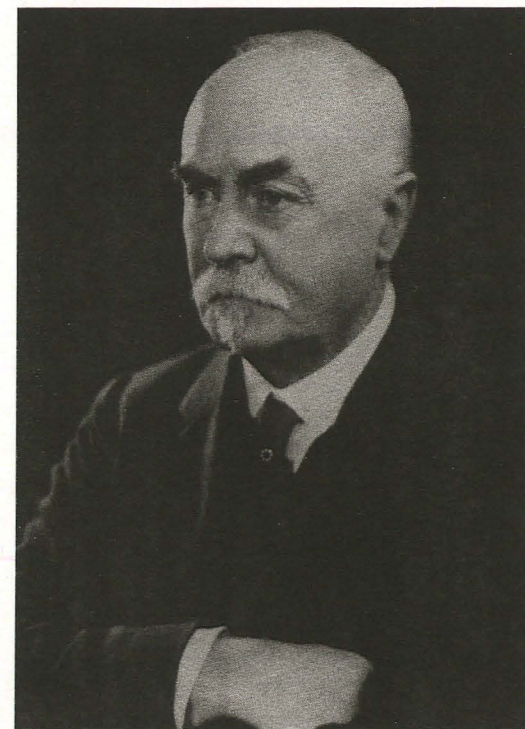
Evaluation of the Usher Gallery

The architect: Sir Reginald Blomfield

Sir Reginald Blomfield (1856–1942) was one of the most eminent architects of his generation (Fellows, 1986). He was, essentially, an Edwardian – a contemporary of notable figures in the arts like Edward Elgar (1857–1934), John Singer Sargent (1856–1925) and George Bernard Shaw (1856–1950).

Blomfield's background was middle class and educated, part of the British 'establishment'. He went to public school and excelled in classics at Oxford. He was interested in the visual arts and said he would like to have been a sculptor, but the need to earning a living made him choose architecture as a profession. In 1881 he entered the office of his uncle A W (later Sir Arthur) Blomfield (1829–99) (Brodie et al, 2001), who '... could turn out an impressive church in almost any style' (Betjeman, 1958). In the Victorian period most architects began their training as teenage pupils, but Blomfield had already reached the relatively advanced age of twenty-five. Although his uncle generously waived the normal fees, Blomfield found the office dispiriting and soon left after a dispute, setting up on his own in 1884. Like many young architects in the 1880s he was attracted by the new Arts & Crafts movement which made Gothic Revival design, as practiced by his uncle, seem mechanical and lifeless.

Blomfield started writing articles on architectural topics in the 1880s. In 1892 he published his first book *The Formal Garden in England*, followed in 1897 by *A History of Renaissance Architecture in England*. These books helped to establish his reputation and contributed to a flourishing architectural practice, largely based on country houses and gardens but including public, collegiate and commercial buildings. Blomfield's career blossomed. He contributed regularly to the annual Royal Academy Exhibitions, missing only five years between 1884 and 1939. He was appointed Professor of Architecture at the Royal Academy in 1907, elected president of the RIBA in 1912–14, received the RIBA Gold Medal in 1913, and knighted in 1919. He still found time to write, producing the first two volumes of a history of French architecture in 1911 and two more in 1921, as well as several books of lectures and essays.



Sir Reginald Blomfield (1856–1942) photographed in the 1920s, the period when he was designing the Usher Gallery.

At the end of World War I Blomfield was over sixty and at the pinnacle of the architectural profession. Country house projects were replaced by public buildings. He was appointed as one of the principal architects for the Imperial War Graves Commission and received commissions for large scale urban projects, such as the Regent Street Quadrant and Lambeth Bridge in London and the Headrow in Leeds. His practice continued up to World War II.

Blomfield's approach to architecture

Throughout his career Blomfield propounded his ideas about architecture. He came to architecture after a wide-ranging education and his first success was with his books: he was always comfortable in writing, lecturing, and arguing. His writings were influential in the new university schools of architecture which could not function without explicit guiding principles, unlike the old pupillage system where architectural conventions were learned by direct experience. Blomfield advocated a rational architecture, embodied in cool classical style, where a lucid concept avoided the 'entanglements of detail' found in ad hoc methods of design.

This rationalism was a reaction against an indigestible succession of more exuberant architectural styles in the late nineteenth century. In the 1880s young architects like Blomfield wanted to get away from the Victorian Gothic Revival; their eclectic Arts & Crafts movement found room for anything from Wren to Byzantium. By about 1900 the latest thing was full-blown Edwardian baroque. So there was plenty to react against, and the rationalist campaign was entirely successful. Blomfield cannot take all the credit: many of his contemporaries felt the same way – hence the success.

Having put cool classicism ahead of the field, Blomfield spent the rest of his life defending it from all comers. In 1934 he published *Modernismus*, a book attacking the pernicious Bolshevik ideas of modern architecture put forward by foreigners. Having started as a young Arts & Crafts radical in the 1880s, Blomfield ended his career as an arch-reactionary in the 1930s.

Blomfield's extraordinary energy and diversity are captured in the obituary notice by Sir Albert Richardson, reproduced in Section 4 below. His towering stature amongst his contemporaries had four aspects: first, his writings; second, his buildings; third, his professional work at the RIBA and on numerous committees; and fourth, his memorable personality.



Selwyn College, Cambridge, designed by Reginald Blomfield's uncle Arthur Blomfield; construction began in 1881, the year that Reginald entered his uncle's office as a pupil. Reginald Blomfield came to detest Gothic Revival architecture.

Of these four aspects his committee work and personality are ephemeral and their impact has been lost. Of Blomfield's writings and buildings, the writings seem today to receive more attention, particularly his anti-modern polemics of the 1920s and 30s. In recent books about inter-war architecture by, for example, Benton (1979) and Curtis (1996), his writings have been quoted to represent the traditionalist point of view which was widely shared at the time. The reputation of his buildings is discussed below.

Blomfield's Usher Gallery

When faced with the Usher bequest Lincoln Corporation '...called in Sir Reginald Blomfield, RA, having entire confidence from previous experience of his work in the city that he could be relied upon to select the best possible site and erect a building that should indeed be worthy of the collection' (Lincoln Echo, 10 March 1926).

Blomfield had already designed two important buildings in Lincoln before World War I – the prominent water tower and the public library. The water tower (completed 1911), located high on the ridge near the cathedral and castle, has a rectangular stone outer casing which Blomfield described as a 'lofty keep'. The library (completed 1914) is an Edwardian baroque building based more on French than English precedents, in stone, with a central dome. Even earlier, Blomfield had two country house commissions in Lincolnshire, the extension and rebuilding of Brocklesby Park for Lord Yarborough (1899), and a substantial country residence and gardens at Caythorpe Court (1901).

A splendid site was chosen for the Usher Gallery in Temple Gardens. Lindum hill forms the backdrop, but there is no competition with the Cathedral which is visible on top of the hill. Blomfield's building is well set back from the road, dominating the Garden. It is a self-contained symmetrical building, as is typical of public buildings in the inter-war period: symmetry was a dominant convention.

Blomfield had designed one art gallery before the Usher, the Holburne of Menstrie Museum in Bath. Like the Usher, a bequest had been made and a suitable building was required, but in Bath an existing building had been chosen before Blomfield got involved in 1910. His first scheme was produced in 1910 and revised in 1911, but construction only began in 1914 on a third, more economical, version. The building was completed in July 1915. It received a very good review in the Architects' Journal in October 1921, the year of the Usher bequest.



Blomfield's Public Library in Lincoln, completed in 1914. Blomfield originally wanted the Usher Gallery to be stone-faced and have a dome, like the Library.



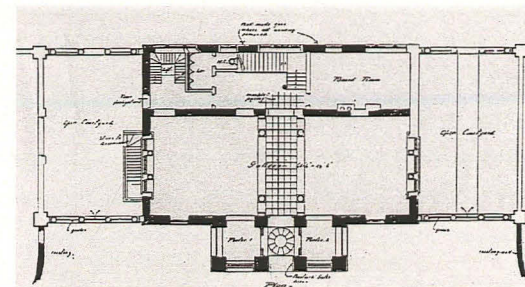
The Holburne of Menstrie Museum in Bath, an 18th century building converted by Blomfield (1910–15). Note the familiar flaming urns.

At the Holburne the existing building was an elegant Palladian design with a portico terminating the long vista down Great Pulteney Street from centre of Bath. The building had previously been used as a school and hotel. Blomfield's main contribution was to sweep away internal partitions and create a clear and rational plan with handsome spaces. The ground floor contained flats for the curator and caretaker, and on the two upper floors Blomfield designed full width galleries 24' 6" x 65' 6", with a floor to ceiling height of 25' 0" on the second floor. Essentially the plan was 'double banked' with the galleries to the front of the building and a narrower zone behind containing staircases, lift and service accommodation. Although the design made good use of existing space it did not allow for expansion, perhaps because the bequest was finite. Unfortunately the positioning of the main circulation and service spaces behind the galleries is causing problems now that the Holburne Museum has outgrown the Blomfield building.

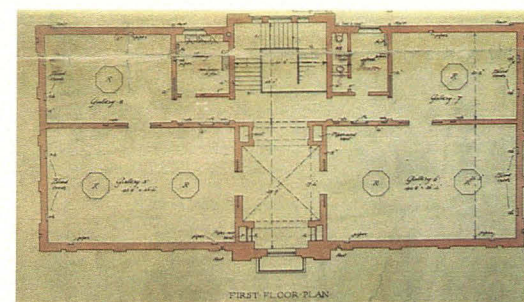
When designing the Usher Gallery, therefore, Blomfield had a precedent to hand. Given that he had a freer rein with the Usher – a new building not a conversion – it is interesting to note the similarities between the two buildings. The floor area of the galleries at the Usher is twice that of the Holburne, but the layout is very similar – a double banked plan with large galleries to the front and smaller spaces to the rear, all disposed about a central axis containing the entrance vestibule and staircase. Blomfield probably felt he had found an ideal layout for a small gallery at the Holburne, so it was natural to re-use it for the Usher.

As for the style of the Usher Gallery, Blomfield, like many architects in Britain in this period, was committed to a restrained, historically accurate classicism. The choice of the Roman Doric order is typical of Blomfield. Three of his major designs of the period are also Doric: the refacing of the Carlton Club (1923), the Menin Gate, Ypres (1919–1927) and the Headrow, Leeds (1925 onwards). He was predisposed in favour of the 'masculine' style of the Doric order, which is more solid and less ornamented than the Ionic or Corinthian orders.

We know that the Gallery as built was less ambitious than Blomfield's first proposal of 1923. 'A previous design showed a dome with a finial not unlike that of the Public Library ...' (Lincoln Echo, 7 March 1925). The revised design of 1924 was stone-faced and '... in the centre of the building there is a higher portion, also with a balustraded parapet, concealing a glass dome for lighting purposes. ... A handsome staircase leads up to the second floor, with another hall lighted by the glass dome ...' (Lincoln Echo, 7 March 1925). However, when tenders came in too high the glass dome and much of the stone facing had to go. The Gallery as built is in the



The floor plans of the Holburne Museum (above) and Usher Gallery (below). The Usher is larger but the organisation of space is extremely similar.



grand manner, but Blomfield would evidently have preferred an even more imposing statement for such an important civic monument.

When it came to building construction, Blomfield believed in soundness and good quality. He frowned on cheap materials but as a practical man he was willing to make use of technical advances. For example, he approved of reinforced concrete as long as it could not be seen. The Usher rests on 120 reinforced concrete piles, manufactured on site, supporting reinforced concrete ground beams that carry the building.

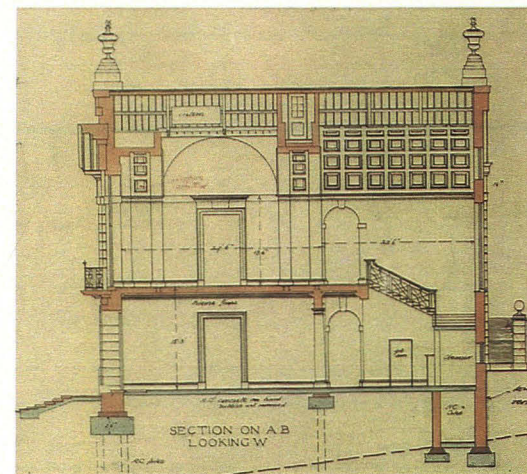
The loadbearing walls are 18" thick of Nottingham red facing bricks and local commons, with ducts let into the wall thickness. The pilasters, dressings and ornaments are of Ancaster stone. The first floor is a patent, fire resisting 'Kleine' system with a void to take pipes and ducts. The flat roof is concrete covered by asphalt, and the raised lantern lights have steel frameworks and are covered with grey Welsh slates. The plasterwork ceilings are on expanded metal lathing suspended from the structure.

There is a heating chamber in the basement which supplies a low pressure hot water system for the radiators. The ventilation system used intake grilles in the outer wall and skirting level inlets in the galleries, with extraction by a ceiling grilles with ducts connecting to a large roof mounted 'Blackman' fan.

Blomfield designed primarily for natural light. The ground floor galleries were lit by large windows. The upstairs galleries had roof lanterns, although Blomfield seems to have ignored 'top-side lighting' ideas that were then being put forward as a way of preventing reflections on glazed paintings (Seager, 1912; Marks, 1927, pp.121-3). In the event, the frosted glazing used has been painted. Blinds were built into the roof lanterns, and controlled externally through timber flaps. Basic electric lighting was provided for the galleries with pendant fittings.

Internal finishes are of good quality, but restrained. The staircase is Portland stone, and the floor of the hall 'white York stone with squares of black marble at angles'. Elsewhere the floor is of polished timber boarding. Externally, the wrought iron work is by the Bromsgrove Guild and the stone carving by William Aumonier & Sons – both of these names familiar to students of late Victorian and Edwardian architecture.

The building and its contents were protected by 'probably the finest burglar device ever invented'. Anyone leaning against the window grills or inadvertently stumbling against a sensor would activate alarms at the local police station.



