



# THE NG200 PROJECT

Design Team Selection Process

DESIGN BRIEF

THE  
NATIONAL  
GALLERY

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Front of the National Gallery

# National Gallery Director's Foreword

2024 is the National Gallery's Bicentenary year.

Over its two centuries of history, the Gallery has developed and changed with great success, responding to the needs of the time and often leading the way for art museums.

In the last generation it has become renowned as a dynamic institution, growing its visitor numbers and broadening its audiences, acquiring major masterpieces, introducing a strong exhibition programme, blazing a trail in museum art history, adopting innovative research and public-facing technologies, and seeding the international museum community with its curators and educators.

In more recent times we have committed to a strong contemporary art strand, an ambitious programme of digital transformation, advancing intellectual leadership, and increasing our levels of self-generated income.



The current Covid-19 pandemic has brought with it unprecedented difficulties — months of closure, the disappearance of mass visiting and a collapse in our income. But we have responded with resilience, massively increasing our online presence, reopening with a spectacular programme of activities and exhibitions, supporting our staff through this period, working towards the completion of a major capital project, and planning significant corporate reorganisation.

The next five years will see us fighting our way out of the crisis, building on our strengths, responding to the challenges and opportunities of now, and forging a pathway to the National Gallery of the future.

And what will the National Gallery of the future be like? It will be:

- A Gallery committed to belief in the transformative nature of great art, with the superb collection of paintings at its heart
- A Gallery that is a resource for the people of this country and beyond, for learning, enjoyment, and for the wellbeing of individuals and communities
- A Gallery that engages with a broad, inclusive audience, in a rich and open cultural dialogue
- A Gallery that is a world leader in academic research on historic painting for the ultimate benefit of the public

- A Gallery that seizes the opportunities offered by new technologies and reaches out digitally to the whole world
- A Gallery that as it seeks to grow, is environmentally responsible

2020 demonstrated the National Gallery's strength, inventiveness and contemporary relevance in a crisis situation. As the Bicentenary comes into sharper focus, it gives us the opportunity for relaunching the National Gallery as a Gallery for the nation and the world. And as we build the National Gallery of the future, we can look ahead with confidence, relying on 200 years of experience, on the support of the UK Government, of our Trusts, of friends old and new, on a committed staff and on the most perfect collection of paintings in the world.



**Gabriele Finaldi**

# NG200: The Vision

The Gallery will celebrate its 200th anniversary through activities in the Gallery; in Trafalgar Square; around the country and around the world. As much as we want to celebrate, we want also to create a meaningful legacy for the Bicentenary.

Our Bicentenary will have two strands — an ambitious programme of public engagement, and a series of capital projects under the banner ‘the NG200 Project’ that will help redefine our visitor experience.

The NG200 Project aims to transform the existing Sainsbury Wing entrance into a more open, inclusive and enjoyable environment for visitors to relax, reflect and plan how they wish to engage with one of the world’s finest art collections.

Transforming the welcome to the Gallery will deliver a world-class experience with a more seamless journey — from queue management and security control, through to visitor services and orientation.

Outside, we aim to provide a more obvious connection with Trafalgar Square by improving the public realm around the Gallery.

We want also to create a new Research Centre with world-leading facilities that communicates the Gallery’s work as a global thought-leader and supports its growing research community, as well as providing an open-access resource for research in art history, the digital humanities, conservation and heritage science.

Critical to the success of all our capital projects will be energy saving initiatives that help to reduce our carbon footprint. We recognise that while Covid-19 and Brexit shape our current strategic environment, the climate crisis is likely to become the defining feature of the years ahead.



**ROOM 32**

At the turn of the 17th century, two differing styles emerged in Italy that were to affect the future of painting across Europe. One was idealized and classical, as demonstrated by the works of Annibale Carracci and Guido Reni, and the other, introduced by Caravaggio, was powerfully naturalistic.

Although profoundly different, both styles were based on a return to the study of nature. What emerged from these two different approaches are the characteristics of the baroque – dramatic compositions, dramatic lighting, and use of colour and intense expression of emotion. These are evident in the paintings hanging in this room, most of which were commissioned to adorn the palaces of wealthy patrons in Rome, Florence, Bologna, Naples and Genoa.

In 2013 twenty-five paintings from the collection of the distinguished art historian Sir Denis Mahon (1916–2011) were presented to the National Gallery through the Art Fund. The breadth and quality of the Italian baroque collection have been greatly enhanced by his bequest, which includes works by Domenichino, Guercino and Bernini.

ROOM 32  
 ITALIAN BAROQUE PAINTING  
 1600–1700



Reopening of the National Gallery after lockdown

# Introduction to the Design Brief

*This **Design Brief** frames the design challenges and opportunities implicit in the NG200 Project, a phased initiative with an initial phase timed to deliver during the Gallery's celebratory Bicentenary year, 2024. The project focuses on enhancing the visitor's arrival experience via the public realm and Sainsbury Wing entrance spaces, as well as reconfiguring some support spaces and creating a new Research Centre.*

*The analysis presented below is intended to inform those participating in the selection process for an architect-led, multi-disciplinary design team to deliver the initiative. A masterplan strategy, as well as a timeframe and delivery strategy, will be considered during the initial phase.*

One of the United Kingdom's pre-eminent art galleries, the National Gallery holds the nation's collection of paintings in the Western European tradition, spanning the period from the late 13<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

For more than 180 years, the National Gallery has enlivened London's Trafalgar Square. Today, it seems extraordinary that at its inception the Gallery was regarded with some doubt, so familiar is it to us as a national landmark, and to many 'a much-loved friend'.

The Post-Modern Sainsbury Wing was added in 1991 to the Gallery's main building, the Grade I Listed William Wilkins building, known for its distinctive grey cupola and Corinthian porticoes.

This intervention, a Palazzo-like addition by American architects Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, was a pragmatic and healing solution following an earlier design competition which proposed a controversial commercial tower — vividly described at the time by HRH The Prince of Wales as a ‘monstrous carbuncle’.

In the intervening thirty-year period, the Gallery’s audiences have increased dramatically and become more diverse.

Since 2018, for security, accessibility and logistical reasons, most of the Gallery’s six million annual guests have been directed to enter through the Sainsbury Wing, which has become the de facto main entrance. From a curatorial perspective, this has underpinned a deeper logic — the Sainsbury Wing galleries on the building’s top floor initiate a visitor journey through the collection that is broadly chronological.

The Sainsbury Wing has more than met its original brief — especially in the provision of its world-class upper galleries and despite being intended to accommodate just three million visitors. But as the National Gallery approaches its 200-year anniversary in 2024, the organisation needs to realise its vision for the forthcoming decade, and longer term for a post-Covid-19 — and rapidly changing — world.

So — the entrance spaces, and some of the support spaces, of the Sainsbury Wing now need a rethink. Firstly, to enable the Gallery to offer an inspirational, world-class welcome experience that is attuned to increasingly sophisticated visitor expectations and accommodates visitor growth (which predated the global pandemic).

Secondly, the Gallery needs to respond to pressures and trends accelerated by Covid-19; not just the practical issues of resolving visitor congestion and queuing outside in all weathers, but also recognising that the pandemic has radically changed the public’s expectations of how a healthy building, that promotes wellbeing, should work.

Subconsciously, and even consciously, visitors will now be hyper-aware of cleanliness and hygiene, of good ventilation, generous access space, and pleasant and safe spaces to dwell, as well as expecting the Gallery to demonstrate sustainability and inclusivity.

Crucial in creating the ‘world-class welcome’ and transforming visitors’ initial impressions will be reimagining the external public realm. Once described by a 19<sup>th</sup> century Justice as ‘the very gangway of London’, Trafalgar Square has in recent times become a place of shifting identities. To some, notable for its historic statuary and its provocative Fourth Plinth; to others a place for seasonal gatherings and protests; to others still, a venue for street performances and outdoor markets — a footfall of varied audiences.

