Appendix 1

barbican renewal

Stage 3 report

Allies and Morrison
Barbican Library refresh
October 2025

BCRPLB-AAM-XX-XXXX-RP-AR-00001

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2.1 Proposal overview

1 Project Overview

1.1 **The Vision**

1.2 **The Site**

1.3 **The Existing Building**

1.4 **The History of the Barbican**

1.5 **Historic Significance**

1.6 **Library**

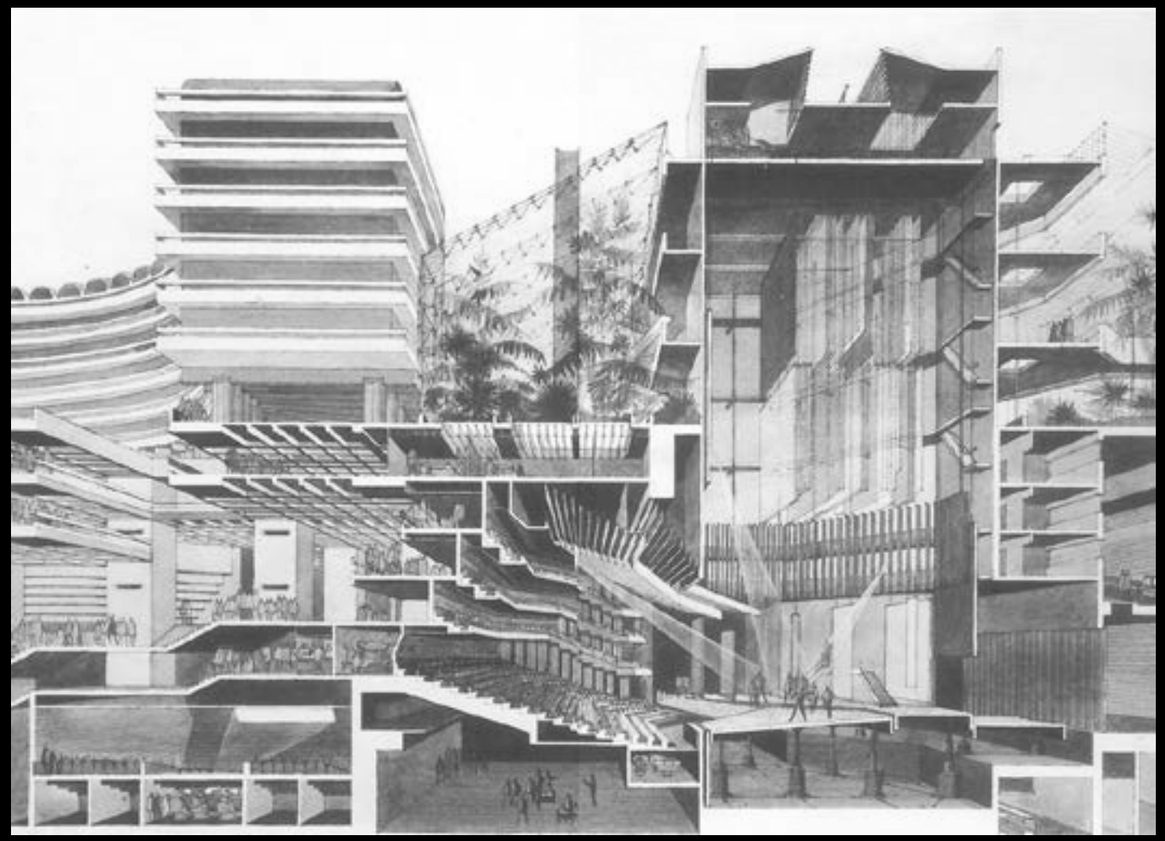
1.1 The Vision

Barbican Renewal is our plan to ensure every part of the Barbican Centre's iconic site is restored, revitalised and relevant for future generations.



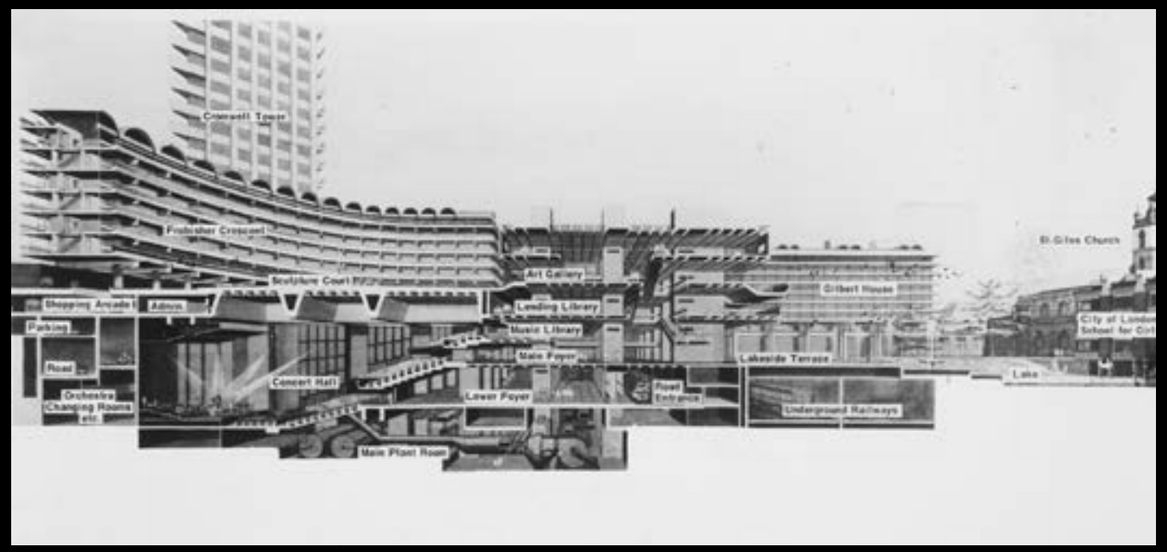
The Barbican Centre is a Grade II listed Brutalist icon, recognised as one of the UK's architectural treasures. Since it opened its doors in 1982, it has become a world-renowned destination, offering a creative programme of unique breadth in spaces of exceptional architectural significance.

At the heart of Barbican Renewal is our commitment to celebrating the architectural vision and heritage of the Barbican Centre, with a programme of sensitive conservation and upgrade to bring the buildings back to their best, while also delivering a place that is truly inclusive, sustainable and resilient.



Over the past four decades the Barbican Centre buildings have deteriorated significantly. Through Barbican Renewal, building systems and ageing materials will be upgraded and restored, while underused areas of the site will be unlocked, releasing their full potential for public, civic and creative use.

After more than 40 years of intensive activity, the Barbican Centre is now in urgent need of upgrade and improvement. Barbican Renewal will celebrate and enhance the Centre's unique architecture and design heritage, ensuring it can be enjoyed by future generations. This includes revitalising existing spaces, improving access for all visitors, and making the building more efficient and sustainable. These ambitions make up Barbican Renewal's four design principles – commitments which are embodied across the whole programme.



- **Repair and conserve:** celebrate the Barbican Centre's iconic architecture, honouring the bold vision at the heart of the Centre.

- **Focus on sustainability:** replace ageing and outdated building systems and minimise embodied carbon in new interventions. This is critical to meet City of London Corporation's net zero targets and secure the Barbican Centre for future generations.

- **Design for all:** deliver an exceptional welcome for everyone through improved access, circulation, wayfinding and facilities.

- **Reactivate space:** revitalise underused spaces, opening them up to the public and delivering creative offers that speak to new audiences.

