

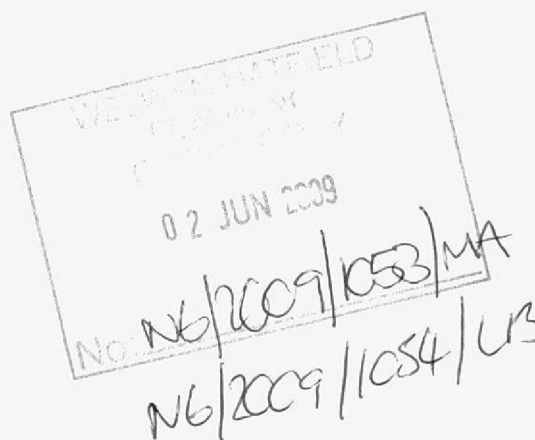
Heritage

Listed Building Statement



On behalf of:
George Wimpey North Thames

In respect of:
Office Block (Buildings 1 to 4)
Roche Product Factory



Date:
May 2007

Reference:
734906-2 R0002v3



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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This statement has been prepared by DPP Heritage to support the applications made on behalf of the George Wimpey North Thames for planning permission and listed building consent for the redevelopment proposals for the former Roche site, Broadwater Road in Welwyn Garden City. The statement, in association with the accompanying information has been prepared to justify and support the proposals for alterations and works at the grade II listed Office Block (Buildings 1 to 4) Roche Product Factory.
- 1.2 This statement sets out the relevant national guidance and local listed building policy context. It goes on to assess the listed building's special architectural and historic interest as found today, with reference to the building's historical development and architectural character, in light of the Government's principles of selection for buildings to be added to the statutory lists.
- 1.3 The nature and extent of the proposals, both the conversion and necessary alterations to the listed building and the redevelopment of the wider site, are reviewed in light of the building's identified character, special interest and setting; and, relevant statutory duties, national guidance and local policy.
- 1.4 It is concluded that on the basis of such assessment that the proposals offer an opportunity to secure the long term future use of the listed building, enhance its setting and integrate it as part of a new community within Welwyn Garden city. Importantly, the proposals would not harm the building's special architectural and historic interest.

2.0 Historic Building Policy and Guidance

- 3.1 The proposals for the Roche site and the listed building have been evolved and have to be considered in light of historic building policy and guidance. The statutory duties, national guidance and local plan policies relevant to the proposals supported by this statement are briefly summarised below.

Statutory duties

- 3.2 The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 provides that listed building consent is required for;

'(s.7)....any works for the demolition of a listed building or for its alteration or extension in any manner which would affect its character as a building of special architectural or historic interest..'

- 3.3 In determining such applications the following duty is placed upon the decision maker;

's.16(2) In considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works the local planning authority, or as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.'

National advice

- 3.4 PPG15: Planning and the Historic Environment provides a full statement of Government policies for the identification and protection of historic buildings, conservation areas, and other elements of the historic environment. The PPG sets out (para. 3.5) the general criteria that are generally relevant to the consideration of all listed building consent applications:

- i. the importance of the building, its intrinsic architectural and historic interest and rarity, in both national and local terms;*
- ii. the particular physical features of the building (which may include its design, plan, materials or location) which justify its inclusion in the list: list descriptions may draw attention to features of particular interest or value, but they are not exhaustive and other features of importance (eg. Interiors) may come to light after the building's inclusion in the list;*

- iii. *the building's setting and its contribution to the local scene, which may be very important,...*
- iv. *the extent to which the proposed works would bring substantial benefits for the community....*

3.5 The PPG provides advice in respect of the use and alteration of listed buildings. The following is particularly pertinent to the consideration of the proposals supported by this statement:

'2.18 New uses may often be the key to building's or area's preservation, and controls over land use, density, plot ratio, daylighting and other planning matters should be exercised sympathetically where this would enable a historic building or area to be given a new lease of life..

3.8 Generally the best way of securing the upkeep of historic buildings and areas is to keep them in active use. For the great majority this must mean economically viable uses if they are to survive, and new, and even continuing, uses will often necessitate some degree of adaptation....

3.9 Judging the best use is one of the most important and sensitive assessments that local planning authorities and other bodies involved in conservation have to make. It requires balancing the economic viability of possible uses against the effect of any changes they entail in the special architectural or historic interest of the building or area in question. In principle the aim should be to identify the optimum viable use that is compatible with the fabric, interior, and setting of the historic building...