This is an opportunity to rethink how the public face to Trafalgar Square can support the Gallery’s improved welcome and enhance the setting of the historic architecture, providing a greater presence for the Sainsbury Wing and linking it visually with the Wilkins Building.

The NG200 initiative has an anticipated construction budget of between £25 and £30 million and will be delivered in phases over the next five years, with the initial phase timed to be delivered during the Gallery’s celebratory Bicentenary year, 2024. Works being considered for this initial phase include remodelling the front gates, entry sequence and associated public realm; interior works to the lobby; limited remodelling of the first floor spaces; and upgrading the supporting facilities, notably visitor orientation and information, retail and security. The Gallery will work with the successful design team to develop the detail of the scope, phasing and costs.

Subsequent phases of the project might include further remodelling of the Sainsbury Wing interiors (the second floor galleries will remain untouched); works to enhance the Portico on the Wilkins Building; further public realm works including Jubilee Walk; and a new Research Centre, likely to be given a site in the west wing of the Wilkins Building that immediately adjoins the Sainsbury Wing.

The finished re-design — which should be informed by the Wing's and the Wilkins Building's Grade I Listing — needs to be a memorable and compelling architectural exemplar — a creative reimagining that inspires visitors, introduces them to the collection and deepens their knowledge, while reflecting the Gallery's status as a national and global icon.

The National Gallery is sensitive to the challenges of climate change and the design team will be urged to imaginatively embrace sustainable design and conservation practices, as well as to future-proof the design so that it anticipates other initiatives.

Please be aware that in this selection process the Gallery is not seeking designs — but rather an architectural narrative or concept study that expresses the NG200 Project vision, focusing on the initial phase works with a masterplan strategy for the additional phases to be considered as part of the overall vision.

Ultimately, the Gallery is searching for an outstandingly gifted and committed architect-led, multi-disciplinary design team — a national or international team of the very highest calibre that can deliver the first phase of the project to celebrate the Gallery's Bicentennial anniversary — no later than May 2024. The Gallery is committed to keeping its main collection open for public enjoyment during the reconfiguration of the Sainsbury Wing.

This is an open two-stage selection process, being run in accordance with UK procurement regulations and guidelines.

**This Design Brief should be read in conjunction with The Conditions document, which details the procurement requirements for the selection process.**



THE NATIONAL GALLERY

REMBRANDT  
THE LATE WORKS  
UNTIL 18 JANUARY 2015

Sponsored by

Visitors queuing for the Rembrandt exhibition

# About the National Gallery

The National Gallery was founded in 1824, when the UK Government acquired 38 paintings belonging to banker John Julius Angerstein, forming the core of a new national collection. Over the next two centuries, the Gallery's collection continued to grow through purchases, private donations and bequests.

Today, the Gallery houses one of the greatest collections of paintings in the world. It tells the cohesive story of art in the Western European tradition from the 13<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, including works by British, Italian, Dutch, French, Spanish and Flemish artists. Its collection of over 2,300 pictures includes paintings by Leonardo, Raphael, Michelangelo, Botticelli, Rembrandt, Vermeer, Van Gogh, Turner and Constable.

The collection remains the Gallery's priority — its principal aim being to care for the collection; to enhance it for future generations, primarily by acquisition; and to study it, while encouraging access to art for the learning and enjoyment of the widest possible audience — now and in the future.

Originally housed at Angerstein's former townhouse in Pall Mall (a site ridiculed in the media for its unimpressive size), the UK Parliament decided in 1831 that a dedicated National Gallery building should be constructed for the collection at Trafalgar Square. Designed by architect William Wilkins, this opened in 1838. This location was specifically chosen due to its easy access from both west and east London, allowing people from all echelons of society to visit.

Accessibility is still fundamental to the Gallery today — by opening free of charge 361 days per year, displaying the collection digitally, delivering a broad range of learning programmes, and lending works to exhibitions across the world, the National Gallery aims to provide enjoyment and learning to the widest possible audience. Today, the Gallery is one of the most popular art galleries in the world, with six million visitors each year.

The Gallery is one of just fifteen museums and galleries in England to be sponsored by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. The Gallery's operation is governed by the Museum and Galleries Act 1992, which also established its independent Board of Trustees. The Chair, Lord Anthony Hall of Birkenhead, CBE, was appointed in January 2020 and took up his post in July 2020. The Gallery's Director is Dr Gabriele Finaldi, who was appointed in August 2015.

[nationalgallery.org.uk](https://nationalgallery.org.uk)

National Gallery exterior  
from Nelson's Column



# Project Aims

The NG200 initiative needs to achieve the first phase completion date of May 2024 and will:

## DEVELOP A WORLD CLASS WELCOME

Establish a strong sequence of positive first impressions through arrival, security, wayfinding and non-collection areas to the Gallery's interconnecting top floor, while also enhancing the experience with new orientation and information space.

## GIVE THE SAINSBURY WING GREATER PRESENCE ON TRAFALGAR SQUARE

Affirm the visibility of the Wing through public realm interventions and optimise the contribution of these spaces to allow the building to relate more strongly to the main Wilkins Building and improve visitor welcome.

## IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Resolve the design and operational shortcomings of the Sainsbury Wing entrance sequence and deepen the audience's understanding of, and connection with, the collection.

## CREATE A NEW RESEARCH CENTRE

Create world-leading research facilities that communicate the Gallery's work as a global thought-leader and support its growing research community as well as providing an open-access resource for research in art history, the digital humanities, conservation and heritage science.

## SUPPORT SELF-GENERATED INCOME GOAL

Create spaces for revenue-generating opportunities (events, sales and membership) to reduce the Gallery's dependence on public funding.

## FUTURE-PROOF

Anticipate wider cultural and environmental sustainability initiatives and seek to respond to the needs of new audiences, as well as long-term behaviour changes following the Covid-19 pandemic.

## STRIVE FOR ARCHITECTURAL EXCELLENCE

Reimagine the Sainsbury Wing so that it is inspiring, memorable and reflects the Gallery's status as a national and global icon – and is respectful of the heritage context.

## ENABLE THE NEW REMODELLED SPACES TO PROMOTE HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Demonstrate good standards of hygiene, ventilation and water systems, as well as well-planned access and respite spaces that are generous and pleasant spaces to stay in.



**THE SAINSBURY WING**  
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GALLERY 2  
GALLERY 3  
GALLERY 4  
GALLERY 5  
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GALLERY 7  
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**THE NATIONAL GALLERY  
SAINSBURY WING**  
Address: NATIONAL GALLERY AND SAINSBURY WING, 5, THE NATIONAL GALLERY, TRINITY SQUARE, LONDON WC2N 5DN  
Telephone: 020 7746 6000  
Fax: 020 7746 6001  
Website: www.nationalgallery.org.uk  
Opening Hours: 10.00am - 6.00pm (closed on Tuesdays)  
Admission: Free  
Accessibility: The Sainsbury Wing is fully accessible to wheelchair users. There are lifts to all galleries and a wheelchair accessible route through the building.  
Contact Us: National Gallery, 5, The National Gallery, Trinity Square, London WC2N 5DN. Tel: 020 7746 6000. Fax: 020 7746 6001. Email: info@nationalgallery.org.uk

The Sainsbury Wing during construction

# Project Background and History

The National Gallery is comprised of two linked sites – the Wilkins Building and the Sainsbury Wing – connected by a circular building which crosses Jubilee Walk, a pedestrian route running north-south from Pall Mall East to St Martin's Street.

The footprint of the National Gallery has remained unchanged since the addition of the Sainsbury Wing in 1991, but visitor numbers have doubled in this time.

The Gallery has periodically reviewed options for more efficient space use and, as a result, several discreet re-organisations have improved the cafe, special exhibition and staff facilities, amongst other areas.

More recently, the Gallery has explored substantial changes through a masterplan options study and Conservation Management Plan (Appendix B). These reviews provided direction on long-term opportunities for the potential development of the entire National Gallery estate.

