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## More room at the inn

*MICA's subtle additions to Lincoln's Inn  
PLUS Adam Richards' scheme at  
Walmer Castle*

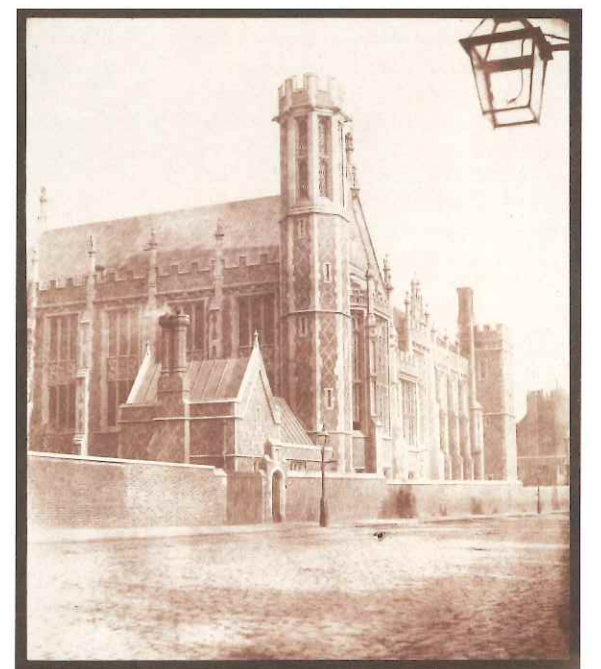






*Building study*  
**Underground  
 advocacy**

MICA has refurbished the Great Hall and Library at Lincoln's Inn in central London while below ground level it has added educational, library and office space







*The Great Hall and Library Project is a series of discrete proposals that are nevertheless holistic in their resolution of Lincoln's Inn's key issues. It includes a refurbishment of the Grade II\*-listed Great Hall and Library and the addition of essential education, library and office floor space through sensitive and efficient extensions adjacent to the Great Hall. The works have dramatically improved the inn's operations and service, while enhancing the historic setting and providing modern facilities fitting for 21st-century legal education.*

Words Rob Wilson  
Photography Andy Stagg, Simon Kennedy

If a £20 million-plus building project could be described as discreet it would be this one. MICA's scheme, which follows the practice's 2013 masterplan, is the most significant development since Victorian times on the inner London estate of Lincoln's Inn. The four Inns of Court are the ancient professional organisations for barristers and Lincoln's Inn is the largest. Yet despite a brief that includes almost 2,000m<sup>2</sup> of new-build elements, as you approach across the inn's central courtyard, there is nothing obviously new to see. For this is an iceberg of a project, with most of the new construction necessarily below ground in what is a fairly

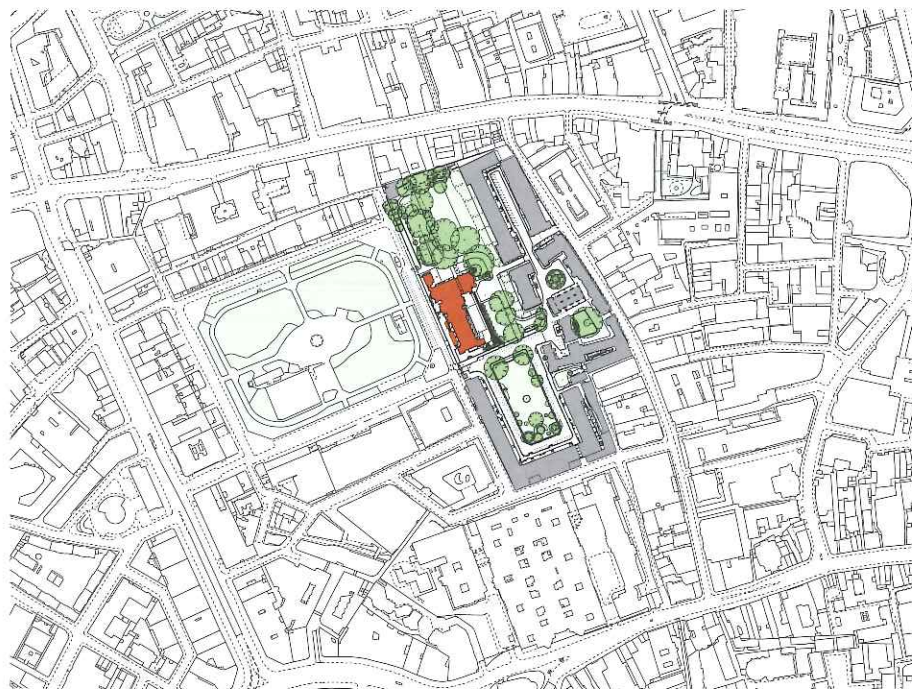
tightly packed historic setting, where some buildings date back to the 16th century.

The scheme's major element is the new Ashworth Education Centre, which lies under a raised terrace that sits loosely corralled by the L-shaped Victorian-Gothic block formed by the Great Hall and Library. It consists of up to 10 flexible advocacy training spaces and a lecture theatre able to seat 150 – facilities that allow the inn to provide its advocacy on site for the first time, and can also function as a self-contained hireable conference facility.