3.10 The best use will very often be the use for which the building was originally designed, and the continuation or reinstatement of that use should certainly be the first option when the future of a building is considered...

3.12 ...In judging the effect of any alteration and extension it is essential to have assessed the elements that make up the special interest of the building in question. They may comprise not only obvious visual features such as a decorative façade or, internally, staircases or decorated plaster ceilings, but the spaces and layout of the building and the archaeological or technological interest of surviving structure and surfaces...

3.13 Many listed buildings can sustain some degree of sensitive alteration or extension to accommodate continuing or new uses. Indeed, cumulative changes reflecting the history of use and ownership are themselves an

aspect of the special interest of some buildings, and the merit of some new alterations or additions, especially where generated within a secure and committed long term ownership, should not be discounted.'

- 3.6 With respect to conditions that may be attached to a listed building consent, PPG15 advises;

'Later approval of details

B.10 The authority must always be satisfied that it has adequate information to assess the effect of proposed works on the listed building before granting listed building consent: the extent of work, the method to be used, and the materials involved are all important. However, section 17(2) of the Act permits authorities to impose conditions requiring the subsequent approval of specified details of the works (whether or not these had been set out in the application).....It avoids the need for the authority to refuse consent if it is satisfied that the remaining details can safely be left for subsequent approval; but it should never be used unless authorities are satisfied that they have enough details to assess the impact of the proposals on the building as a whole.'

- 3.8 PPG15 also usefully sets out the criteria at paragraph 6.10 by which buildings are selected for inclusion on the statutory lists which provide the parameters for assessing special architectural or historic interest:

*' - **architectural interest:** the lists are meant to include all buildings which are of importance to the nation for the interest of their architectural design, decoration and craftsmanship; also important examples of particular building types and techniques (eg. buildings displaying technological innovation or virtuosity) and significant plan forms;*

*- **historic interest:** this includes buildings which illustrate important aspects of the nation's social, economic, cultural or military history;*

*- **close historical association:** with nationally important people or events;*

*- **group value,** especially where buildings comprise an important architectural or historic unity or a fine example of planning (eg. squares, terraces or model villages).'*

Welwyn Hatfield District Plan

- 2.1 The relevant Development Plan document is the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005. The policies relating to listed buildings are as follows:

'Policy R25 - Works to Listed Buildings' that listed building consent will be refused unless the following criteria are satisfied:

- "(i) New works respect the character, appearance, and setting of the building in terms of design, scale and materials;
- (ii) Architectural or historic features which are important to the character and appearance of the building (including internal features) are retained unaltered;
- (iii) The historic form and structural integrity of the building are retained; and
- (iv) Full detailed drawings of the proposed works are submitted with the application."

'Policy R26 - Alternative Uses for Listed Buildings' supports new uses for listed buildings where:

- "(i) The proposal would not harm the character or setting of the building;
- (ii) The change of use could be successfully implemented without the essential need for other development which would harm the building's character or setting, and;
- (iii) The change of use results in the continued preservation of the building's fabric or its restoration."

'Policy R27 - Demolition of Listed Buildings' outlines the Council's approach to applications for the complete or partial demolition of a listed building.

3.0 Historic Development and Architectural Interest of the Building

- 3.1 The Roche products factory was included on the list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest at grade II on 10 October 1980. It is by Otto R Salvisberg of Zurich in association with C Stanley Brown (with later additions). The list description was amended on 1 April 1981 to make reference to the later 1950s additions being of no special interest. It reads as follows

"In the entry for BROADWATER ROAD 1/27 Roche Products Factory The address shall be amended to read: Office Block (Buildings 1 to 4) to Roche Products Factory In part 2 of the entry the following sentence should be added: 'The 1950s additions are not of special interest' 1. 5260 BROADWATER ROAD Roche Products Factory TL 21 SW 1/27 10.10.80 II 2. 1938-40 by Otto R Salvisberg of Zurich in association with C Stanley Brown, with later additions. The original factory buildings lie in axis with but behind and to the left of the original administration block whose entrance is on its short end. The construction is of reinforced concrete and the factory buildings are steel framed; external surfaces are rendered in an off-white colour. The administration block is 2-storeyed with the bronze entrance doors set well back behind pilotis and with 7 narrow, deeply set vertical windows in the wall above. To the right, the principal staircase in a glazed door, the only feature to break the austere white cubic form of the group of buildings. The factory buildings 4-storeyed with single-storeyed spurs. Metal casement windows Georgian in proportion but closely set in long horizontal bands and the general horizontality of the building is further emphasized by the widely projecting flat roof."