The Sainsbury Wing initiative grew out of these reviews and will enable the building to live up to its role as the primary entrance and welcome threshold for visitors. Originally, the building was intended to provide extra gallery space, while being only an overflow/supplementary entrance to the Gallery, a junior partner to the historic Portico Entrance in the Wilkins Building.

Today the Sainsbury Wing is the Gallery's principal entrance (augmented by the Getty Entrance for booked groups; the Pigott Education Centre Entrance on Orange Street; and the National Cafe Entrance on St Martin's Place).



The National Gallery from Trafalgar Square

# The Wider Context

The National Gallery has identified four strategic priorities for the next five years:

## **THE GALLERY AT 200**

In 2024 the National Gallery will begin its Bicentenary celebration. This Bicentenary will be a celebration not only of what the Gallery is, but of the role audiences and partners play in helping others engage with great art across the nation. As part of the Bicentenary, the Gallery will complete or begin a suite of capital projects that will reshape the Gallery estate for its third century.

## **THE GALLERY ACROSS THE NATION**

The Gallery intends to raise the profile of its national work, share its collection across the UK in innovative ways, create new partnerships and strengthen existing ones, and support the work of collections throughout the UK by sharing its skills.

## **THE GALLERY: ACROSS THE WORLD**

The Gallery will be redefined as a global digital institution. It will do this by dramatically increasing both its digital audience and content to reach people across the world.

## **RESEARCH FOR PUBLIC BENEFIT**

The Gallery does world-class research in art history, the digital humanities, conservation and heritage science to understand and care for its collection, and to generate new knowledge and discoveries about its paintings. Research underpins the entire programme of public engagement, both digital and physical, from exhibitions and display, to publications, talks and films. The Gallery wants to maintain and grow this expertise and invest in improved ways of sharing it with people.



Trafalgar Square

# Setting

## NATIONAL GALLERY LOCATION & SITE

The National Gallery stands on the northern side of Trafalgar Square, facing south. The Gallery is bound by Orange Street to the north and by Charing Cross Road and Whitcomb Street to the east and west. Located in the City of Westminster, the site originally housed a royal stable, the King's Mews, until the area was redeveloped as a pedestrianised public square in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.

Named for the British victory at the Battle of Trafalgar, the Square is famed for its four monumental bronze lions and iconic 51-metre high Nelson's Column. From the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Square has also become known for its Fourth Plinth, which is used to display specially commissioned temporary artworks.

The Square is also seen as a place of celebration by the nation: a Christmas Tree donated by the people of Norway is the centre of an annual tree-lighting ceremony, and thousands gather here to ring in the New Year. However, the Square's large area and central location has also made it the perfect setting for more political events: an early example was an 1848 rally for social reform, and both organised and spontaneous marches and demonstrations have been regularly held here since.

The 18<sup>th</sup>-century St Martin-in-the-Fields Church and South Africa House (the South African consulate) are situated on the eastern side of the Square, separated from the National Gallery by Charing Cross Road. Canada House, the Canadian consulate, is on the western side of the Square, separated from the Gallery by Pall Mall East.



To the south, opposite the Gallery, is a roundabout with five exits, including The Mall leading southwest to Buckingham Palace, Whitehall to the south and The Strand to the east.

Directly adjacent to the Gallery on its northern side is the National Portrait Gallery, which is entered via St Martin's Place. In front of the Gallery is a pedestrianised terrace, the result of a 2003 redevelopment which closed the road between the Gallery and the Square. The other three sides of the Square are bordered by roads, and there are many public transportation links, with Charing Cross Underground Station having an exit directly onto the Square.

The construction of the Sainsbury Wing

## WILKINS BUILDING & LATER ADDITIONS

The Wilkins Building was the result of an architectural competition, won by William Wilkins in 1831. Finished in 1838, the building is in a classical Graeco-Roman style and was given Grade I Listed status in 1970 (Appendix C). Two storeys high, the grand central Portico features a triangular pediment supported by fluted Corinthian columns.

Above is a large, scalloped cupola. On either side of the central Portico are smaller porticoes featuring Corinthian columns as well as two smaller domes. It is an attractive and well-ordered architectural piece, which has become a familiar landmark, but arguably lacks the architectural flair of its neighbour St Martin-in-the-Fields.

Since its completion, the Wilkins Building has been extended several times. The first alterations took place in 1860, and a significant extension by E.M. Barry added several Neo-Renaissance galleries in the 1870s.

Further extensions have taken place over the last century, including the infilling of courtyards in the 1960s and the creation of the North Galleries in 1975. The Sainsbury Wing (1991) was the last major addition, but a 2004-5 project saw the refurbishment of the main Portico Entrance and the creation of the Getty Entrance in the east wing, which offers ground-level access from Trafalgar Square.

Since 1997, St Vincent House, located behind the Sainsbury Wing, has housed the Gallery's offices and is partly rented to outside tenants. It is separated from the Gallery by St Martin's Street.

## ORIGINS OF THE SAINSBURY WING

In 1959, the National Gallery acquired a site adjacent to the west of the Wilkins Building, formerly a furniture store that was destroyed in WWII. In the 1970s, a rise in museum and gallery visitor numbers led to discussions over a potential extension onto the site. Government funding was unavailable, so this new extension was originally intended to be financed by the inclusion of commercial office accommodation along with gallery space.

A competition was launched in 1981 to find an architect and developer team, and the winning design by Ahrends, Burton and Koralek (ABK) was favoured by both the competition assessors and the public, although not by the National Gallery Trustees. The competition was a drawn-out process, and the ABK design was revised several times, eventually featuring curved galleries, a glazed atrium and a tower block of office space. The final high-tech proposal proved to be controversial and sparked debate between architectural traditionalists and neo-modernists.

After being described by HRH The Prince of Wales as ‘a monstrous carbuncle on the face of a much-loved and elegant friend’, the design failed to receive planning permission and was subsequently abandoned.

In 1985, the Sainsbury family generously offered to sponsor a new scheme, without the need for commercial offices. A second, invited competition was held and was eventually won by the American practice Venturi, Scott Brown and Associates (VSBA), known for their Post-Modernist approach. The Sainsbury Wing was opened to the public by Her Majesty the Queen in 1991. It was awarded Grade I Listed status in 2018 (Appendix D).

The Sainsbury Wing features an irregular quadrilateral plan filling the available site, and a massing that is in keeping with the historical buildings around Trafalgar Square. The front façade of Portland Stone adopts the classical architectural language of column and pilaster from the adjoining Wilkins Building; this is reflected playfully, but modified in depth and detail, eventually dissipating completely at the façade’s western edge.

The treatment is similar to a ruched theatre curtain, and acts as a counterpoint to the Wilkins architecture's earlier interpretation of the classical rule. Venturi, himself, described it as: 'a fragment of the old'.

Within, there are some notable interiors that draw on such classical precedents as the Palazzo typology and Mannerist perspective as the means of creating a grand entry sequence from the 'crypt' foyer up to the main gallery level on the second floor. The galleries, which initiate the broadly chronological curatorial journey, comprise an enfilade of top-lit double-height rooms, reminiscent of Soane's Dulwich Picture Gallery — with matching scale and setting. This level is connected on a visual axis and rotunda bridge link over Jubilee Walk to the remainder of the collection in the Wilkins Building.

**Further information on VSBA and their work on the Sainsbury Wing can be found in Appendix A.**

Her Majesty the Queen  
opening the Sainsbury Wing in 1991





TRAFALGAR SQUARE WC2

Toilets



One Way

The Sainsbury Wing

# The Brief

## INTRODUCTION: DESIGN CHALLENGES

**Please note:** the project will be phased over five years and the Gallery will work with the successful design team to develop the detail of the scope, phasing and costs.

It is anticipated that the **initial phase** will include remodelling the front gates, entry sequence and associated public realm; interior works to the lobby; limited remodelling of the first floor spaces; and upgrading the supporting facilities, notably visitor orientation and information, retail and security.