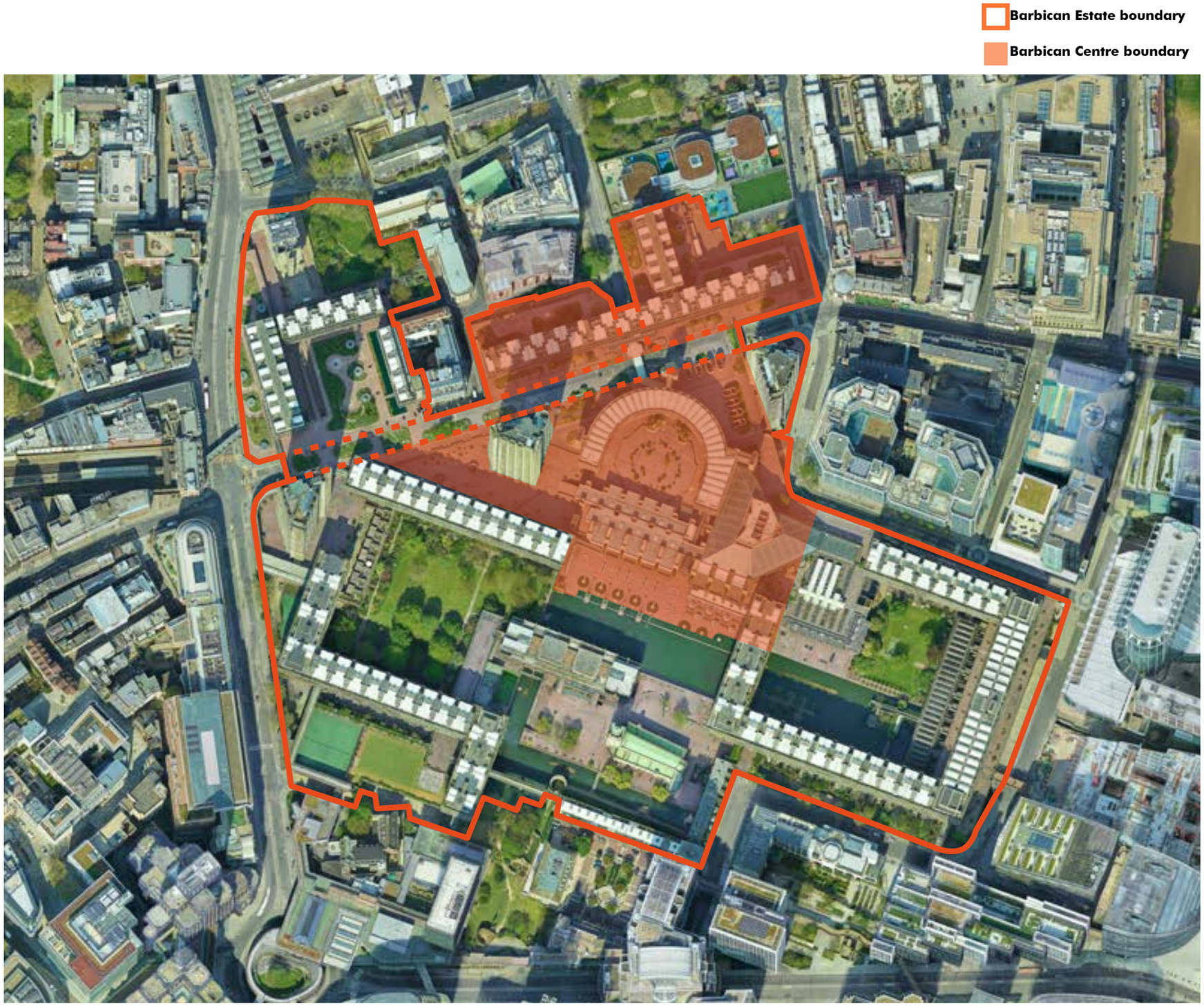
1.2 The Site

Site

The project site comprises the Barbican Centre which sits within the Barbican Estate, as indicated on the plan. They are both listed at Grade II. The landscape of the Barbican Estate is designated at Grade II* on the Register of Parks and Gardens. The City of London Corporation is the owner, founder and principal funder of the Barbican Centre. The Barbican Centre in its entirety consists of:

- Concert Hall and backstage
- Theatre Block
- Cinemas 1, 2 and 3
- The Pit Theatre
- Art Gallery
- Library
- The Curve Gallery
- Conservatory
- Lakeside Terrace
- Foyers
- Catering Block
- Sculpture Court
- Exhibition Halls
- Frobisher Crescent levels 2-6
- Barbican Centre car parks

The area affected by this project is the library.



The Barbican Centre comprises the shaded area within Barbican Estate boundary indicated with a red line

Heritage designations

The entire Barbican Estate, including the Barbican Centre, was listed at Grade II in 2001. It was also entered at Grade II* into the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens for the special interest of its landscape in 2003. There is a separate listing for the ceramic mural of nine panels on Cromwell Highwalk, which was listed at Grade II in 2016, and for the Church of St Giles Cripplegate which was listed at Grade I in 1950. The section of London Wall within the Barbican Estate was also registered as a Scheduled Monument in 1951. The Barbican Centre sits within the Barbican and Golden Lane Conservation Area which was designated in 2020.



1.3 The Existing Building

The Barbican Estate was built on the largest bomb-damaged area in London. The intention was to create a residential estate to attract the middle classes back to central London from the suburbs. The Barbican Centre was designed in the 1960s and built from 1971 to 1982. It was finished years after the first residential block was completed in 1969. As a result, it was largely developed underground to fit around the residential scheme.

The 1968 report is clear on the way that the building was intended to foster collaboration between the different arts bodies with their overlapping activities, with an emphasis on visual and physical connections between floors. In Chamberlin, Powell and Bon's own words:

'The Arts Centre is intended to provide a home for a number of different bodies whose activities overlap one another in various ways, calling for a closely interrelated design…' (CP&B 1968, 9).

'The group of buildings comprising the Lending Library and the Art Gallery are planned on three levels grouped round a central well above the Foyer of the Arts Centre. This well links the levels visually – so that those visiting any of the three levels will be aware of the activities going on above or below; the well also contains stairs which connect the three levels' (CP&B 1968, 26).

'Nor has the Arts Centre been conceived, or designed, as a shelter for a number of unrelated activities – loosely sharing the common classification of the Arts – but carrying on their functions in isolation collaboration between the various occupants of the Arts Centre will encourage reciprocal activities not only between the students and the professional actors and musicians but also between the Theatre, Concert Hall, Library and Art Gallery. The compact grouping of the various elements in the Arts Centre will encourage collaborative enterprise of this sort and will create a unique opportunity for the public to patronise such events' (CP&B1968, 49).



1972 sectional drawing through the Barbican Centre



1958 aerial view with the Barbican boundaries highlighted

The Barbican Centre was designed in the context of the City of London's post-war vision for a network of elevated pedestrian walkways. It was intended that audiences would arrive by car at ground or basement level, with pedestrian access being separate, via the podiums. As a result, entrances to the Centre from Lakeside Terrace or from the driveway beneath are generous, in each case with a sequence of large doors. Entrances from the two high walkways are far less clear and direct, having never been satisfactorily resolved in design terms.

The plans for a city-wide network of high walkways never materialised and the Barbican Centre has been left disconnected from its urban context. The dominance of vehicular infrastructure such as car parks and servicing routes around the entire perimeter of the Barbican Centre denies it of any real public visibility. This leaves it isolated from the city around it, and disconnected from local communities, neighbouring cultural institutions and other public places.

Today, the main entrance to the site is via Silk Street, a retrofitted pedestrian entrance, in a former taxi drop off point/ loading bay. Arrows have been painted on the pavements between Silk Street and Barbican Station, through the Beech Street Tunnel to direct visitors. For most audiences arriving by foot or public transport, this remains the primary route into the building.

The Barbican Centre is within easy walking distance from several London Underground Stations including Barbican and Moorgate. There are local bus routes and cycle docking stations near to the Centre.

