LONDON STUDIO ARCHITECTURE

ESEA CONTEMPORARY

MANCHESTER

PLANNING & LISTED BUILDING APPLICATION

DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

JUNE 2026

DOCUMENT

LSA/079/DOC/DAS_01

Revision **1**

Date June 2026

Notes

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All areas, figures and diagrams are approximate only and subject to further interrogation.

All drawings/ diagrams are not to scale.

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

ESEA Contemporary ('ESEA') occupies a space within the Market Buildings, Thomas Street, in the Northern Quarter area of Manchester. The Market Buildings are Grade II Listed (ref. 1282996) as part of the former Smithfield fish market site, and situated within the Smithfield Conservation Area.

The site has been re-developed to comprise residential apartments, a pub (the Foundry Project) and the ESEA gallery.

The ESEA space (approx. 600sqm) was fitted out in 2003 by OMI Architects; the project received an RIBA Award for Design Excellence.

As an institution, ESEA is well established in the city and beyond, having been set up in 1989 as the Chinese Arts Centre, subsequently the Centre for Chinese Contemporary Art, and more latterly ESEA Contemporary.

Although the space functions well, many of the finishes and MEP services have become tired or inefficient, requiring a level of refurbishment.

1.6 Design Team

London Studio Architecture - Architectural Design

London Studio was established in 2010 and draws on a wealth of experience across a wide range of building types - including arts, education, commercial and residential - and is committed to responsible, intelligent and creative architecture.

https://londonstudioarchitecture.com

OR Consulting Engineers - MEP Services & Lighting Design

Founded in 2006, OR Consulting Engineers is a creative and responsive multi-disciplinary engineering design practice. We bring a diverse range of training and expertise in lighting design, acoustics, architecture, environmental engineering and psychology to deliver beautiful and efficient integrated solutions that are fully aligned with the architectural, environmental, experiential and financial goals of the project - collaborating closely with our clients and project partners to deliver solutions that are the best they can be.

https://www.orconsult.co.uk

Rider Levet Bucknall (Manchester Office) - Cost Consultant

Rider Levett Bucknall (RLB) is a leading independent construction, property, and management consultancy, recognised globally for delivering cost certainty, value, and excellence across the built environment. With a strong Manchester presence and deep regional expertise, we provide end-to-end support across cost management, project management, and advisory services. Our collaborative approach, technical rigour, and sector insight enable clients to deliver complex projects with confidence, quality, and long-term value.

https://www.rlb.com/europe

1.7 Caveats & Disclaimer

Whilst observations were made on the following aspects, for both the existing situation and proposals, the current proposals are not based on, or do not constitute a full audit or survey of the premises in terms of;-

- structural condition
- MEP services (refer report by OR Consult)
- fire safety and management strategy
- compliance with Building Regulations
- compliance with Health & Safety at work regulations
- general health and safety in use and operation
- insurance and security requirements
- acoustics

2.0 Existing Building

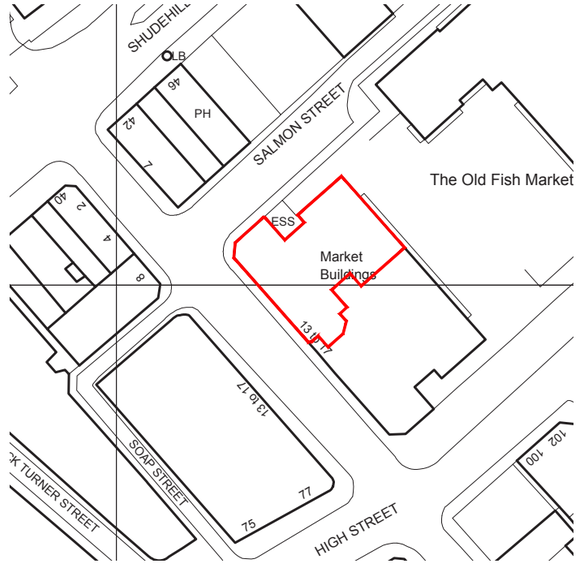
2.1 Location

ESEA is located on the periphery of the Northern Quarter, at the upper end of Thomas Street, and close to Shudehill.





Location



Location Plan

2.2 Site & Context

ESEA occupies the north-west corner of the Market Buildings, a historic block fronting Thomas Street in the Northern Quarter.

The building forms the south-western frontage of the old fishmarket which was infilled around 2000 with a contemporary housing development.

ESEA has a street frontage to both Thomas Street and Salmon Street.

Rooftop plant serving the ESEA demise is located withn a shared enclosure.



View looking north



View looking south

2.3 The Premises

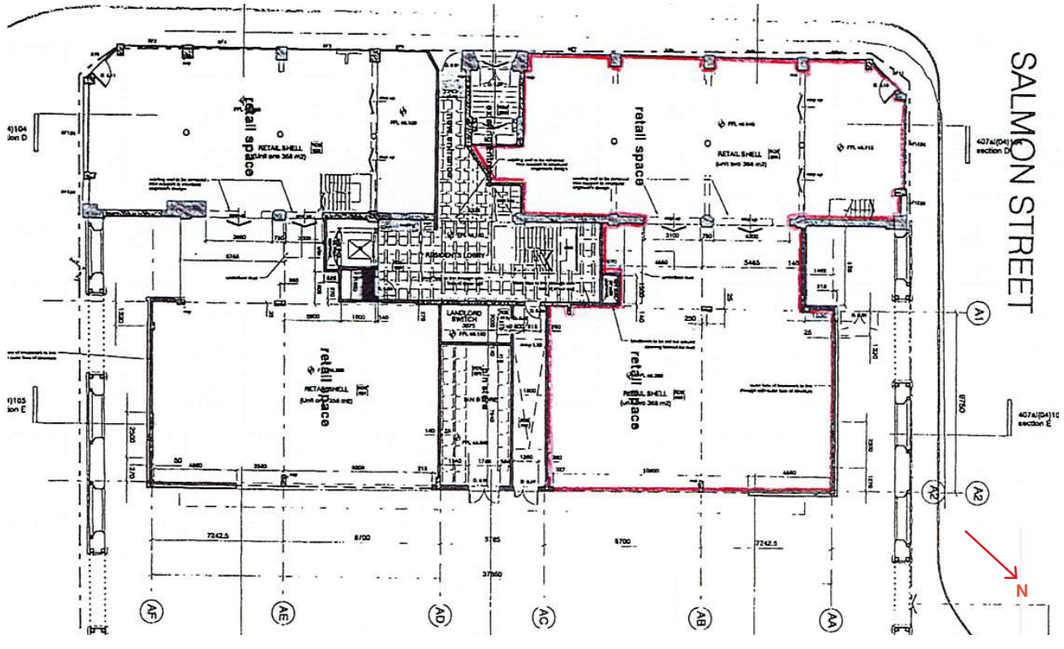
The ESEA space has it's own entrance (with secondary access/ egress at the rear) and large 'shopfront' windows fronting Thomas Street and Salmon Street.

The building is an ornate historic block, expressed predominantly in red-brick, with limestone ground floor and feature mouldings above.

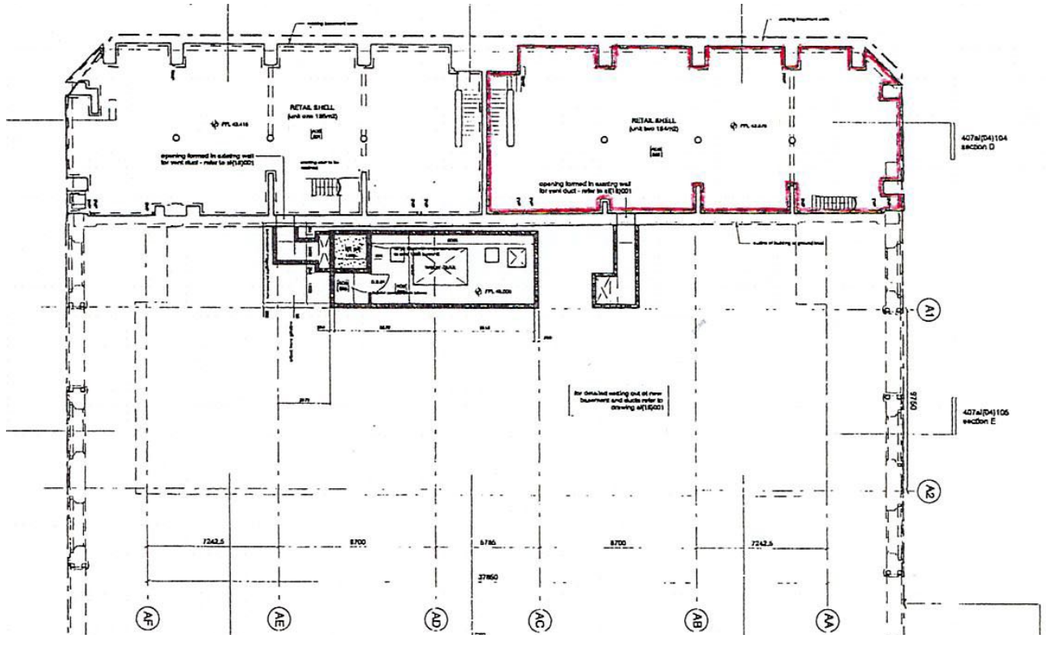
The lease plans below show the adjacent tenancies - common parts are separate to the ESEA demise.

Gross Internal Area (GIA) is approximately 596 sqm across ground and basement.





Lease plan - ground floor - c. 386 sqm GIA (including bedroom mezzanine)



Lease plan - basement - c. 210 sqm GIA

2.4 2003 Fit-out design

Internally, the 2003 fit-out is modern in aesthetic - with clearly legible spaces and crisp lines - and although the design incorporates slightly exaggerated expressions such as the slot windows and outside-inside zinc panels, the design has withstood well the test of time.

The gallery and studio spaces are inherently flexible and incorporating ancillary spaces such as the library/ kitchen/ bedroom space have been neatly accomplished.

Some original features - a fish tank, cafe servery and reception desk - have been removed, and finishes are showing some wear from 20+ years of use.