Cross section through the entrance hall and first floor landing.



Rooftop view of the lantern lights for Gallery 5 (right) and Gallery 6 (left). The glazing is below the parapet level.

Architectural context of the 1920s

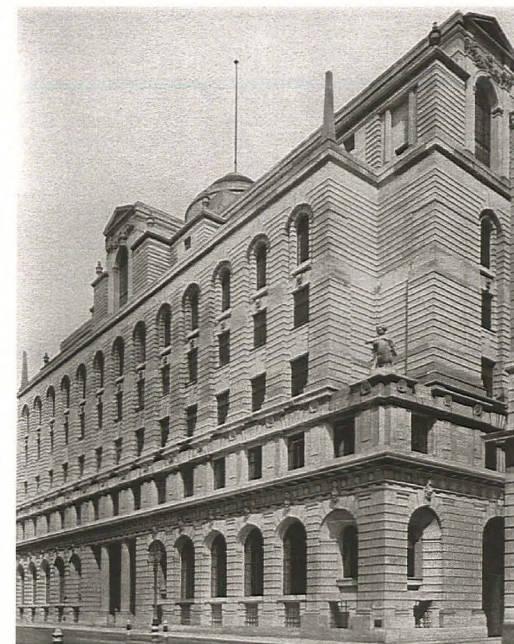
Britain in the 1920s was not a period for architectural innovators. At the head of the profession stood three knights: Sir Edwin Lutyens (1869–1944) (Arts Council, 1981), Sir Herbert Baker (1862–1946) (Gray, 1985) and Sir Reginald Blomfield. They had all come to prominence in the 1890s. Lutyens was the outstanding architect of the trio. He was the opposite of Blomfield, coming from a humble background and lacking in formal education; his approach was essentially intuitive but he was an incredibly fluent, and sometimes irresponsible, designer – probably one of the greatest British architects ever.

All three knights, along with most of the architectural profession, were lodged in the neo-Georgian groove where they had been since about 1910. The premier journal of the day, the *Architectural Review*, published articles on historic cities at home and abroad illustrated by architects' sketches, featured many seventeenth and eighteenth century buildings, and ran a continuing series of 'practical exemplars of Architecture' showing precisely drawn details of Georgian buildings. Thus the Usher Gallery is typical of its time: restrained, using eighteenth century style and conventions; backward looking from today's perspective, but up-to-date in 1927.

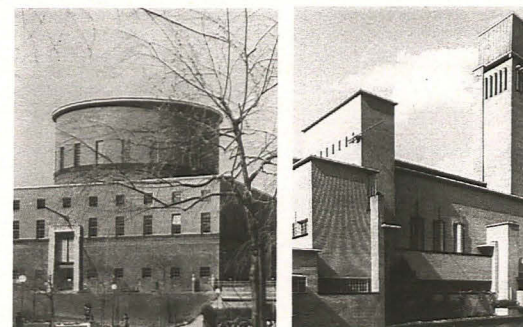
The dominant style of the 1920s seems strangely narrow. Alternatives were possible, without returning to superseded Edwardian baroque, Arts & Crafts eclecticism or Gothic Revival. Blomfield seems still to have been fighting the battles of the 1880s when he lectured the citizens of Lincoln after the new Gallery's foundation stone was laid in 1926. He told them that, 'It is fortunate that no such building as the Usher Gallery was then erected [in the 19th century] or we should doubtless have had a pseudo-Gothic structure in feeble imitation of the Cathedral, instead of one which will act as a foil to it' (*Lincoln Echo*, 13 March 1926).

In retrospect we know that other approaches were possible. Two outstanding public buildings of the same period are the City Library in Stockholm by E G Asplund (1885–1940), in a creative classical style, and the City Hall in Hilversum by W M Dudok (1884–1957), using exquisite brickwork in a non-classical style. Dudok was awarded the RIBA Gold Medal in 1935.

However, there was precious little influence in Britain from the new developments on the Continent. It must be noted with some irony, however, that 1927, the year that the Usher Gallery was opened, saw the publication in English translation of Le Corbusier's seminal book *Vers une Architecture* (*Towards a New Architecture*) which advocated a complete break with the



Lutyens' Midland Bank in the City of London (designed 1924), a much larger project than the Usher Gallery, but showing Lutyens' more inventive approach to traditional design compared to Blomfield's.



Exciting events on the Continent: Asplund's City Library in Stockholm (1921–28, left), and Dudok's City Hall in Hilversum (1922–29, right). Blomfield, however, was not an innovator.

past. After World War II a generation of architects who were profoundly influenced by this book and committed to modern architecture completely overthrew Blomfield's most cherished values.

Strengths and weaknesses

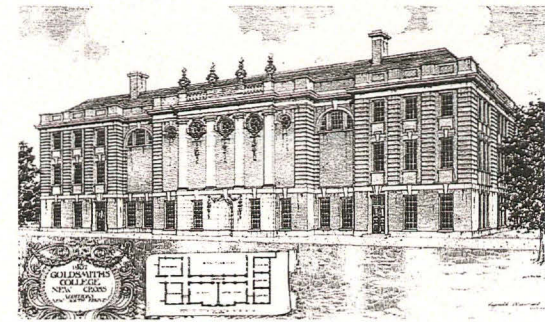
Sir Reginald Blomfield was one of the most important members of the architectural profession in Britain when the Usher Gallery was built, but he was not one of the most creative designers of the period. He tended to repeat the same architectural ideas over and over again. His buildings are formal, impeccably well built, but humourless and not very engaging. They are the architectural equivalent of someone who is always perfectly dressed and elaborately polite, but lacking in warmth.

When applied on a large scale, Blomfield's limited stock of architectural ideas led to some rather dull designs – and in the 1920s and 30s Blomfield did receive some very large commissions, including the Headrow in Leeds and 4 Carlton House Gardens in London. The latter in particular was severely criticised when it was built, partly because its bulk was so insensitive to neighbouring buildings. As an example of Blomfield's work, therefore, the Usher Gallery benefits from being on a smaller scale.

The Gallery's strongest point is the external view from Lindum Road, where the south façade makes a powerful impact, even though the central axis of the composition points nowhere in particular. There are no features that respond to the special characteristics of the site, but it is a bold, unapologetic façade.

The second strong point is the 'ceremonial' route inside the building – the entrance hall, staircase and vaulted upper landing. These have a real element of drama. The architectural language is conventional, but the sequence of spaces leading up to the tall and well-lit landing is striking. The marble statues reinforce the Roman effect.

The other parts of the building are polite and well-mannered but undistinguished. The upper, rooflit galleries are the most attractive spaces, especially the de Wint gallery with the original seat pedestals. Because the building is symmetrical and orderly, the same architectural features are repeated many times.



Blomfield's extension to Goldsmiths College of 1907 already shows almost all the architectural elements that he used in the Usher Gallery: strict symmetry, broad quoins with emphasised horizontal joints, brick panels between stone verticals, balustrated parapet, flaming urns, Georgian sash windows, exaggerated keystones.



A 'corrected' view of the Usher Gallery in 1927, which appears to be a view along the building's main axis – but in fact the photographer's viewpoint is oblique (see the steps in front of the entrance door). The camera has been set up to suppress the normal oblique perspective.

The Usher Gallery cannot be regarded as a piece of architecture of the very highest class, but it is an extremely good building of its period. Neo-Georgian architecture was over-whelmingly dominant in Britain between the two World Wars, and a vast number of symmetrical brick-and-stone facades with sash windows were built all over Britain. Blomfield had laboured to establish the neo-Georgian ascendancy, so his own efforts in the style gain a degree of extra significance. The Usher Gallery is also substantially complete and well-preserved, enhancing its value as an example of a long-defunct approach to civic architecture in general and art gallery design in particular.

Although it has some good and powerful features, the Usher Gallery is not an architectural masterpiece. Conservation policy for the building should reflect this status. The quality of Blomfield's building does not justify wholesale conservation, or the return of the entire building to its 1927 state. Proposals for change should always be rigorously appraised in accordance with the policies in this Conservation Plan, and it is highly desirable that sufficient of the original materials and spaces should be retained to allow visitors to experience at first hand the character that Blomfield intended, demonstrating the architectural ideals that were dominant in Britain in the 1920s. This would be an enhancement compared to the situation today, where all the spaces have been altered in ways that compromise Blomfield's intentions.

In planning for the future it is vital to retain the Gallery's two strongest points – the view from Lindum Road and the 'ceremonial' route inside the building (indeed, the latter could be enhanced). However, there is not the same overriding necessity to preserve all the other, weaker, elements of Blomfield's design. If the needs of the Usher Gallery as a thriving asset to the community in the 21st century had to be weighed against the preservation of rather ordinary features which are repeated throughout the building, a well thought out case for change might justify alteration to some of the secondary building elements.

The strongest points of Blomfield's design should be retained (and enhanced) in an evolving building which meets evolving needs.



The staircase and first floor landing create a magnificent space, enhanced by the marble statues. Unfortunately the windows are usually obscured by blinds.



The spaces in the Usher Gallery were originally daylit. This 1927 photo shows one of the large first floor galleries during the opening exhibition.

Blomfield: changing assessments

The following quotations represent snapshots of Blomfield's reputation between the 1920s and today, arranged in date order. In the period after World War II, when modern architecture was dominant, his reputation sank to a very low level indeed. Latterly, from the 1970s, there has been a reassessment. One hopes that his buildings can now be evaluated on their merits, without the distorting ideology of the traditional-versus-modern architecture dispute.

"On all hands I think Sir Reginald Blomfield would be acclaimed today as the doyen of the architectural profession. Among architects there is no finer figure of a man intellectually - and we may also add physically - while his long line of buildings, culminating in the massive Menin Gate, have a straightforward downright quality of scale and strength which we like to think is typically English. With a long career of first class achievement in the fields of literary scholarship as well as architecture, such as no other architect of eminence possesses, everyone feels like the Times obviously doesthat Sir Reginald should represent the English architectural world on all great occasions."

C H Reilly, Representative British Architects of The Present Day, London, 1931.

'... his buildings belong to the period in which he lived and worked, but they have the merit of being individual, and bear the definite Blomfield touch. The impression to be derived from them is a certain spontaneity. Scale they have as well as light and shade, ornament is introduced to afford contrasts, but urbanity, that abstract quality that is so consistent in old buildings, is not always present.'

A E Richardson, RIBA Journal, 1943

'So far as one can generalise about so wide a range of buildings, Blomfield's designs recall English and French architecture of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He had a special fondness for bull's-eye windows and carved swags or festoons.'

Martin S Briggs, Dictionary of National Biography, 1959

'Headrow Garden [Leeds]. The architecture (by Sir Reginald Blomfield and G W Atkinson) is tame and dull, of a variety only too familiar from the London of between the two wars. But the scale is an asset.'

Nikolaus Pevsner, The Buildings of England: Yorkshire - the West Riding, 1959

'The post-war period was dominated by the academic 'pompier' architects, besides Lutyens and Blomfield, Sir Giles Gilbert Scott, Sir Edwin Cooper and Sir Herbert Baker.'
Joseph Rykwert, 'Great Britain', in V M Lampugnani (ed) *Encyclopaedia of Twentieth Century Architecture*, 1963

'Usher Gallery. By Sir Reginald Blomfield, 1927. Like his Library of twenty years earlier, still mostly French dixhuitieme. He thought himself the successor to Gabriel. All stone except for brick between giant pilasters. Lots of swagged bucrania in a pseudo-frieze.

'Public Library. By Sir Reginald Blomfield 1906. Of stone, one-storeyed. but with a two-storeyed domed centre. The style is Blomfield's usual mixture of French dixhuitieme with William and Mary motifs.'

Nikolaus Pevsner and John Harris, *The Buildings of England: Lincolnshire*, 1964

'One architect, Sir Edwin Lutyens, had a personal capacity for invention along traditional lines ... Those who tried to rival him [as a classical architect], Sir Reginald Blomfield ... and Sir Herbert Baker ... hardly deserve mention, although their work bulks very large on the London scene.'

Henry-Russell Hitchcock, 'Twentieth-century "traditional" architecture', in *Architecture: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (3rd edn), 1968, pp.404, 407.

'Blomfield was neither as perceptive a critic nor as gifted an architect as might have been hoped for – but had he been either of these, his influence might well have been less. As it was, the buildings he produced and the books he wrote, while lacking in subtlety and often erroneous in detail, had a curious mixture of persuasiveness and massive aplomb.'

Robert Macleod, *Style and Society*, 1963

'Other more idealistic architects were influenced by the Beaux-Arts styles, too. Chief among them was Reginald Blomfield ... a scholar and designer of talent, though an aggressive and dogmatic man. ... From 1903 onwards ... Blomfield moved steadily towards a Beaux-Arts Classical style. ... Blomfield's United Services Club (1906–07) is a refined work but his refacing of the Carlton Club ... and his Menin Gate war memorial were splendid. Blomfield's chef d'oeuvre, however, is the elevation for the whole western part of Piccadilly Circus. The overall exterior design, with its curving French cupolas, is Blomfield's largest and most dignified Beaux-Arts inspired work.'

Alistair Service, *Edwardian Architecture*, 1977, pp.164–7.

'The Menin Gate might be described as uninspired compared with some of the other Memorials ... If Reginald Blomfield, who designed the Gate, was possibly the most



Blomfield's most prominent building: the Regent Street Quadrant leading into Piccadilly Circus in London (1912–23). Blomfield designed the facades and other architects collaborated on the buildings.

conventionally patriotic and 'establishment' of the architects connected with the Imperial War Graves Commission, his Memorial is not just a piece of Imperial bombast, not a celebration of Triumph or Victory, but an attempt to express the vast scale of human sacrifice in permanent and dignified architectural form which has meaning by being rooted in tradition. ...

'[The architects of the IWGC] all favoured a monumental Classicism but the interpretation of style naturally varies with each architect. Blomfield's Classicism was, perhaps, the most pedantically 'Beaux-Arts' or 'Wrennaissance'. ...