To follow, **subsequent phases** are anticipated to include further remodelling of the Sainsbury Wing interiors (excluding the second floor galleries); works to enhance the Portico on the Wilkins Building; further public realm works including Jubilee Walk and a new Research Centre likely to be given a site in the west wing of the Wilkins Building that immediately adjoins the Sainsbury Wing.

This procurement process encompasses the design and delivery of all works — a masterplan strategy for subsequent phases, as well as a timeframe and delivery strategy, will be considered during the initial phase.

**The following brief is indicative of the spaces to be addressed and interventions to be made into the building's fabric. It is a guide and will be formally confirmed with the National Gallery following the appointment of the successful design team.**

**The brief covers all phases of works.**

The Sainsbury Wing's configuration inevitably reflects the Gallery's needs of thirty years ago. Excepting the upper galleries, which remain an asset, the building, and specifically its entrance and support spaces identified by this project, now need a thorough and comprehensive rethink.

This will enable the Gallery to satisfy visitor expectations and to address the overwhelming rise in visitors (pre-pandemic), while also communicating the Gallery's progressive commitment to health and wellbeing and accessibility.

It is worth noting that from a sustainability perspective, adapting and upgrading the design honours the embodied energy in its construction.

As outlined earlier, the Wing requires welcoming, compelling, and inspirational interior spaces that resolve the current practical and logistical problems; and externally, the whole ensemble should achieve greater visibility and presence on Trafalgar Square.

The Gallery has limited public realm; however, there is an opportunity to refocus and strengthen these spaces to contribute to the overall visitor experience and to guide circulation. The visitor data model (National Gallery Masterplan, 2018) revealed that the public does not linger after crossing the building's entry threshold.

The grand staircase offers an obvious wayfinding direction for the procession up two levels to the National Gallery's main floor; otherwise, the signage to the lower staircase at the rear leads only the most determined visitor down two levels to the Temporary Exhibition Gallery.

The findings also suggest that complementary attractions, such as the shop and the restaurant, are not capturing the public's attention.

The Gallery wishes to broaden the experience by creating an orientation space that acts as a portal to multiple visitor experiences (please note, the Temporary Exhibition Gallery and the Auditorium are to be retained). This may involve a holistic re-imagining of the Wing's volumes, functions and flexible spatial uses.

The intellectual challenge lies with each designer's skill in navigating the existing context, the heritage red lines and the architecture designed by VSBA, in order to fulfil the project's objectives.

The other challenge is the unlocking of potential latent within this Design Brief. In the following pages key issues, including heritage, public realm, the adaptability of building fabric, sustainability and wellbeing, are highlighted to begin to prompt the design team's thinking about their own particular response to this context.

## NEGOTIATING CHANGE

In developing this Design Brief, the Sainsbury Wing has been considered in terms of which existing areas are fixed (and should be retained unaltered) and which might be suitable for accommodating change.

This has involved input from key stakeholders (at the National Gallery) on areas where they would welcome improvements on the spatial arrangements and functions.

For example, the National Gallery is in the process of reviewing its commercial strategy across its estate and, as a result, is interested in reviewing the type and location of both the retail and food and beverage offer. There is also an interest in expanding the kinds of events the Gallery hosts, from fundraisers to private functions.

Additionally, the current Temporary Exhibition Gallery is satisfactory but is constrained in size and layout. However, resolving this will be left to a future iteration of the Gallery's wider masterplan. But to meet the aims of the project, improvements to the access and welcome to the Temporary Exhibition Gallery could be considered.

## THE BUILDING'S ARCHITECTURAL HIERARCHY

The Sainsbury Wing makes formal reference to a traditional Palazzo. The top (second) floor, comprising an enfilade of 16 gallery spaces, is the predominant floor, reminiscent of a *piano nobile*. Here, the floor level and the circulation axis are both integrated with the original Wilkins Building to establish continuity of circulation through all gallery spaces. The organisational parti is driven by the grand staircase, which, with its own prescribed volume, deploys mannered perspectival space to augment the visitor procession up two levels from the ground to the second floor galleries.

Not only are these elements understood as being set pieces that express the character of VSBA's architecture, together they are essential to the legibility of the original design concept.

The first floor is accessed off the grand stair's half landing. This level is currently the location of the restaurant and conference rooms.

The two basement levels are served by a return leg of the main staircase, providing access to the Auditorium's ante space at upper basement level, and the Temporary Exhibition Gallery on the lower level. While the detailing and architectural language is consistent with the whole composition, these basement floors are of a lesser magnitude.

The original design concept envisaged the foyer as being like a crypt, where the mass of Portland Stone linings creates a visual contrast with the side light from the grand staircase. However, visitors generally find this space uninviting, underwhelming and confusing.

## THE SAINSBURY WING'S GRADE I LISTING

Adapting the building to suit the National Gallery's needs and vision is anticipated to be challenging, but not impossible. Historic England's Grade I Listing ensures statutory protection; however, the Listing explains that the historic interest stems from the events surrounding the building's commissioning and public debates in the 1980s where Post-Modern design prevailed over late Modernism.

Later, the document's Architectural Interest section cites the architect's interpretation of classical Mannerist language, the response to its context and the fact that the building is a legible articulation of the formal concept. The design intentions and the historic interest lead over the building's actual architectural qualities.

Outside the core text, under the accompanying appendix, there is a record of the significant parts of the building that characterise VSBA's architecture.

This section opens with the façades, whose ornamentation and openings within the stone facing material for the main frontage to Trafalgar Square merit a detailed description. Within the interiors, there is a similar level of interest in the significance of the Soane-inspired gallery spaces that house the National Gallery's collection of Medieval and Renaissance paintings and the spaces that lead up to them — the adjoining rotunda bridge link (over Jubilee Walk) and the 'monumental' grand staircase.

The other interiors do not merit the same level of detailed descriptions and all back-of-house service areas are stated to be 'not of interest'.

## STRUCTURE

The plans on all levels reveal that the public rooms are set out according to the Beaux-Arts principle of *poché*. This concept imagines spaces carved out of a solid building block, to create an impression of monumentality. However, as the Sainsbury Wing was completed late in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and to a fixed budget, modern construction methods were used. The technique is typically Post-Modern — an impression of permanence is created by using surface materials that have no structural function.

Behind the finishes, the engineering solution comprises a concrete frame superstructure, piled perimeter foundations and two rows of internal columns; at rooftop level, this changes to a more lightweight steel infill structure that frames the inner clerestory and outer rooflight cladding.

The concrete frame's mass suits the heavy-set Portland Stone and brick façades that provide a solid treatment on three sides of the building; the fourth side being an exception — a tinted black glass curtain wall that runs alongside the grand staircase.

Within the interior, the architects chose to hide most of the functional columns behind dry wall construction. In a Mannerist PoMo flourish, the exposed stone-clad columns and pilasters in the ground floor foyer and adjacent to the grand staircase, are deliberately oversized and ornate — for purely decorative reasons.



The Sainsbury Wing during construction

## PUBLIC REALM

Now that the Sainsbury Wing serves as the National Gallery's official front door, visitors approaching across Trafalgar Square from the east and south experience a prolonged skirting of the Wilkins Building's frontage before reaching the destination. For some, the main Portico is the intuitive entry point, but this space cannot accommodate the volume of visitors annually nor the legal obligation to provide a level access threshold.

Due to the visitor logistics, the current arrangement is not going to change, but there is an opportunity to think about ways that the two set pieces can become an entry sequence that enhances and even animates Trafalgar Square's northern edge.

The Design Brief allows scope for reimagining the Gallery's interface with the public realm, from the Sainsbury Wing's loggia in the west, across Jubilee Walk, and then in front of the Wilkins Building's main façade to its eastern end at St Martin's Place.

Unlike the Canadian and South African Embassies on either side, which run flush to the pavement, the Wilkins Building meets the pavement through a layered edge condition that combines plinth, lawn, lightwells and Portico in front of the main façade itself.

This foreground adds up to several metres in front of the Gallery, which lies within its ownership. The relationship to passers-by changed significantly when the upper part of the Square was pedestrianised in 2003.