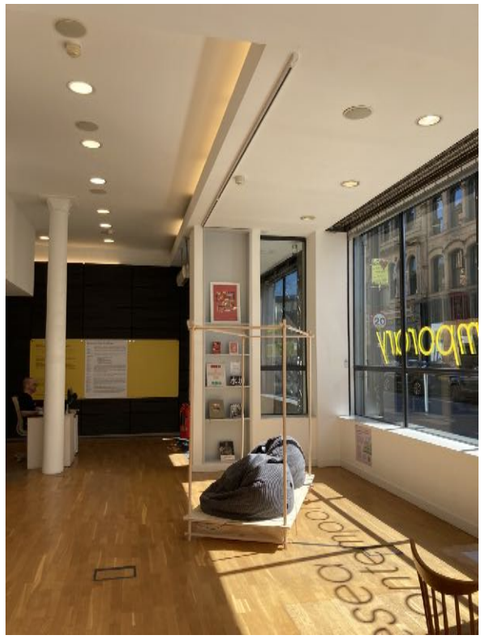


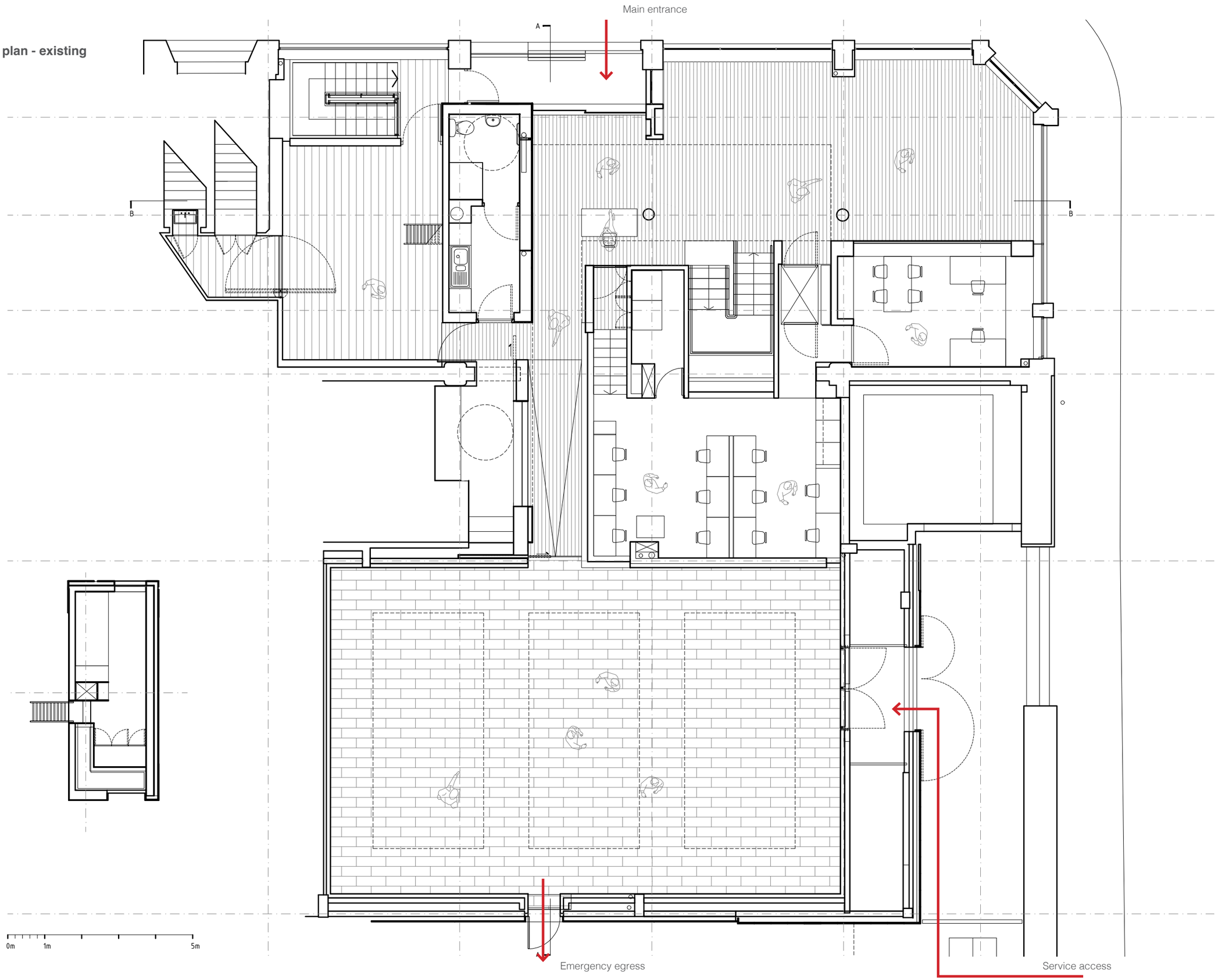


Image: OMI Architects

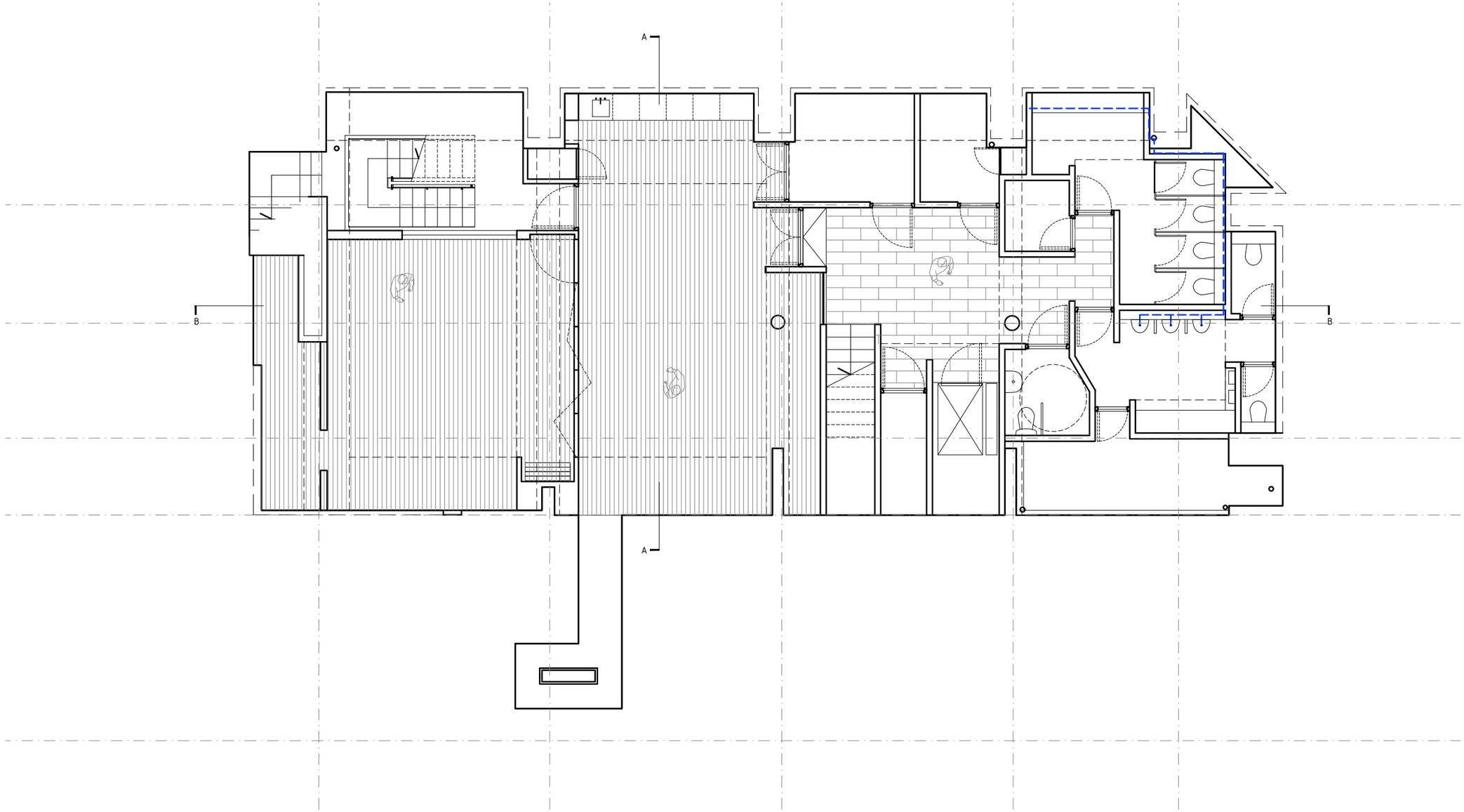


Image: OMI Architects

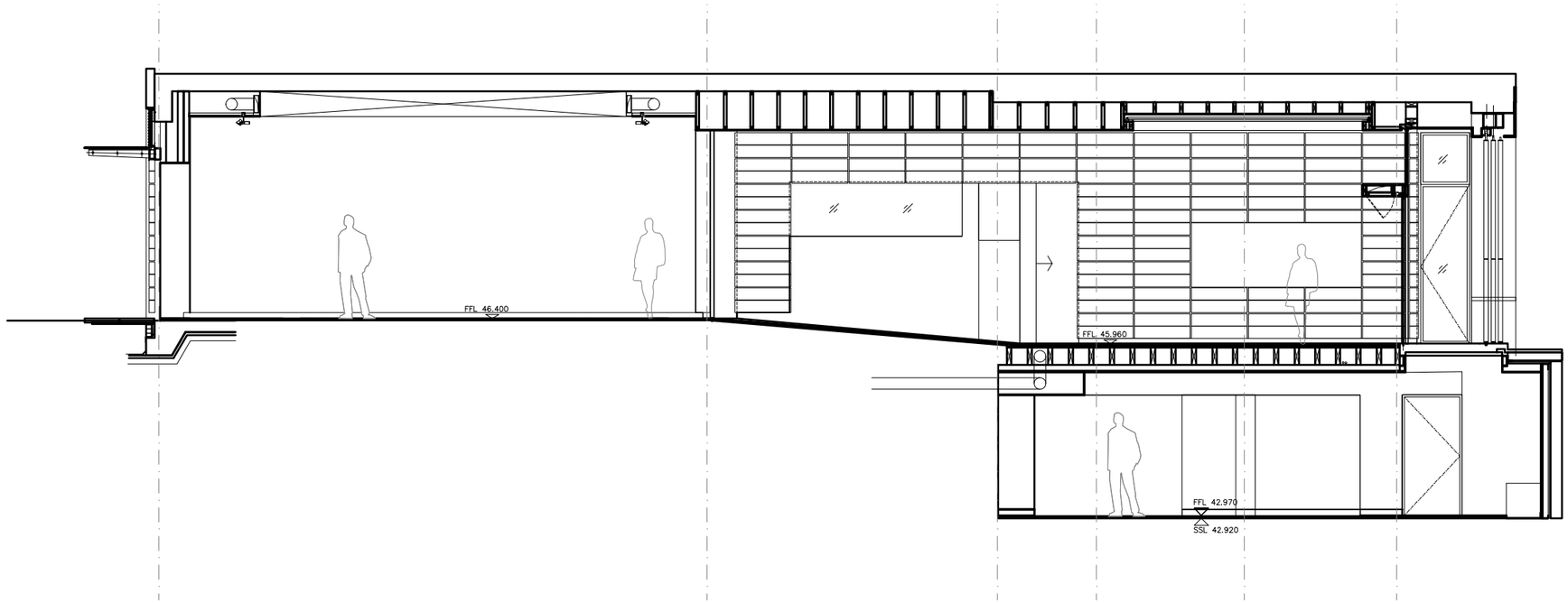
Ground floor plan - existing



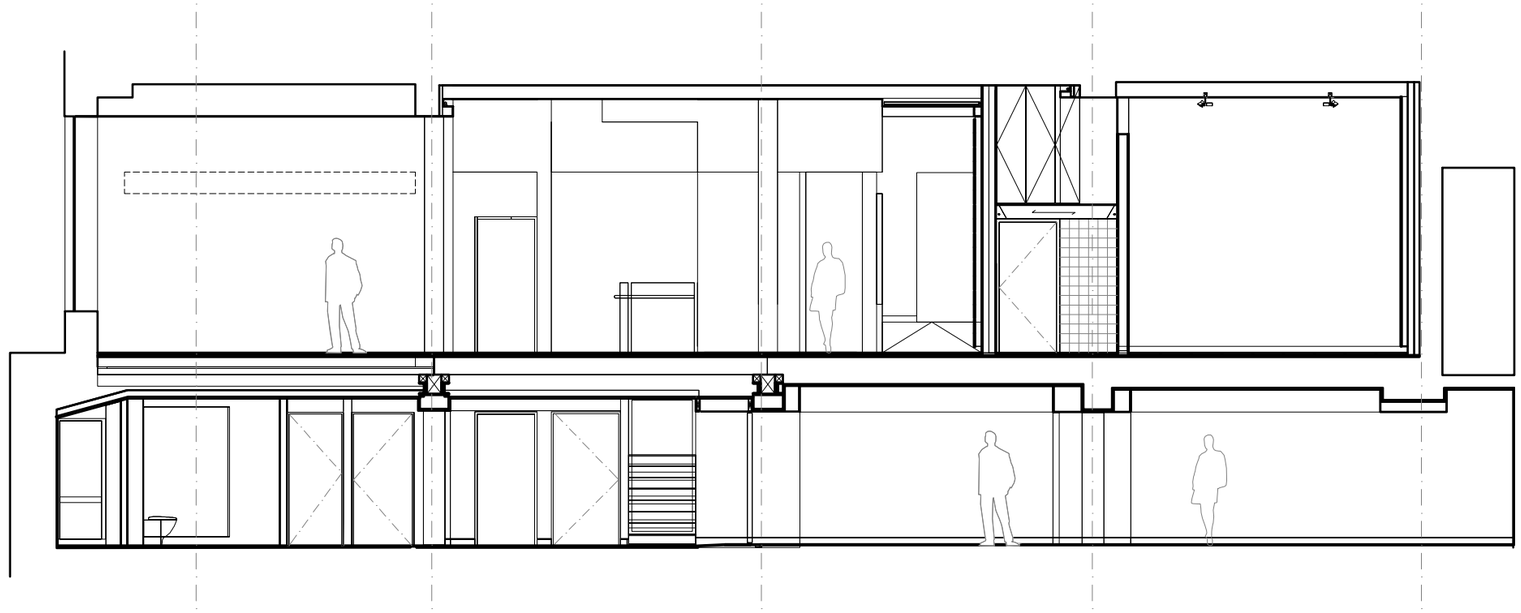
Basement plan - existing



Sections - existing



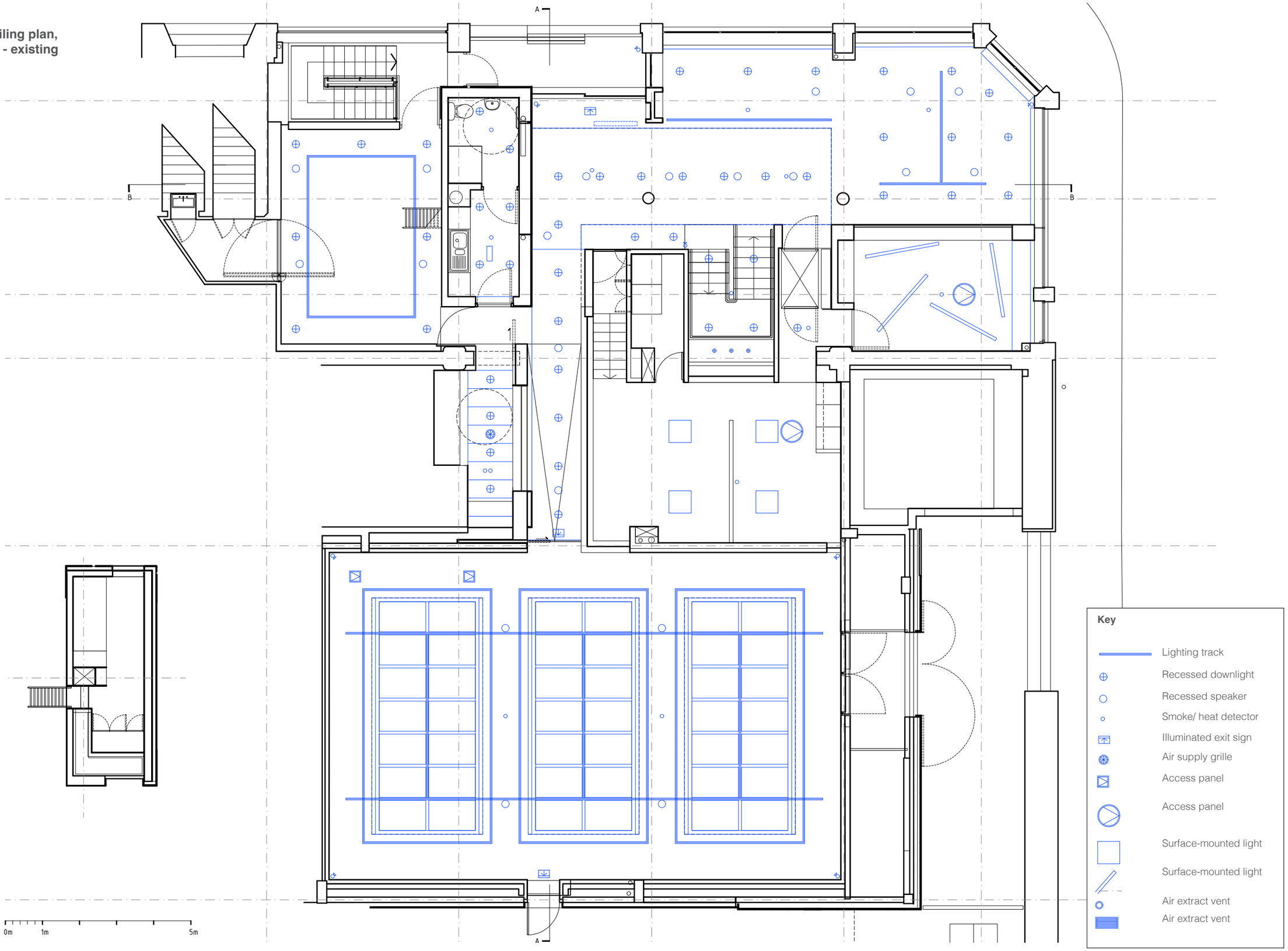
SECTION A



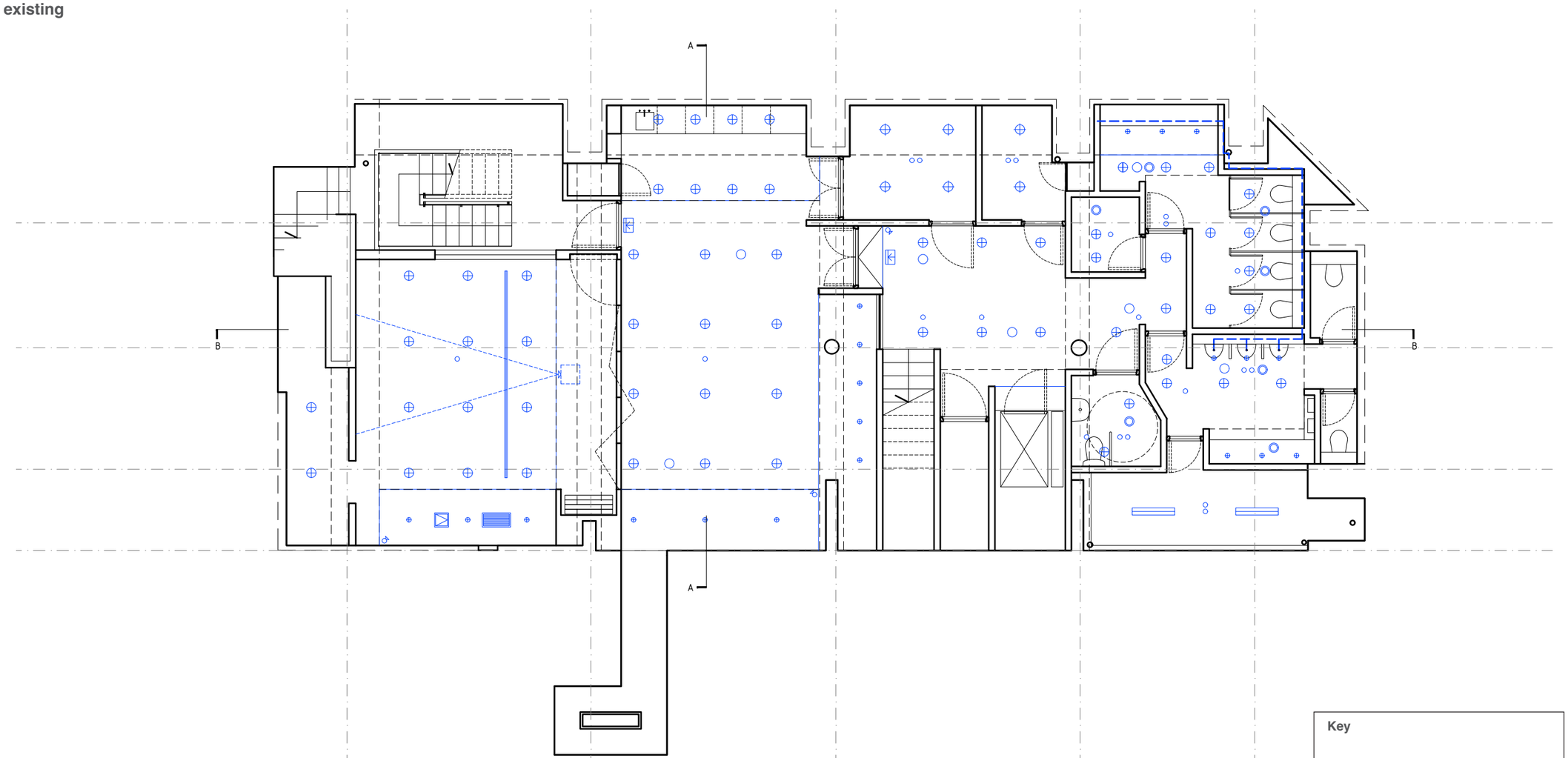
SECTION B



Reflected ceiling plan, ground floor - existing



Reflected ceiling plan, basement - existing



3.1 Exterior - street facade

The ground floor is articulated with a limestone entablature and the historic column heads have been complemented with Chinese motifs.

The shopfront glazing has been replaced with aluminium framed fixed double-glazing. Similarly, the window header panels and stall risers have been replaced, with zinc and limestone panels respectively.