'W C Von Berg [assistant architect at the IWGC] writes that "Blomfield, I recall, took a meagre and superficial interest in my work and rarely had much to contribute. Lutyens, on the other hand, showed a lively concern coupled with a delicious sense of humour. I remember how once he introduced an asymmetrical feature into one of my designs saying with chuckle "That's cockeye but let's do it." ' Gavin Stamp, *Silent Cities*, 1977

'... Reginald Blomfield, a traditionalist architect of the old school ... The culture to which Blomfield aspired had been based on private patronage ... By the 1920s economic and aesthetic confidence had evaporated.'

C & T Benton, 'Architecture: contrasts of a decade', in *Thirties*, 1979

'Blomfield contributed commodious county houses in the later style of Norman Shaw. ... Nor were Blomfield's university and commercial buildings inferior and, as might be expected from his books and studies, these affected a mature Renaissance style with French overtones. ...

'After 1920, however, the task of designing satisfactorily the really large-scale building proved too much for Blomfield as it had for many others. His 'Waterloo' was the Menin Gate ... and 4 Carlton Gardens. ...

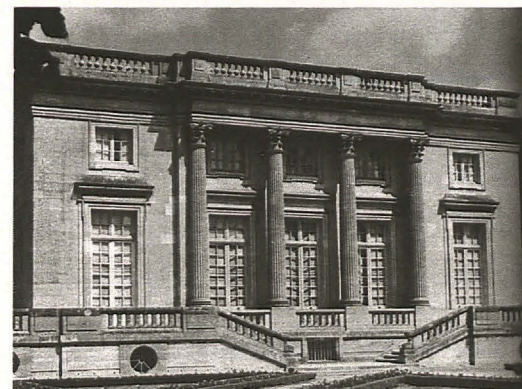
'[Blomfield produced] a range of competent work, sedate, but charming.'

A Stuart Gray, *Edwardian Architecture: a biographical dictionary*, 1985

'Usher Gallery. By Sir Reginald Blomfield, 1926-7. Like his earlier library, still mostly French dixhuitieme. He thought himself the successor to A-J Gabriel. All stone except for brick between giant pilasters. Lots of swagged bucrania in a pseudo-frieze. Windows only on the ground floor. A crisply detailed and bold design which gains much from its position on a hillside away from other buildings.

'Public Library. By Sir Reginald Blomfield, 1914. Of stone, one-storeyed, but with a two-storeyed domed centre. Wings with partly balustraded parapets and end pavilions, slightly advanced. Imposing and ashlar faced. The style is Blomfield's usual mixture of French dixhuitieme with William and Mary motifs.'

Nikolaus Pevsner, John Harris and Nicholas Antram, *The Buildings of England: Lincolnshire*, 2nd edn 1989 – it is interesting to compare these entries with those in the first edition of twenty-five years earlier (see above).



The Petit Trianon at Versailles by A-J Gabriel (1698-1782) – the masterpiece of the French classical tradition so admired by Blomfield. 'Originality and novelty were always held in check in favour of an overriding concern for harmony and propriety' (Vincent, 1993).



The Menin Gate war memorial at Ypres in Belgium (1923-27), arguably the pinnacle of Blomfield's career. Roman Doric, as at the Usher Gallery.

'Against this [the case for modern architecture] Blomfield set the position of the 'traditionalist' (which he was able to convey better in words than in his own architecture. ...

'One suspects that if Blomfield had spent less time taking the slogans of 'functionalism' literally, and more time examining actual works of modern architecture, he might have understood that his position was not so dogmatically opposed to 'modern' architects as he imagined. ... The difference between Le Corbusier and Blomfield lay, of course, not only in the divergence of their respective talents, but in their attitude to the contemporary world. ... Blomfield put forth the Academic position, which was liable to lead to sterility, as there was insufficient transformation of precedent.'

W Curtis 'The Continuity of Older Traditions' in Modern Architecture Since 1900, 3rd edn
1996

'This fine building ... the impressive Usher Art Gallery ...'
Land Use Consultants, Temple gardens, 1998

'... another donnish architect, Sir Reginald Blomfield.'
Gavin Stamp, An Architect of Promise: G G Scott Jr, 2002

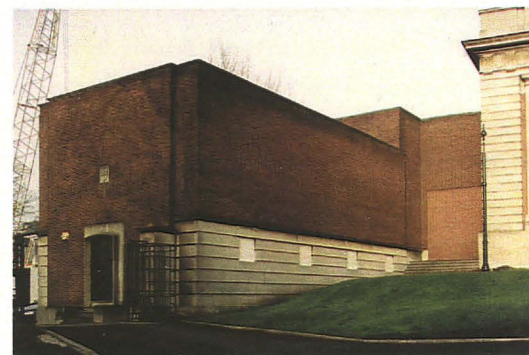
Evaluation of the Curtois Extension

Blomfield's building of 1927 was designed for the display of art exhibitions, not as an art museum which would require a great deal of back-up accommodation in addition to gallery space. The needs of a modern museum would have been known to Blomfield, as he was in the chair at Cecil Brewer's 1913 RIBA lecture about American museums (Brewer, 1913). Brewer, who had won the competition for the National Museum of Wales, emphasised the requirement for reserve collections, workshops, curators, etc.

We must assume that Lincoln Corporation's brief for the Usher Gallery, which Blomfield requested in 1923, called for display space only. Blomfield's original design was subjected to cost-cutting, but there is no mention of omitting back-up facilities.

The opportunity for expansion arose with the Ella Curtois bequest of £14,000, which was received by the City Council in 1945. Records of the discussions about how to use this fund have not been retrieved, but after a long gestation period the Curtois extension was built in the late 1950s, costing £14,400. A planning application was approved in June 1958 and the extension was opened on 11 November 1959. The design was credited to the City Architect, R R Alexander, with D R Vale as assistant in charge. It has been suggested that David Vale (1926–2002) was the primary author of the design. He worked in the City Architect's Department, mostly on housing projects, until 1974 when he moved to the County Council. From 1980 he worked for the Cathedral for ten years as architect to the Close Houses. He made many drawings of historic Lincoln; a book of his drawings was published in 1997 and some are reproduced in the Conservation Plan for Lincoln's Roman Monuments (City of Lincoln, 2003). David Vale was awarded the MBE in the New Year Honours list in 2002, shortly before his death.

The Curtois extension provided an additional display gallery and a workshop and storeroom, and a lift connecting the three levels of the extended Gallery (Curtois basement, Curtois/Usher ground floor and Usher first floor). The extension was built alongside Danesgate to the west of Blomfield's building, and only connected to it by a narrow link block. An existing ground



The Curtois extension, opened in 1959. The design strategy was to match the materials but not the detailing of the 1927 Gallery, and create a simple form which would not clash with the earlier building. The roof level steps up to house the lift serving the first floor of the 1927 building.

floor window was made into a doorway and a door opening was cut into the external wall immediately above. The link also had new glazed entrance doors from the south.

The daylighting of the Curtois display gallery was given special attention. The Building Research Station was consulted and they recommended the top-side light principle that had been proposed by Seager in 1912 (but ignored by Blomfield). Christ Church Picture Gallery in Oxford by Powell & Moya (1964–7) uses a similar system, as does Stirling's Clore Gallery for the Turners at Tate Britain (1984–6). The objective was to throw daylight onto the display walls but not onto the public in the centre of the gallery, to minimise the risk of people seeing their own reflections in glazed pictures. As a result, the centre of the Curtois gallery is rather gloomy and the flat ceiling seems oppressively low.

It was not easy to design an extension to Blomfield's finite, symmetrical building. 'The challenge presenting itself when the extension was planned was whether in fact any building on the available site could be added for contemporary needs to such a building as the Usher Art Gallery without detriment. From an aesthetic point of view the solution of the problem of adding to the existing building was to keep the new structure as simple as possible and to rely upon good quality materials and their colour to marry unobtrusively' (Lincolnshire Chronicle, 13 November 1959). The extension has a rusticated stone-coloured semi-basement supporting a plain red brick volume. There were windows and a surprisingly grand entrance door to the semi-basement workshop/store, now blocked.

A puzzling problem is that the ground floor level of the Curtois extension does not align with Blomfield's ground floor level, despite the statement made at the opening: '... a new gallery at the level of the ground floor of the existing gallery ...' (Lincolnshire Chronicle, 13 November 1959). There are in fact three extremely inconvenient steps in the link block.

Externally the extension does not significantly detract from Blomfield's impressive front elevation, which is usually viewed from the south-east. The south-west view of Blomfield's building is restricted by the Curtois extension, but this was always secondary. The deliberately austere style of the building was advanced for its date, when strictly utilitarian modern design was giving way to more abstract architectural gestures. However, the Curtois extension is perhaps not rigorous enough, the pure volume being let down by the arched basement door and undersized crest on the south elevation, and the enclosures for the lift connection to the first floor. Would a taller volume, enclosing the lift and raising the ceiling height in the display gallery, have worked better? The extension is a characteristic but not outstanding example of 1950s design.



The carefully designed door on the south end of the Curtois extension that opened into the store/workshop. It has been bricked up internally.

A further extension was added when Sir Francis Hill presented his coin collection to the Gallery in 1974. A new Coin Room was built in the angle between the Curtois link block and Blomfield's west elevation, designed by Robin Wade Design Associates and opened in 1976. It is a secure, windowless room with a massive door, and is of no architectural interest. It cannot be seen from the south, but its construction involved blocking the three remaining ground floor windows in Blomfield's west elevation. The glazed entrance doors to the link block were bricked up in 1980.

SECTION 2

CONSERVATION STRATEGY

In this part the broad conservation strategy for the Usher Gallery is presented in the following sequence: first, the basic reasons why the Gallery has significance; then the issues that make the significance vulnerable; the basic policies that will enable the Gallery to respond to these issues without losing significance; and finally a procedure for using the Conservation Plan to assess the impact of any changes to the Gallery.

Significance

As described in Section 1, 'Understanding', the Usher Gallery has cultural and historic importance. There are many aspects, which can be viewed under the following headings (the order does not indicate importance).

Architectural character

The Usher Gallery is a typical work by Sir Reginald Blomfield, RA, one of the most eminent British architects in the 1920s. It has been relatively little altered and is a powerful example of the characteristic architectural style of British public buildings in the 1920s.

Historic associations

The Usher Gallery has associations with the nineteenth and early twentieth century development of Lincoln, having been established by the City Council through a bequest from a wealthy local businessman.

Setting for collections

The Usher Gallery still contains the Usher Collection for which it was established, and some works of art which were given or acquired when the Gallery was newly built, as well as additional works of art collected for the Gallery over the succeeding generations.

Urban design

The Usher Gallery is a prominent building in a mature landscape setting containing important antiquities, and is located on one of Lincoln's busiest roads.

Public amenity

The Usher Gallery is one of the main centres of cultural life of Lincoln. It is an important amenity for local residents in Lincoln and has many visitors from the UK and abroad.

Statutory protection

The Usher Gallery is classified as Grade II* on the statutory list of buildings of architectural or historic interest and in the City of Lincoln's Cathedral and City Centre Conservation.

Any changes to the Gallery which have an impact on one or more of these aspects of significance fall within the scope of this Conservation Plan.

This assessment of significance applies to the Usher Gallery as a whole. Some elements make particular contributions, and this is considered when the separate elements are assessed in Section 3 of the Conservation Plan.

Issues

This section identifies and discusses the main pressures for change that face the Usher Gallery and that could, if not managed appropriately, lead to loss of significance of the buildings. Many of these pressures are natural and not necessarily detrimental. This discussion does not attempt to provide an exhaustive list of pressures affecting the Gallery, but highlights those that are most important.

Wear and tear to building fabric

Much of the fabric of the Usher Gallery dates from the original construction in 1925-27, and some elements show severe signs of wear and tear. Elements that are fundamentally sound and still meet current needs can be repaired on a like-for-like basis. This could include, for example, the stone and hardwood floor finishes.

For other elements, like-for-like replacement is less important from the point of view of retaining significance, and may offer opportunities for improved performance. The areas of flat roof, for example, appear to be waterproofed with asphalt laid on a reinforced concrete slab with no insulation. It would be reasonable to consider improved waterproofing systems and improved insulation for this element.

Major secondary elements like windows, doors, shutters, security grilles present particular problems. In some cases it may be difficult or impossible to repair items of obsolete technology, and anyway it may be necessary or desirable to move to newer technology with improved performance. These elements should be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and the factors of significance, functionality, and cost thoroughly reviewed for all possible alternatives.

In some cases the obsolete elements may be visually significant or have intrinsic historic interest, and in these cases it may be desirable to leave the old elements in place even if their function is being performed by newer replacements. For example, in some areas there are rails

at high level on the walls which were originally used for hanging pictures on chains. This method is now rarely used but the rails can be retained as a record of the building's original use.

Some expedient repairs carried out in the past should be removed. For example, some floor boards are in poor condition after being lifted and refitted, or poorly sanded.

Servicing, environmental controls, security

The environmental control systems of the 1927 Gallery were carefully thought out but fail to meet current needs. The exploitation of natural light was regarded as the critical problem in the design of art galleries, when daylight was relied on exclusively in normal conditions. This led to the elaborate lantern lights for the first floor galleries, a fairly common strategy for gallery lighting, although the configuration used by Blomfield did not follow the most advanced gallery lighting theories of the 1920s. The ground floor galleries and the staircase and first floor hall had generous windows. In contrast, the original electric lighting was rudimentary.

All this design effort (and construction cost) has been rendered useless, or even counter-productive, by the current concern to reduce the amount of light falling on paintings. As in many galleries, the elaborate natural light systems have been obscured or completely blacked out – a strategy which is wholly at odds with the designer's architectural conception and the original character of the spaces. The present situation is anomalous with a mismatch between the architectural framework and the current use of the building.