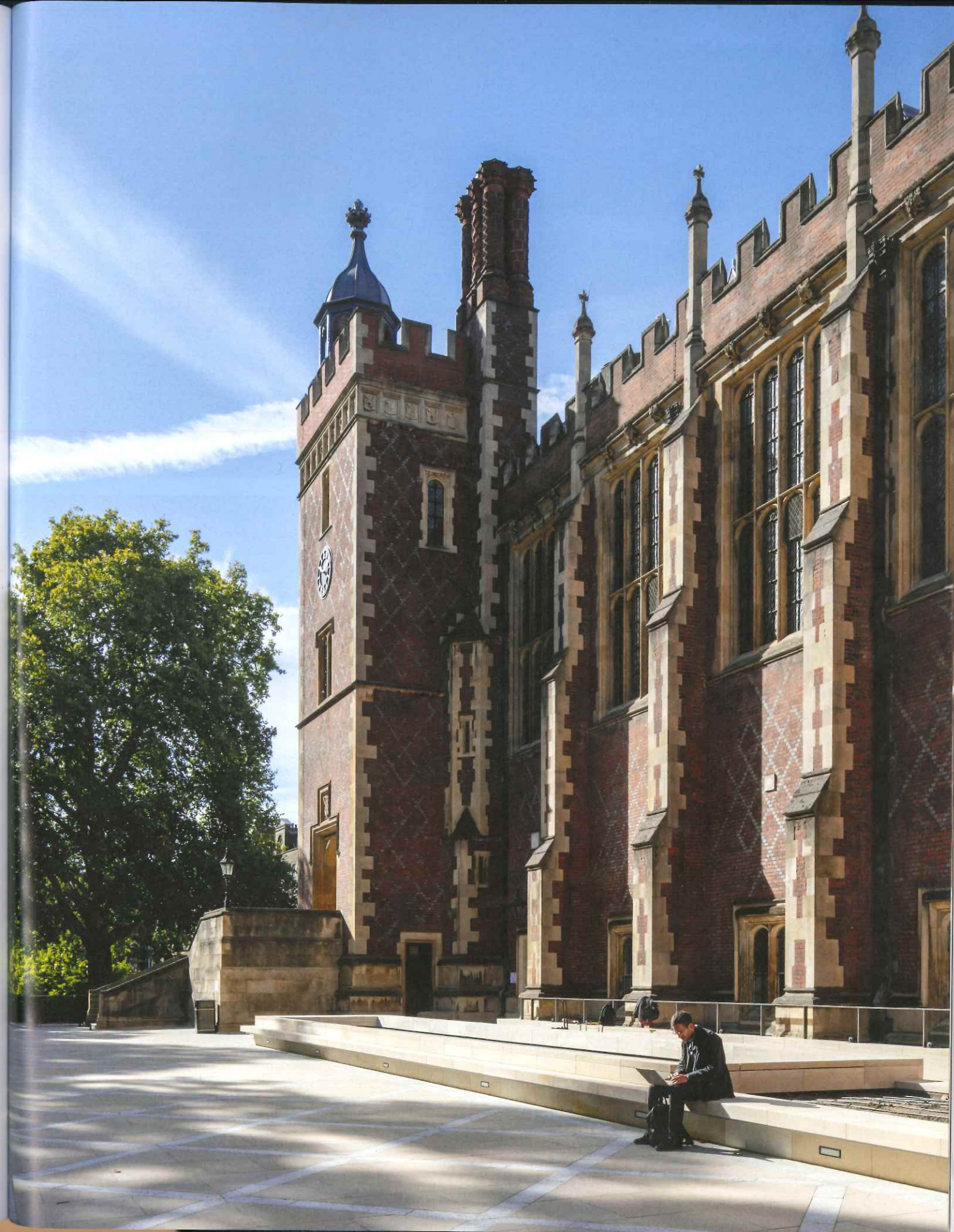
The library extension, meanwhile, is situated on the library's north-west corner. This is essentially the library's 'backside', adjacent to a service gate off Lincoln's Inn Fields on the site of an earlier, poorly constructed and difficult to adapt 1960s building. Its visible element consists of a sober square two-storey aedicular block, which contains new library offices. However the main element here too is subterranean: a basement extension to the library archives, which are necessarily ever expanding with printed volumes of new case law continually being added.

Aside from these largely hidden new-build elements, a large chunk of the project has also consisted of the look-no-hands restoration of the inn's main Great Hall, which is the main ceremonial space of the inn and the library, massively upgrading the fabric and servicing. There was also some phased work on the older, smaller Old Hall to the east, which was used for events during the main construction.

**Despite almost 2,000m<sup>2</sup> of new-build elements, there is nothing obviously new to see – most of it is below ground**



PREVIOUS SPREAD: ANDY STAGG; THIS PAGE: ANDY STAGG; OPPOSITE: SIMON KENNEDY







The Grade II\*-listed combined Great Hall and Library block only dates back to 1845. Its fine Neogothic brick and stone-dressed form was originally designed by Philip Hardwick and his son, with a three-bay library extension by George Gilbert Scott.

The extensive restoration work included removing several damaging adaptations, such as radiators mounted on timber panelling, and bringing the services up to present-day environmental standards. The Great Hall's timber floor had to be replaced, with underfloor heating installed, and the kitchens were also completely revamped. Architecturally, the most significant move has been to re-establish the original ceremonial entrance, accessed up steps at the south-east corner. This is complemented by an accessible entrance via the new education centre, restoring the logic of the architecture that had been lost.

The combined complex of Great Hall and Library sits at the heart of the Oxbridge college-like inn's estate, which consists of a picturesque mishmash of buildings and architectural styles dating back several hundred years. (Lincoln's Inn has its origins in the 14th century though it only moved to its present site in the 16th century).

No doubt, it was work MICA has done at Oxbridge colleges in similar historic context/courts that recommended it as a safe pair of hands for this project, particularly its project at The Queen's College, Oxford, completed in 2017. This similarly saw the sinking of an underground extension to its archive, in an historic courtyard setting adjacent to that college's 17th-century library.