The stone columns have been painted to c.2m above pavement level.

The exterior would benefit from a general clean but appears to be in generally good condition, with the exception of the column bases and stall riser panels, which warrant repair and deep cleaning.

The entrance recess allows step-free access; automatic glazed doors are situated behind an ornate sliding steel security screen.



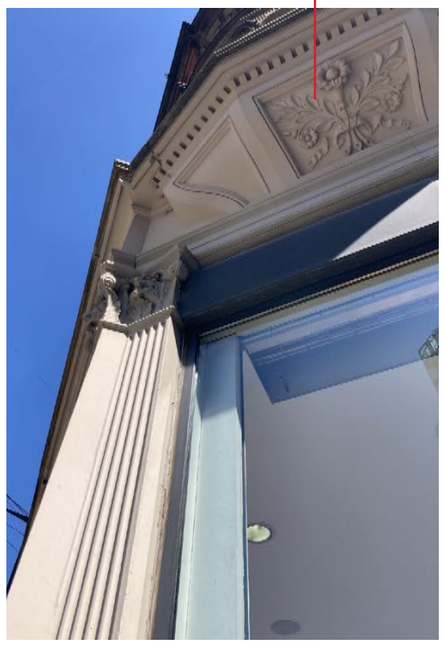
Contemporary decorative mouldings to columns

Fixed double-glazing

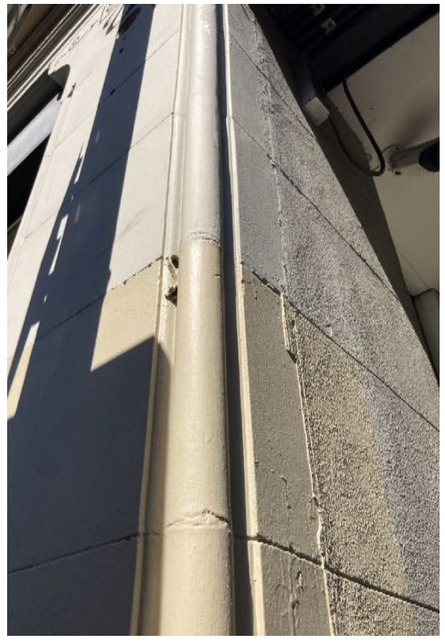


Salmon Street elevation

Traditional mouldings to corner window header



Corner window



Paint ‘datum’

Security screen

Zinc header panels

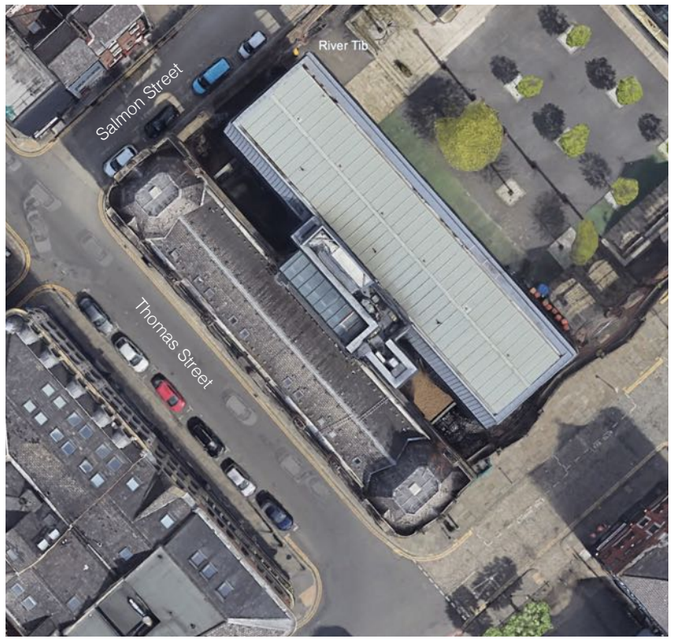