The significance of the spaces in the Gallery would be enhanced if the method of lighting recreated the original architectural character. This could be done whilst lowering the actual light levels; it could even be done entirely with artificial light, although it is desirable for energy conservation reasons to make as much use of natural light as possible.

As well as excluding natural light, blinds cut off views out from the ground floor galleries and the staircase and first floor landing for much of the time. The windows in the east elevation, overlooking Temple Gardens, have been blocked. It would enhance significance to reinstate views, especially from the staircase and first floor landing.

The original heating and ventilation system in the Usher Gallery was carefully thought out and fully integrated into the building fabric. Heating has always been by low pressure hot water. The original system, with modifications, is still in use. A major change was the replacement of the central seating units in the galleries which incorporated radiators – these were originally installed in all the galleries but they only survive in Gallery 4, although the radiators are still in the pedestal locations in Gallery 2. In other galleries there are now radiators on walls, or fanned convectors have been installed in curious plinths. Much of the pipework is buried in the structure and its condition unknown. There is a leak in the basement boiler room ceiling, believed to come from pipes buried in the ground floor slab.

An elaborate system of ducts brought external fresh air into skirting level grilles in the galleries, and another system of ducts carried waste air through high level grilles in the galleries up to the rooftop. Air movement was normally by gravity (warm, waste air rising), with a large extract fan at roof level to boost airflows when needed. The routing of these ducts, which are hidden in the structure, is not entirely clear, nor is it clear how much of the ducting is still functional. Some of the external fresh air inlets have been blocked, as have some skirting level grilles. Portable machines are now used for humidity control, but they are troublesome to maintain. The duct spaces should be considered as a resource for future servicing of the Gallery – either retaining them as air ducts or re-using them for other services needs.

The heating and ventilation system was not designed for, and cannot provide, today's requirement for close control over temperature and particularly humidity. At present the Usher only just meets the minimum standards for galleries that receive loan exhibitions. In order to function as a modern gallery the environmental control systems have to be upgraded. Air conditioning will probably be necessary. It is difficult to install air conditioning in an existing building in an invisible way. This has been done in the Royal Academy galleries in London, at very considerable expense over a long period, but for the much less grand galleries in the Usher careful consideration should be given to the balance between architectural conservation and system complexity and expense. Any intervention strategy should be thoroughly explored to take advantage of existing ducts and void spaces to minimise the loss of significance, and the impact in areas of high significance should be controlled with particular care.

Today's security and fire alarm systems in museums and galleries are complex. They require a lot of wiring and the detectors can be obtrusive unless very carefully considered.

Accessibility and other regulations

Convenience for visitors, backed up by the Disability Discrimination Act, will have a major impact at the Usher Gallery. Plans have already been formulated to provide a ramped access at the impressive front entrance steps. The present arrangements for disabled visitors are known to be inadequate, using the service entrance off Danesgate and the goods lift which was added to the Gallery in the 1950s (and which is due for demolition). A new passenger lift will be required. The location of the new lift shaft and plant room must take into account the significance of the existing fabric.

The movement of heavy and bulky works of art is also poorly catered for at present, and new arrangement will be required, with a loading bay. It is currently proposed to use the ground floor galleries for temporary exhibitions, reducing the amount of movement to the first floor. Shared use of loading facilities with the new City and County Museum are being discussed, but better arrangements will be needed to move works in and out of the Usher building. Alterations to the north elevation may be necessary.

At present there is an external fire escape on the north elevation. Although it is not seen in the most important views of the Gallery, it is seen from Temple Gardens and should be removed if an alternative way of meeting fire escape requirements can be found that has a lesser impact on the building's significance.

Toilet provision will have to be upgraded. The disabled WC is in the Curtois extension (up three steps with a stairlift). The male WC is down five steep steps, and the female toilet is accessed from the main staircase half-landing, which would not be served by a new lift.

Maintenance access to the roof is reasonably safe due to the continuous parapet. However the access route is tortuous, through a ceiling hatch and small roof access door. Current Health and Safety at Work Regulation may require new access arrangements, especially if new plant is installed at roof level. Alterations in the service areas are unlikely to detract from the building's significance.

The risk of asbestos will be a serious consideration when refurbishment work is undertaken. The current Asbestos Regulations must be complied with. Press cuttings of the 1920s claimed that the heating pipes in the Gallery used a new form of insulation that performed better than asbestos, but this should not be relied on.

Diversity of activities

The original Usher Gallery was designed for a very narrow range of activities. New uses that have arisen include: café, shop, concerts, multi-media art, computer access, administration, education, storage of permanent collection. The Curtois Extension and Coin Room provided much-needed additional facilities when the Gallery was thirty years old, but nothing has been added in the last forty-five years.

It is anticipated that the Curtois Extension, Coin Room and the Bungalow (currently used for administration) will be lost, depriving the Gallery of some highly-used (though far from ideal) facilities. New accommodation will be provided in the new City and County Museum; for example, the Usher Gallery does not plan to have its own shop or café.

The new uses have in some cases been in conflict with the building's original character. The main entrance hall, for example, which was originally an austere, classical space, now has to function as the Gallery's shop and reception. The removal of some of the new uses should make it easier to recover the building's original character.

If, as it planned, the whole of Usher Gallery is used for the display of art, there will still be pressures for change to meet the display needs of new art, now and in the future. It is possible that there may be conflicts between the significance of the building and the display needs for works of art. In these situations value judgements will have to be made on a case-by-case basis. In general, there should be greater reluctance to change spaces or elements of higher significance, if the changes would reduce significance; and reversible changes should be preferred to irreversible ones.

Scope for change/expansion

Blomfield designed the Usher Gallery in a finite form, highly resistant to extension. The designer of the Curtois Extension struggled with this problem in the 1950s: quite apart from the problematic external design of an extension beside Blomfield's elevation, the circulation to the side extension connects inconveniently inside the building, through galleries rather than the Usher's central circulation space.

However, even though Blomfield did not anticipate change, changes have taken place. Some have had a detrimental impact on the building's significance, others have had no impact on significance. Continuing developments at the Gallery mean that there will undoubtedly be more changes in the future.

There is no case for preserving the building in exactly its present state, since it has functional problems and has suffered a considerable loss of significance. However, the evolving needs of the Gallery mean that it is unreasonable to think of restoring the whole building to its 1927 state. The building is not of sufficient significance to warrant the sacrifices that such an approach would entail.

The amount of change that is consistent with retaining the significance of the building whilst allowing it to evolve to meet present and future needs must be carefully considered. A selective approach is certainly needed. It is possible that quite radical change to less significant parts of the building could lead to a strong net benefit to the Gallery, if handled appropriately.

It may be useful to review what has happened to other Blomfield buildings to assess whether change is consistent with the retention of significance. Blomfield's City Library in Lincoln, completed 1914, a large extension was added in the 1980s and Blomfield's building now provides the main entrance and smaller reading rooms. The main elements of Blomfield's building appear to be well-preserved, and alterations to his work that were required for the extension were carefully done, but the finishes, signage and decorations are rather incongruous compared to what Blomfield would have expected. The fact that the impression received by a visitor to the Library today is at odds with Blomfield's intentions may be regarded as a loss of significance. However, these features are easily reversible.

At the Headrow in Leeds, a large 1920s commercial building with elevations by Blomfield, a new enclosed shopping mall has been built behind Blomfield's building, with his rear elevation forming one side of an enclosed atrium. The front elevation facing the street is unchanged. The new atrium is something undreamt of in Blomfield's day, but Blomfield's elevation gives character to the atrium, and in turn the atrium gives Blomfield a 21st century role.



The rear elevation of Blomfield's Headrow building in Leeds has been incorporated in an atrium serving a new shopping mall.

Policies

The purpose of the conservation policies set out in this section is to provide a guide to the development and care of the building so as to retain its significance. The application of the policies to particular building elements is discussed in Section 3 of the Conservation Plan.

Explanation of terms

The following definitions have been used.

Fabric means all the physical material of the place.

Conservation means the process of looking after a place so as to retain its historical significance. It includes maintenance and may according to circumstances include preservation, restoration and alteration and will be commonly a combination of more than one of these.

Maintenance means the continuous care of the fabric, contents and setting of a place, and is to be distinguished from repair.

Planned maintenance means a continuous programme of preventative maintenance that is carried out before the breakdown or failure of elements or components, as opposed to corrective maintenance or repair which takes place after failure.

Repair means the occasional renovation or renewal of materials in the fabric.

Preservation means maintaining the fabric in its existing state and retarding deterioration.

Restoration means returning the existing fabric to a known earlier state. This is not to be confused with conjectural reconstruction.

Alteration means modifying the fabric (including services systems) to meet new requirements.

Compatible use means a use which involves no change to the historically significant fabric, changes which are substantially reversible, or changes which require a minimal impact.

Policies

- 1 The Conservation Plan should be applied whenever work to the building or site is being planned or carried out.
 - 1.1 The Conservation Plan should be formally adopted by Lincolnshire County Council and City of Lincoln Council.
 - 1.2 The Conservation Plan should form the basis of dialogue with outside bodies who have roles affecting the Usher Gallery, including English Heritage.
 - 1.3 Copies of the Conservation Plan should be passed to all consultants involved in work to the buildings and site, and it should be made available to all contractors.
 - 1.4 The Conservation Plan should be made available for information and consultation by all interested parties and members of the public.
 - 1.5 The staff of the Usher Gallery and Lincolnshire County Council/City of Lincoln Council should refer to the Conservation Plan and follow the policies in it whenever work to the buildings or site is planned, commissioned or carried out.
 - 1.6 The Conservation Plan should be regularly reviewed and updated at least every five years or after major changes, to ensure its continued relevance and use.

- 2 Coordinated planning procedures should be established and used.
 - 2.1 A system of planning and decision making should coordinate the whole range of interventions to the fabric and services systems, involving the Gallery, relevant specialists, and outside bodies with roles affecting the Gallery.
 - 2.2 A system of planning and decision making should coordinate and prioritise the needs of the Gallery for the use of space, based on an accommodation strategy which gives high priority to the appropriate use of significant spaces.
 - 2.3 Systems of planning and decision making should work on the longest feasible timescale, to maximise opportunities for coordination and efficient working.
 - 2.4 The requirements for work to a listed building should be met by submitting applications for planning and listed building consent to City of Lincoln Council and referring to this Conservation Plan. The Secretary of State, following considerations by the local authorities and taking into account comments from statutory consultees, will determine applications for listed building consent on buildings given a Grade II* status.
- 3 Work to the building should be based on expert knowledge.
 - 3.1 Documents about the design, construction and alterations to the building should be recorded and catalogued by a librarian/archivist to provide a complete historical record, in a form that is easily accessible in an agreed location.
 - 3.2 Whenever non-maintenance work is carried out, comprehensive data about both the existing and new work should be recorded, and the information added to a building manual. This information should be used to inform changes to the Conservation Plan (see policy 1.6).
 - 3.3 Whenever possible, knowledge about the building held by individuals should be recorded in suitable documentary forms, and the information systematically catalogued.
 - 3.4 Work to the building should be planned by individuals and organisations who have made themselves familiar with their history, construction and significance, and who have proven expertise in the relevant field of work.

- 3.5 Whenever work is carried out to the building, the structure, materials and services should be checked or recorded, and the information added to the building manual.
- 4 Alterations should respect the significance of the building.
 - 4.1 Alterations that enhance the existing fabric or setting should be carried out whenever there is an opportunity.
 - 4.2 Preservation should be a priority for elements of very high significance. Alterations that would detract from their significance should only be considered for the most compelling reasons, and any such alterations should be carried out so as to minimise the damaging impact of the work.
 - 4.3 Alterations that would detract from elements of high significance should be pursued only if there are no practicable alternatives that would lead to a reduced loss of significance.
 - 4.4 Alterations that would detract from elements classified as significant should only be made if there is a demonstrable net benefit.
 - 4.5 Alterations to elements of low significance or no significance should not normally be constrained for conservation reasons, so long as there are no secondary impacts on elements of higher significance or overall significance.
 - 4.6 Where significant elements have deteriorated, they should be repaired or restored in such a way as to regain their significance.
 - 4.7 Spaces of very high or high significance should be used in ways that contribute to their significance, and should have public access wherever possible.
- 5 Maintenance and repair activities should respect the significance of the building.
 - 5.1 The building should be cared for by a planned maintenance programme based on a complete knowledge of the building and its materials, regular inspections and preventative action.
 - 5.2 Only persons qualified and experienced in working with the materials of significant elements of the fabric should be employed.

- 5.3 Care should be taken to supervise and, where relevant, train operatives to ensure that fabric is not damaged by maintenance and repair activities.
- 5.4 Any repair, alteration or replacement of original materials of significant elements should retain the original qualities, in particular:
- colour, texture, reflectivity, geometry and pattern
 - dimensional accuracy and precision of joints
 - resistance to physical deterioration
 - security and fire resisting properties.
- 5.5 Particular attention should be paid to keeping in good order roofs, gutters and rainwater drainage systems to conduct water safely away from the building.
- 5.6 Evidence of defects in the fabric should be reported without delay and investigations and remedial work carried out promptly.
- 5.7 Makeshift alterations or repairs made in the past should be removed to recover significance.
- 5.8 Original and significant fabric should only be removed if there is no appropriate alternative which would allow its retention.
- 5.9 Where significant fabric is removed, its location should be recorded in the building manual and the items, or samples, catalogued and stored safely for possible future re-use or replacement.
- 6 Services and lighting should be appropriate to the different characters of the spaces.
- 6.1 Wherever possible, the uses of elements of the building should be matched to their inherent environmental characteristics, to minimise the need for reliance on services systems.
- 6.2 Service systems for lighting and heating should be designed to respect the significance of the areas or spaces they serve, in terms of (i) the environmental conditions created, and (ii) the visual and acoustic impact of the system components.