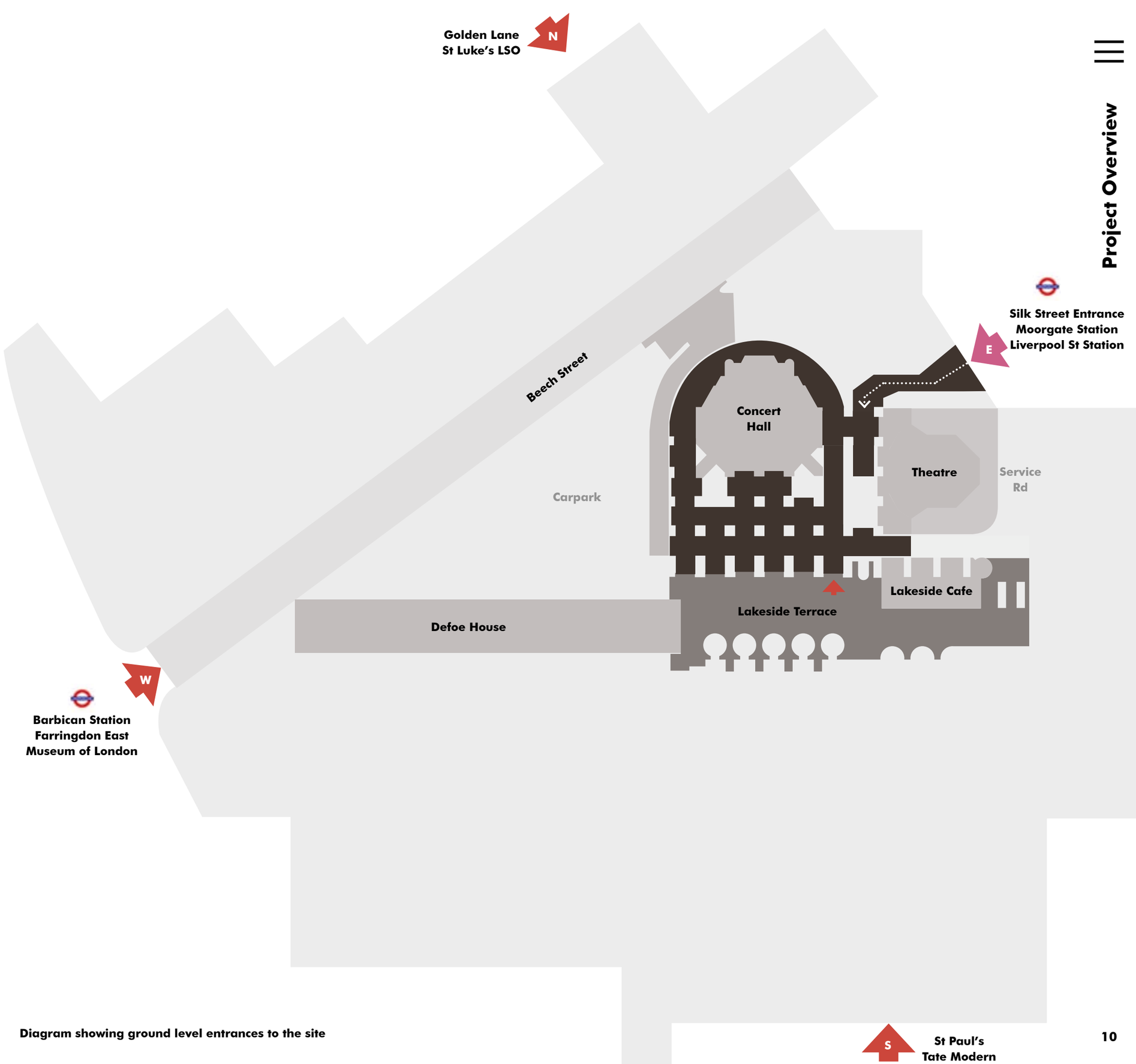


Diagram showing ground level entrances to the site

1.4 Historic Significance

The special interest of the Barbican Centre was recognised by its listing at Grade II in 2001. In 2003 its designed landscape was inscribed on the Register of Parks and Gardens at Grade II*. The Barbican Centre sits within the Barbican and Golden Lane Conservation Area which was designated in 2020.

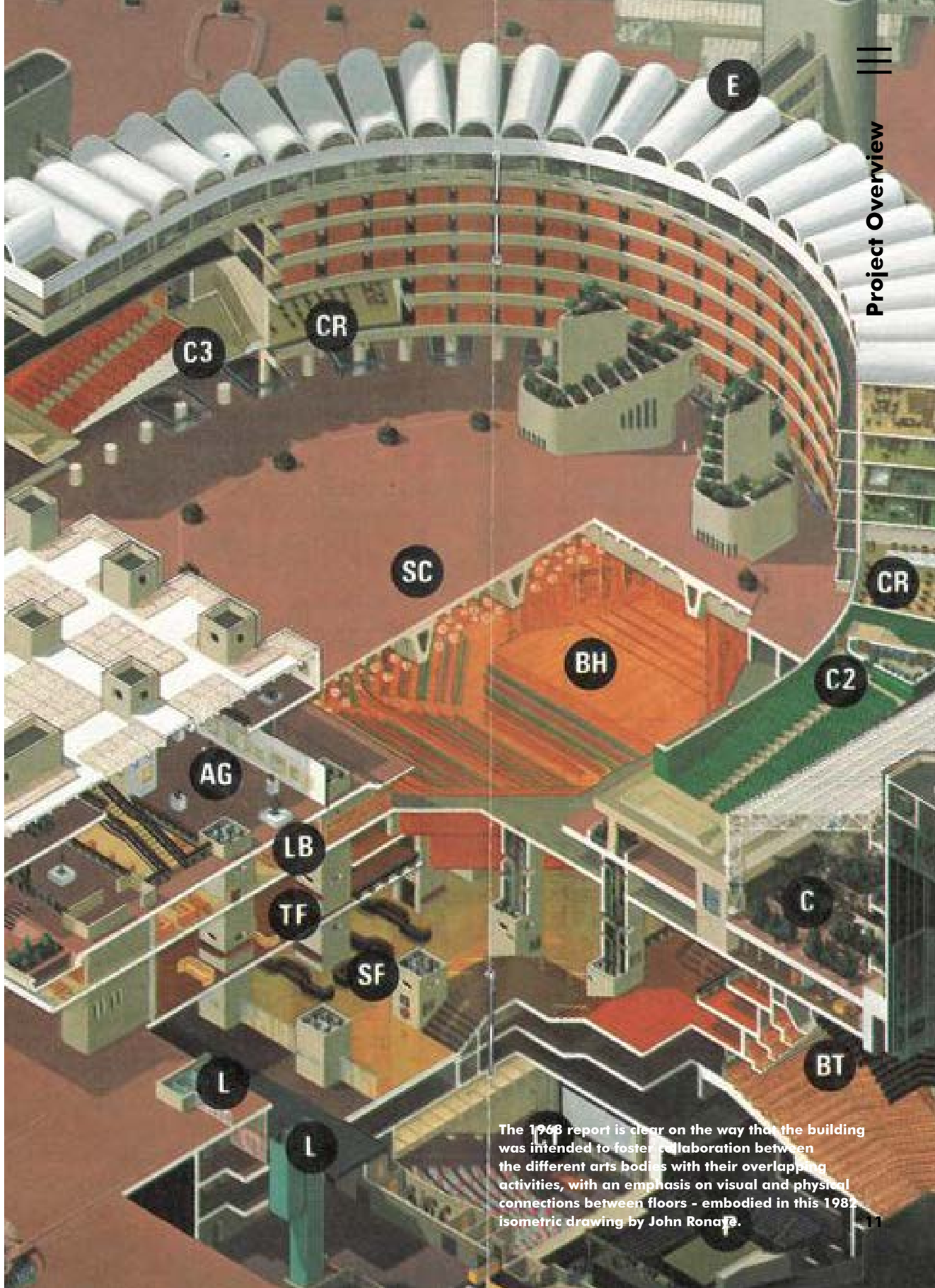
The significance of the Barbican Estate can be described in terms of the following interests:

- It possesses architectural and artistic interest for its elaborate multi-level planning creating a spacious and largely car-free urban environment of lakes, gardens, buildings and walkways, expressed in sculptural forms and richly textured materials.
- It possesses historical interest for the way it combines residential accommodation, recreational and cultural facilities in a single development of unprecedented scale and ambition that is redolent of the vigour and idealism of post-war Britain.

With reference to the Barbican Centre:

- Key to the historic interest is the cultural and communal ambition of the Centre. It is a unique public site that plays a critical civic and creative role in the City. The Foyers, Lakeside Terrace and Conservatory, in particular, offer rare free space for those living in or visiting the capital.
- The uniquely broad and inter-disciplinary artistic programme at the Barbican Centre is internationally recognised as of particular significance. Its history is a narrative of excellence in the arts, and a reflection of creative and cultural life through the decades. The spaces that host these events and their audiences are therefore of great value as examples of the cultural ambitions and commitment of the City of London.

The relative significance of different areas is set out in terms of relative 'heritage sensitivity' in the draft City of London's Listed Building Management Guidelines (Volume IIIA, 2020 draft, p. 14).



The 1968 report is clear on the way that the building was intended to foster collaboration between the different arts bodies with their overlapping activities, with an emphasis on visual and physical connections between floors - embodied in this 1982 isometric drawing by John Ronaye.

Relative significance of different areas

The extent to which different areas of the Barbican Centre contribute to the overarching significance of the estate differs.

The significance of different areas is set out in terms of relative 'heritage sensitivity' in the draft City of London's Listed Building Management Guidelines (Volume IIIA, 2020 draft, p. 14).

This employs a star rating scale which breaks down heritage sensitivity into these four bands:

- Extreme Sensitivity ****
- High Sensitivity ***
- Medium Sensitivity **
- Low Sensitivity *

Using this system, the levels assigned by the Listed Building Management Guidelines to different areas are shown in the first table. There are areas relevant to the Barbican Renewal which are not yet covered by the star rating scale. Heritage consultants Alan Baxter, have assigned this star rating scale to the other areas, as set out in the second table, with explanatory notes.