Fixed double-glazing



Thomas Street elevation

3.2 Exterior - rear & roof

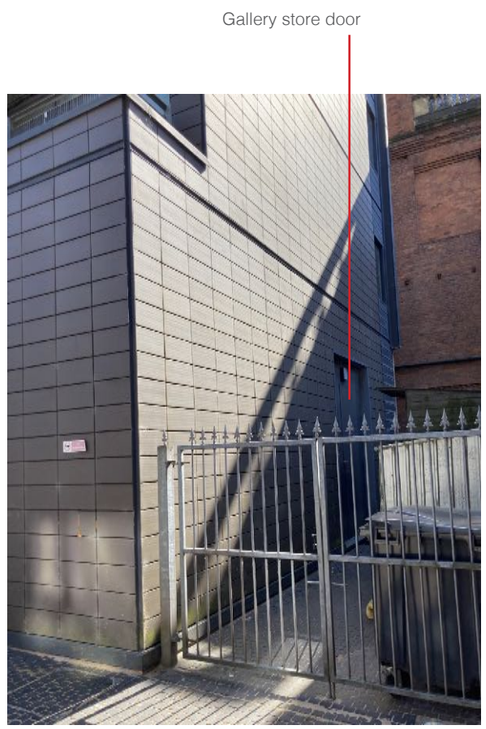
Service access & emergcney egress to/ from the rear ground floor gallery space is via Salmon Street, via a shared courtyard (with the housing block above).



Aerial view



Shared courtyard



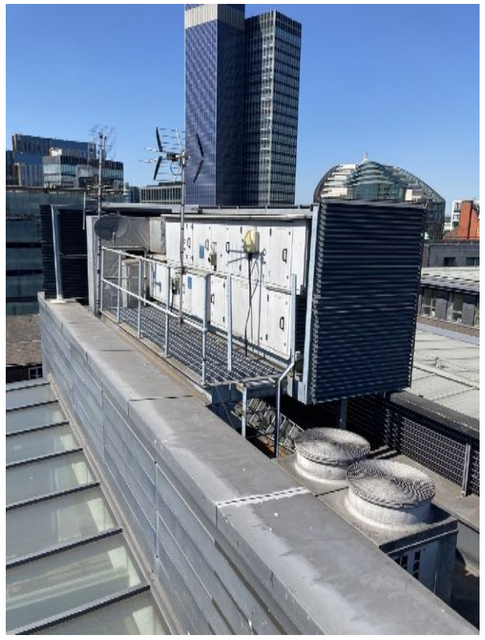
Rear yard / store room access

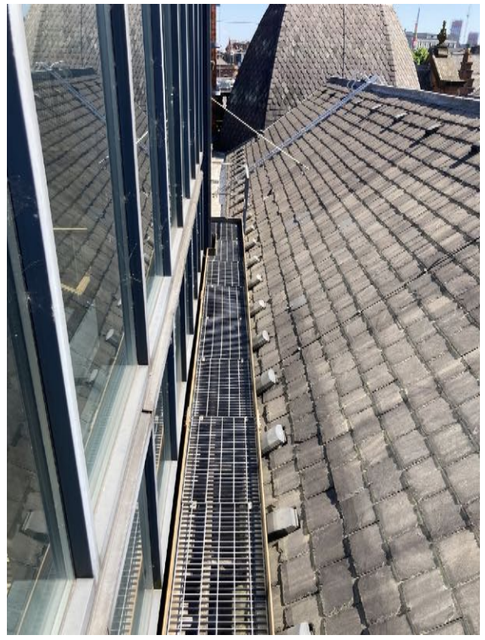
3.15 Roof

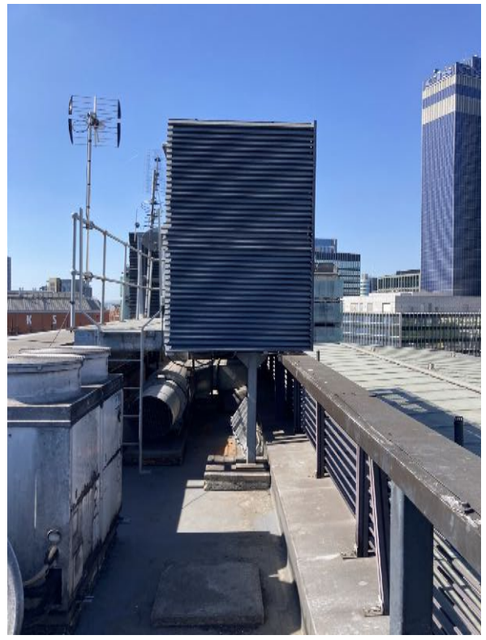
Mechanical plant serving the ESEA demise is located at roof level, accessed via the apartment block common parts and walkway/ access ladder.



Aerial view looking south-east







3.0 Proposed Scope of Work

1.0 External

1.1 Clean all stonework above painted datum & within entrance recess. DOFF (steam) / jet-wash. Thomas Street & Salmon Street elevations.