Historical Development

The Ordnance Survey maps referred to below can be found at Appendix 1

- 3.2 The list description refers to the buildings as dating between 1938 and 1940. The area to the east of the railway line remained in agricultural use in 1925 as can be seen in the Ordnance survey map of that date. Office Block (Buildings 1 to 4) was the

first building on the Roche site and remained the dominant built form into the 1960's as can be seen in the 1938-39 and 1960 Ordnance Survey maps.

- 3.3 By the 1970s a concentration of industrial development, including the intensification of built form on the application site and in the surrounding area is evident as seen in the Ordnance Survey map of 1976. The principal view of the listed building from Broadwater Road, however, and the relationship of the two principal built volumes and the single storey 'finger block', with the formal green space fronting the road remains largely intact. An article by Fello Atkinson, one of the architects of building 7 and 25¹ notes how the mature landscape facing Broadwater Road was retained as part of the masterplan developed for the site in the late 1950's and into the 1960's. This area forms an important part of the setting of the listed building today. The boundary wall (listed) to the front of property is also evident.

Architectural Interest

- 3.4 Otto Rudolf Salvisberg 1882-1940 was born in Switzerland and settled in Berlin in 1908. He had become influenced by the modern movement by the 1920s and these influences can be seen in his many housing project in Berlin. Salvisberg is well known on the continent, but primarily for residential developments. He did, however, undertake other projects for Roche Germany.
- 3.5 The building is described by Pevsner² as, "white and unadorned, and still refreshingly modern." The strong form and external envelope of the elements remains intact and whilst changes have taken place the qualities described by Pevsner are still clearly evident today, particularly when viewed from Broadwater Road. Internally, however, much of the specialist areas and the original fittings have been lost.
- 3.6 An article from the Architects Journal in 1939(AJ) ³ provides useful archival information on the building when completed and illustrates many of the key internal spaces at the time as well as proposals for the future extension of the building. This can be found at appendix 2 and is a useful marker to gauge the extent of alterations that have taken place as discussed in more detail below.

¹ Concrete Quarterly Oct-Dec 1975

² Buildings of England, Hertfordshire, Pevsner & Cherry, 2002

³ The Architects Journal, 19 January 1939

Exterior

3.7 The list description (whilst primarily intended for identification of the building) makes reference to the following with regards to the structure and external appearance of the building:

- Reinforced concrete construction
- Steel framed factory buildings
- Rendered external surfaces (off-white)
- Bronze entrance doors
- Principal staircase in glazed bay.
- Metal casement windows, Georgian in proportion
- Widely projecting flat roof

3.8 Externally the administrative block remains largely intact and has undergone little alteration. The impressive entrance, though without the Roche crest, retains the bronze doors and travertine finish to the door reveal. The glass block glazing to the grand staircase has, however, been lost, and was replaced by curtain glazing before the listing. Much of the bronze windows remain, however, and these would have contrasted with the original steel ones painted blue in the '4 storey' factory building.

3.9 The fenestration to the factory block and the single storey spurs has been replaced and is of a modern design. One of the single storey spurs (north-western most one has been lost) was probably replaced by the single storey glazed link which appears to date from the 1980s.

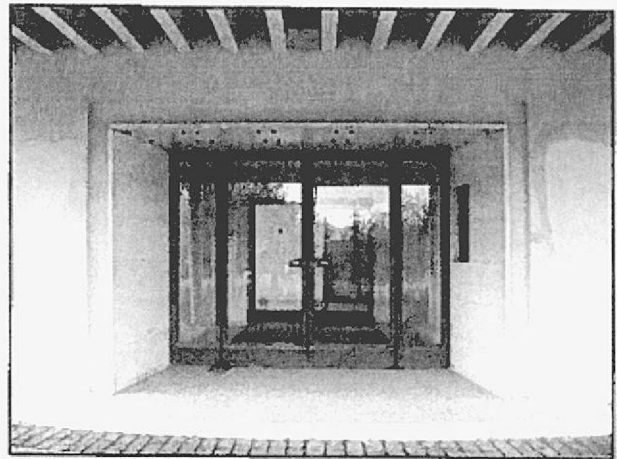
Interior

2.15 A visual survey has been undertaken of the interior as found today to assess the extent of the remaining historic fabric and nature of the spaces and finishes in order to inform the application proposals. Considerable change has taken place to much of the interior and the list description notes that much of the fenestration was altered in the 1980's. The structure is generally robust and has provided a relatively high level of flexibility over the years to allow for alterations to accommodate changing functional requirements.