Certainly as demonstrated through recent projects, including its work at Centre Point, MICA has developed a skill-set in the conservation and restoration of buildings

### The sense and handling of natural light in these spaces is impressive, particularly in the double bank of training spaces

up to and including Modernist structures. This is combined with a demonstrable track-record of successfully making quite radical insertions, notably basement extensions, in relatively historic and sensitive contexts, working closely with engineers such as, in this case, Eckersley O'Callaghan.

Despite the extensive groundwork necessary, for the new Ashworth Education Centre in particular, the herbaceous border planting that fronts the terrace over the centre is already beginning to re-establish itself. It will soon shield from view the strip of sloping rooflights that runs along the centre's heart, lighting the training rooms beneath. These, together with a stone-rimmed seat-like rectangle of skylight set back at the rear of the terrace – relaid to reflect the Great Hall's brickwork above – provide clues to the scale of the intervention beneath.

The centre's new main entrance is equally subtle, a relatively small stone-arched doorway, mimicking an existing south terrace door to its left, set in the existing south terrace wall which runs like a plinth around the base of the Great Hall.

The scale of this doorway has a slightly Alice in Wonderland-like feel, as after entering, the relatively small lobby presents a primary route down wide steps and opens out into the skylit glow of the Ashworth Centre. Ahead a lift provides step-free access down to the centre and up to the Great Hall, which is also accessed by a small stair on the left. Despite rising up, this appears



the darker space, due to the European oak panelling lining it being stained to match the woodwork of the Great Hall above.

Taking the steps down to the centre, you enter at the upper level of a kind of skinny top-lit, double-height atrium, which drops down to the left with steel and glass bridges crossing over it. Ahead, the brickwork bases of the Great Hall's buttresses, exposed and repointed, provide the main textural contrast to a sea of blond wood, lining walls and balcony edges. The series of bridges leads to the upper tier of training spaces, which can be reconfigured through foldable







SIMON KENNEDY

dividing walls into anything from five separate rooms to a single large space.

Perhaps because of the initial pinch-point, there's a great sense of space as you enter. Steps ahead take you down to another identical bank of training rooms at the lower level, as well as offering a glimpse into the main double-height 150-seat lecture theatre, which is highly-flexible with retractable bleacher seating.

The sense and handling of natural light in these spaces is impressive, particularly in the double bank of training spaces. These are naturally lit from the sloping strip of rooflight, which forms the top of what reads like a glass vitrine let down two storeys. One end of this also forms a glazed upper corner to the lecture theatre, offering a small patch of sky visible in the otherwise deep-set basement space, more than 5m below ground level.

The various skylights provide good levels of natural light while their depth guards against significant solar gain. And though these subterranean spaces are necessarily mechanically ventilated, the energy used for this and for heating is renewable, coming from a ground-source heat pump. This together with the increased servicing and fabric efficiency achieved throughout has helped to significantly reduce overall energy use for the whole Great Hall and Library complex, with the project achieving a BREEAM 'Very Good' rating.

What is less successful is the use of material. The blond oak aesthetic, which in

**While the buttress brickwork does provide texture, its repointing somehow gives it a fake over-brickiness more akin to a Harvester**



ANDY STAGG

any case has become a trope over the last few years, is certainly well detailed and resolved, forming thick walls of storage, or shielding acoustic panels. But being primarily veneer for cost reasons, it's very flat, offering little warmth and no texture for the dramatic falling light to animate. And while the buttress brickwork does provide texture, its repointing somehow gives it a fake over-brickiness more akin to a Harvester. One might have hoped for a more Piranesi-like approach, a tougher, more textural and less polite tenor to the architecture, that celebrated the underground nature of the spaces to a degree, expressing more rawly the engineered making of these spaces.



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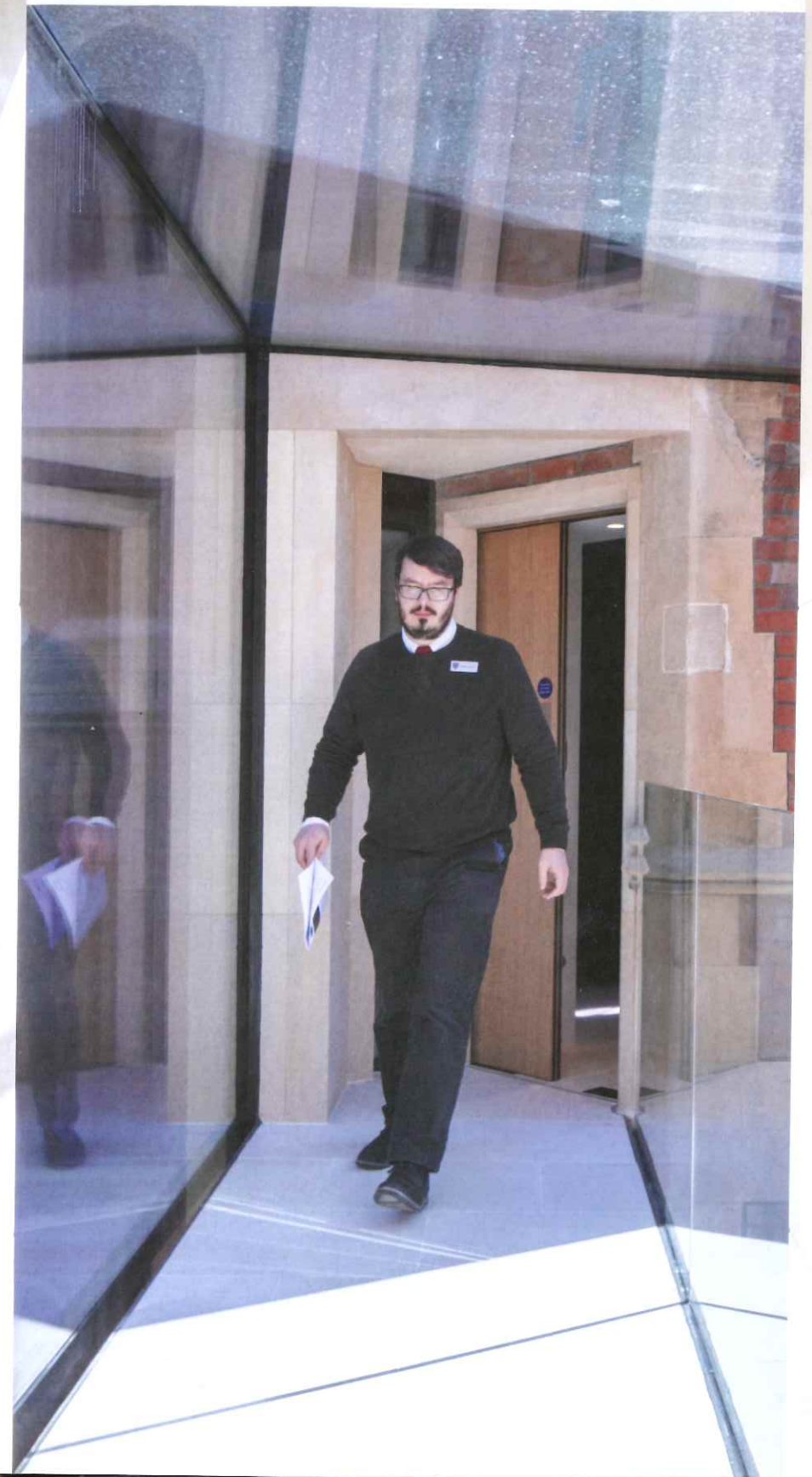
Like to the education centre, the library and archive extension is also very cleanly achieved. It is neatly accessed from the library via an existing doorway into a round turret. In this, a spiral stair has been twisted, reset and tapped off below (*pictured opposite*), now just serving the library balcony above, allowing a passage across a short glazed link to a much more practical stair and new lift, vastly improving accessibility to the archive store below.