Immediately west of the Wilkins Building, the Sainsbury Wing's façade is angled as a response to its corner context and as the means to signify entry through a loggia that faces out to Trafalgar Square. The deep recessed openings in the Portland Stone and the ornate metal gates complete the façade composition and signify the point of entry. In contrast to the Wilkins Building's raised Portico, this gesture is modest in scale and discreetly tucked away.

The way that the Wing meets the ground is also different. Being at the point where Trafalgar Square narrows to a wide pavement, the site does not have the benefit of additional land abutting the frontages. Instead, there is a triangular area of nondescript paving fronting the loggia and a line of exhibition banner posts that demarcate the private edge to the public square.

To the north, Jubilee Walk carries the paving through the rotunda that links the two buildings at the Gallery's main level. The side elevations, stepped paving and the rotunda are elements of an existing streetscape that leads towards the back of Leicester Square.

As time has passed, the context has changed. External influences, such as the exposure to terrorist attack, the rise in global tourism and laws on equal access, have introduced requirements with an impact on the day-to-day functioning of the Trafalgar Square frontage. This is reflected in the relatively recent decision to designate the Sainsbury Wing as the main public entrance to the Gallery.

There is no evidence that VSBA intended to make more of the public realm<sup>1</sup> but with the increased pressure on Trafalgar Square and the Sainsbury Wing, there is now an opportunity to enhance the public realm and to create a well-designed, unified entry sequence leading up to the point of entry.

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<sup>1</sup> The National Gallery owns several areas of land around its perimeter. These spaces include Jubilee Walk (circa 1,025 sqm), the front lawns adjacent to the Getty and West Entrances on either side of the Wilkins Building Portico (circa 505 sqm combined) and in front of the Pigott Entrance to the North of the Wilkins Building adjacent to Orange Street (circa 190 sqm). Additionally, a further 122 sqm of public realm is included within the canopied entrance to the Sainsbury Wing.

## RESEARCH CENTRE

For over 150 years research has been the engine-room of the National Gallery, enabling the Gallery's world-renowned expert team to care for this beloved collection.

As a global thought-leader in art history, digital humanities, conservation and heritage science, the Gallery is uniquely placed to become a model open-access, public-facing research body, sharing its expertise, archives and library, and fostering a dynamic research community. The new Research Centre will host visiting scholars, as well as events for researchers and the wider public. Through this, and partnerships with universities, as well as working with the Gallery's Learning team, the Research team will build a more diverse community of practitioners and mentor innovative research into historic painting.

The new Research Centre will need to be both a physical and digital entity. It will need space, as well as facilities with embedded technology, to house expanding research collections (digital as well as physical), showcase findings, encourage the exchange of ideas and welcome new voices within the community, including external researchers, students and young people.

The Research Centre will provide:

- World-class on-site research facilities and exchange of knowledge through fellowship schemes and a programme of seminars, conferences and residencies;
- Administration of library and archive material, making this accessible through digital and physical means; and
- Widening public engagement through seminars, events, learning and partnerships.

As a result of internal relocations, the lower levels of the southwest corner of the Wilkins Building (immediately adjacent to the Sainsbury Wing) will be vacant and it is envisaged that these spaces will be used for the Research Centre.

## SECURITY & ACCESSIBILITY

Due to its proximity to Whitehall and two prominent foreign embassies in Trafalgar Square, the National Gallery operates in a high-risk target zone. While the major incident risks are covered by the civil authorities, the Gallery itself has a duty to screen the public for substances that are harmful to other people and the artwork on display. As a consequence, a security threshold must be integrated into the building for the foreseeable future.

During peak times, especially in the summer months, over a thousand visitors arrive each hour. The security screening devices and cordons are currently fitted inside the recessed front porch area of the Sainsbury Wing and, although they are conveniently masked by the ornate metal gates, this has resulted in less desirable side effects.

This security equipment compounds the Sainsbury Wing's fortress-like appearance, already established by the gates and black-tinted glazing which prevent passers-by seeing in and create an off-putting impression.

Added to that, the limited footprint means that there is insufficient queuing space in front of the two airport-style scanners; at peak times, an ad-hoc cordon corrals the public in a snaking queue out into Trafalgar Square in all weathers.

A key challenge, along with the legal requirement to provide level access, is to ensure that any proposed modifications will integrate security and access seamlessly with the architecture.



A visitor seated in  
Room 60 of the Sainsbury Wing

## HEALTH & WELLBEING

The global pandemic that began in 2019 has intensified the need in architecture to design buildings that are healthy and that positively promote wellbeing.

Public perceptions around hygiene, safety/health-threats and the desirability of dwelling in crowded urban spaces, especially interior ones, have shifted dramatically. Features and facilities that were previously tolerated in a public building may now significantly deter visitors. Different modes of transport may be used with visitors arriving having travelled on foot or by bicycle rather than using public transport.

At the same time new technologies, such as bacteria and virus resistant materials, state of the art water and ventilation systems, automatic doors, touch-free taps and so on, offer ways to provide safer, cleaner environments.

From a strategic perspective, generous access and roomier spaces, implicit in a 'baggy planning' approach, can future-proof the building against other unforeseen events.

The National Gallery is focused on providing a visitor experience that alleviates visitors' health concerns and is progressive in offering public spaces that actively promote wellbeing.

## SUSTAINABILITY & ENERGY PERFORMANCE

A thoughtful and committed sustainability strategy will be fundamental to the design, and the successful team will be required to report on all measures and performance at the formal approval stages of the design.

Considerations include, as a minimum, aligning with the National Gallery's Carbon Management Plan (CMP) (Appendix F), which is currently under formal review and sets out the Gallery's environmental policy and low-carbon vision and related goals — and the means and processes to achieve them — as well as meeting Westminster City Council's Environmental Policy.

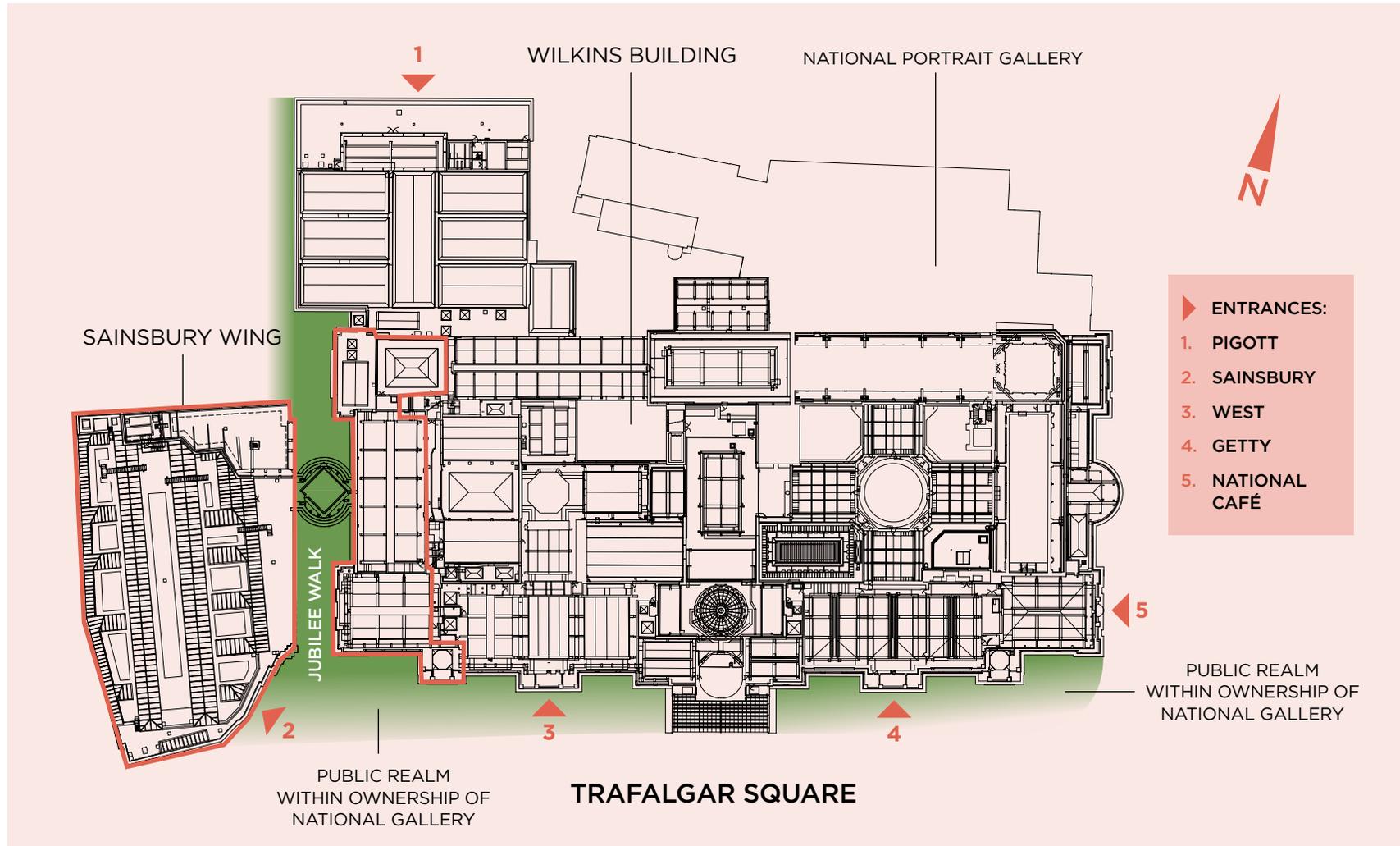
But more ambitiously, the project should be an exemplar of sustainable conservation and updating of heritage (and Listed) building practices, in its design, construction and use. It should innovatively embrace sustainable design, conservation, construction and practices with a commitment to low energy, low or non-mechanical systems, alternative energy strategies and waste management.