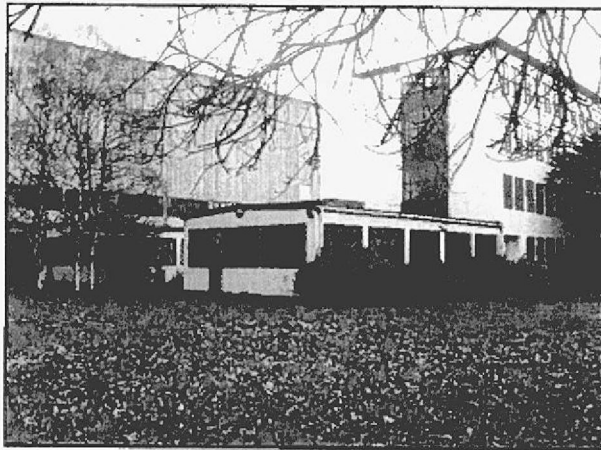
Exterior of the building



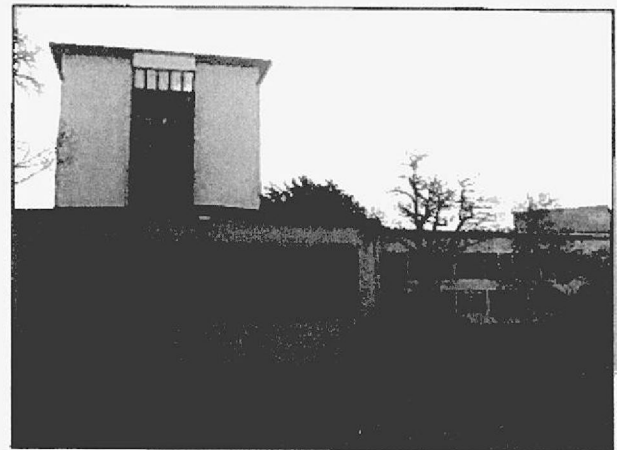
Photograph from Architecture Illustrated taken in 1940 Main entrance to administration block



Bronze doors to main entrance



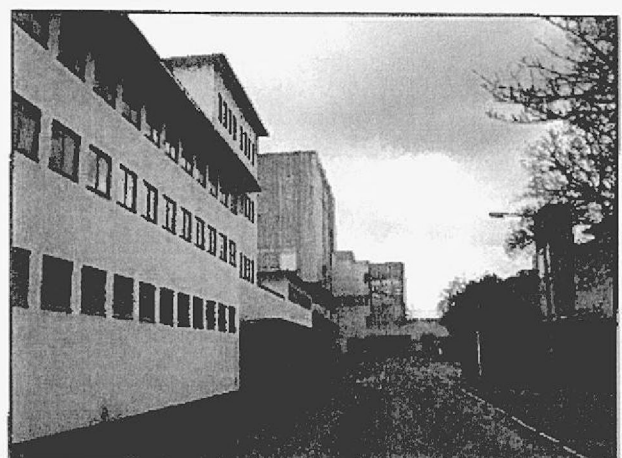
Single storey finger blocks and '4 storey' block



View of all 3 component parts - finger block, '4 storey' block and administration block.