This stair serves three levels of office and two staggered levels of store, all cleverly resolved and neatly fitted in. While the upper library office is well-lit with a central skylight, lighting to the two office floors below – one a mezzanine, one a semi-basement – which share a window, is less successful.

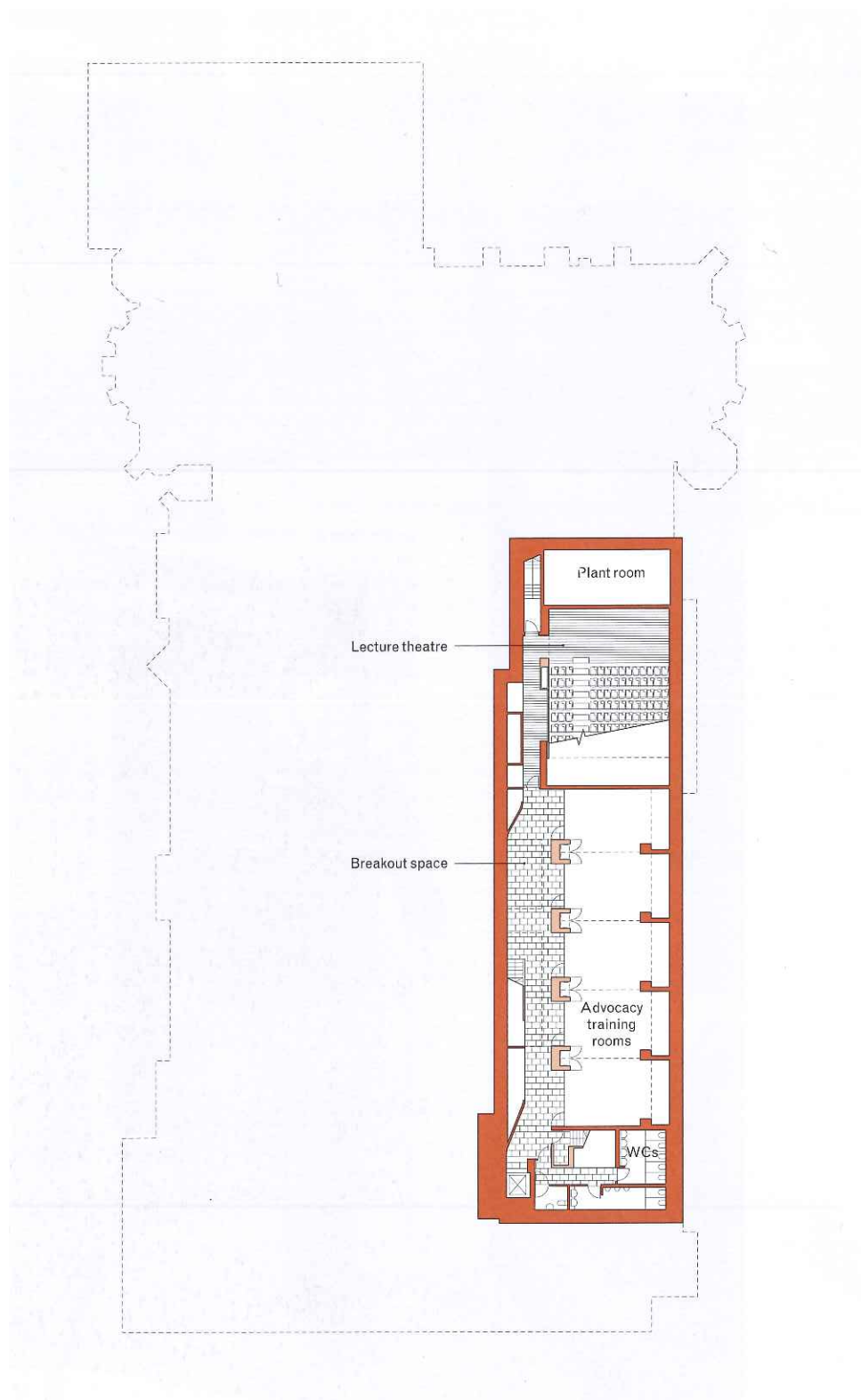
Externally too, the architecture, while well detailed and carefully knitted-in via the glazed link, remains a bit bloodless compared with the gutsy flourish of the surrounding Victorian Gothic. MICA has designed the window sets with stone surrounds to echo the Victorian stone mullions, but it feels the practice missed a trick by not introducing some play in a patterning of the brick akin to the Victorian building, or in the accenting of its cornice, a PoMo flourish to lighten the otherwise rather po-faced, soft-modern mood.