It should pursue a holistic approach to sustainability, rather than aim narrowly for an imposed level of BREEAM certification, while nonetheless taking certification standards such as BREEAM (Excellent) and Well Building Standards as benchmarks.

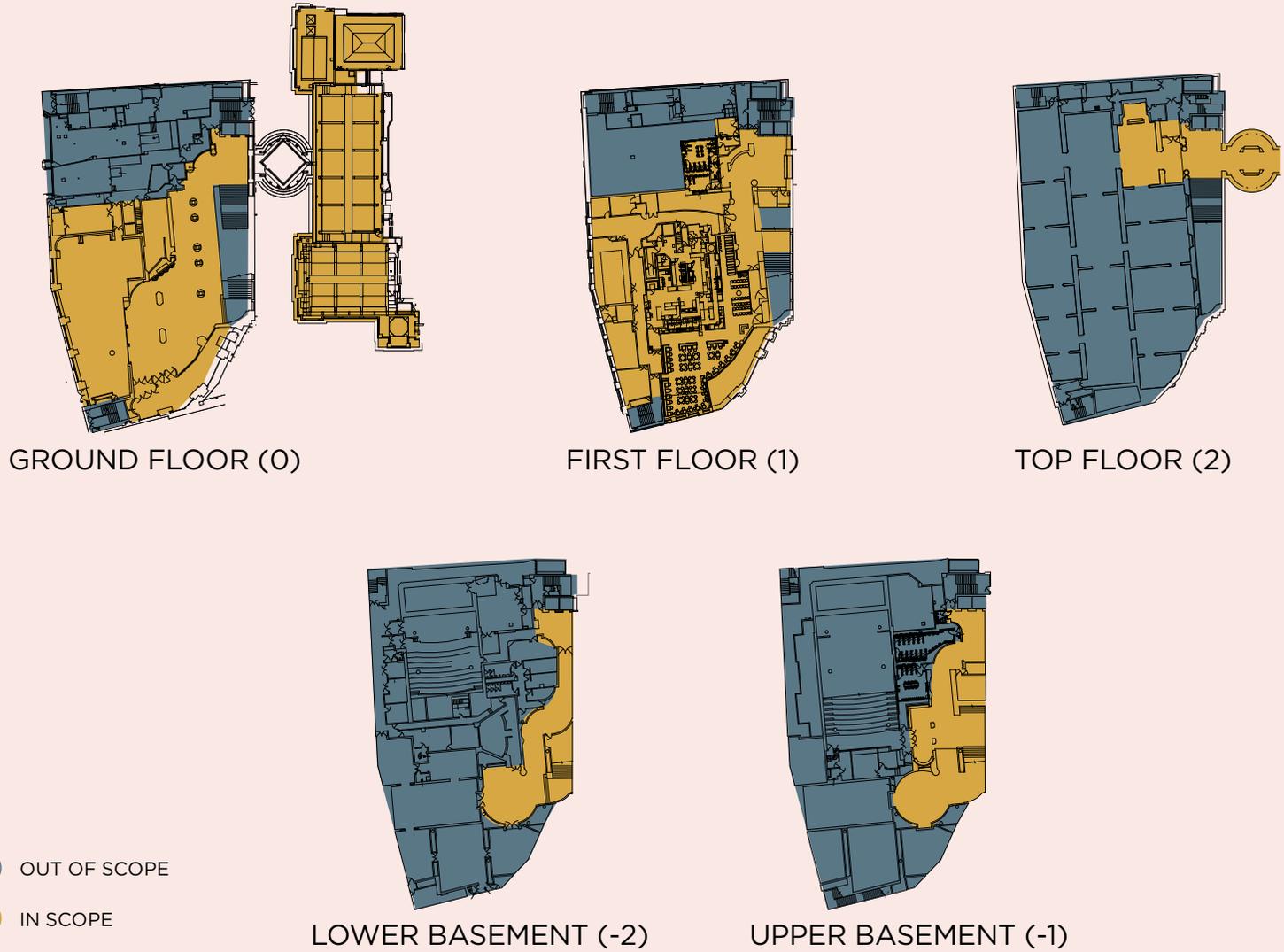


Leighton's *Cimabue in Procession* at the top of the Sainsbury Wing Staircase

# Context and Layout



# SPACE ANALYSIS





The link between the Sainsbury Wing and Wilkins Building

# Outline Space Guidance

There is an area of circa 4,000 square metres of usable space within the curtilage of the NG200 Project scope plus an additional 900 square metres available for the Research Centre in the Wilkins Building. This figure, provided as a benchmark, is based upon the available footprint in the existing arrangement.

The project will repurpose part or all of this space.

The Design Brief should be considered a 'live' document, to evolve and develop as the project progresses through early design stages. A final project brief will be produced as an output of the concept design stage.

Outline descriptions for each type of space can be found on the following pages.

## APPROACH, THRESHOLD, ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE

The project presents an opportunity to enhance the setting of the National Gallery and improve its relationship to Trafalgar Square. The public realm in front of the Sainsbury Wing and the Wilkins Building should be reconsidered to offer a more positive contribution to the setting, augment the Gallery's presence, and resolve some of the practical issues that have arisen in recent years — including addressing post-pandemic design issues regarding crowded urban spaces.

Three possible areas for hard and soft landscape and wayfinding design have been identified:

- the paved area immediately outside the Sainsbury Wing's loggia entry porch;
- the strip of lawn, paths and lightwells that occupy the depth of the Portico along the Wilkins Building's southern façade (from east to west); and
- along Jubilee Walk (the gated passage between the Wilkins Building and the Sainsbury Wing).

Although these areas (shown on page 42) are owned by the Gallery, they contribute to the wider visual setting. Care must be taken to work within the historic fabric and devise a new layer that fits with the existing. Access/egress to the Portico and the Getty Entrance must also be retained.

The design should create a more coherent visual impact across the entire building ensemble facing onto Trafalgar Square. This may involve public art or animating the ground floor edge to the Square.

Equally, it is important to address functional needs that help manage visitor access and wayfinding, such as queuing, security, refreshment and curatorial programming.