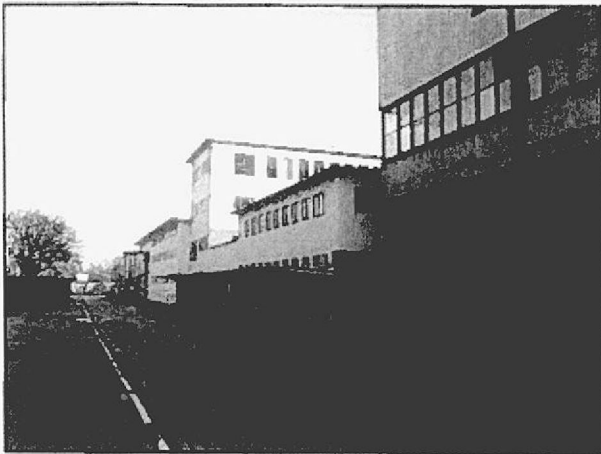


Administration block as seen from open green space

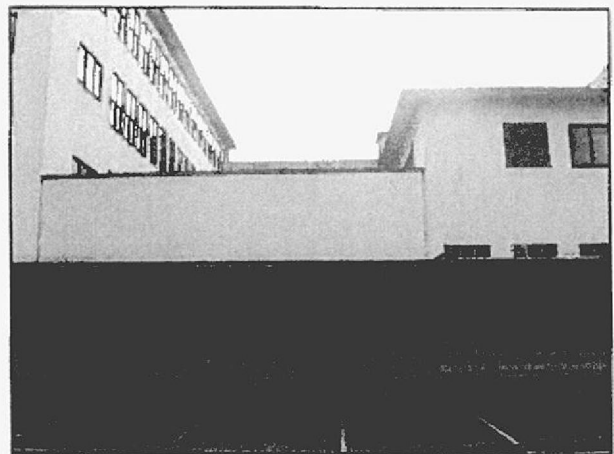


Northern elevation of Administration block with '4 storey' block beyond

Exterior of the building



Northern elevation with 1950s extension in middle ground



Linking element between 1950s extensions and '4 storey' block



Return elevation of 1950s extension with 1980s wall



Internal view of corridor in 1950s extension with later external wall (1980s)

- 3.10 Parts of the Administration block remain largely intact and these are identified on the plan at Appendix 3 'Areas most sensitive to change'. The key elements of importance, other than the plan form, are as follows:

Ground floor

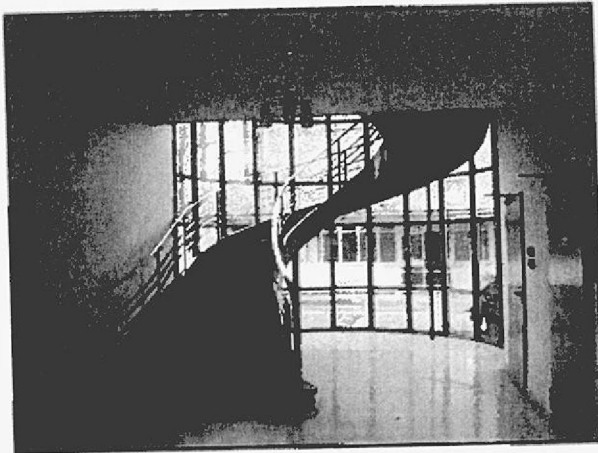
- Entrance hall, lobby and stair case - with travertine floor and skirting.
- Hatch and light fitting in porch lobby
- Planting box in large window recess
- Internal veneered doors

1st floor

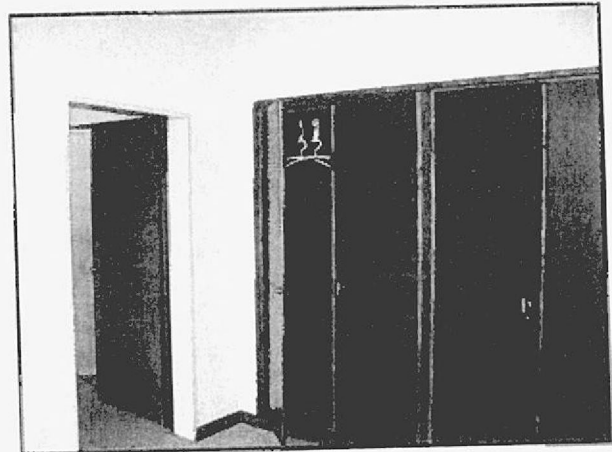
- Conference room – hearth and fire guard, fire surround (follows original plan form and AJ article notes the use of Hamm Stone.
- Areas of wooden block flooring remain.
- Some of the southern offices retain original fitted cupboards.
- Internal veneered doors
- Spiral staircase in former storage/records area (star on plan)

- 3.11 Within the factory block the two staircases remain important features that have not been altered. That to the southern end being note in the AJ journal as having specially made brown floor tiles. It is worth noting that a small number of original doors remain throughout the building. Those areas most sensitive to change are identified on a plan at appendix 3.