- 6.3 The replacement of old service systems by new systems that perform better (in respect of both the environmental conditions created and the visual and acoustic impact of the system components) should not normally be constrained for conservation reasons.
- 6.4 Where components of old services systems are significant but functionally obsolete, redundant ducts or openings should be sealed to protect the integrity of the fabric whilst retaining the components' visual appearance.
- 6.5 In significant spaces, artificial lighting should be designed to complement the visual effect and environmental character of the original natural lighting.
- 6.6 When new service distribution networks are necessary, alternative distribution routes should be thoroughly investigated to identify routes that avoid or minimise damaging impact on significant fabric.
- 6.7 Whenever the fabric has to be opened up, the provision of ducts and routes for unspecified future services should be considered.
- 6.8 Services systems should be provided with access to allow for maintenance and renewal with minimum disruption to the fabric.
- 6.9 Makeshift insertions of service systems carried out in the past should be removed or modified to ensure that they do not detract from significance or present a threat to the fabric.

Impact assessment

The Conservation Plan should have many uses in the on-going management of the Usher Gallery. One use is impact assessment, that is, the evaluation of proposals for change. This section presents a procedure for impact assessment which will, it is hoped, add to the usefulness of the Plan.

The procedure is based on the policies set out above. All relevant criteria for conservation management should be covered by the policies, so it should not be necessary to introduce additional factors when carrying out impact assessment. If it turns out that additional criteria have to be considered, there is probably a need for new or amended policies.

Structure for impact assessment

The impact assessment procedure has four components, described below, which would normally be presented in a report. The four-part structure should be suitable for assessing proposals of any scale, but the level of detail would vary depending on scale and importance – the length of an impact assessment could vary from a page or two to a short report.

A Key data

This is a list of the basic data for the impact assessment:

- A1 Identify the proposed work;
- A2 Identify the elements of the building that are affected, and the level of significance attached to them in Section 3 of the Conservation Plan;
- A3 Identify the conservation policies in Section 2 of the Conservation Plan that have a bearing on the proposed work.

B Description of the proposal

This can be in words or drawings, in sufficient detail for the evaluation to be carried out. The reasons for the proposed change should also be stated.

C Evaluation

For each element that is affected (A2), consider each of the relevant conservation policies (A3), and state whether the proposal is consistent with the policy. Often the evaluation will go beyond a simple, factual exercise: judgement may be required, and in such cases the basis for the evaluation should be set out clearly.

D Conclusion

The conclusion establishes whether, having reviewed each element for each policy, the proposal is or is not consistent with the Conservation Plan. If the proposal is consistent for every element and policy, it should normally be acceptable from conservation point of view; whereas if it is inconsistent for one or more of the elements and policies it may not be acceptable.

Please note that any proposed change must also be submitted for statutory approval, in accordance with Policy 2.4 above. The City of Lincoln Local Plan should be taken into account in all cases, as well as PPG 15 and 16, and other statutory or non-statutory legislation or documentation, for example BS7913: 1998 'Guide to: the principles of the conservation of historic buildings'.

SECTION 3

ELEMENTS OF THE GALLERY

In this section each element of the Usher Gallery is reviewed in turn. The significance is assessed, then special observations are noted and, in some cases, guidelines are set out indicating how the conservation policies should be applied.

Organisation of Section 3

The entry for each element has three sections:

Significance

The assignment of significance to each element of the Usher Gallery is based on the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the Conservation Plan.

There are continuous gradations of significance. For convenience, when assessing individual elements the following five-step hierarchy is used:

Very high significance Elements which are outstanding examples of their kind, of national or international importance.

High significance Elements that are excellent or rare examples of their kind, with artistic or historic importance.

Significant Elements that are particularly good or unusual examples of their kind.

Low significance Elements that are typical or representative examples of their kind, but without special artistic or historic merit.

No significance Elements that do not contribute to, or that detract from, the significance of the Gallery.

Observations

Where appropriate, points about the particular element are set out here. This is not intended to be a condition or dilapidation survey, but it points out features – sometimes quite small – that should be taken into account when any work to the Gallery is being considered.

Guidelines

Some guidelines are included indicating how the policies identified in Section 2 should be applied to particular elements. This is not exhaustive. As new situations arise, the policies should be revisited, new guidelines generated, and superseded guidelines removed.

Overall Setting

Temple Gardens

Assessment: High significance

Observations:

The Garden is not within the area covered by the Conservation Plan.

Significant archaeological remains, including part of the ditch outside the Roman city wall, a Scheduled Monument (City of Lincoln Council, 2003).

Temple Gardens was purchased by Lincoln Corporation in 1924 with funds from the Usher bequest, as a site for the Usher Gallery. It was the garden of a house at 7 Lindum Road which was demolished. Additional land was acquired in the 1930s extending the Gardens to the north and south-east.

A contemporary press cutting notes: '... down one side [of Temple Gardens] ran a dell which was all that was left of the fosse guarding the wall of the later Roman city ... In laying out the site the moat was used for the disposal of surplus soil, but some of it is still left in the lower part of the grounds' (Lincoln Echo, 25 May 1927).

Undergoing a major re-landscaping project under a Parks and Gardens Lottery Grant (Land Use Consultants, 1998).

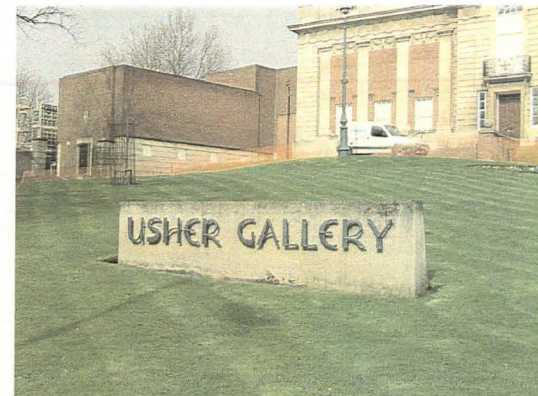
The lamp post opposite the main entrance to the Gallery was part of the 1927 design. The present light is inappropriate.

A planning application for the concrete sign near the road and the banner pole was approved in 1995.

The sculptures in the garden are covered under the City of Lincoln Public Art policy.



The metal sculpture 'A Mighty Blow for Freedom'



Concrete sign approved in 1995

External Elements

External Steps and Paths

Assessment: Significant

Observations:

The steps at the front door and the lower flight of steps up from the driveway are part of the 1927 design. These are incompatible with disabled access.

There have been a number of visible repairs to the steps to the front door.

A crude handrail has been added to the lower flight of steps.

The steps create a problem for disabled access. A layout of ramps has been designed.

Guidelines:

Any changes should be recorded (3.2).

Gates, Front Walls and Garden Pavilion

Assessment: Significant

Observations:

These are not within the area covered by the Conservation Plan. They are listed Grade II as part of a group with the Usher Gallery.

The wall dates from 1927. The original railings of 1927 were scrapped in World War II.

New railings, banner sign, and gates have recently been installed following a 'Forging Links' initiative and a competition.



Detail on new gates of the 'Lincoln Imp'.



New gates and railings fixed to original pier.

The garden pavilion was not built in 1927 but added in the 1930s, on land that was acquired after the main purchase of Temple Gardens. It is in the style of Blomfield but the authorship is uncertain. The stonework to the terrace in front of the pavilion has been newly repaired.

Guidelines:

Any changes should be recorded (3.2).

Bungalow Elevations

Assessment: No significance

Observations:

Now used for the Gallery's administration.

Contemporary with the Curtois extension.

It is believed that there may be old basements beneath the bungalow.

Panels of 'rustication' below some windows indicate a design connection with the Curtois Extension.

Guidelines:

Any changes should be recorded (3.2).

External Elements of Building

Front (South) Elevation

Assessment: High significance

Observations:

Little changed since 1927. The flag poles are not part of the original design. There is no record of when these were added.

The balcony has become dangerous and is no longer used.

The window boxes are not part of the original design.

The timber windows are in need of routine maintenance (this applies to all elevations of the 1927 building).

The original air grilles have been infilled with steel plates, some of which have rusted away (this applies to all elevations of the 1927 building).

A central stone panel has the original carved name of the gallery. There is no record of whether this was originally painted, gold-leafed or left undecorated.

Guidelines:

A system of banner display could be developed with planning authorities (4.1).

The balcony should be restored to enhance this important elevation (5.3, 5.5).

The window boxes should be removed (5.7).

The timber windows should be maintained (5.3).



The Gallery photographed on 15 March 2004 (compare with 1927 photograph on page 4).



Stonework on balcony must be restored.

Lighting of the building and external spaces could be developed with the local authority (4.1).
Original ventilation grilles should be opened, effectively sealed, or removed (5.7).

Rear (North) Elevation

Assessment: Low significance

Observations:

The extent of decorative stonework is much reduced on the rear elevation.

This elevation is not visible in significant views of the Gallery.

The fire escape was not part of the original building. A planning application for an external fire escape was approved in 1990.

Guidelines:

The fire escape should be removed when practicable (5.7).

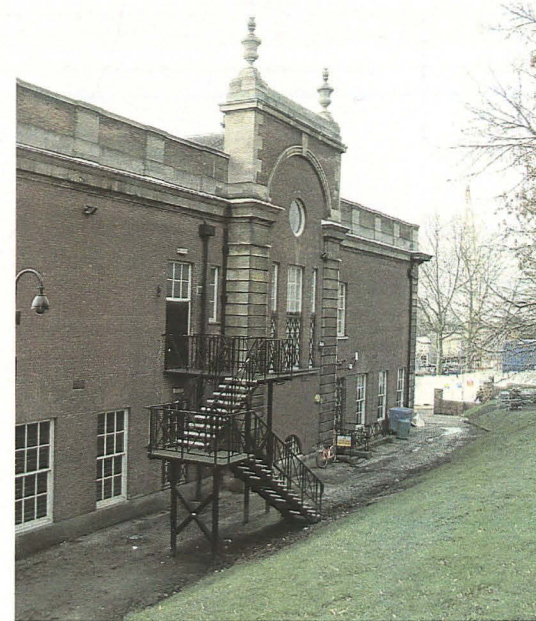
East Elevation

Assessment: High significance

Observations:

The east elevation is hardly changed since 1927. It is seen in significant views from Lindum Road.

The windows to Gallery 2 are now 'blind'. There are no records of when this change was made.



Rear elevation with prominent fire escape stairs.



East elevation.

West Elevation

Assessment: Low significance

Observations:

The west elevation is partially masked by the Curtois Gallery and Coin Room. The windows have been removed and the openings rendered over.

Curtois Extension Elevations

Assessment: Low significance

Observations:

The east elevation shows signs of subsidence.

The entrance doors on the south, between the Blomfield elevation and the Curtois Gallery, were bricked up in 1980.

Windows to the semi-basement have been blocked.

There is a sculpture, spelling 'Usher', on the west elevation to Danesgate.

Guidelines:

Any changes should be recorded (3.2).

Coin Room Elevations

Assessment: No significance

Observations:

Three ground floor windows in the west elevation of the 1927 building are blocked by the Coin Room.

Guidelines:

Any changes should be recorded (3.2).



Original window opening on the west elevation are blocked by Coin Room extension.



Sculpture spelling 'Usher' on west elevation of Curtois extension.

Roof

Assessment: Significant

Observations:

None of the roof is visible in the most significant views from the south-east. The slate roofs over the raised lanterns are visible from the northern part of Temple Gardens. The glazing of the lanterns is not visible at all from ground level.

Asphalt flat roofing with raised lanterns to light the first floor galleries.

New flagpoles replacing earlier flagpoles.

Some stone balusters severely weathered.

Some overdue maintenance tasks.

Current access arrangements are tortuous.

Guidelines:

The space should be maintained under a maintenance plan (5.3, 5.5).

External controls could be installed to control natural light levels in first floor galleries (6.3).

Consideration could be given to improving the insulation and weatherproofing externally (4.1).

Internal elements – basement

Lift Lobby/Lift

Assessment: No significance

Observations:

The lift is basically a goods lift. It is timber lined and fitted with numerous coat hooks.

At present it is used for public disabled access.

Stairwell/Meters

Assessment: No significance

Observations:

There is a small toilet in the under stair space.

External delivery doors to Danesgate are used for disabled access.

Curtois Store

Assessment: No significance

Observations:

Original descriptions refer to partial use of space as store.

Original external door now bricked over.

Considerable movement cracks in floor and ceiling.

Store under Gallery 2

Assessment: No significance

Observations:

Part of the original spaces.

The external door has been altered.

Boiler Room

Assessment: No significance

Internal elements – ground floor

Original colours

The original colours used in 1927 are described in contemporary press cuttings.

‘The walls and ceilings of the halls and staircase are all white, giving a very light and airy effect. ...

‘The lower galleries are decorated in beige, relieved by skirtings and doors in primrose, and the upper galleries have a dado of rich leather brown, whilst the walls above are distempered the colour of corn.’

Lincoln Echo, 25 May 1927

‘All the woodwork [of the staircase hall] is enamelled white.

‘There is a handsome wrought iron balustrade, gilded with gold leaf and with a mahogany rail.

‘The upper galleries have floors of polished teak. There is a wood dado in a dark leather brown tint, toning with the floors, and the walls are a fawn shade.’

Lincs Leader, 21 May 1927

‘As showing how thoroughly the matter of setting is appreciated, I learned from Capt Porteous [the Clerk of Works] that it is quite probable that the whole background of a saloon – in distemper – may be changed from one hue to another, in sympathy with the tone of an incoming set of paintings. The plain woodwork now to be seen in the saloons referred to is to be covered with canvas, and thus while one week one could enter a given room and obtain a particular impression, it is evident that not only, in the course of a day or two, can the pictures be removed and others substituted, but the actual background can be entirely changed also.’

Lincoln Leader, 19 February 1927

Foyer

Assessment: High significance

Observations:

The draught lobby was added shortly after the building was opened, to a design by Blomfield.

The following original features remain, including horizontal hanging poles, shutters, security grilles, cast iron radiators and brass covers.

The windows have been covered with acrylic secondary glazing screwed to the front of the frames.