There may be opportunities for programming within the public realm adjacent to the Gallery — future-proofed infrastructure should be provided to support this.



Visitors queuing for entrance security checks at the Sainsbury Wing entrance

Trafalgar Square is located within the Northbank Business Improvement District, covering Trafalgar Square, Aldwych and Strand. An update to their Public Realm Vision and Strategy is underway and should be taken into consideration at the appropriate time.

The public realm surrounding the National Gallery is also subject to security requirements which will need to be considered during design development.

## ENTRANCE, WEATHER LOBBY, SECURITY & VETTING

Given the importance of the Gallery's location and the significance of its collection, security is a critical issue at the Gallery generally, and for the Sainsbury Wing initiative specifically.

A security processing space should be provided for up to 200 people to queue and await processing upon arrival at the Gallery. During popular, one-off and high-volume occasions — such as temporary exhibitions — space for additional queuing may be needed. This should be in an area which minimises crossovers with the general public, as well as being space planned to reduce the impact on security staffing needs.

Screening is to be carried out through a mixture of staff and technology. After queuing, visitors will pass through high footfall scanners for an initial security screening. Any visitors that set off the scanners — or who are carrying bags — will then be searched by security staff. For the bag search a raised surface (table or counter) is required.

Ideally, the security processing space would either be in an open or enclosed lobby, adjacent to the project's entrance.

This space should have the architectural, spatial and material qualities of the rest of the proposed scheme. Design interventions focused on promoting public health and wellbeing — such as ventilation, generous access space and cleanliness — should also be considered.

There is a requirement for blast-proofing and Gallery lock-down within this area. Security infrastructure (which will need updating over time) will be required at the entrance.

If the current facility is repurposed as part of the project, then a security situation room will need to be re-provided. This is a dedicated space, with up to six workstations capable of providing security control room services if the main control room (located within the Wilkins Building) is out of commission.

## ORIENTATION & ENTRANCE FOYER

The challenge, described in detail elsewhere, is to ‘announce’ the entrance confidently, and to create an architectural presence that does not rely on the addition of complex orientation and wayfinding mechanisms.

As the main entry, orientation and visitor welcome space – the foyer should be bright, inviting, well-scaled and inspiring. It should communicate that this is a building that promotes health and wellbeing, and provides a safe and pleasant place to dwell.

Consideration could be made for a large volume space where the arrangement of, and connectivity to, adjacent spaces may be over more than one level.

The foyer should be a dynamic space, with good levels of visual and physical connectivity. It should be an architecturally distinguished arrival statement, invoking a sense of welcome; it should be a place to linger and an open invitation to explore the rest of the building.

There should be minimal reliance on orientation and wayfinding signage (to avoid visual noise and clutter) and instead there should be a clear and intuitive hierarchy of routes to adjoining spaces.

The foyer should provide seamless access to the visitor amenity spaces for the project, including cafe/restaurant, retail, information, ticketing, cloakrooms and WC facilities to support the quality of the overall visitor experience.

On a day-to-day basis, the foyer will provide the primary gathering space for the Gallery, with seating, information and other visitor experience services provided within it.

Digital technology could be used to enhance and support the visitor experience, providing, for example, interactive information displays and/or commissioned digital artworks. New technologies focused on providing safe, clean public environments could also be considered.



Sainsbury Wing foyer

The entry screen should include provision for a suitable environmental buffer zone that will ensure control of heat and humidity levels within the Sainsbury Wing galleries.

The foyer is intended to be a flexible space, as well as a creative place to meet and work. It should be able to accommodate diverse arrangements and site-specific and unique installations for an array of artform including film, performance art, fashion and design. It will also be used as an evening venue for official gallery openings, corporate and private client events.

## INFORMATION HUB

The Sainsbury Wing initiative should provide the main visitor information needs and services for the Gallery. Located within or adjacent to the foyer should be the main welcome, reception and information point for the Gallery – the Information Hub. This facility should be suitably located and clearly seen and accessed from the entrance and is not to be confused with other visitor experience facilities also located within the foyer.

There should be good visible sightlines from the welcome, reception and information point across both the entrance and foyer, resulting in a strong and highly visible staff presence. Additional ‘meet and greet’ staff may be located throughout the foyer, as and when required. These staff may provide a range of services, including visitor information, wayfinding guidance, access to services (physical and/or digital) and seeking donations.

The welcome, reception and information point should provide an array of visitor services, including, but not limited to the following: welcome and Gallery information; ticket collection; and Membership.

The provision of each service should be clearly delineated. Located near the welcome, reception and information point should be access to visitor guides, including books, maps and audio-guides.

Information should also be provided within the foyer using digital technology, with hardware and infrastructure provided to support this.

## VISITOR AMENITIES & SUPPORT

Visitor experience is central to the project. Amenities (such as a shop and cafe, cloakrooms, WCs and changing facilities) should be provided.

The Gallery has a desire to maximise income through commercial activity and is in the process of reviewing its commercial strategy across its estate.

As a result, it is interested in reviewing the type and location of both the retail and food and beverage offer. There is also an interest in expanding the kinds of events the Gallery hosts, from fundraisers to private functions. The detail of the offers will be developed with the appointed design team.

Suitably located and easily accessed WCs should be provided as part of the project and are intended to form the central facilities for visitors to the Gallery; however, it is the intention that existing facilities will also be retained where suitable.

These should be modern, hygienic and high-quality facilities, easily cleaned and maintained with minimal disruption, and designed to support inclusion and all visitors' needs, regardless of ability. Consideration of 'Changing Places' requirements and specifications should be addressed.

Cloakroom facilities should be provided through a mixture of staffed and technological services and solutions. As well as providing check-in services for coats and bags, there should be some provision for buggy parking. The cloakroom should be visible from within the foyer, without detracting from other visitor experience services.

Other visitor amenities that may be considered (but that are not specifically included in the Design Brief) include pop-up installations and dedicated spaces for co-working and hosting National Gallery Members.

Throughout, the design should consider how to provide a safe, clean environment for the public.

## RESEARCH CENTRE

The new Research Centre will bring together fragmented spaces within the Gallery devoted to research and study, allowing a transformation in public engagement and resources dedicated to the research of historic painting.

The Research Centre will provide a dedicated space for storage of and access to the Gallery's growing archive and library collection, including its historic painting and collection archives. The Centre will also offer access to the Gallery's digital collections and resources, allowing staff and visitors to consult technical and scientific images of the National Gallery's collection and other paintings.

The Centre will require study spaces for National Gallery staff researchers and visitors, as well as easy access to the library for day-to-day work, and dedicated office and social spaces (including a common room and restrooms).

Engagement spaces for both public and invited research activities (including seminars, lectures, and colloquia) should also be provided, as well as space for displaying objects from the archive collection.

Conditioned spaces for the special collections and the photographic library will be essential, including quarantined storage space.

The Centre will also include spaces for experimentation, and for developing innovative ideas for the development, dissemination and preservation of research.

## UNASSIGNED AREAS

Public circulation should feel generous and architecturally impressive. Consideration should be given to a 'baggy planning' approach, where excess space is planned in to futureproof the building against unforeseen events such as the Covid-19 pandemic.

Operational spaces (such as storage and cleaners' cupboards etc.) should be located, appointed and sized dependent on the functions served.

Service space for plant and service rooms and equipment, and vertical risers and ducts, should be provided, sited in efficient locations to service the project. Use of existing service routes and spaces should be considered, as and where suitable.

Plant and related technical service areas are vital to the smooth operations of the building. As staff-only areas, these spaces should be provided with a high level of security, including access control.

Plant spaces should be dispersed or centralised as needed, in order to maximise spatial and functional efficiencies.

Plant equipment usually has a shorter design life than other elements of projects. Consideration should be made for flexibility and adaptability in the design and layout of plant space(s) to facilitate access, change and updating of services in the future.

**Please note:** The primary plant spaces for the National Gallery are to be retained in their current locations.



Leonardo: Experience a Masterpiece

# Project Details

## BUDGET & PHASING

The Gallery will work with the successful design team to develop the detail of the scope, phasing and costs.