Alongside this, certain structural elements (later interventions that block or obscure areas of extreme sensitivity) have been categorised as 'detracts'. This covers: the blocked atrium, the shop, the AHMM bridge, the podium crossing to the exhibition halls, and floor to ceiling height bars and cloak rooms in the Foyers. Elements that have not been included in this category include moveable furniture and certain fixed elements that are fully reversible and do not obscure key elements in areas of extreme significance.

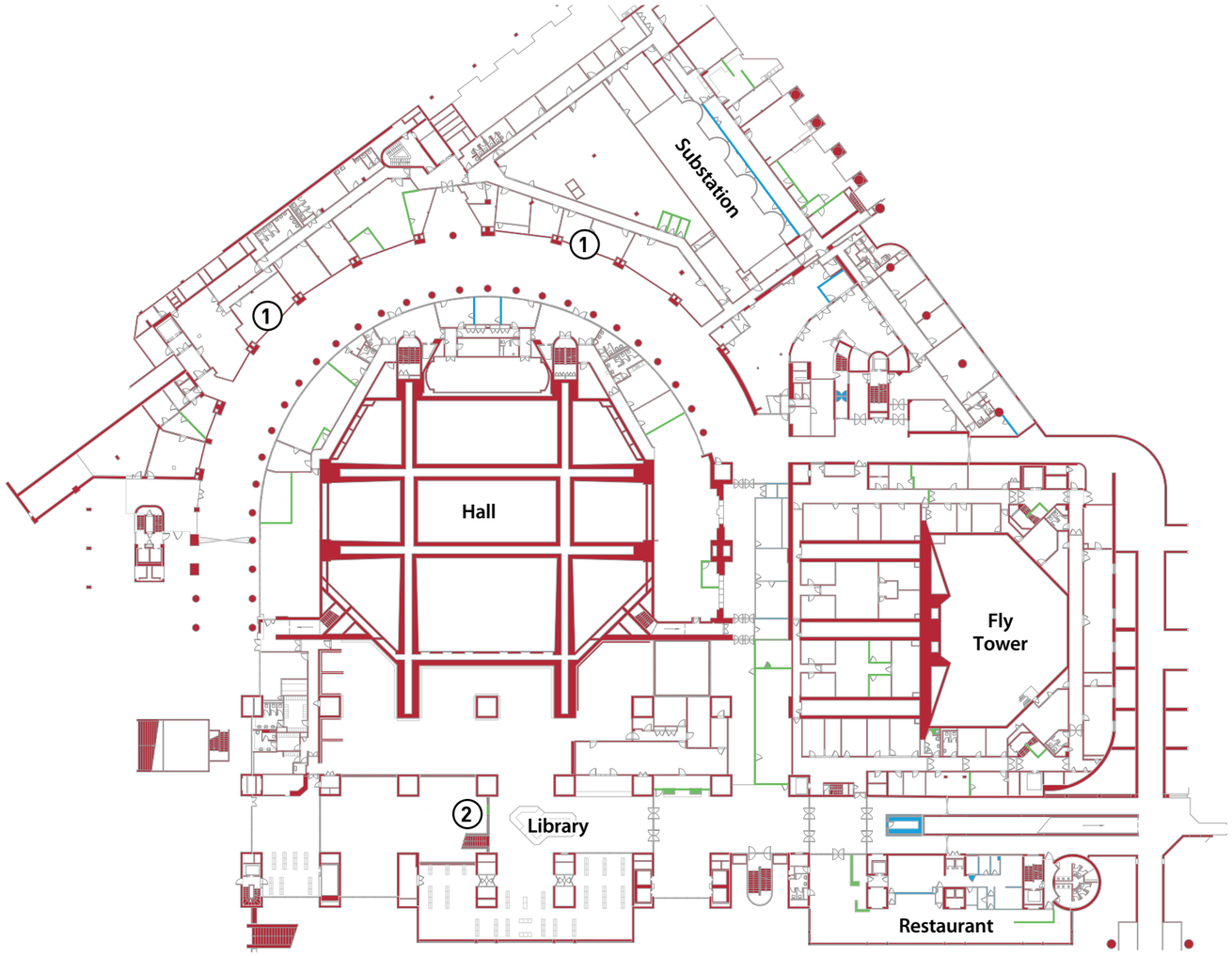
Star Rating Scale
(areas assigned by the Listed Building Management Guidelines)

Exterior and exterior spaces	****
Entrances, Foyers and Common Parts	****
Concert Hall	****
Theatre	****
Art Gallery	***
Conservatory	***
Library	***
Concert Hall and Theatre Backstage Areas	**
Curve	**
Cinemas	**
Pit Theatre	**
Restaurants	**
Exhibition Halls	*
Offices	*
Toilets elsewhere	*

Suggested Star Rating Scale ***(areas not included in the Listed Building Management Guidelines)***

Podium	****	The podium can be assessed as possessing 'extreme sensitivity' as part of the overall design for the exterior architecture of the Barbican
Lakeside Terrace	****	The lakeside terrace can be assessed as possessing 'extreme sensitivity' as part of the overall design for the exterior architecture of the Barbican
Frobisher Interiors at L2	**	The later interiors of Frobisher Crescent can be assessed as possessing 'medium sensitivity' as an altered part of the Barbican design
Theatre bars	**	Theatre bars are assigned the same as the restaurants
Silk Street entrance	*	The Silk Street entrance is marked as 1 star
Beech Street tunnel	*	The interior of the Beech Street Tunnel has only modest historic interest and very low architectural and aesthetic interest. It can be assessed as having ' low sensitivity'
Car parks	*	The car parks possess some historic interest as part of the 1960s design, but their architectural and aesthetic interest is low. On balance they can therefore be assessed as having 'low sensitivity
Route from Silk Street to Lakeside	*	The existing stair link from the vehicle ramp to the lakeside is essentially a low-key service stair and can be assessed as possessing 'low sensitivity'
Concert Hall and Theatre backstage toilets	*	Toilets that are not the ones identified as 2 star in the LBMG are all given 1 star, even if they are within an area assigned as more than one star
Plant rooms and other back-of-house areas	*	Plant rooms and other back-of-house areas that are not offices are assigned as 1 star
Voids and ducts	*	Voids and ducts, even in areas of extreme sensitivity are 1 star
Kitchens	*	Kitchens are assigned 1 star