Overall, though, there is an impressive ease in what MICA has achieved. The breadth of the work is impressive, from the structural gymnastics and engineering feat of the excavated basements, to the careful knitting of new to old, down to the level of concealed movement joints. But one could perhaps wish for a little more character in the scheme. You are left with a sense that the scheme's new architecture could have been pushed more; that while it is necessarily discreet, it is also unnecessarily self-effacing.

OPPOSITE: SIMON KENNEDY





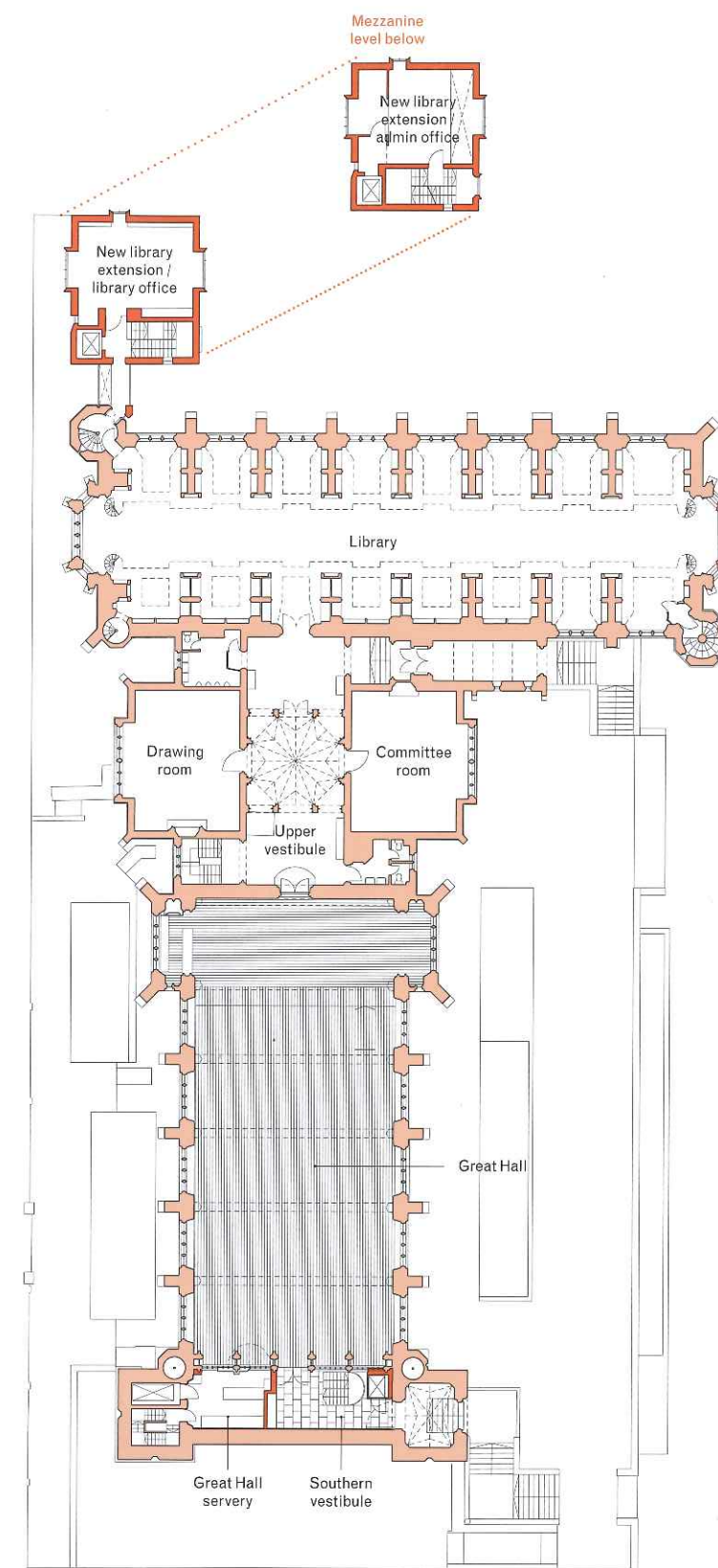
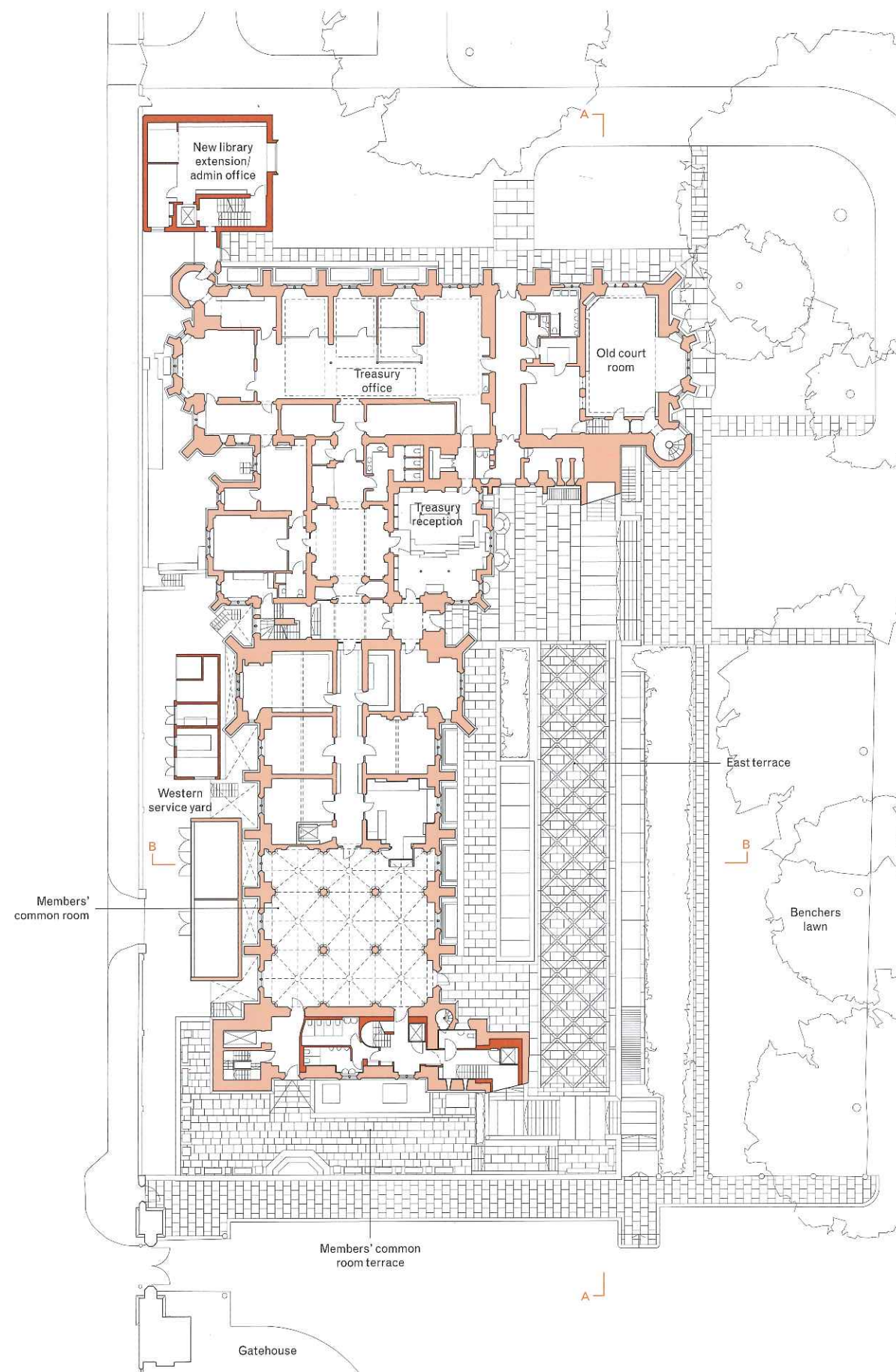