The space is cluttered by the reception desk and shop displays.

The clock was originally positioned over the under stairs storeroom door.

Some of the original floor tiles have already been sympathetically replaced. There are further damaged tiles to be replaced.

The cornice, between the columns, has been damaged by re-wiring.

There are new lighting tracks, smoke detectors and CCTV points on the ceiling. Re-wiring has caused minor damage to the plinth and architraves.

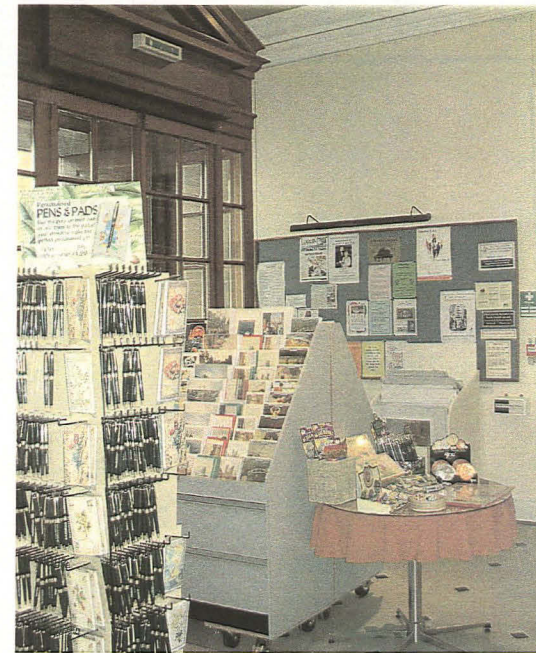
Guidelines:

The space should be cleared of clutter (4.7).

The space should be retained as the main entrance (4.7).

The space should be maintained under a maintenance plan (5.3).

The original colour scheme should be considered when redecoration works are carried out (5.4).



Shop displays clutter the foyer.



Cracked stone tiles

Gallery 1 (south-west)

Assessment: Significant

Observations:

This room is used for temporary exhibitions and concerts and lectures. There is a grand piano in the room.

Many original features remain, including shutters, security grilles, ceiling and skirting grilles.

The walls have been over-boarded.

One of the original windows in the west elevation has been turned into a door to the Curtois Extension.

The other original window in the west elevation has been blocked by the Coin Room.

The windows have been covered with acrylic secondary glazing screwed to the front of the frames.

Window blinds are frequently lowered to protect artworks.

The original seating pedestals incorporating radiators have been removed and a low level boxing inserted at the west end.

The floor boards have been repaired and sanded. This has been done very badly in places.

Guidelines:

Consideration should be given to reinstating the west elevation windows if the Curtois Extension and Coin Room are removed (5.7).

Consideration should be given to removing the modern service boxing (6.9).

Consideration should be given to improving the security of the windows without detracting from the space (6.2, 6.3).

Consideration should be given to allowing views from the windows without incurring damaging light levels (6.2, 6.3).



Typical security grille still used on most original windows.



Gallery 1 set out for a lunchtime function.

Gallery 2 (south-east)

Assessment: Significant

Observations:

Many original features remain, including shutters, security grilles, ceiling and skirting grilles.

The windows have been covered with acrylic secondary glazing screwed to the front of the frames.

The gallery was fitted with large free-standing display cabinets in the 1980s, in the positions of the original seating pedestals. The central heating is still in these locations.

The east elevation windows have been blocked.

Natural light is largely excluded from the south elevation windows.

The floor is carpeted and the original floor can not be assessed.

The walls have been over-boarded.

Guidelines:

Consideration should be given to reinstating the east elevation windows (5.7).

Consideration should be given to improving the security of the windows without detracting from the space (6.2, 6.3).

Consideration should be given to use of the space which would allow the windows to be uncovered at times (6.1).

Gallery 3 (north-east) – Usher Collection

Assessment: **Fit-out:** No significance; **Space:** Significant

Observations:

The room has always held the Usher Collection.



Blinds are kept down in Gallery 2.

The original seating pedestal was removed in 1929 when new, purpose-built display cabinets were installed. These have since been removed.

The room has now been fitted out as a dark 'cavern' to focus attention on the relatively small artefacts in the Collection.

The original windows have all been retained.

The floor is carpeted and the floor can not be assessed.

Security grilles have been welded over the windows. This room was always more secure than the rest of the Gallery.

Guidelines:

Consideration should be given altering the current display (4.6).

Consideration should be given to restoring the space to the original form (4.1). Any changes to this space should be recorded (3.2).

Gallery 4/Café

Assessment: Significant

Observations:

This room was originally a gallery but is now used as a cafe. It has been used as offices in the past.

Many original features remain including the shutters, security grilles, ceiling and skirting grilles.

A servery has been installed.

The two internal walls are over-boarded.

The original radiators have been replaced.

It is the only room where natural light is freely admitted.

The west windows have been blocked by the Coin Room.



Gallery 4 is currently used as a cafe

Guidelines:

Consideration should be given to reinstating the west elevation windows if the Curtois Extension and Coin Room are removed (5.7).

Consideration should be given to improving the security of the windows without detracting from the space.

Workroom 1

Assessment: Low significance

Observations:

A lot of services are fixed to the surface of the door lining.

It has been suggested that this space could be used for a lift.

Guidelines:

Any changes to this space should be recorded (3.2).

Consideration should be given to the removal of the exposed services (6.9).

Switchroom

Assessment: Low significance

Observations:

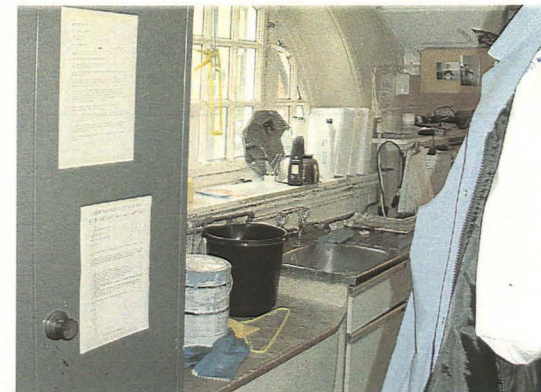
Interesting lunette window.

Guidelines:

Consideration should be given to the reduction of the exposed services (6.8).



Proliferation of services in workroom 1.



Part of the switchroom space.

Staircase

Assessment: High significance

Observations:

The staircase is virtually unchanged since 1927.

Stone plaque commemorating the opening by the Prince of Wales on 25 May 1927.

There are original fire-fighting points in this space.

The hand rail fixed to the wall was added shortly after the building was opened.

Window blinds are frequently lowered to protect artworks.

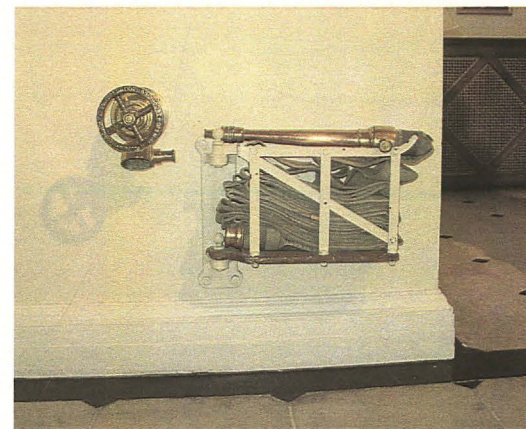
Guidelines:

The space should be maintained under a maintenance plan, particularly for work on the stone steps (5.3).

Consideration should be given to use of the space which would allow the windows to be uncovered (4.7, 6.1).

The original colour schemes should be considered when redecoration works are carried out (5.4).

Maintenance should only be carried out by people with appropriate experience (5.1).



Original fire fighting point is still functional.

Male Toilets

Assessment: No significance

Observations:

Floor is below the ground floor level, with awkward steps, incompatible with disabled access.

The window retains the original pivoting lights.

Guidelines:

Any changes should be recorded (3.2).

Female Toilets

Assessment: No significance

Observations:

The current layout is similar to the original. Part of the space was once used as storage.

A mezzanine with access off the half landing of the main stairs.

Retains the original terrazzo floor.

The window retains the original pivoting lights.

Guidelines:

Any changes should be recorded (3.2).

Coin Room

Assessment: No significance

Observations:

Added after the Curtois Gallery. Opened in 1976.

Guidelines:

Any changes should be recorded (3.2).

Store Room (off Coin Room)

Assessment: No significance

Guidelines:

Any changes should be recorded (3.2).



Original terrazzo floor in Female Toilets.

Corridor and Lift Lobby

Assessment: No significance

Observations:

The original external doors were blocked after the Coin Room was added.

The disabled toilet is off this space.

The stairs to the basement have been separated by modern security grilles.

A stairlift connects the different levels of the 1927 galleries and the Curtois gallery.

Guidelines:

Any changes should be recorded (3.2).

Curtois Gallery

Assessment: Low significance

Observations:

The innovative roof lighting had been blocked for some time but was unblocked in 2004.

The gallery has been divided by an ad hoc partition.

The floor was originally studded. It is now covered in vinyl.

Timber plaque commemorating the opening on 11 November 1959.

Guidelines:

Any changes should be recorded (3.2).



Corridor with stair lift for disabled access to Curtois Gallery.



Curtois Gallery is currently being used as an educational space. The roof lighting has been unblocked.

Internal elements – first floor

Upper Foyer

Assessment: High significance

Observations:

Some of the sculptures have been in this location since the building was opened.

The ornate architraves over the doors have been damaged.

The south- and north-facing windows have excellent views, but are usually obscured by blinds, except for the high circular window facing north. This gives a delightful view of the Cathedral and is said to be an afterthought, but it is shown on the contract drawings of 1925.

Acrylic secondary glazing has been fixed to the face of the frames.

Original features include the horizontal hanging rails, radiator cases and fire hose.

The oak floor has been sympathetically repaired.

Guidelines:

The original colour schemes should be considered when redecoration works are carried out (5.4).

The ornate architraves should be carefully repaired (5.4).

Consideration should be given to using this space for works of arts that are not damaged by natural light, so that the windows do not need to be obscured (4.7, 6.1).

The balcony requires restoration work (5.4).

Consideration should be given to the occasional use of the ceremonial balcony (4.7).



Blinds obscure north facing windows except for the high level circular window.



Some damage to the ornate architrave over door to Gallery 5.

Gallery 5/De Wint Gallery (south-west)

Assessment: High significance

Observations:

This is the most original of the galleries. Many features have been retained including the ceiling and skirting grilles. The original oak floor has been well repaired.

The space has the two remaining original seating pedestals, which also house the original radiators. One has been repaired with a plywood top.

The roof lighting has been blocked.

The original dado appears to have been removed and re-fixed immediately above the skirting.

The walls have been over-boarded and have fabric coverings.

A door to the lift in the Curtois Extension has been inserted in the west wall of the room.

Guidelines:

Consideration should be given to retaining the 1927 character in this gallery (4.7).

Consideration should be given to the re-use of the original roof lighting, with control over light levels (6.5).

The original colour schemes should be considered when redecoration works are carried out (5.4).

Gallery 6 (south-east)

Assessment: Significant

Observations:

This gallery is used for temporary exhibitions. The walls are over-boarded.

The seating pedestals in the space have been removed. There is a modern services boxing at low level across the east end of the room which houses the heating vents.



An original seating pedestal housing the radiator.

There are some recessed floor sockets. The floor boarding has been repaired.

The roof lighting has been blocked.

The original dado appears to have been removed and re-fixed immediately above the skirting.

Guidelines:

Consideration should be given to the re-use of the original roof lighting, or alternatively replacing the redundant raised lantern (4.7, 4.4).

Consideration should be given to removing the modern services boxing (6.9).

Gallery 7 (north-west)

Assessment: Significant

Observations:

The seating pedestals in the space have been removed. There is a modern services boxing at low level across the east end of the room housing the heating vents.

The roof lighting has been blocked.

Many original feature retained including the ceiling and skirting grilles.

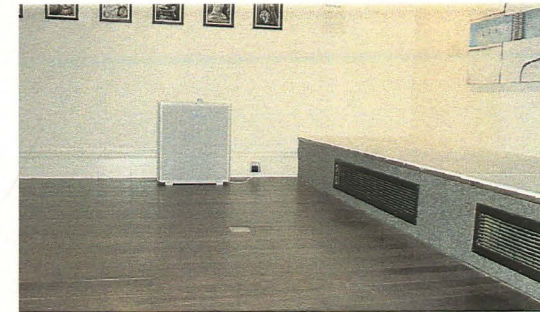
Walls have been over-boarded.

There are some recessed floor sockets. The floor boarding has been repaired and badly sanded.

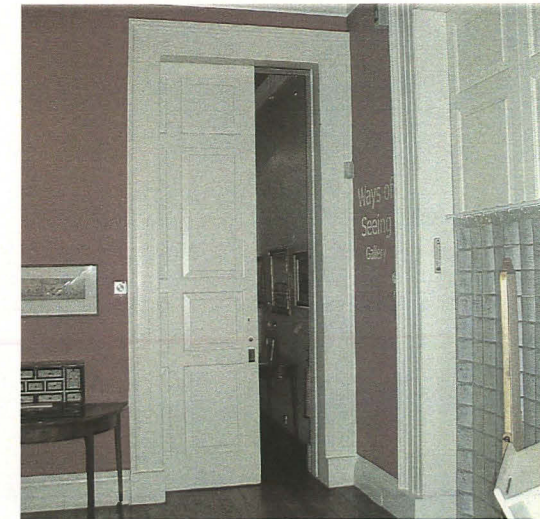
Guidelines:

Consideration should be given to the re-use of the original roof lighting, or alternatively replacing the redundant raised lantern (4.7, 4.4).

Consideration should be given to removing the modern services boxing (6.9).



Modern services are now housed in low level boxing in Gallery 7, as well as Galleries 6 and 8.



Original sliding door still functional in Gallery 7, and in other galleries.