1.2 Clean stone stall risers. DOFF (steam) / jet-wash.

1.3 Clean zinc header panels. Detergent/ sponge wash.

1.4 Clean painted section of stone pillars to datum. c.2.1m. Detergent/ sponge wash

1.5 Re-paint metal glazing bars & sills (in-situ spray).

1.6 Replace frosted glass pane with PPC aluminium weather louvre. Dark grey to match window frames.

1.7 Repair spalled stonework to base of columns.



Thomas Street elevation



Salmon Street elevation

2.0 Entrance / reception

2.1 Clean stone paving

2.2 Remove reducndant intercom & signage fixings

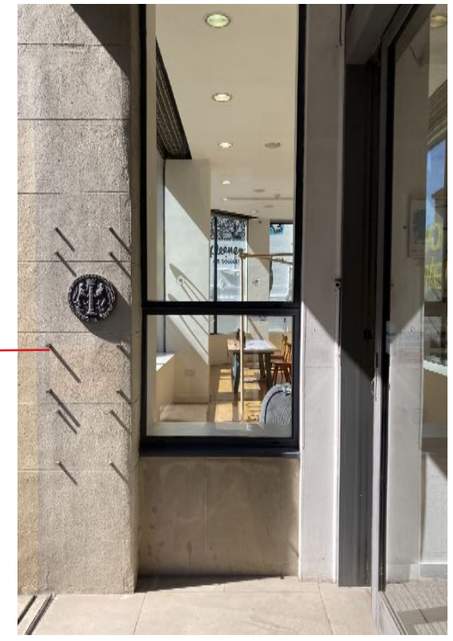
2.3 Repair spalled stonework to column reveal.

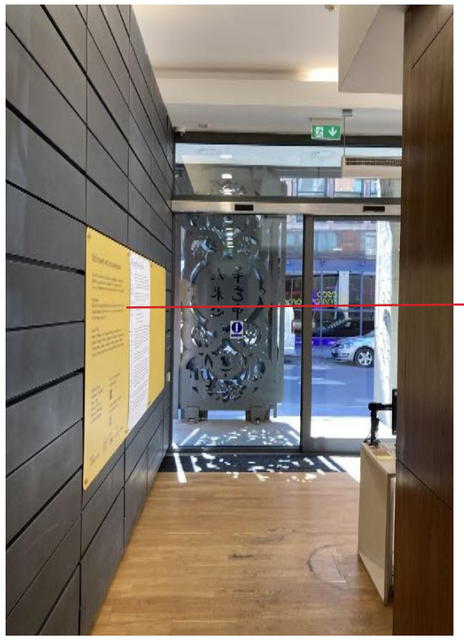
2.4 Install overpanel to central section of security screens (3 x panels) .

2.5 Replace 1 x downlight with colour change LED fitting.

2.6 Infill space behind signage board (old fish tank) with plasterboard dry-lining.









3.0 Front gallery space

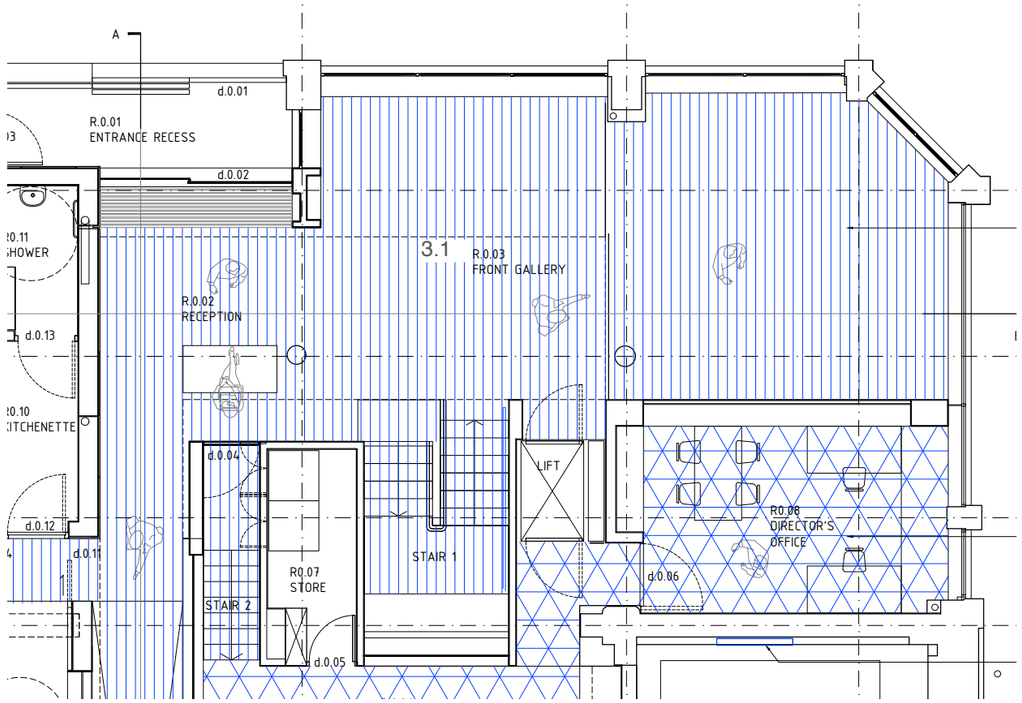
3.1 Replace timber floor (include ramped corridor & main stair). Engineered oak strip flooring.

3.2 Re-configure ceiling lighting/ install new track lighting.

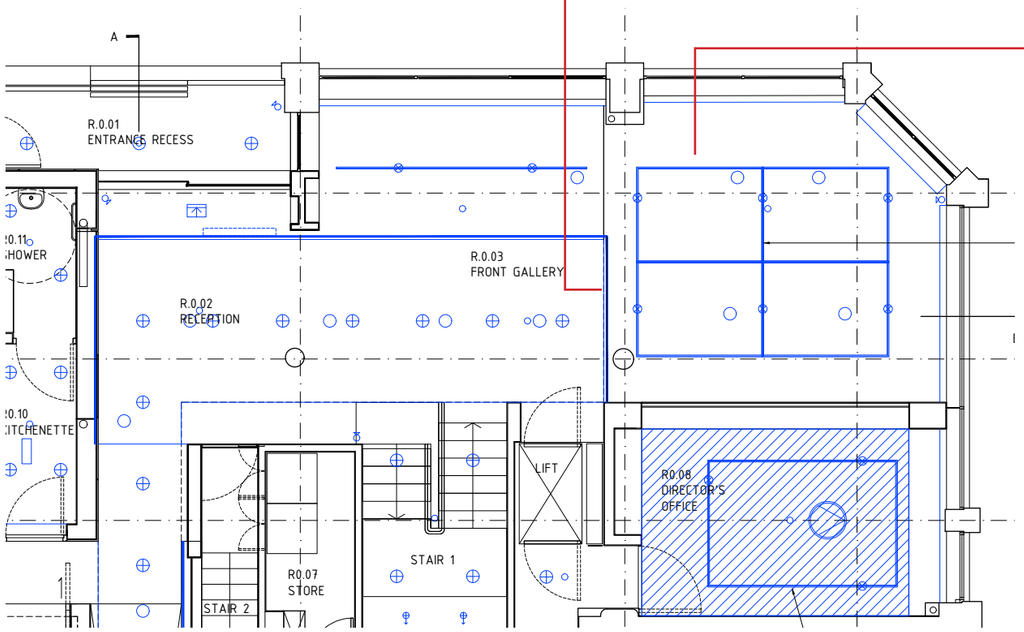
3.3 Install clear solar film to glazing.

3.4 Install fan-coil cooling unit within ceiling void.

3.5 New decorations - walls, doors, ceiling.



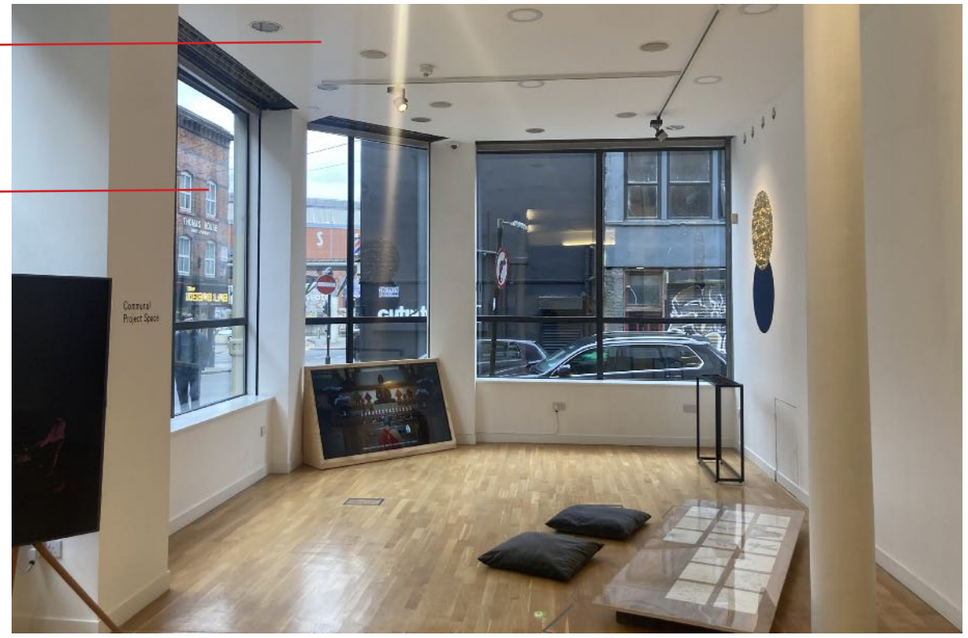
Proposed plan



Proposed reflected ceiling plan

3.2

3.3



4.0 Library / Kitchen

4.1 Replace library carpet.

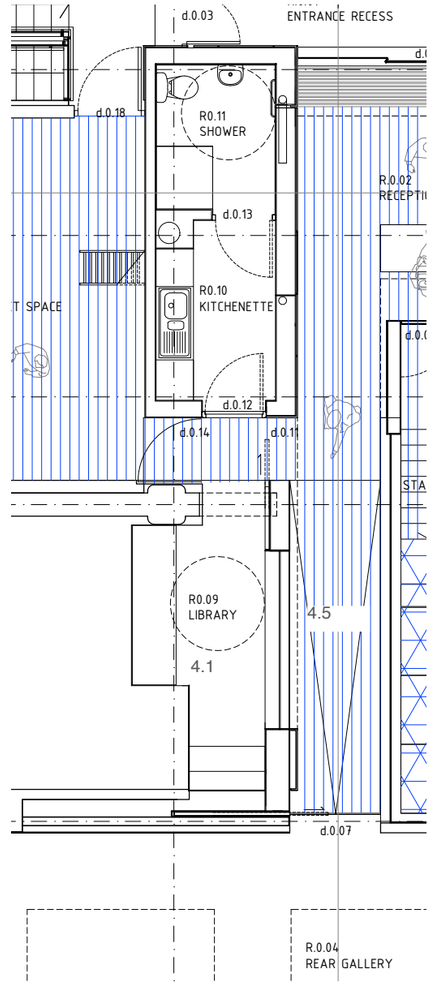
4.2 Replace library ceiling (to facilitate access to riser pipework).