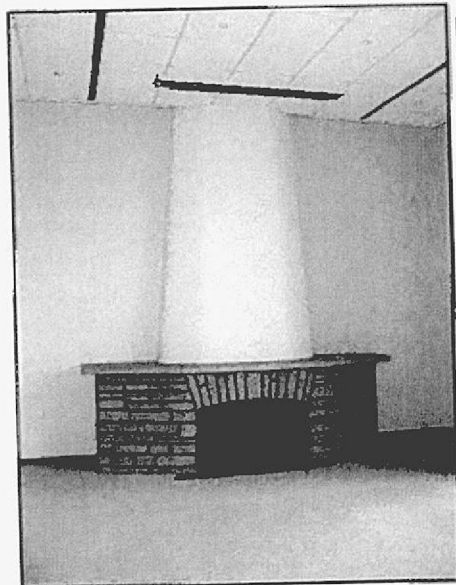
Interior of the building



Impressive staircase in Administration block



Cupboards in cellular office at 1st floor level



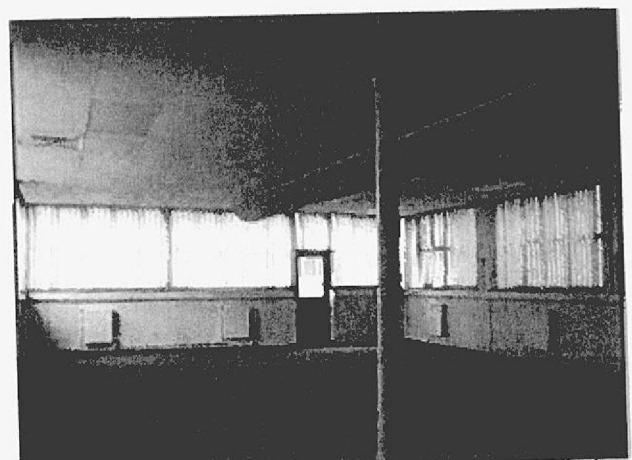
Fire place
in board room



Staircase in
mezzanine
level
administration
block



Typical altered interior of open-plan floor in
'4 storey' block

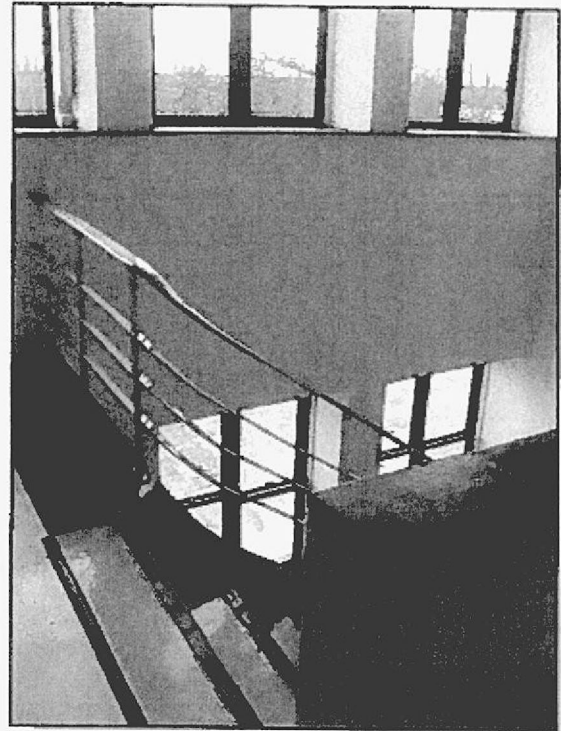


Altered interior of single storey finger block

Interior of the building



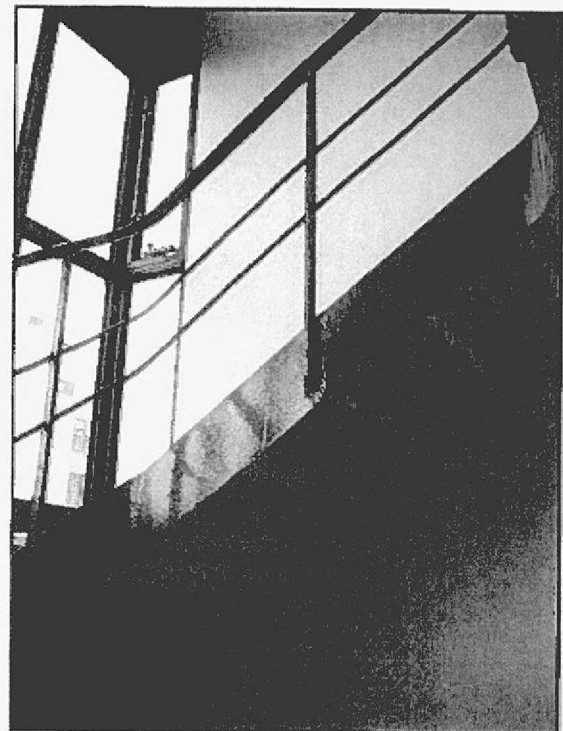
Ceiling light in entrance to administration block