Gallery 8 (north-east)

Assessment: Significant

Observations:

This gallery is used for temporary exhibitions.

There is a modern services boxing at low level across the east end of the room.

The roof lighting has been blocked.

The following original features retained including the ceiling and skirting grilles.

The walls have been over-boarded. The oak floor has been badly sanded in areas.

Guidelines:

Consideration should be given to the re-use of the original roof lights, or alternatively replacing the redundant lantern light (4.7, 4.4).

Consideration should be given to removing the modern services boxing (6.9).

Workshop 2 (formerly the Tennyson Room)

Assessment: Low significance

Observations:

Originally a workroom, not a gallery. It was converted into the Tennyson Room in 1960 after the construction of the Curtois extension. It has now been converted into a projection room, so the window has been boarded over.

Access to the roof is through a ceiling hatch in this room.

The original door is stored in the basement.

Considerable encroachment of exposed services.

The floor is carpeted and can not be assessed.

The original cast iron radiator is retained.

Guidelines:

Any changes to this space should be recorded (3.2).

Consideration should be given to the removal of the exposed services (6.9).

Office

Assessment: No significance

Observations:

Space contains an original safe and shelving.

The original window was adapted to form a door to the external fire escape stairs.

SECTION 4

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

In this section the main sources of information about the Usher Gallery are described.

Published sources

- Arts Council (1981) Lutyens London: Arts Council exhibition catalogue
- C & T Benton (1979) 'Architecture: contrasts of a decade', in Thirties London: Arts Council exhibition catalogue
- J Betjeman (1958) Collins Guide to English Parish Churches London: Collins
- R T Blomfield (1897) History of Renaissance Architecture in England London: Bell
- R T Blomfield (1908) The Mistress Art London:
- R T Blomfield (1932) Memoirs of an Architect London:
- C C Brewer (1913) 'American museum buildings' Journal of the RIBA vol.20, pp.365-403
- M S Briggs (1959) 'Sir Reginald Theodore Blomfield', in L G Wilkinson & E T Williams (eds), Dictionary of National Biography 1941-50 Oxford University Press
- A Brodie, A Felstead, J Franklin, L Pinfield, J Oldfield (eds) (2001) Directory of British Architects 1834-1914 Continuum, London
- City of Lincoln Council (2003) Conservation Plan for Lincoln's Roman Monuments (consultation draft)
- W Curtis (1996) Modern Architecture since 1900 (3rd edn) London: Phaidon
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- A S Gray (1985) Edwardian Architecture: a biographical dictionary London: Duckworth
- H R Hitchcock (1968) Architecture: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries (3rd edn) Harmondsworth: Penguin (first edition 1958)
- M J Jones, D Stocker & A Vince (2003) The City by the Pool: assessing the archaeology of the City of Lincoln Oxford: Oxbow Books

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R Macleod (1971) *Style and Society: architectural ideology in Britain 1835–1914* London: RIBA Publications

P L Marks (1927) *Principles of the Planning of Buildings* London: Batsford

Panter Hudspith (2001) *The Usher Gallery, Lincoln: Feasibility Study*

N Pevsner & J Harris (1964) *The Buildings of England: Lincolnshire* Harmondsworth: Penguin

N Pevsner, J Harris & N Antram (1989) *The Buildings of England: Lincolnshire* (2nd edn) London: Yale UP

M Richardson (ed) (1976) *Catalogue of the Drawings Collection of the RIBA* Farnborough: D C Heath

C H Reilly, *Representative British Architects of The Present Day*, London, 1931.

S H Seager (1912) 'The Lighting of picture galleries and museums' *Journal of the RIBA* vol.20, pp.43-54

A Service (1977) *Edwardian Architecture* London: Thames & Hudson

G Stamp (1977) *Silent Cities* London: RIBA Heinz Gallery exhibition catalogue

Usher Gallery (2003) *Usher Gallery: Development Plan*

R H Wood (1979) *The Founding of the Usher Gallery, Lincoln* Lincolnshire Museums Information Sheet no.1

The Usher Gallery was published in *The Builder*, 3 June 1927, p.886 plus plates.

Archive Sources

Material held at the Usher Gallery:

Scrapbooks of press cuttings 1922 onwards.

Press cutting and programme for the opening of the Curtois Extension, 11 November 1959.

Correspondence relating to Curtois and Hill bequests.

Two of Blomfield's original drawings of 1925.

Other sources

Information provided by the Usher Gallery.

Information provided by City of Lincoln Council:

Schedule and map of Scheduled Monuments

Print-out of Listed Building records

Schedule and map of Conservation Areas (original area designated April 1968; extended 29 April 1975).

Ordnance Survey extracts

Schedule of planning applications for the Usher Gallery

Relevant policies from the City of Lincoln Local Plan and the Roman Monuments Conservation Plan.

Obituary

A long obituary of Sir Reginald Blomfield appeared in the Journal of the RIBA for January 1943 (pp.65-67), with contributions from A E Richardson, W Curtis Green and G Berkeley Wills. A letter about Blomfield by A Trystan Edwards and a list of works were published in the February issue (p.88).

A E Richardson's contribution to the obituary is as follows:

SIR REGINALD BLOMFIELD, RA
by Professor A E Richardson, ARA

The character in which most of us respected Sir Reginald was that of a protagonist in the cause of architecture, and this secured to him the admiration of his supporters and the sympathy of his opponents. From among many architects you may select a number who have wider claims to be considered as designers of the first rank; but even these are rare; and again you will choose them by reason of the individuality of their buildings. It is, however, not solely as an architect that a lasting tribute is due to one who combined his ideal of building with unswerving loyalty to the profession.

There can be no doubt that Reginald Blomfield looked upon architecture as his special charge; and he determined to pursue his own broad theories. It was this absorbing and inspiring idea which made him such a force, and a figure difficult to assess at contemporary value. But all will be agreed that no other man has done so much to inspire his fellow architects with a love for the great exemplars of the English classic tradition. This theme was to him a solace, a species of armour, and withal a weapon of precision. I recall very well his once saying to me at Osterley, 'There is a solecism in the handling of the portico! Robert Adam did not understand the meaning of the Anta.' This will show the delight he took in critical analysis, sparing neither great nor little, fuming over those trivialities which escape ordinary attention, and trying to shed new light on old methods. Therefore, without hesitation, I can write that the art of building was his chief obsession.

To contribute an appreciation of the life and career of a great architect so soon after his death is no easy task. Obituaries have to a great extent become a matter of form; in some instances they are vulgarised, and in others they are merely spiteful. Critics are often prone to compile invectives upon those whom in life they did not understand. It is thought a duty to the public to detract from their works and to make comparisons which are invidious. Such attacks may possibly be admired for a day or two; but there is greater merit in avoiding them altogether. Again there are obituary notices which, glossing over realities, seek to escape difficulties by setting forth a mere index of books and buildings. No doubt there are thousands of blameless architects who deserve such forms of commemoration; but an entirely different case arises when we contemplate the stature of a scholar.

Reginald Blomfield in the eyes of posterity must inevitably rank among the giants of the architectural profession. He takes his place, even now, with those luminaries of the Victorian epoch whose fame has survived to inspire the middle-aged men of today. By this is implied, Cockerell, Elmes, Barry and Norman Shaw. These men were great influences in their day, as history will also prove in the case of Blomfield. All these names will outlive the clash of dispute, and will be quoted time and again. Reginald Blomfield, therefore, despite the fact that his actual buildings are comparatively few in number, passes naturally to the hierarchy of scholarship. The time for an authoritative memoir of his life will in due course arrive; and then only will the true assessment of his influence be available to students. To judge from the brief notices which have already appeared, there can be no doubt of the impression he made on his contemporaries. His was a tall, commanding figure, physically striking, intellectually impressive. His personality was genial, he did not suffer fools gladly, and his comments at times were satirically ungracious. Few men have been endowed with such dynamic energy, fewer still blessed with such power of concentration. He viewed life from Olympian heights, and he hurled classical quotations at the heads of his brother Academicians.

Even a vague conception of such a figure can only be arrived at by years of association. His monument exists in his writings and his sensitive drawings; and even for those who have delighted in both since early youth it is still difficult to fathom the productive energy, and quite beside the point to criticise. For my own part it is entirely out of the question. I remember well – nearly forty-six years since – how I bought the two volumes on the History of Renaissance Architecture in England. These books appeared to me to focus the whole interest of the English tradition as it had never before been presented. They were at once the most fully illustrated and the most lucidly written of any works on architecture.

For the first time, since Ralph wrote on London, the young architects of the 'nineties realised the value of critical analysis. Fergusson's work, the architectural bible of the later Victorians, appeared dull by comparison. It is only fair to say that an architect or a writer does not develop his style instantaneously. On the contrary, it changes continually until he achieves a model. Once this model is attained, it becomes a constant; it is used time and again, and is never discarded. Thus an architect of genius can be said to be capable of evolving one building and one only which pertains entirely to himself. Around this nucleus he provides subsequent variants. This is the case of the two volumes of the Renaissance in England, a work which simply towers above all the others. I can say this without disparagement of the French books, or of those semi-autobiographical works which came from the same prolific pen.

We may well ask, as architects, what is the real reason for the extraordinary hold Sir Reginald possessed over his fellows? It does not rest on his architecture, it cannot be said to spring entirely from his writings, or from his exquisite sketches. He published many books, and as President directed the affairs of the Royal Institute. He served on the council of the Royal Academy, and was

chairman of the council of the British School at Rome. It was not these distinguished services which ensured the estimation in which he was held by all who knew him. He was in no small sense the greatest man of letters in the sphere of modern architecture. Besides this he was various in a multiplicity of ways. If nothing else could be assigned to him his reputation would be assured. But it would have differed from that opinion which is universally held of his outstanding ability. In a word, he showed us the things we cared about, he was the ideal prognosticator, the arbiter elegantiarum, who orders the ceremonial. In the first place he focused attention on the fact that England, in common with other European countries, possessed a unique classical tradition. Secondly, he did the same service for French architecture. Thirdly, he demonstrated the mutability of these two distinctive traditions. Whatever else may be implied to his unswerving loyalty to history, our consciences must accept the power to direct the attention of so many to the value of style. It should not be imagined that this voluntary service to the cause of architecture was accomplished without unstinting labour. Reginald Blomfield was too careful a scholar to be inattentive to minute detail; so that all may be said to read his descriptions with unending pleasure. I remember writing to him some years ago from college to say the comfort I had derived, during some despondent hours, from reading his French books again. His reply was characteristic: 'I envy you your opportunities to live in a seventeenth-century college; of all the things I prize, my honorary fellowship of Exeter College, Oxford, delights me most.' I formed then the conclusion that he was at heart a collegian and that his mind would always be in his self-appointed mission to provide others with material. As an architect he most assuredly had the genesis of the matter in him from the first. He was endowed with that strange intuition for the laudation of masterpieces. Further, he possessed the skill to balance the career of one master against another, and to portray the idiosyncrasies of periods and styles in succession. But if he allowed himself to become impregnated with the ethics of the Grand Manner, it was with the sole object of raising the standard of civic art in this country.

In Sir Reginald Blomfield's estimation the great period of English architecture ended with Wren and his school; but he realised that the eighteenth century provided the corollary: and he did not entirely disdain reference to the later architects of the tradition. By far the most striking of his tastes was his veneration for the imaginative genius of Piranesi.

Now the weakness of all architectural erudition is the tendency to grasp the main facets of a subject and to be content to weave a tapestry pattern to suit. Thus what makes Sir Reginald's French books so unique is the portrait study of the periods dealt with. These books are obviously the outcome of a mind which could discriminate and select with acumen. To the student familiar with the designs of Le Pautre or D'Aviler, in the original editions, there lies something more profound in the engravings than is apparent in more recent classical buildings. The old designs evidence system and co-ordination; there is proof of method and logical reasoning. Architects trained in France have the advantage of grounding in the nuances of planning, and the harmony consonant with the expression

of elevations. Thus the French architect, classically inclined, knows the syntax of composition and is rarely guilty of those solecisms which Sir Reginald denounced. The price of scholarly achievement in architecture is more than most modern architects care to pay. It implies many frustrations and it calls for a tenacity which does not acknowledge defeat. Sir Reginald is in a category of his own. He inherited the liberty-loving methods of Norman Shaw, which suited his insular experience, and strangely enough in his buildings he contradicted all he had imbibed from study in France. For this reason his buildings belong to the period in which he lived and worked, but they have the merit of being individual, and bear the definite Blomfield touch. The impression to be derived from them is a certain spontaneity. Scale they have as well as light and shade, ornament is introduced to afford contrasts, but urbanity, that abstract quality which is so consistent in old buildings, is not always present.

But the foregoing remarks apply to modern neo-classical buildings, English, French and American, many of which have been evolved during the past half-century. No architect, whatever his genius can entirely escape the influence of the period to which he rightfully belongs. No matter how the sense of fitness may inspire, true design remains an esoteric branch of art, and as such it can create jealousies.

I have endeavoured to set down, however inadequately, some of the salient facts surrounding one of the outstanding personalities of the architectural profession. There is something about this inspiring career which commands more than ordinary respect; we recognise a scholar whose books will survive out of their period to bring comfort to posterity. We who are left know that we have been deprived of a fund of knowledge, but we realise that our friend and mentor possessed a great heart.

Statutory Listings

The Usher Gallery is in the City of Lincoln, Cathedral and City Centre Conservation Area No. 1.

The Usher Gallery is on the statutory list of buildings of architectural or historic interest. It was designated Grade II in 1973. It was upgraded to II* in 1999. The statement (which was not significantly changed on upgrading) states:

LINDUM ROAD (West side): Usher Art Gallery

Grade II*

Art gallery. 1926–27. By Sir Reginald Blomfield. Ashlar and brick with slate roofs. Plinth, rusticated quoins, bays defined by giant pilasters, pseudo-frieze with bucrania, entablature, parapet and balustrade. 2 storeys, the upper storey blind, 7 x 4 bays. Projecting rusticated centre with open pediment and raised parapet with urns. Steps to moulded doorcase with cornice on consoles and small flanking lights. Above it, a tall round headed window with keystone and wrought-iron balcony. On either side, 3 glazing bar windows to the ground floor. Rear elevation has a projecting centre with 3 windows with ornamental grilles, and above, a round window. All the windows have glazing bars.