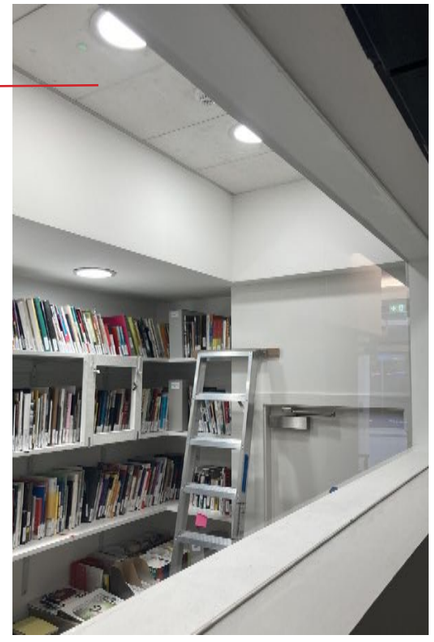
4.3 Replace kitchen units & applicances.

4.4 Replace bathroom fittings & rubber flooring.

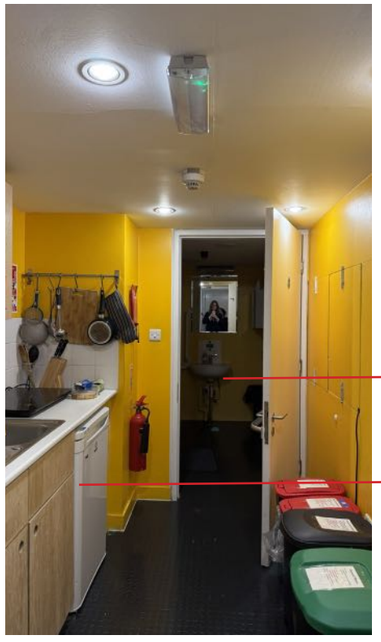
4.5 Replace corridor timber flooring.
Engineered oak strip flooring.

4.6 New decorations - walls, doors, ceiling.





4.2



4.4

4.3

5.0 Rear gallery space

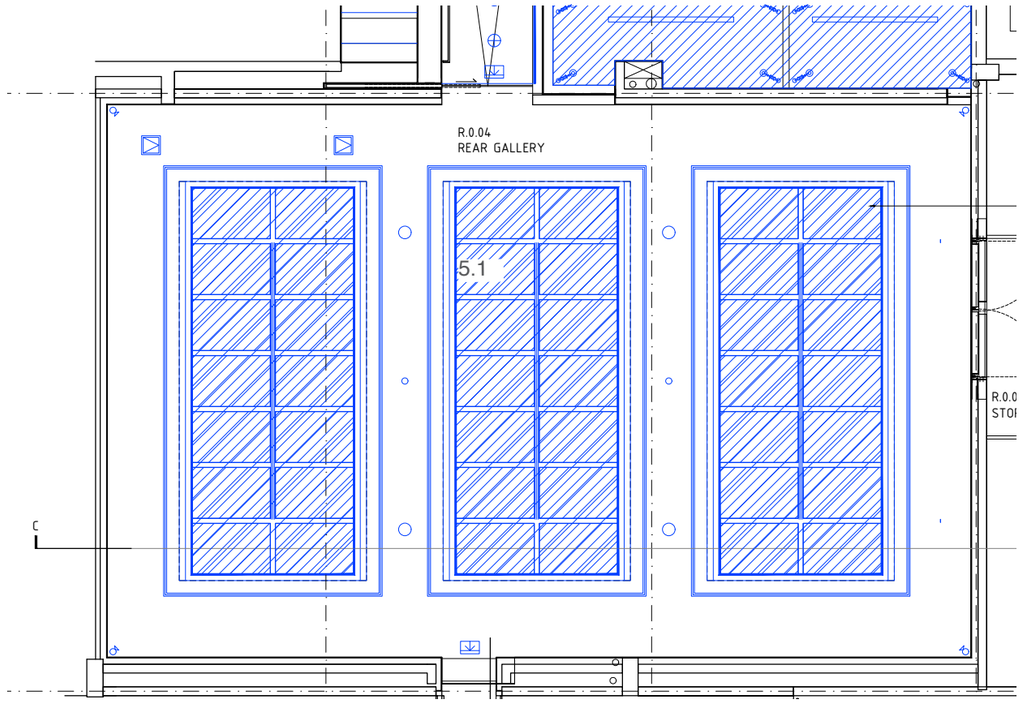
5.1 Replace stretch-fabric to bespoke ceiling light panels.
Replace flourescent lights with LED tube fittings.

5.2 Replace gypsum board wall lining.

5.3 Replace tiled floor.
Mid-grey large format porcelain tiles.
New recessed floor power/ data sockets.

5.4 Replace local fan-coil cooling & ventilation units within ceiling void, amend ductwork.

5.5 New decorations - walls, doors, ceiling.

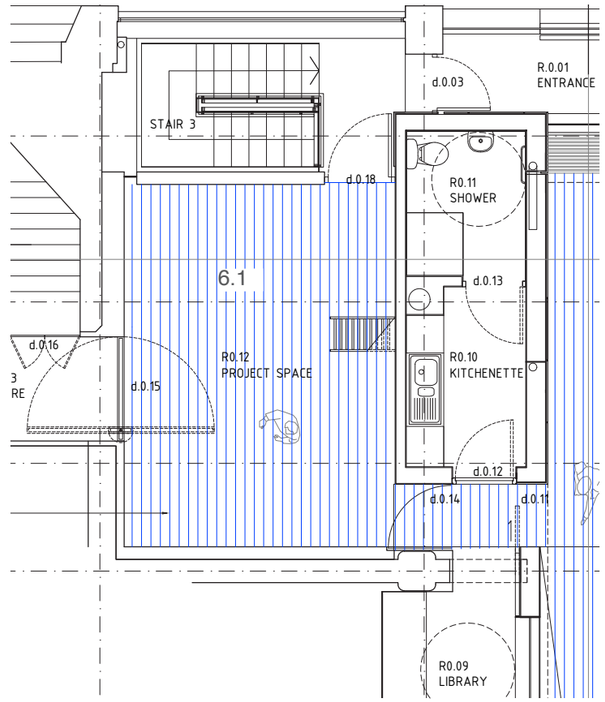




6.0 Project Space

6.1 Replace timber floor (include ramped corridor & main stair).
Engineered oak strip flooring.

6.2 New decorations - walls, doors, ceiling.





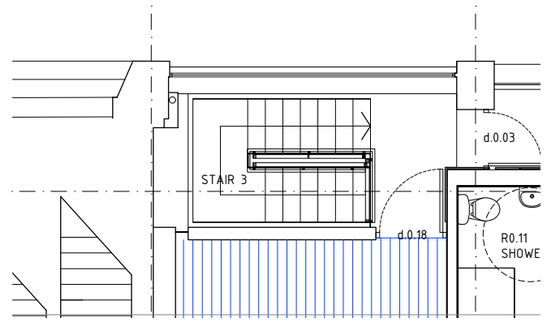
7.0 Escape Stair

7.1 Remove roller blind to internal window.

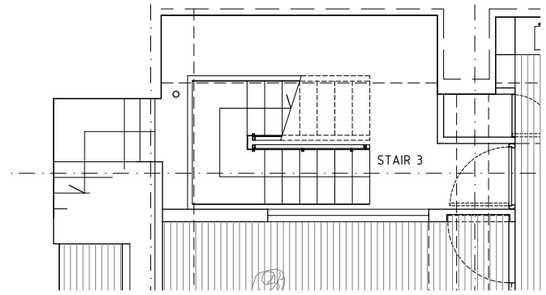
7.2 Remove LED screen & timber supports.