Northern staircase in 4 storey block



Specially made brown tiles to southern stair well in 4 storey block



Southern staircase in 4 storey block

Summary

- 3.12 To summarise, with regard to the general criteria in PPG15 (paras. 3.5 and 6.10) the character of the listed building as found today, arising from a combination of special architectural and historic interest, can be summarised as;

architectural interest:

- 3.13 The Roche Office Building (Buildings 1-4) is of interest as an example of a modernist building by an architect of some pedigree. Representing the first phase of development on this master-planned site, it is also of interest in that it was designed to allow for the future expansion of the operations on site and to be flexible enough as a structure to accommodate the changing requirements of the company.
- 3.14 This building is of particular interest as a purpose designed multi-use facility, incorporating accommodation for both administration and factory uses. The four storey factory block and single storey spurs was designed to provide a variety of uses originally including research laboratories and part of the warehousing and despatch accommodation. The single storey accommodation provided areas for processing, despatch lavatories and canteens. The majority of the interior fittings relating to these uses have been lost

historic interest:

- 3.15 This building is of interest as a purpose built factory and office building from the late 1930s, but also as an interesting example of the employment of a 'House style' by an international company. The endorsement of the modernist style and principles by a scientific firm and their commitment to design quality, provides an interesting socioeconomic record of the time. Whilst much of the internal interest is lost the architects' drawings provide a record of how companies were organised at the time and attitudes towards gender and class.

group value:

- 3.16 This building stands alone on site today and has no group value with other buildings. It does, however, form part of the first phase of 'zoned' industrial development in the wider area (other examples of which are also listed).

4.0 Assessment of Proposals

- 4.1 The LBC application is for demolition of the later addition to the building, necessary making good of the ground floor facade to the west of the '4 storey' block and minor internal alterations and works of upgrading to facilitate the use of the building as a place of worship. Importantly, key internal features and spaces, as described in section 3 above, are retained as found with the majority of proposed alterations confined to the ground floor of the '4 floor' block and associated single storey elements.

Justification for extent of building to be demolished

- 4.2 The proposals involve the demolition of the 1950's addition which is noted in the list description as being of no interest and a small part of the single storey element from the first phase of development of the building. This is necessary for the proper planning of the redevelopment of the remainder of the site which will secure the future of this listed building. A pragmatic approach has been taken, in the spirit of the underlying principles of the design of the listed building, and provides a clear and logical form to the ground floor plan of the retained building and its relationship with the site.
- 4.2 The original composition of three 'finger' blocks has been compromised by the addition of the 1950 extension and subsequent extensions. Only two of the three single storey spurs remain today, their fenestration has been changed and there are no internal features of interest. Importantly, the eastern most wing or 'finger' of the single storey element is being retained. This will preserve a complete example of this element of the original built form, and the most significant in terms of the composition of the building as a whole, particularly in public views. This will illustrate the history of the building and how it was conceived to perform different and distinct functions by the architect. It also preserves the relationship of the building with the green open space fronting Broadwater Road, as designed by the architect.
- 4.3 The western ground floor elevation will be made good with a simple masonry wall finished in render to match existing. This will be screened by a 'living wall' which will be seen as an integral part of the landscape strategy for wider site. This is in keeping with the utilitarian and industrial nature of the building and also the 'green' landscape

setting as evidenced by the open space to Bridgewater Road.