1.4.1 Age of Fabric

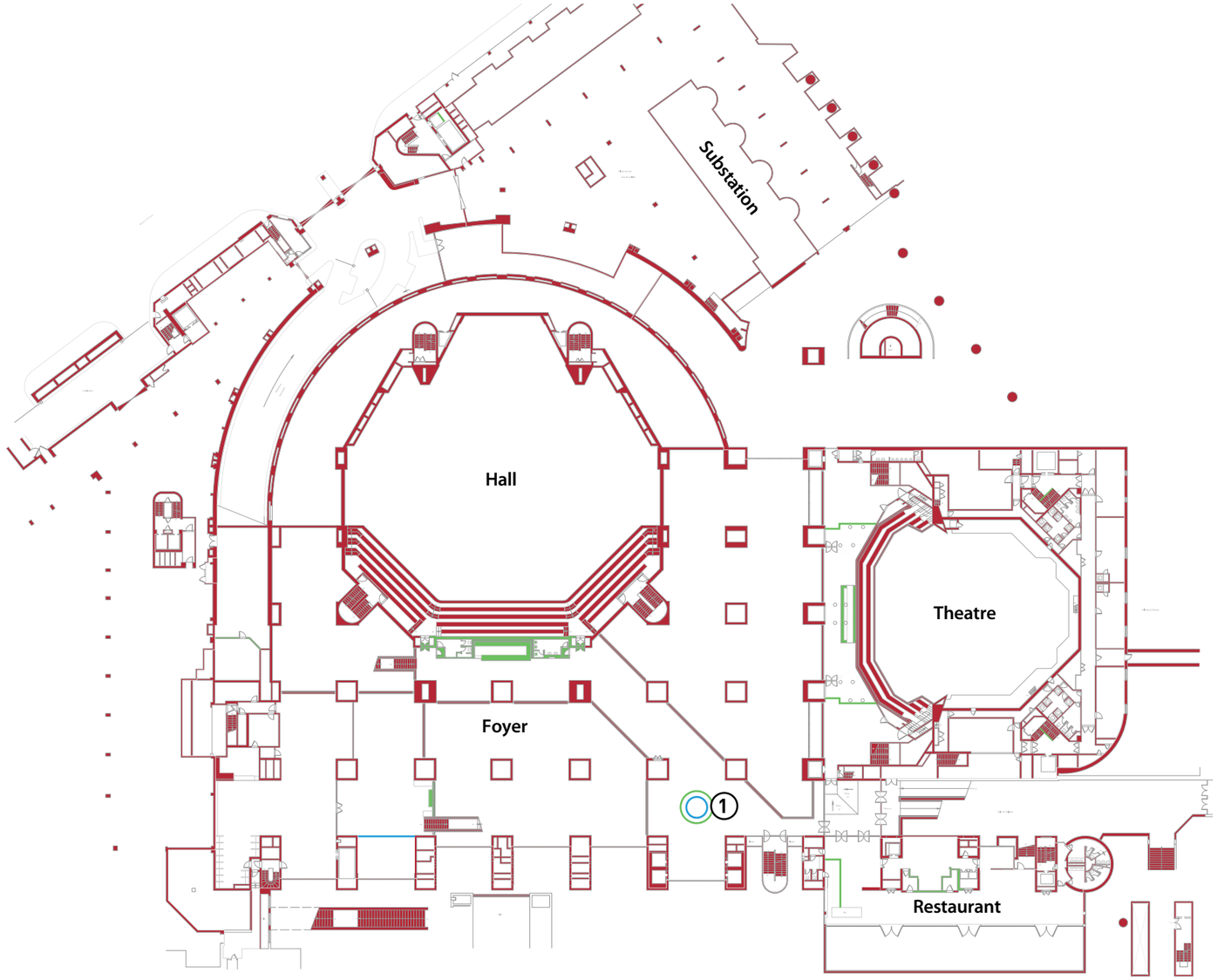


1982
Chamberlin, Powell & Bon

1982–2005
Pentagram and others

2005–present
AHMM and others

Age of fabric - Level 02



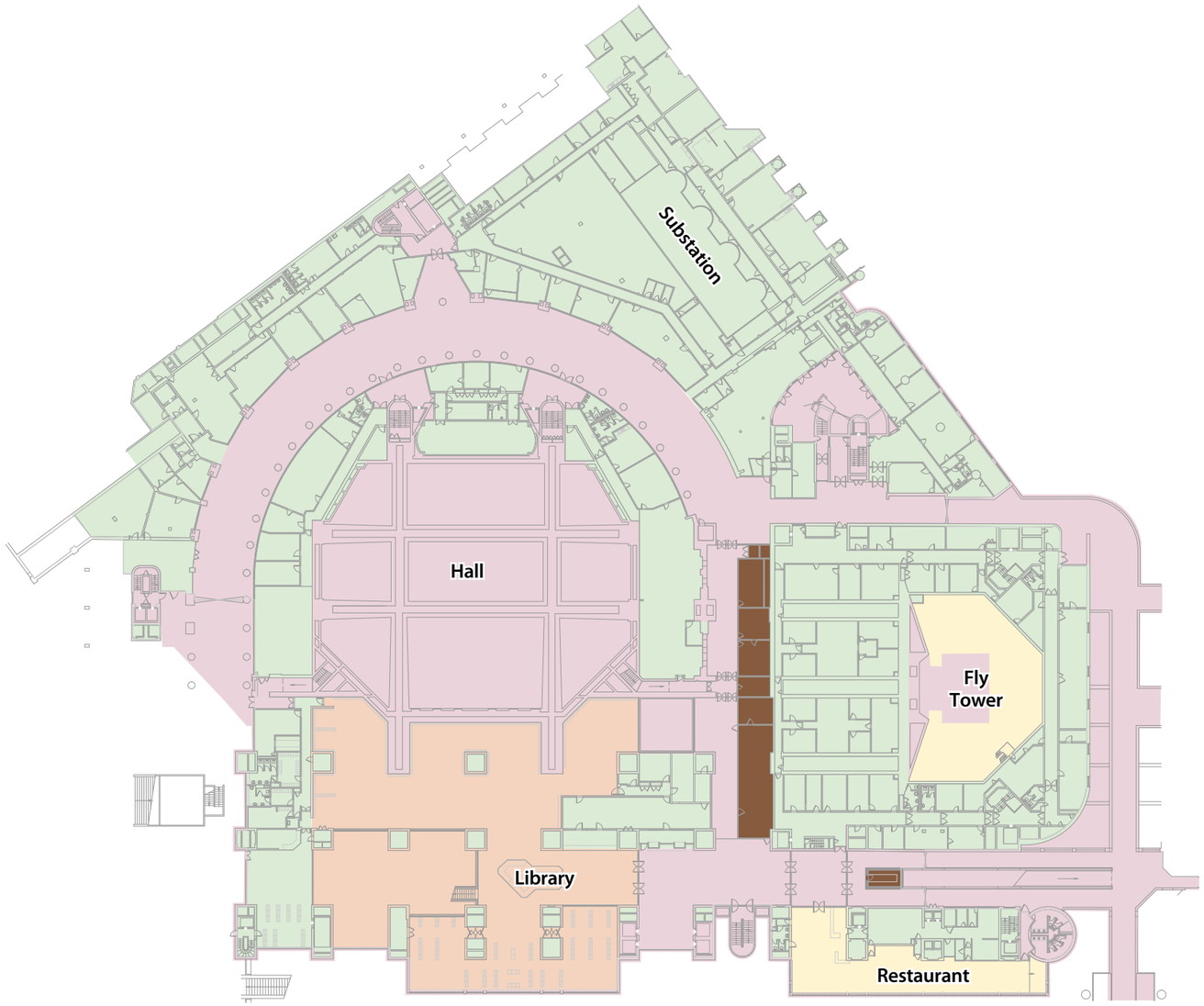
1982
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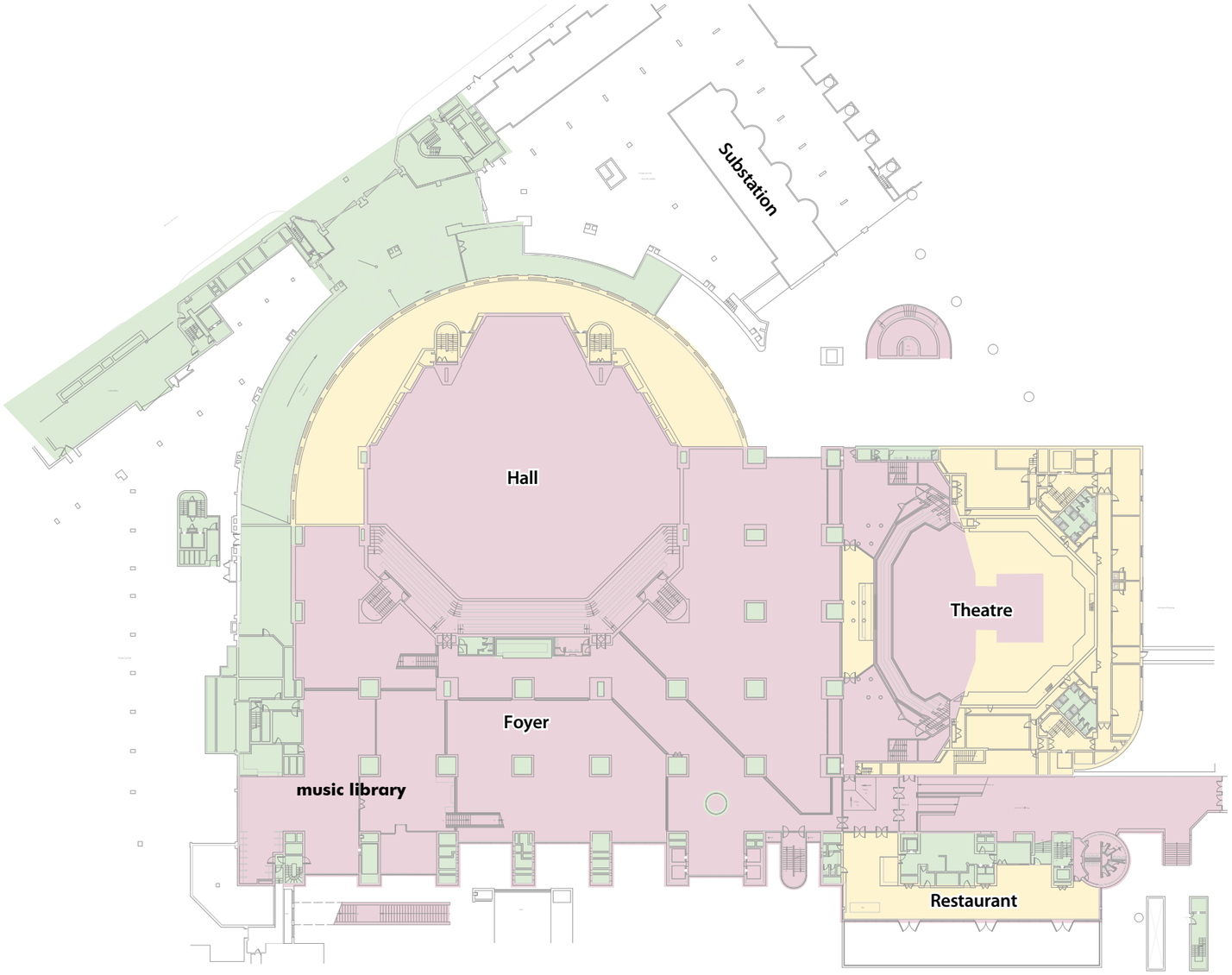
Age of fabric - Level 01