7.3 Remove opaque window film to lower window panels.

7.4 New decorations - walls, doors, ceiling.

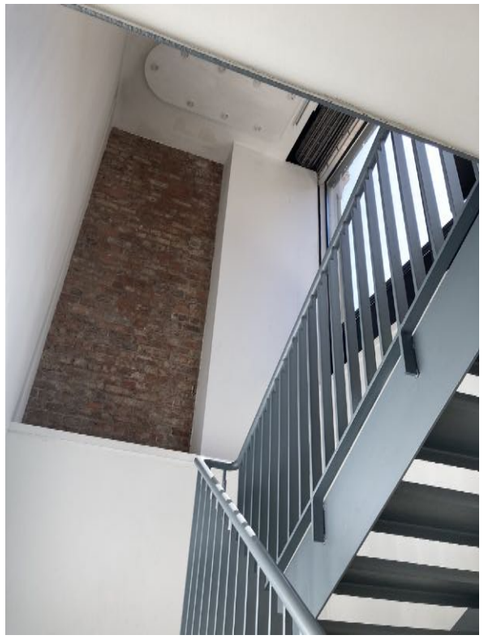


Ground floor plan



Basement plan







8.0 Offices

8.1 Replace flooring to shared office & Director's office.
New carpet.

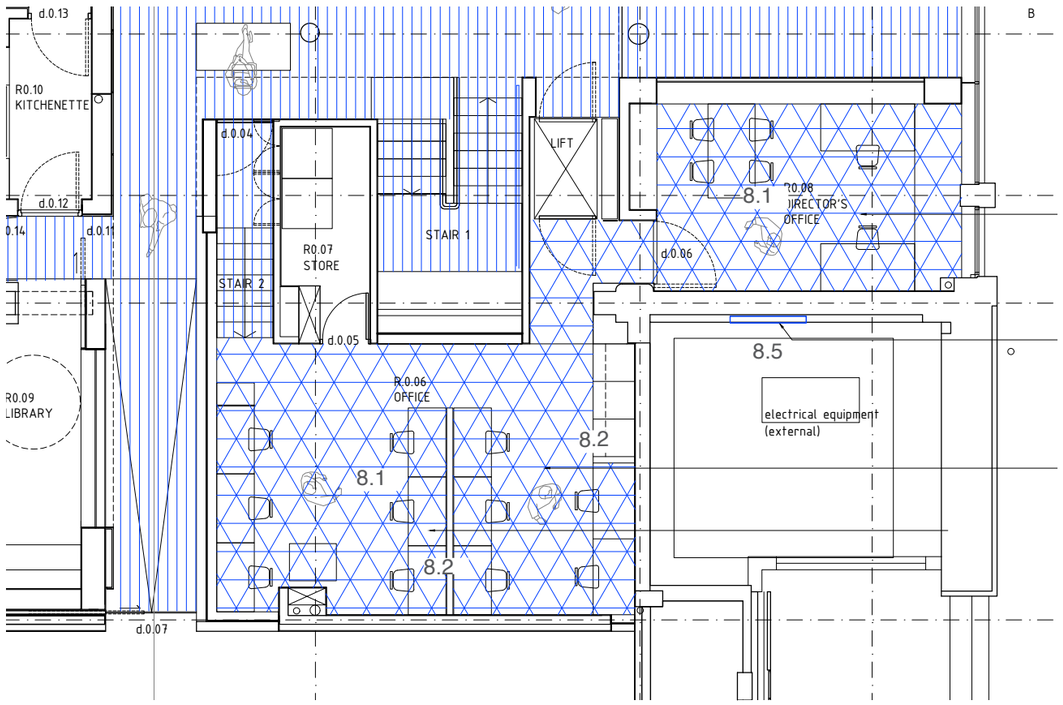
8.2 Re-configure fixed desks & kitchenette worktop.

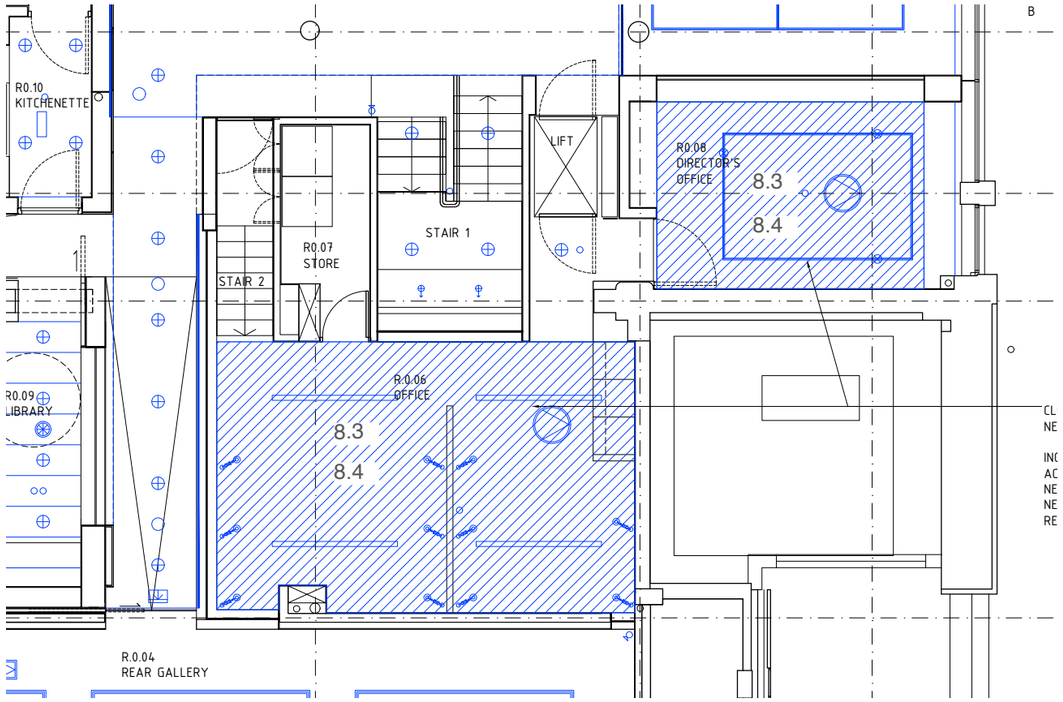
8.3 Reconfigure ceiling lighting.

8.4 Install new fan-coil cooling & ventilation units within ceiling void.

8.5 Replace existing extract louvre with fire rated weather-louvre.

8.5 New decorations - walls, doors, ceiling.





9.0 Basement Studio Space

9.1 Replace timber effect vinyl floor.
Engineered oak strip flooring.

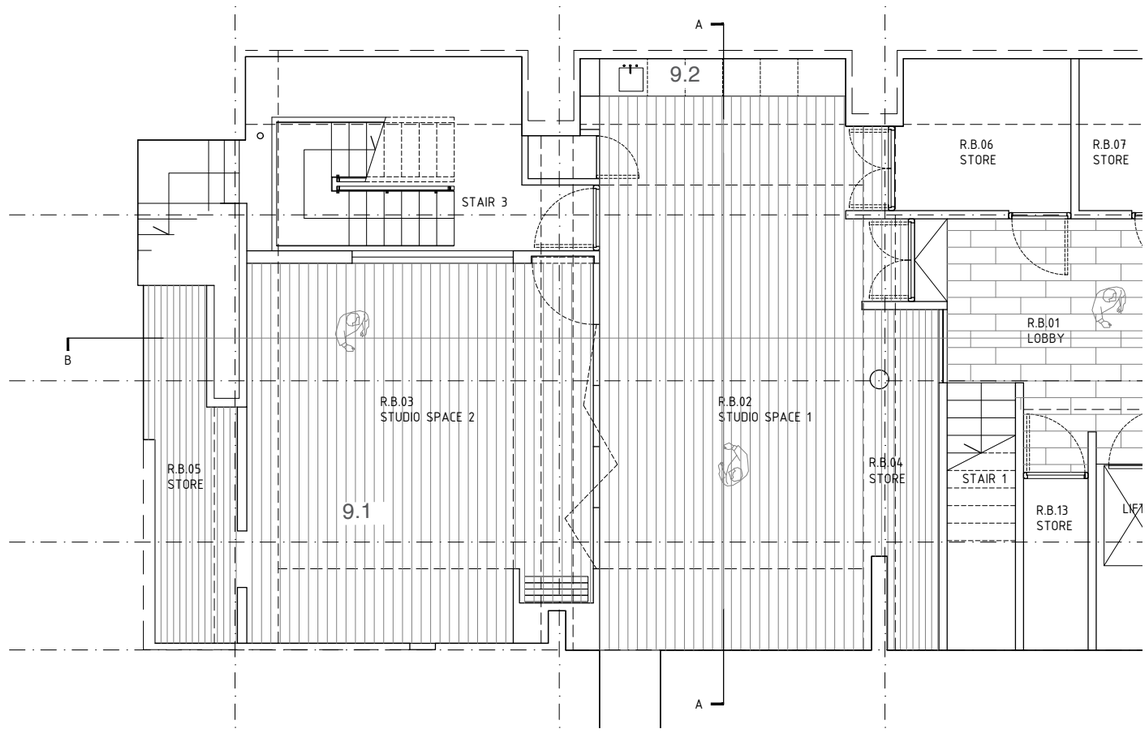
9.2 Replace kitchen units.

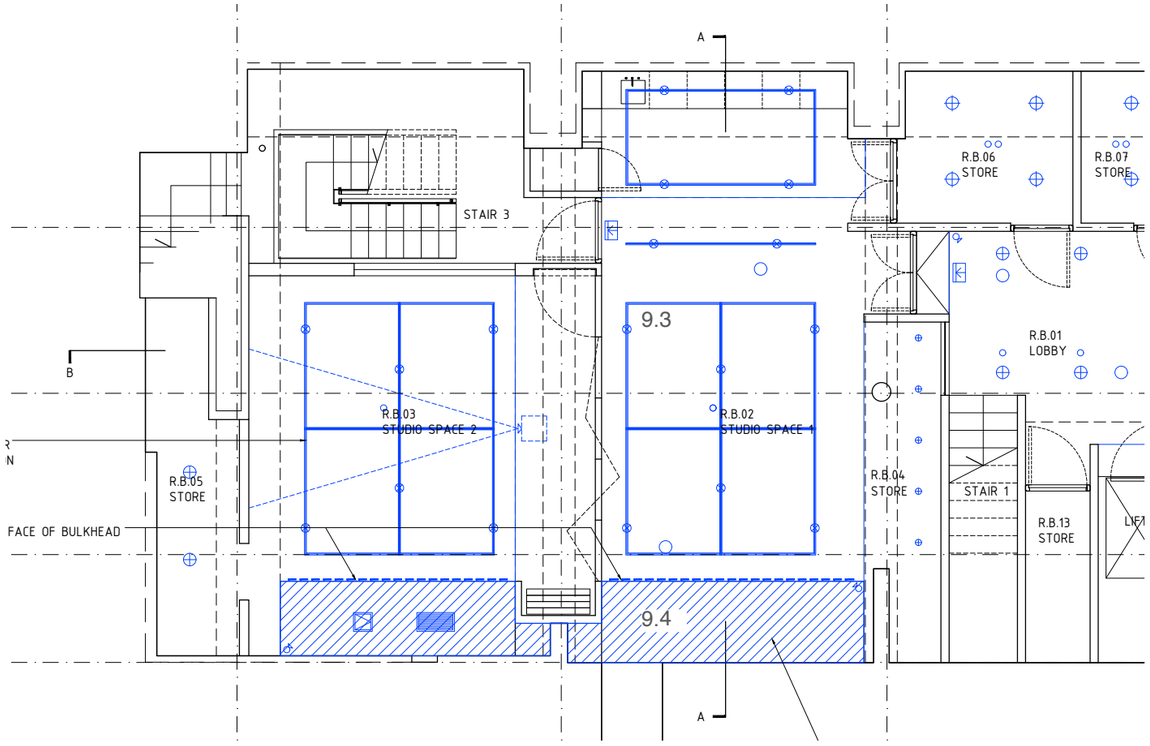
9.3 Reconfigure ceiling lighting, add new track lighting.