Due to logistical and other challenges, and to ensure delivery for the Bicentennial, an overall available construction budget of between £25 and £30 million should be considered for all phases. An initial phase will be timed to deliver during the Gallery's celebratory Bicentenary year, 2024 and it is aimed to complete subsequent works within a five year timeframe. It is anticipated that preparatory work for the subsequent phases can be completed during the initial phase.

The construction budget excludes contingency, professional fees, client costs, VAT and inflation.

The budget may be reviewed and increased depending on scope decisions, timing and value-for-money decisions.

## PHASING

At present, the works are anticipated to be divided as follows:

### INITIAL PHASE

- Remodelling the front gates, entry sequence and associated public realm
- Interior works to the lobby
- Limited remodelling of the first floor spaces
- Upgrading the supporting facilities, notably visitor orientation and information, retail and security

## SUBSEQUENT PHASES

- Further remodelling of the Sainsbury Wing interiors (the second floor galleries will remain untouched)
- Works to enhance the Portico on the Wilkins Building
- Further public realm works including Jubilee Walk
- Integration of the new Research Centre likely to be given a site in the west wing of the Wilkins Building that immediately adjoins the Sainsbury Wing

## PLANNING APPLICATIONS

It is anticipated that the NG200 Project will require a full Planning Permission application, as well as Listed Building Consent.

The planning application for the initial phase will be supplemented by a masterplanning strategy for the subsequent works. The timeframe and strategy for detailed design and delivery of the subsequent works will be determined during the initial phase.

## STAKEHOLDERS & CONSULTATION

As a significant national institution, housed in a Grade I Listed building, the National Gallery has a wide group of statutory and non-statutory stakeholders. Delivery of the project will require close coordination with these groups.

# Appendices

- A.** Venturi Scott Brown Associates
- B.** Conservation Management Plan
- C.** Historic England Grade I Listing – Wilkins Building
- D.** Historic England Grade I Listing – Sainsbury Wing
- E.** Context – Planning and Stakeholders
- F.** The National Gallery Carbon Management Plan

Appendices B-F provided separately.

# Appendix A



# Venturi, Scott Brown and Associates

## THE SAINSBURY WING'S ARCHITECTURAL LINEAGE

In architecture, the Post-Modern condition's trajectory originated in the questioning of Modernist values. The post-war generation of American architects that produced Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown had, by the 1960s, become wary of the limited scope for design experimentation. As students, they were influenced by the older generation of Modernists, such as Mies van der Rohe and Le Corbusier.

This International Style espoused an architecture of abstract purity, honesty of structure and materials, and universal solutions to building typologies. That movement's guiding rules became functionalist orthodoxy.

*I like complexity and contradiction in architecture. I do not like the incoherence or arbitrariness of incompetent architecture nor the precious intricacies of picturesqueness or expressionism. Instead, I speak of a complex and contradictory architecture based on the richness and ambiguity of modern experience...*

Robert Venturi, Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture (1966)

By contrast, the architecture embodied by the Sainsbury Wing is the visual response to multiple contexts, both in time and of place. The public debates that surrounded the original design competitions for the then new wing were heated exchanges about traditional vs. modern as the most appropriate style for public institutions and the wider cityscape — now a historic footnote.

What endures today is the legacy of Post-Modernism — known affectionately as ‘PoMo’. This term refers to both a movement in architecture and a significant shift in cultural thought across other fields of the visual and literary arts.

New and radical PoMo concepts emerged through the research behind key theoretical texts. Venturi’s explorations sought to draw on a wider field of input to stimulate architectural design. In that vein, Venturi published his seminal book *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (1966). Therein, he made the famous quip, as a riposte to the Miesian dictum, that ‘Less is a Bore’.

Venturi was making an argument for a ‘non-straightforward architecture’, in which there is a celebration of complex relationships between disparate fragments rather than a reductive, formal simplicity.

By engaging with ‘either/or’ instead of black-and-white decision making, a more open and, perhaps, playful approach would, in his view, create architecture that embodied the actual richness and ambiguity of modern life in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

This book is also notable for Venturi’s development of his argument through visual case studies. From his time at the American Academy in Rome, Venturi drew on direct observation of Mannerist examples from the canon of Classical architecture.

The insistence on a return to precedent was not a plea for applied ornament, nor was he advocating a return to classical styles.

Instead, here was a demonstration of an interest in the particular context: the case studies demonstrated how architects had been inventive with the application of formal architectural conventions to the design problem, site or brief.

The outcome was intended as a more engaging, and legible, visual language that was based in a common understanding of symbols or clues.

The Sainsbury Wing



## TRANSLATION INTO PRACTICE — SAINSBURY WING

Venturi's academic work explains the thinking behind the Sainsbury Wing's eclectic façades. The architecture devised by VSBA is an assimilation of fragments, rather than a perfect and pure composition. Each can be read, and they respond to a set context within an overall narrative structure. For example, the facing material on the main façade, Portland Stone, was chosen to blend in with its immediate neighbours.

Deeper than that, the expression of pilasters is a reference to the neo-classical language adopted by Wilkins for the original National Gallery building — but with a twist: as they are drawn across the frontage, the order is deconstructed. Once the façade turns the corner to face Canada House, the proportions of window openings and details engage with the architecture opposite.

This is a demonstration of how architecture can be 'either/or', or both, within a single composition. There are, arguably, key set pieces that characterise VSBA's architectural expression — the façade, the picture galleries, the rotunda bridge link (to the Gallery's main floor in the Wilkins Building) and the grand staircase.

It is worth considering each in turn as a design manifestation of the Post-Modern intellectual process of appropriation and interpretation.

It is a fitting recognition of the Sainsbury Wing within the oeuvre of VSBA that, when Robert Venturi was announced as the Pritzker Prize Laureate in 1991, the awarding organisation chose the Wing as the location for the ceremony.

However, it is important to note that Denise Scott Brown was not honoured as an equal intellectual and creative partner of VSBA and consequently refused to attend the awards ceremony in protest. A 2013 online petition demanding her contribution be retrospectively recognised received over 21,000 signatures (including Robert Venturi's); however, the Pritzker Prize jury declined to act, arguing that the decision of an earlier jury could not be revised.

## ROBERT VENTURI PRITZKER PRIZE CITATION, 1991

Architecture is a profession about wood, bricks, stones, steel and glass. It is also an art form that is based on words, ideas and conceptual frameworks. Few architects of the twentieth century have been able to combine both aspects of the profession, and none have done so more successfully than Robert Venturi.

He has expanded and redefined the limits of the art of architecture in this century, as perhaps no other has through his theories and built works. Of the former, his thin but potent volume, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, published in 1966, is generally acknowledged to have diverted the mainstream of architecture away from modernism.

The extent of the influence that this treatise has had on everyone practicing or teaching architecture is impossible to measure, but readily apparent. In this landmark book, Venturi looked with fresh eyes at the architectural landscape of America and described the inherent honesty and beauty of ordinary buildings. From this simple observation he wove a manifesto that challenged prevailing thinking on the subject of American functionalist architecture, and the minimalism of the International School.

Not content with just theory, Venturi began to implement his convictions. He provided full-scale illustrations of his ideas through his pioneering early buildings. His first houses, including one for his mother in 1961, gave form to his beliefs, confounding the critics and angering many of his peers. Over the intervening years he methodically forged a career that established him not only as a theorist of exceptional insight, but also as a master practitioner of the arts.

His understanding of the urban context of architecture, complemented by his talented partner, Denise Scott Brown, with whom he has collaborated on both more writings and built works, has resulted in changing the course of architecture in this century, allowing architects and consumers the freedom to accept inconsistencies in form and pattern, to enjoy popular taste.

As an architect, planner, scholar, author and teacher, Robert Venturi has distinguished himself as an architect with vision and purpose. His vision and purpose are in accord with the tenets of the Pritzker Architecture Prize qualifying him to take his place among those who are producing significant contributions to humanity through the art of architecture.

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