Existing building  
New building



0 5m







## Project data

Start on site June 2016

Completion July 2019

Gross internal floor area

1,850m<sup>2</sup> GIA (new build),

1,400m<sup>2</sup> NIA (existing building  
refurbishment)

Construction cost Confidential

Architect MICA Architects

Client The Honourable Society of  
Lincoln's Inn

Structural engineer Eckersley O'Callaghan

(Ashworth Centre and Library extension),

AECOM, (Great Hall refurbishment)

M&E consultant Mott Macdonald

Quantity surveyor Gardiner & Theobald

CDM co-ordinator Gardiner & Theobald

(principal designer)

Approved building inspector Local

authority

Main contractor Graham Construction

CAD software used MicroStation

Planning consultant Montagu Evans

Catering consultant Duncan Ackery/Keith

Winton Design

Acoustic consultant Sandy Brown

Associates

Fire engineer Jeremy Gardner Associates

Access consultant All Clear Designs

Landscape architect Jeremy Rye Studio

Heritage lighting Light Perceptions

## Performance data

On-site energy generation 17.6%

Heating and hot water load 7.26 kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/yr

Total energy load 32.66 kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/yr

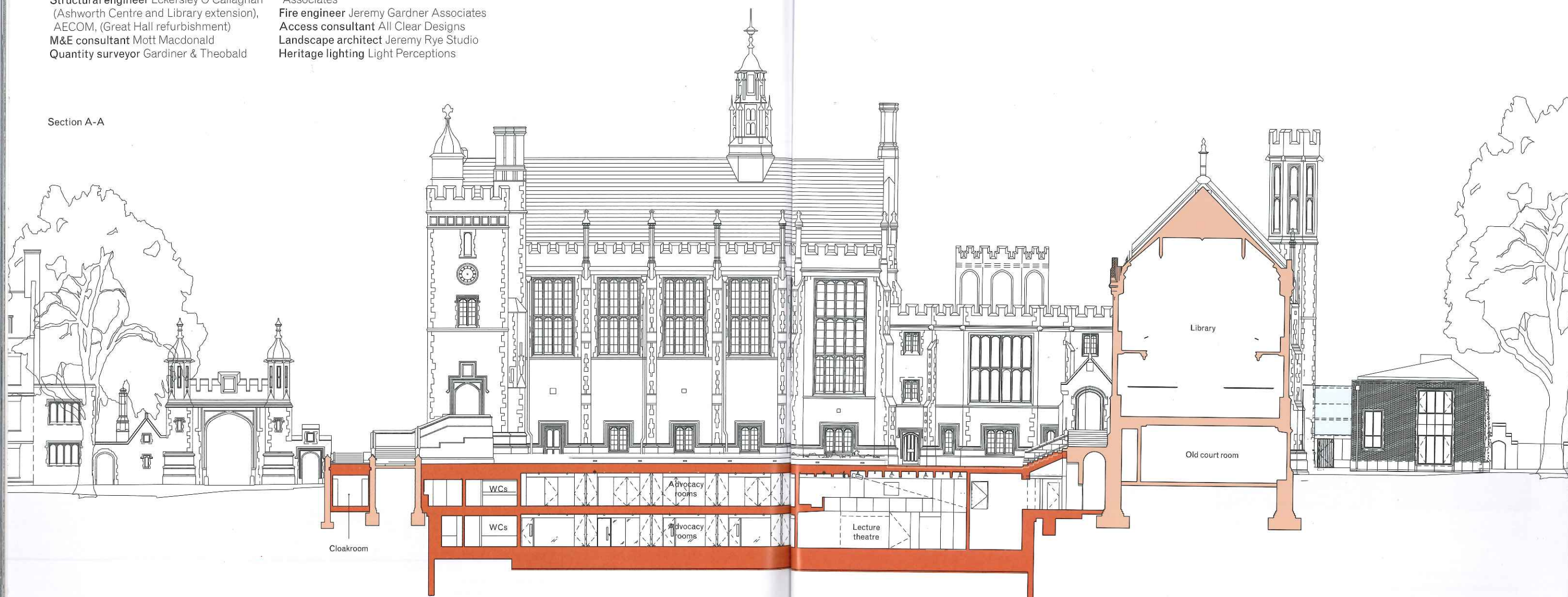
Carbon emissions (all) 16.2 kg/m<sup>2</sup>

Airtightness at 50Pa 2.96 m<sup>3</sup>/hr/m<sup>2</sup>

Overall area-weighted U-value 0.2W/m<sup>2</sup>K

Predicted design life 60 years

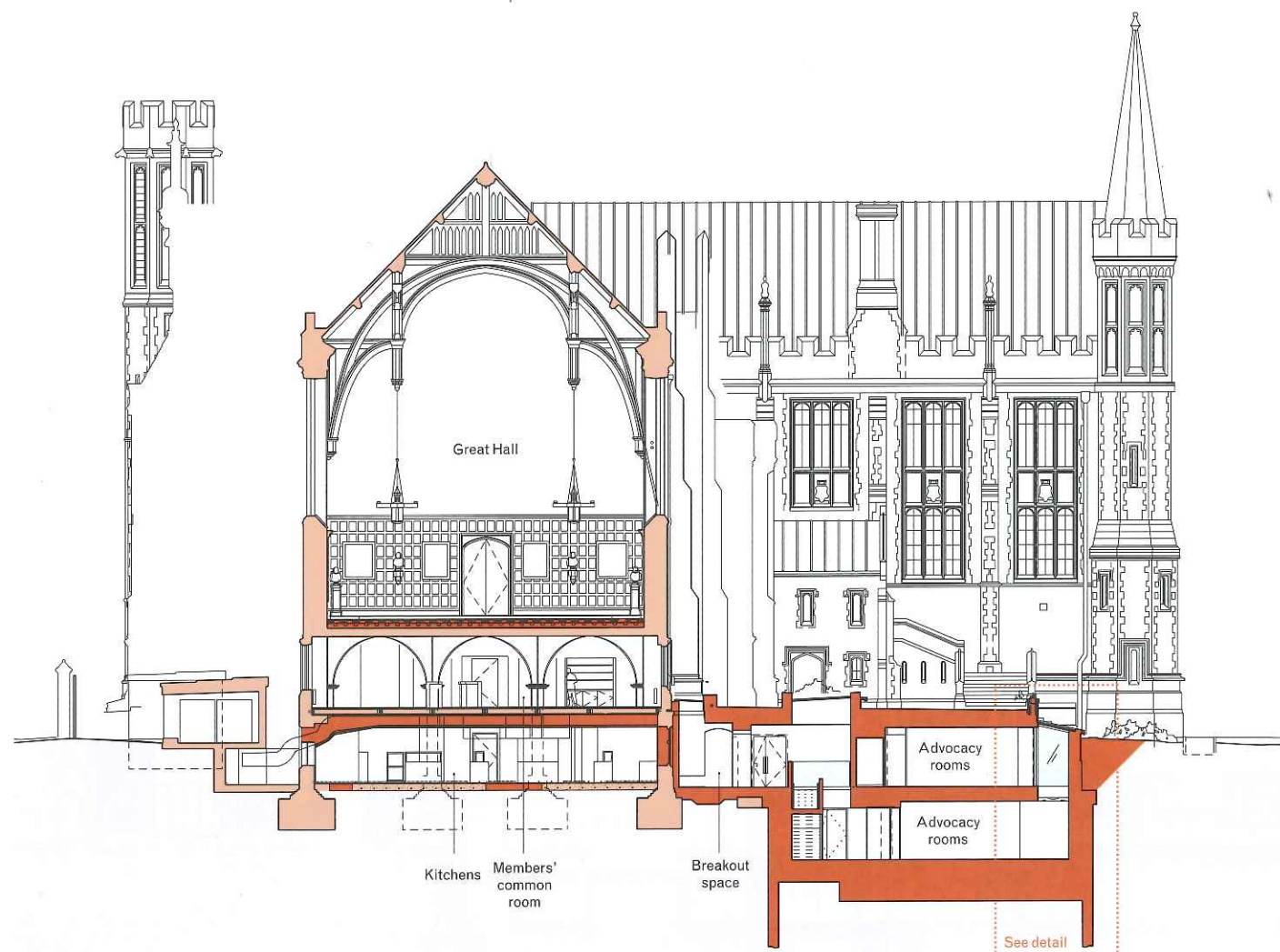
Section A-A



Existing building  
New building

0 2m





Existing building  
New building

0 2m

## Architect's view

We took a holistic approach to the complex of buildings, removing insensitive 20th-century additions, conserving existing fabric and remodelling spaces to reveal the character of the Grade II\*-listed Great Hall and Library. The design adds new elements that integrate with the historic fabric and offer previously unseen views of the existing building.