1.4.2 Significance



- Extreme sensitivity
- High sensitivity
- Medium sensitivity
- Low sensitivity
- Detracts

Significance of fabric - Level 02



Extreme sensitivity

High sensitivity

Medium sensitivity

Low sensitivity

Detracts

1.5 Library

1.5.1 History and Significance

From the early discussions on the redevelopment of the Barbican area, a public lending library was considered, with the 1959 Barbican Redevelopment Report recommending 'the inclusion of a modest lending library within the Barbican precinct' (City of London, 1959, p14). This was to be housed in a 'building 25ft. high with a large gallery on an intermediate level' (City of London, 1959, p14) and 'sited at the west end of the sunken forecourt in front of the theatre and concert hall' (City if London, 1959, p37).

The proposal to build a library was a big step for the City. As Elain Harwood states: They 'had never built a public library, [with] its Library Committee [before the war] providing a service through the Bishopsgate and Cripplegate Institutes. It agreed to support only an art gallery in Barbican (confirmed 1962) but allowed CPB to leave a site where a library might be inserted later' (Harwood, 2014, p59).

In 1964 the Library concept made progress. It was approved in principle, grew significantly in size and was brought into the Arts Centre brief (Kenyon, 2014, p40). Over the following four years – as the Barbican's design was refined – it moved to its current form and location. This is reflected in the 1968 plan that shows the locations of the lending, children's and music libraries, as well as the administrative offices and enquiry desks. The design changed a little from this point onwards. The Library was located at the centre of the complex, being open to both the foyers below and the Art Gallery above, being connected by various flying staircases. This fit within the Arts Centre vision, which the architects expressed in their 1968 plan:

"The group of buildings comprising the Lending Library and the Art Gallery are planned on three levels grouped round a central well above the main foyer of the Arts Centre. This well links the levels visually – so that those visiting any of the three levels will be aware of the activities going on above or below; the well also contains stairs which connect the three levels' (CP&B 1968, 26)."



1982 - the library shortly after opening

History narrative from Alan Baxter Associates - Barbican Library Heritage Statement, October 2025

1982-1992 – Barbican Library as built
Like other Barbican interiors, the Library's internal fixtures and fittings were all bespoke designed by the architects, Chamberlin, Powell and Bon (CP&B). This included the desks, shelving, chairs, rattan coloured sisal carpet, Ken Briggs signage and coffer lighting (acrylic disks around a cylindrical metal holder). The desks had either and elm or muninga veneer, while the shelves were manufactured by Architectural Woodcraftsmen from Barnstaple, Devon (Architectural Review, 1981, p252). The chairs were designed by the Danish furniture company Magnus Olesan, using Hallingdal fabric (Schedule of Loose Furniture and Fabrics, 1980). In the Children's Library, the furniture was designed slightly differently, with the shelves, tables and chairs all having a light-yellow veneer.

The Barbican housed the City's only children's library which provided a programme of regular classes and visits from schools and playgroups. Due to the Gallery and Guildhall School of Music connections, there was also a strong emphasis on the art and music collections, with the arts library on the Lakeside elevations and the music library on Level 1.

By the beginning of 1985, the library had almost 44,000 members, although this slowly declined during the late 1980s. The library also boasted several exhibitions, such as one on the Royal Shakespeare Company and another on Twentieth Century Classics.

1992-2025 – Barbican in recent years
No clear modifications were made to the Barbican Library during the Pentagram refurbishment of the early 1990s. However, large changes did take place during the AHMM refurbishment of the early 2000s. Primary amongst these were the removal of two staircases: one from the Music Library to the L0 foyer and another from the Level 2 Library reception area to the Art Gallery. The second of these also came with a complete separation of the Gallery from the Library, with the void being filled in. This effectively ended CP&B's original intention of a visual connection between the different Arts Centre offers. Smaller changes that took place were the replacement of some of the original furniture, such as the main desks at the entrance area, the insertion of a lift between both levels of the Library and the replacement of some of the original balustrade with more modern materials.

After a small decline in the late 1980s, membership rose again and was around 42,000 by the end of the 1990s. They were also receiving around 1500 visitors per day (Barbican Centre, 1997, p12).

The Barbican Library today
Today, the Barbican Library retains more of its original fixtures and fittings than any other part of the centre, with it being the only place where the original interior lights survive and one of the few places where original CP&B seating can be seen.

It still retains large music and art collections, a children's library and is one of the City's primary lending libraries. However, with the increasing dominance of digital technology, the way the spaces are being used has changed. An example of this is the reduced importance of the listening pods and the magazine stands.


The original staircases linking library and art gallery


1982 - the library shortly after opening

History and significance narratives from Alan Baxter Associates - Barbican Library Heritage Statement, October 2025

Summary statement of significance
The significance of the Barbican Library can be described in terms of the following interests:

From the Level 0 foyer, the Barbican Library is the most visible of the Art Centre's institutions. This makes its contribution to the foyer particularly important, adding to its volume, as well as contributing to the architects' intention of the Barbican as a multi-purpose arts venue, with the main foyer as the central street.

The Library is of communal interest, having been host to several generations of local school children using the Children's Library, as well as the local residents using the main lending library. It has also served people from further afield who either visited for the Library's many exhibitions or for its extensive arts and music collections.

The Library's architectural interest rests in its many bespoke Barbican features. This includes the guarding/handrail, the spherical soffit lighting and the doors (with the stadium-shaped windows). It also has a good collection of bespoke furniture, including seats, bookshelves and desks. Unlike other parts of the Arts Centre, the Library still has much of its original fixtures and fittings, being the only part of the Centre that retains the original interior lighting.



1982 - the library shortly after opening



1982 - the library shortly after opening

1982 - the library shortly after opening

From Alan Baxter Associates - Barbican Library Heritage Statement, October 2025

1.5.2 Current Issues and Challenges

Public service provision

While many of the original fixtures and fittings in the Barbican library still continue to serve the public well some have dated and are no longer utilised- such as the map table, built in PCs in the foyer (from the AHMM refurbishment) and periodical shelving.

As technology has increased the level of self service provision available to the library the large desks that have been added are now oversized and using space which could be utilised for the library's expanded book holdings. There is also increased power demand in the library as personal devices requiring power (laptops and mobile phones) are now much more common than in the 1980s.

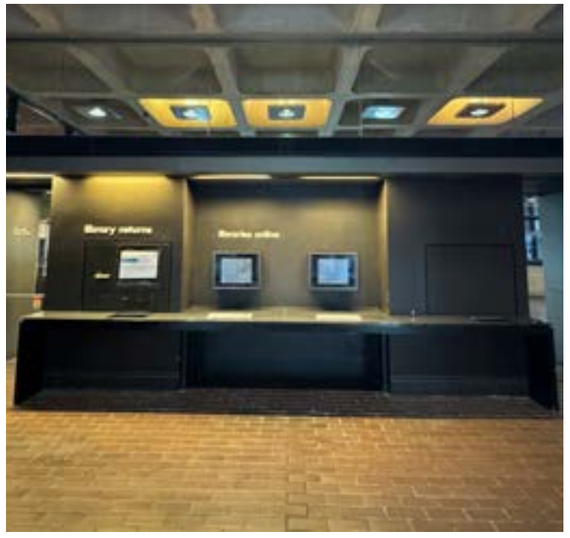
The original children's library seating is beginning to cause health and safety issues with the 'climbability' of the seating creating an appeal to children - some of whom have hurt themselves jumping off it.

Fabric condition

While broadly in good condition the (non-original) carpet is now worn out and in need of replacing.