INTERIOR has an open well stone staircase with landings, and patterned steel balustrade. Ionic (sic – it is actually Roman Doric) arcade to stairwell, and round arched openings elsewhere. Galleries have moulded beam ceilings with cornices. Top floor galleries have coved ceilings and arched roof lights.

(Buildings of England: Lincolnshire: Pevsner N: Lincolnshire: 1989–: 509 (sic); Fellows RA: Sir Reginald Blomfield: an Edwardian Architect)

The wall along Lindum Road and garden pavilion are also separately listed, because they form a group with the Gallery:

LINDUM ROAD (West side): Boundary wall and gatepiers at Usher Art Gallery

Grade II

Boundary wall and gatepiers. 1927. Probably by Sir Reginald Blomfield. Brick with stone dressings. Curved line along Lindum Road. Low wall with stepped stone coping, formerly with a railing. 2 corniced gatepiers with ball finials. 2 terminal piers and 2 smaller piers to side gate to north east. Included for group value.

LINDUM ROAD (West side): Garden pavilion and attached terrace wall 70m south east of Usher Art Gallery

Grade II

Garden pavilion. 1927 (sic – almost certainly after 1936). Probably by Sir Reginald Blomfield. Brick with concrete dressings and flat roof. Plinth, entablature, low coped parapet. Front has a distyle Doric portico with double flanking pilasters. At each end a steel glazing bar window. Outside, attached remains of a semicircular balustraded terrace wall. Included for group value.

PLANNING GUIDANCE

Relevant policies in the City of Lincoln Local Plan (adopted 26 August 1998): paragraphs numbered 5.12, 5.13, 5.14, 5.36, 5.37 and 5.38.

Roman Monuments Conservation Plan.

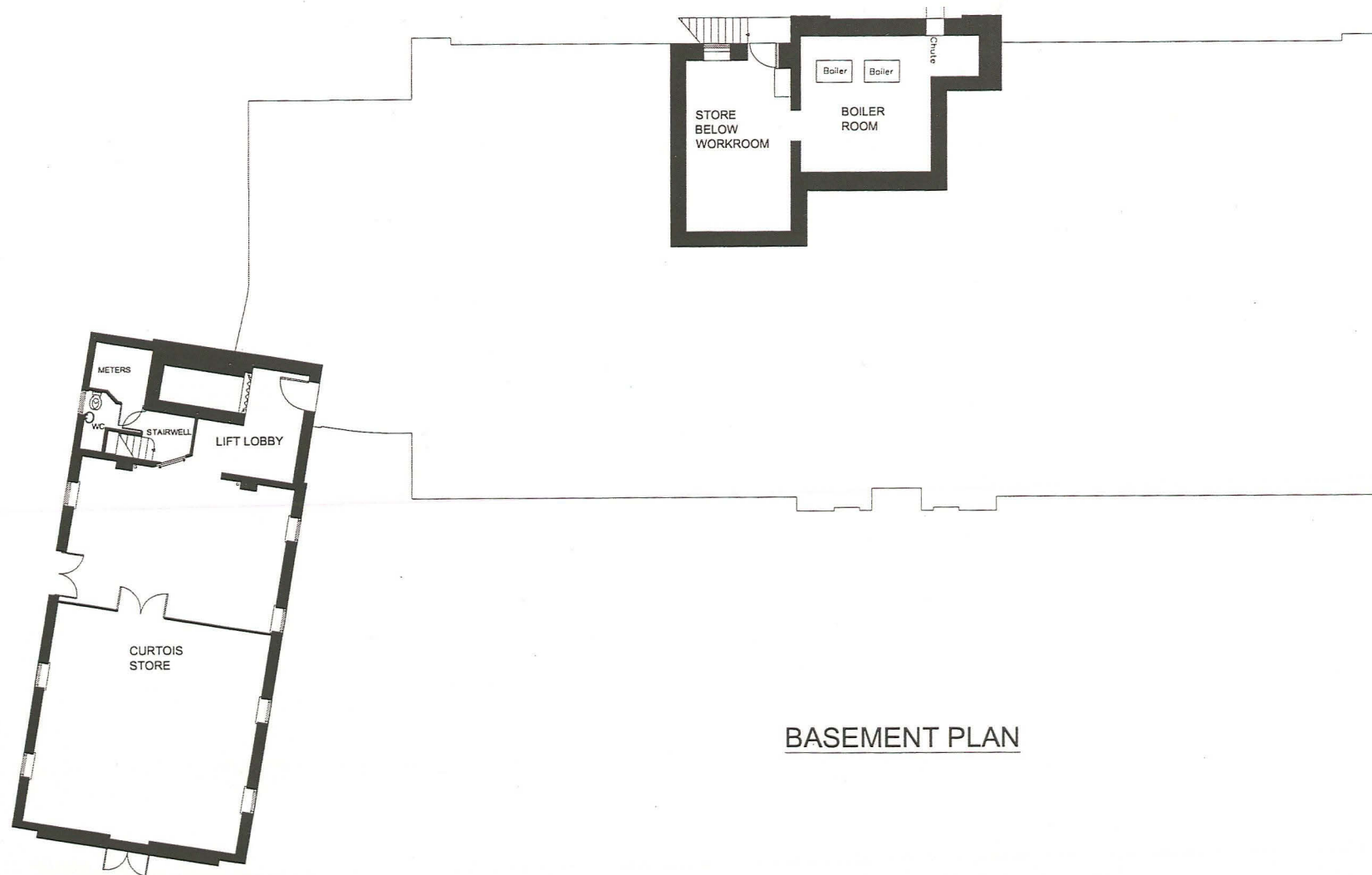
SECTION 5

PLANS

This section presents plans of the building as built in 1927, the chronology of development, the building as it exists today and the Cathedral and City Centre conservation plan.



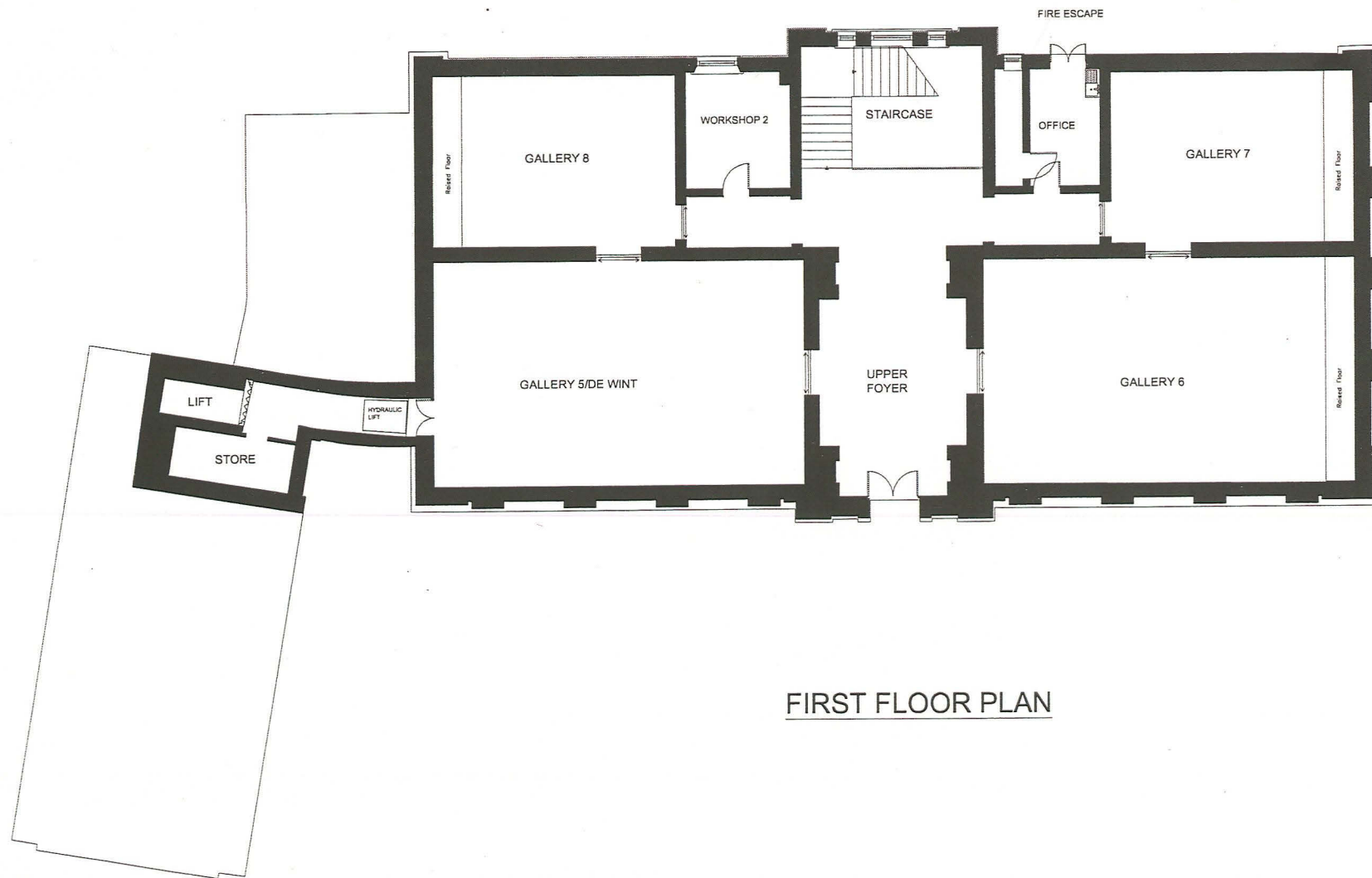
GROUND FLOOR PLAN - CHRONOLOGY



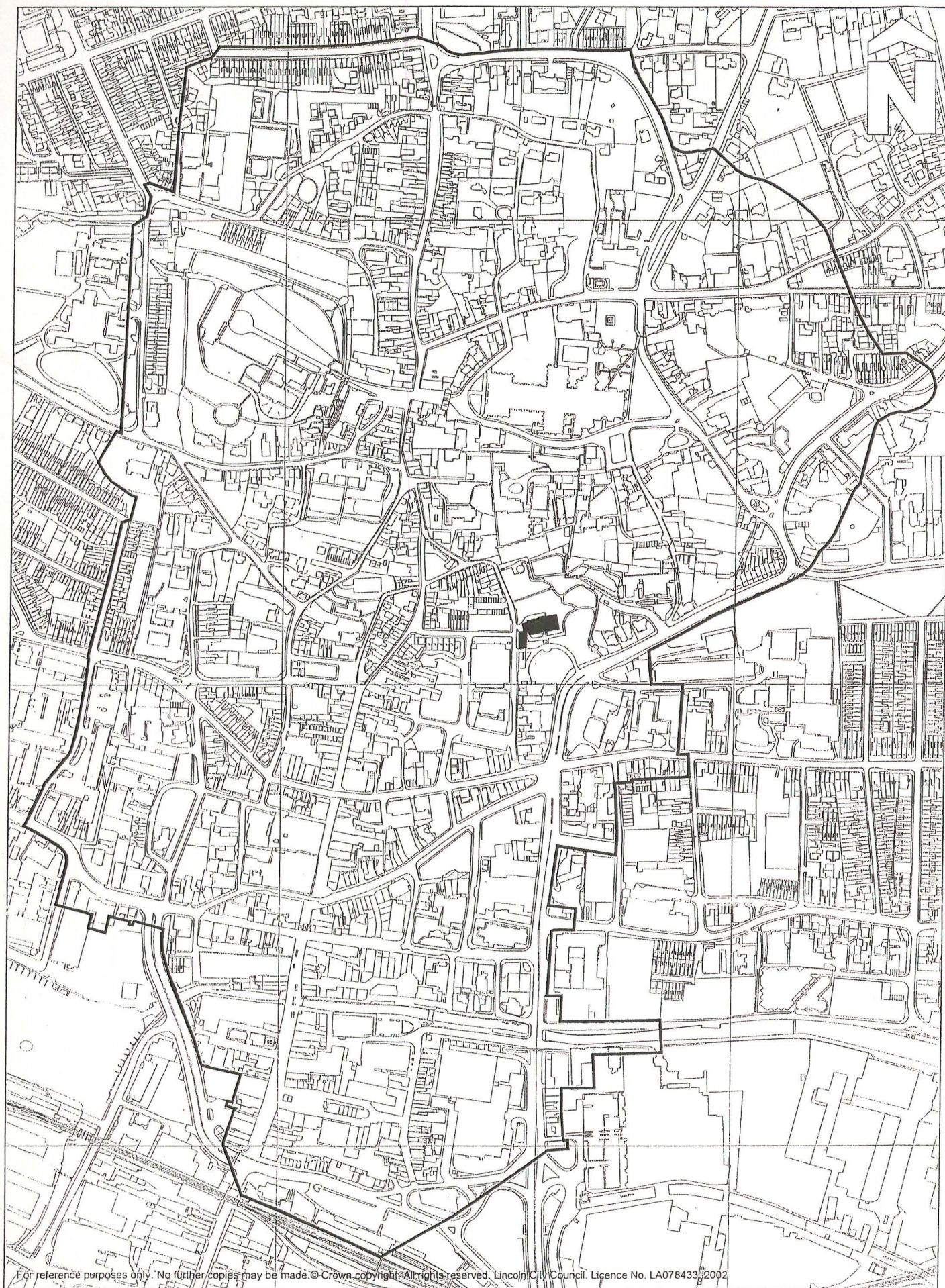
BASEMENT PLAN



GROUND FLOOR PLAN



FIRST FLOOR PLAN



City of Lincoln Conservation Area No.1 - Cathedral & City Centre