9.4 Remove & replace ceiling bulkhead.
Install new fan-coil cooling & ventilation units.

9.4 New decorations - walls, doors, ceiling.







10.0 Basement WC's

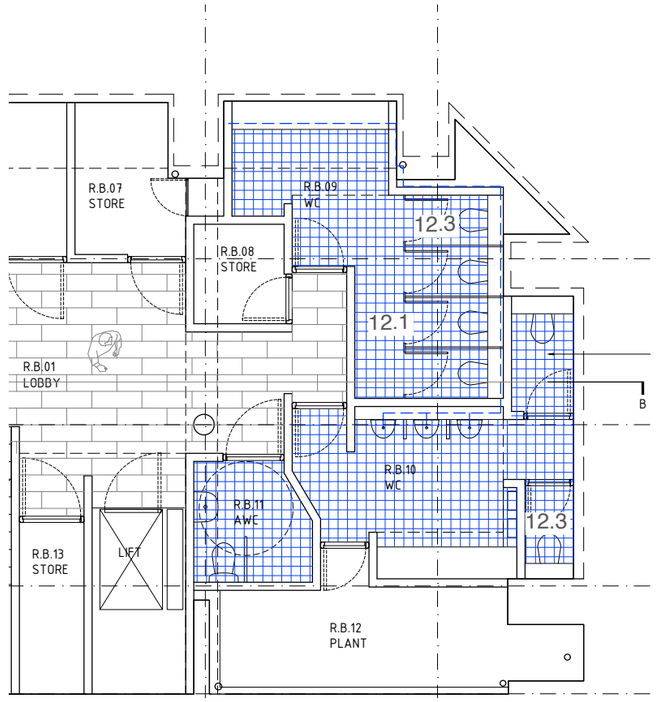
10.1 Replace vinyl flooring (male, female & accessible WCs).

10.2 Replace WC cubicles inc. doors & back panels.
New high pressure laminate IPS system.

10.3 Replace WCs & cisterns.
New white cermamic back-to-wall WC's with low-flow cisterns.

10.4 Replace wallpaper.





12.2

12.4



11.0 Roof Plant

11.1 Replace air-handling unit within existing louvred enclosure.

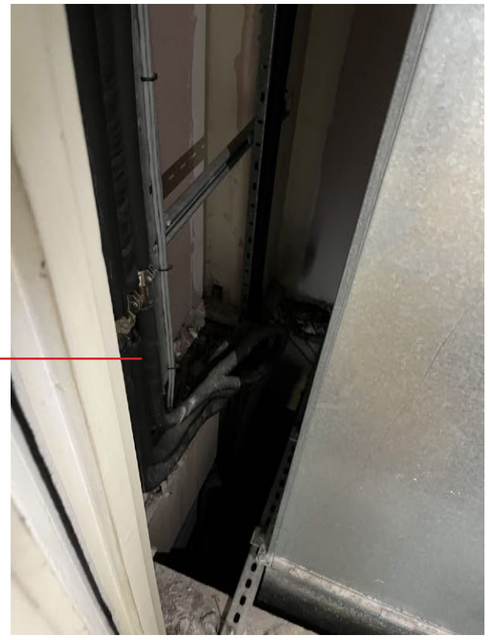
11.2 Replace VRV unit

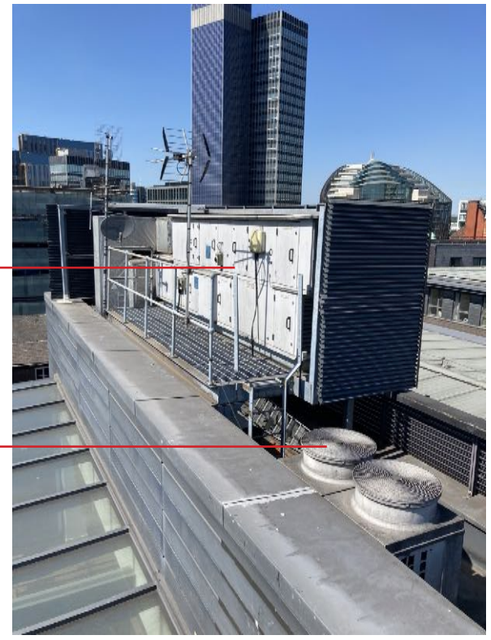
11.3 Replace refrigerant pipework within common parts riser (from roof to ground floor).

Refer to the separate External Plant Noise Impact Assessment, which concludes that the proposed plant is within the relevant noise criteria.









12.1 MEP Summary

The MEP installations are over 20 years old and are reaching ‘end of life’. They have become inefficient - and expensive - to run, and at risk of critical failure. This could significantly impact the day-to-day operations of the gallery, with potential to cut short or prevent programmed exhibitions.

The refurbishment project therefore proposes to replace all critical MEP equipment, whilst leaving in place fully operational infrastructure.

The scope includes:

- replace existing HVAC cooling and heating equipment - including roof-mounted AHU/ VRV units and ceiling-mounted fan coil units - with high efficiency modern equipment
- replace refrigerant pipework from roof mounted plant, through common parts riser, to local distributor
- reduce the design load from the existing high occupancy loadings to a more practical ‘medium’ duty performance, better reflecting the day-to-day occupancy of the spaces
- reduce the over-sized extract rate of the WC spaces, reducing the burden this places on the building’s heating load
- install sophisticated localised controls to ensure maximum efficiency of the systems

The new systems will significantly reduce the operational energy load, thereby reducing the expenditure on power and water.

Refer to the separate External Plant Noise Impact Assessment, which concludes that the proposed roof plant is within the relevant noise criteria.

12.2 Lighting Summary

Most of the current lighting uses fluorescent or halogen lamps, far less efficient than today’s LED alternatives. In many of the areas the lighting is not well-designed: for example, lamps are high powered but short reach meaning they are working harder to illuminate the floor and eye level walls. A lack of control and daylight sensing means the spaces are frequently over-lit.

The scope includes:

- re-configure localised areas to more efficient lighting layouts
- replace fluorescent and halogen lights with high-efficiency LED fittings
- install sophisticated control system allowing detailed calibration to individual lights and spaces
- install daylight sensing to the ground floor to reduce unnecessary illuminance

The work involves limited opening up & replacememt of plasterboard ceiling linings.

12.3 Building Regulations & Fire Strategy

Prior to implementation of the works, it is intended to submit a Full Building Regulations application. This will cover new elements of work, in particular the integration of new MEP services.

The proposals do not alter the current fire strategy and operational fire safety management of the ESEA premises (which is not within the scope of the current design work).

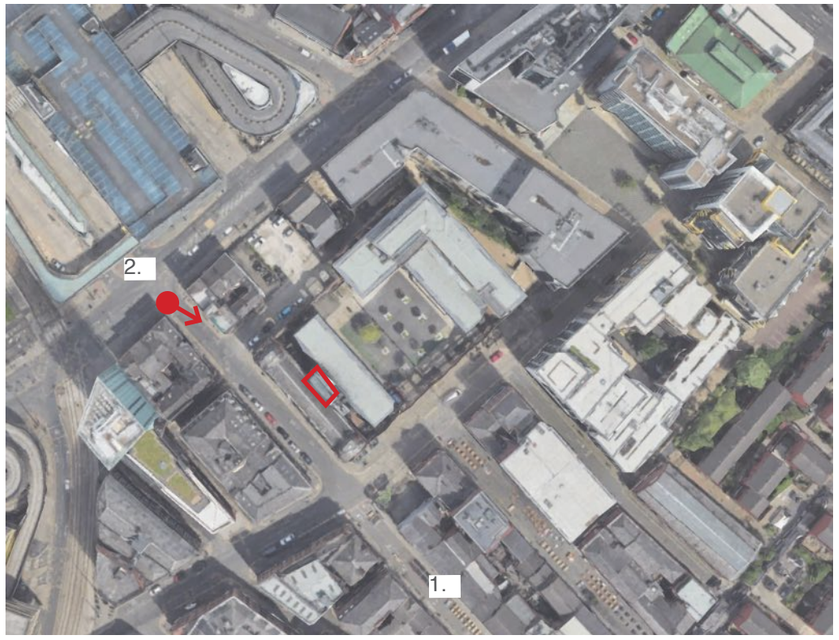
The ESEA premises are part of a larger building which contains multiple residential units. Available information suggests that the top floor of the residential wing is below 18m above ground level and it is therefore assumed that the building as a whole is not a High Risk Building (HRB). Prior to any subsequent development requiring Building Control approval, confirmation of this status should be sought from the approving body.



4.0 Roof Plant - Street View Assessment

The following street views show that the existing roof plant is not visible from most street views.

Where it can be seen, the replacement plant will not affect the current view.





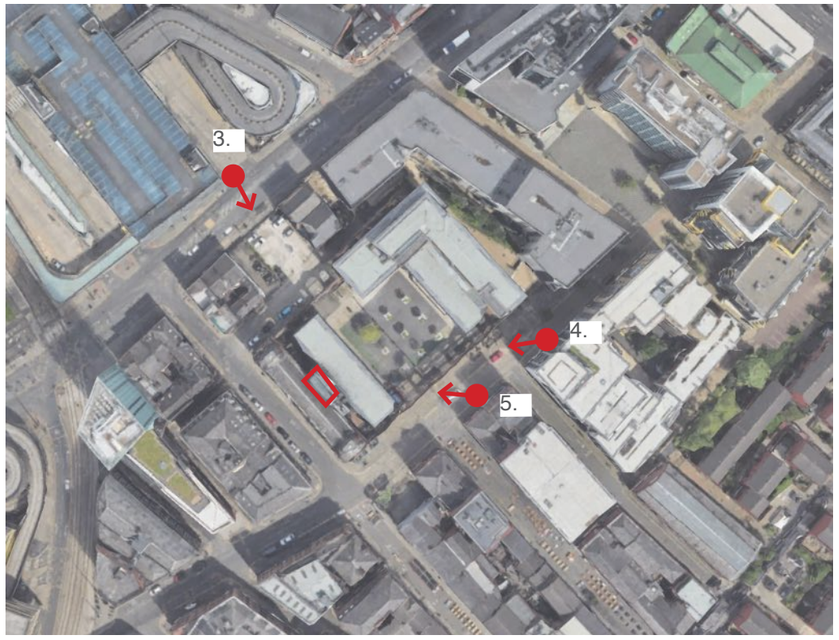
View 1. Thomas Street



View 2. Thomas Street / Shudehill



View 3. Shudehill





View 4. High Street



View 5. High Street

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