Clutter

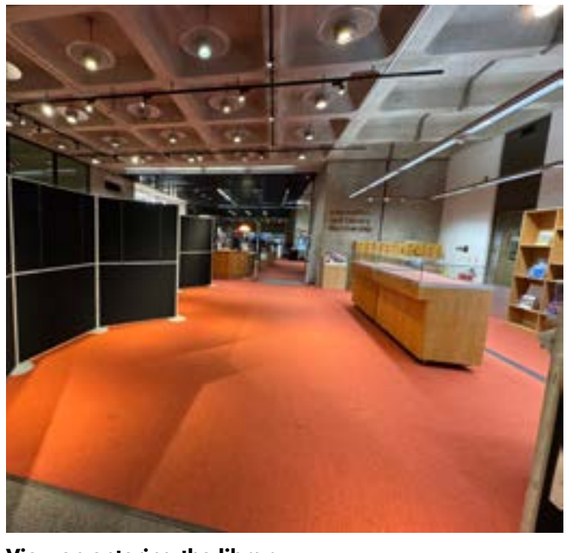
The Library's services and holdings have been increasing over time. Its public exhibitions are very popular and it now offers public information services, battery recycling facilities, additional book stacks added ad hoc over time etc. This had led the original clarity of the library design to become lost



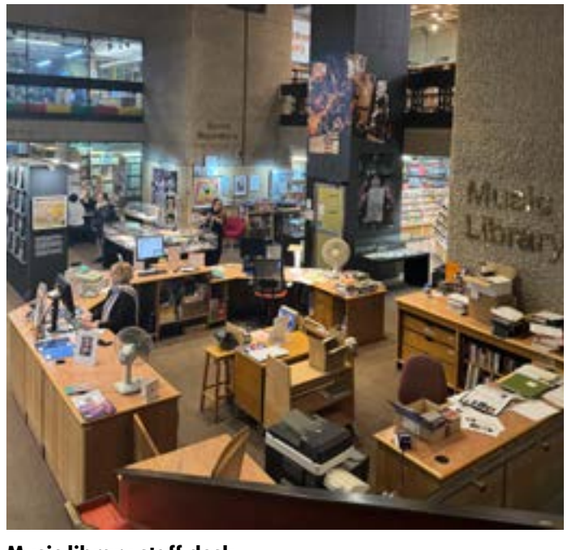
L02 foyer computers (non functioning)



Children's library



View on entering the library



Music library staff desk

2 The Proposal

2.1 Proposal overview

Vision

A revitalised Library will become a welcoming public space that celebrates and honours the bold vision conceived by the Barbican Centre's original architects, Chamberlin, Powell and Bon.

More recent interventions causing clutter, and original fittings that no longer have a purpose will be removed. The signage will be adjusted to ensure that it remains useful and does not point to departments or services that no longer exist. New bookstacks will house the Library's larger inventory and offer flexibility in a layout designed to sit within the original design intent. Additional power provision and acoustically buffered meeting tables will improve the quality of the study spaces offered to the public.

New carpet will be laid throughout the library with the same colour scheme as the forthcoming Foyers Renewal project to visually link the foyers and library. Furniture, desks and exhibition fittings that block views between the library and foyers will be removed to re-link the library and foyers as much as is practicable in line with original design intent.

New joinery and exhibition fittings will create a flexible environment that allows the library's current and future facilities and exhibitions to evolve in a way that feels integral rather than 'added on' to the Library's design.

The vision of the library refresh is to revive the original design of the library, in a way that serves the demands of a popular twenty first century library.

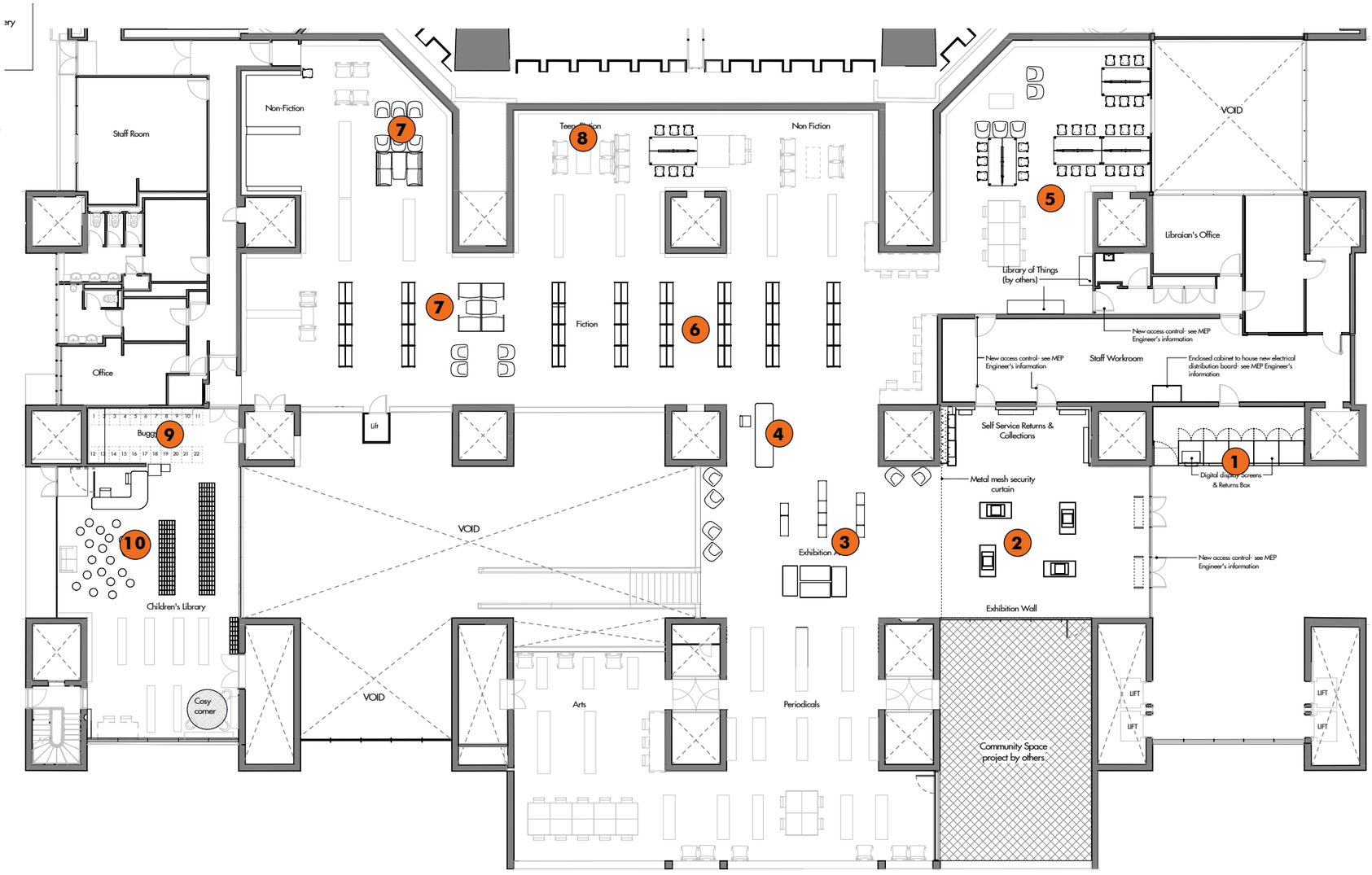


2.1.1 Level 2

Level 2 forms the arrival point for the Library. It houses the Arts, General and Children's Libraries. It has a large study area and a revolving exhibition of local artist's work as well as a new community room.