The works reinstate the key access routes and clarity of movement within and around the building. Reopening the southern entrance stair returns ceremony to the ascent into the hall, re-establishing the sense of arrival that was subdued by previous works. A new timber floor with underfloor heating in the Great Hall provides more effective thermal

comfort and the reinstatement of the timber wainscoting that lines the room restores the hall's grandeur. Comprehensive drainage and waterproofing works in the basement safeguard the building's long-term future.

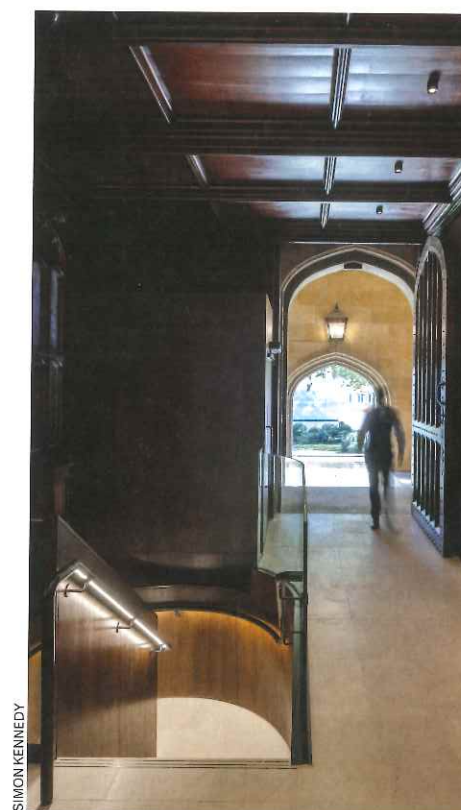
The Ashworth Centre places education at the heart of the inn, providing high-quality teaching facilities. Along with the library extension, the new buildings are designed to be discreet and sympathetic to the inn's historic context. Large rooflights and double-height spaces bring natural light into the heart of the buildings.

The design provides new education, library and administration facilities with minimum visual impact on the historic

setting of the Great Hall and Library building and on the wider setting of the inn.

A holistic energy strategy helped to significantly reduce the running costs of the historic building stock. Existing building systems have been upgraded to be more efficient and sustainable; using renewable energy from a new ground source heat pump within the new education development. Rainwater harvesting and a sustainable urban drainage system (SUDs) have also been incorporated into the new buildings and despite the age of the buildings and heritage restrictions, the project achieves a BREEAM Very Good rating.

*Tim Paul, associate director, MICA Architects*



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## Client's view

Lincoln's Inn, as one of the four Inns of Court, plays a central role in the rule of law. The estate to support this work is located across 4.5ha of quiet historic buildings. One of its most important functions is the education of student members and barristers. The inn was keen to expand its education programme, reaching out to individuals from backgrounds where a career in legal advocacy was never expected. But its existing education facilities were off site as well as being too small, with poor ventilation and no natural daylight.

The new Ashworth Centre provides excellent facilities, highly rated by both pupils/students and the senior barristers

using the premises. It provides exactly the kind of flexible facilities needed to support the inn's widening net of education, together with committee and meeting space. The centre has a light and airy feel, and users regularly say they do not feel they are in a basement space at all.

MICA's original masterplan included an assessment of library needs. It had run out of book storage space on-site, but the need for space was not diminishing. Again, an innovative solution was achieved, providing three floors of offices flooded with natural light, and a substantial increase in basement book storage space at the centre of the estate.

This addition will ensure that the library is able to provide ready access to its complete collection for many years.

Building users' comfort has been carefully considered and takes advantage of the inn's peaceful verdant setting to provide natural ventilation to the office spaces, holistically improving wellbeing of users through connection to the outdoors.

The new and refurbished spaces provide exactly the facilities needed, have been very well received, and will ensure the inn has excellent facilities for a long time to come. *Philip Ardley, director of estates, The Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn*





## Working detail

The rooflight inserted beside the original stone parapet wall to the east terrace provides natural light to the two new levels of advocacy training facilities. Acoustic double-glazed screens admit natural light deep into the advocacy rooms, maintaining acoustic privacy between adjacent training rooms while offering long views out towards the rooftops of the inn's historic estate. Automated roller blinds linked to the lighting controls allow each of the advocacy rooms to be controlled for a variety of training set-ups. Oak veneered retractable partitions allow the training rooms to be subdivided or opened-up for large events.

The basement of the education facility was excavated to two-storeys with a new piled wall retaining the lawn to the east. At lower basement level, a raised access floor distributes air throughout the facility. Air for the advocacy rooms is supplied through a low-level diffuser, while at upper basement level it comes via timber veneered ductwork columns.

At terrace level, the original stonework was carefully deconstructed, and individual stones catalogued before being reset on the new reinforced concrete structure. The structurally glazed rooflight sits within a stainless-steel frame and is dressed in new facing limestone to match the stonework of the existing building. Once established, the planting of the flower board will conceal the new rooflight, ensuring minimum visual impact on the historic setting.

*Tim Paul, associate director, MICA Architects*

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Benchers' border  
rooflight detail section