Key moves

1. New information wall joinery to Level 02 foyer
2. New entrance area with a focus on library services, new joinery and a mesh curtain for out of hours access.
3. New exhibition fittings in new location
4. New enquiries desk in original location
5. Improved study facilities
6. New stacks layout
7. New acoustically buffered meeting tables
8. New dedicated teen fiction area
9. Relocated buggy parking into the Children's library
10. New desk and multipurpose layout in Children's library



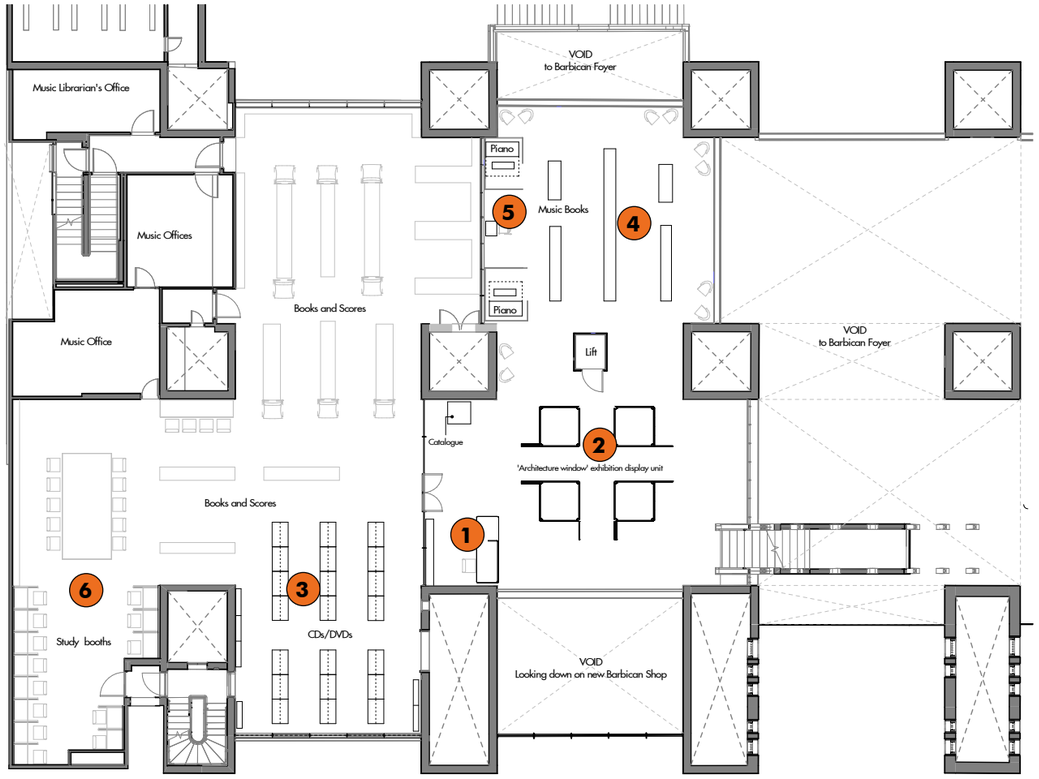
Proposed Level 2 plan

2.1.2 Level 1

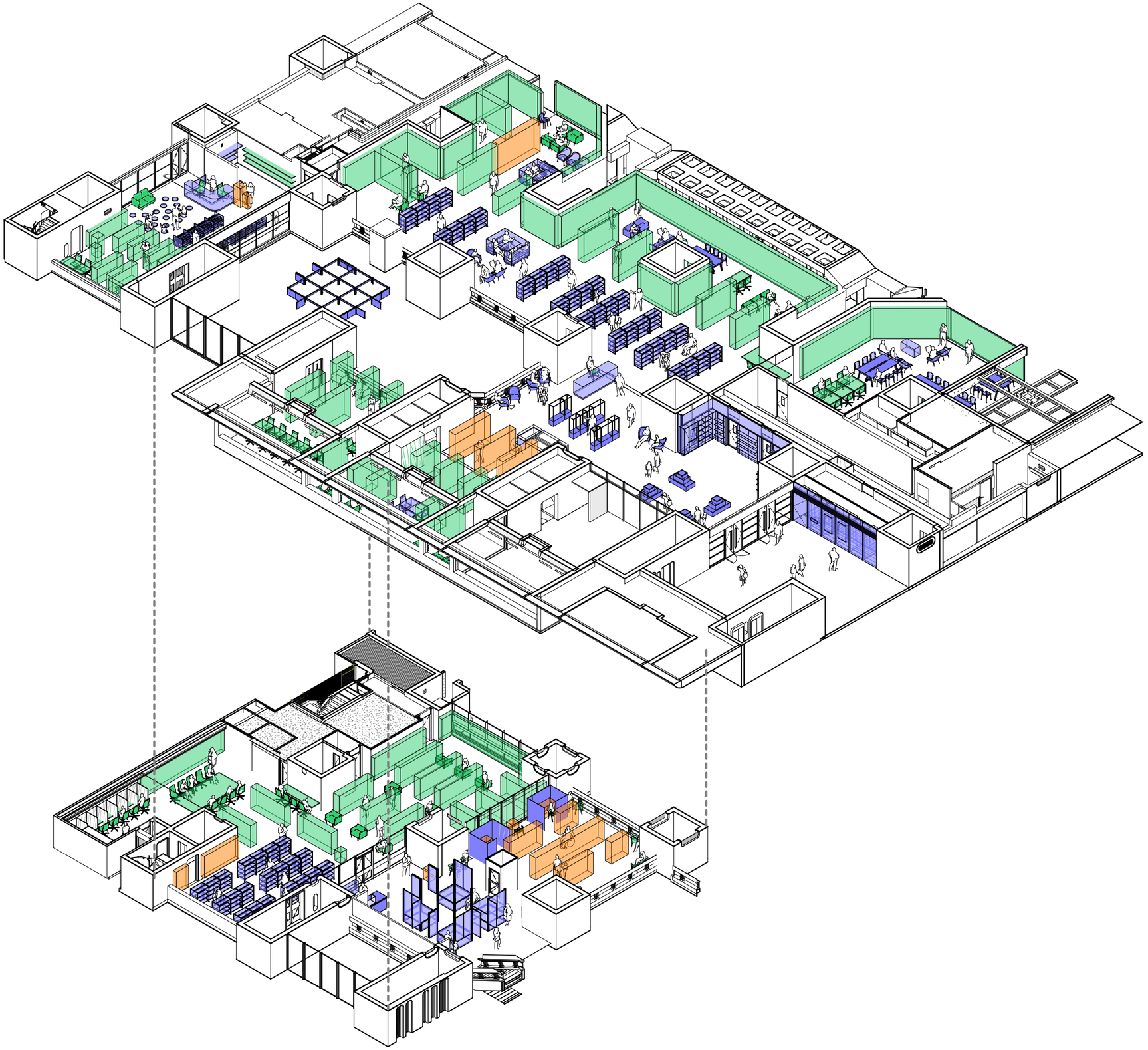
Level 1 houses a dedicated music library and exhibition

Key moves

1. New information desk facing the stairs
2. New exhibition fittings
3. Relocated CD library with new shelving
4. Relocated music books stacks
5. Relocated pianos with new acoustic buffer surrounds
6. Improved study facilities



Proposed Level 1 plan


LEGEND
Existing
Repurposed
New

2.1.3 A warmer welcome

The new welcoming face of the library will be an elegant joinery wall in the level 2 foyer that offers book deposit facilities and an information screen.

Inside the library there will be a clear view over new book display tables with seasonal book displays to a new exhibition area with clearer definition. The alcove to the right as you enter will house new bespoke flexible joinery to contain information displays, printers, loan machines, and the new mesh curtain that sections off the entry area at night.



Illustrative view on entering the library at level 02

2.1.4 Main library & study spaces

Within the main library the enquiries desk will be returned to roughly its original position and book stacks more sympathetic to the original library shelving will replace the inefficient 1990s/ early 2000s book shelving. The stack layout will sit on the original grid aligning with the coffered ceiling.

New acoustically buffered meeting tables and additional power provision will provide higher quality study seating, and the removal of the non original study pods at L02 will reduce blind spots in a heavily trafficked study space.

A dedicated teen fiction area will provide a better welcome to the City's younger residents and visitors away from the Children's library. The original furniture supplier still stocks some of the library furniture allowing us to purchase furniture that matches the original pieces.



Illustrative view of general fiction library

2.1.5 Children's library & Music library

The Children's library desk will move into the main body of the space freeing up an alcove to provide buggy parking, allowing parents to easy access to and sight of their buggies, rather than the current arrangement of small banks of buggies throughout the main library. The yellow seating units will be removed to create a more multifunctional space with browsable storybook shelving and stackable seating cushions for story times.

In the music library the desk will be relocated so that instead of its 'back' facing the stairs its 'front' welcomes visitors. The exhibition will be re-housed in new fittings donated by the Royal Academy of Arts with sculptural effect.

The CD library, the most visible point of the library from the foyers, will be moved into the back of the library and the current CD library will be the new home of the music books on their original shelving relocated from the new CD area. It will also house the practice pianos, shielded from some of the foyer noise by acoustic buffer surrounds.

Within the back of the music library the study area will be upgraded with better power provision and the listening booths made better for their more common current use with improved power provision.



Illustrative view of children's library

Throughout the proposals for the library the spirit of the original Barbican design has been considered and respected. Furniture and joinery has been designed to be in keeping with the original design of the library, and small adjustments have been made to existing layouts and signage positions to accommodate the increased library stock, increased demand for study spaces and reduce confusion by removing wayfinding to defunct services.

Taken together the proposals have a minimal impact on the existing listed fabric of the library focussing on refreshing it and revitalising it for the demands of a popular twenty first library with considerable public benefit.



Illustrative view of level 02 foyer