Internal alterations

- 4.4 Given the alterations that have taken place to the interior of the property there is potential for further internal alterations in order to facilitate a viable use to safeguard the future of the building. Those areas more sensitive to change have been identified and are illustrated on the plan at appendix 3. The intention is to focus alterations in those areas that have already experienced alteration and to retain other areas more sensitive to change.
- 4.5 The alterations are generally confined to those areas not identified as being sensitive to change. They include:
- the removal of partition walls at ground floor level of the '4 storey' block and the single storey element directly to the west to provide an open floor plan and flexible space for the church use (this block largely comprises of an open plan layout to each floor as found today). The retained finger block will be partitioned-off through the installation of a modest partition wall. The two remaining stair cores are the principal internal features in this block and will be left unchanged apart from the installation of a new fire rated partition at ground floor level to the southern one;
 - the opening up of the basement area of the administration block through the removal of largely modern partition walls;
 - the modest removal of partition walls comprising 4 cellular offices at ground floor level in the administration block (there are better examples at 1st floor level that are retained as part of these proposals and the doors removed will be used to repair those on the 1st floor, where necessary, or retained in secure storage on site for future use); and,
 - Installation of partitions to provide a kitchen area set against the northern external wall of the ground floor of the administration block (this has top lights and the works will therefore not impact on the external appearance of the block); and,

- renewal of sanitary ware in the existing WC facilities (the current fittings are modern) and provision of disabled WC facilities at ground floor level in the current utility room. The utility room on the 1st floor of the '4 storey block is being converted in to a male WC.

- 4.6 One minor alteration is proposed in an area identified in 'Section 3' as being sensitive to change and this is the provision of a fire escape stair from the basement to the southern service room flanking the main entrance lobby vestibule. This will have a minimal impact on the special interest of this part of the listed building which is derived primarily from the spatial qualities of the entrance route and main lobby and the impressive principal staircase: these will remain unchanged. The new stairs will be spatially and visually contained within the existing service room with the entrance moved to provide direct access into the lobby vestibule (the existing door will be reused).

Setting

- 4.7 The well considered proposals for the wider site will ensure the meaningful integration of the listed building as part of the overall scheme. The proposals have been informed by the architectural and historic interest of the listed building and the need to preserve its setting. The Roche facility evolved and grew in an orderly fashion comprising a distinct grid of development and the application proposals demonstrate sensitivity to this in the redevelopment and enhancement of this urban site.
- 4.8 The design of the site layout and the height, scale and massing of the residential blocks respect the height, scale and massing of the listed building. They will significantly enhance the setting of the listed building compared to the industrial and commercial buildings that stood on the site (see illustration on page 49 of the D & A Statement). Block 3 and 4 (those closest to the retained listed building) are 4 storeys in height, to match the '4 storey' factory block element of the listed building, and neither rise above it. Both blocks are of a high quality design utilising a 'modern' industrial aesthetic and will be finished in render to complement the listed building.
- 4.9 The distinctive view of the listed building from Broadwater Road, beyond the green open space, is maintained and enhanced as part of an extensive landscape strategy

(including the retention of the original boundary wall with its elegant curve). Block 3 reflects the footprint of the listed building and will formally enclose the southern and part-western boundaries of this enhanced public open space, formalising the setting of the listed building in this location.

- 4.10 Block 4 balances the taller '4 storey' block of the listed building and is critical in defining the character and qualities of the new pedestrian (and part vehicular) route that will run through the centre of the site.

Summary

- 4.11 Roche Office Block (Buildings 1 to 4) formed part of substantial industrial complex of later buildings. It is a robust modern building that has undergone numerous alterations, and one that can accommodate change without causing harm to its architectural and historic significance provided it is undertaken in a considered manner. Works of demolition have been kept to a minimum and relate primarily to the 1950's addition to the building identified in the list description as being of no value.
- 4.12 Many of the spaces were designed for 'scientific' research and manufacture and, in line with the modern sensibilities influencing the external appearance of the building, were provided as flexible utilitarian spaces. The internal areas where the original plan form, fabric and fixtures of interest remain have been identified as sensitive and are being incorporated intact into the proposals for the future use of the building as a church.

5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1 It is proposed to bring the listed building back to an active, economically viable use so that it can become a valuable and integral part of the emerging masterplan for the development of the site and aspirations for the wider area. The proposed redevelopment of the wider Roche site would enhance the setting of the listed building.
- 5.2 The nature and extent of the elements that make up the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building have been identified and informed the evolution of proposals for the building and the wider site. The scheme necessitates a degree of sensitive alteration which this robust and flexible modern structure has been shown to be able to accommodate without affecting its architectural and historic interest.
- 5.3 A full justification has been given for the demolition of part of the listed building, most of which is noted as being of no interest in the list description. That small area of the original building to be lost has been shown to have been compromised through alterations that pre-date the listing.
- 5.4 This property has experienced extensive alterations in places, although key features such as the staircases remain intact. Internal changes proposed are confined to areas where modern interventions have already taken place, generally in the now open plan areas of the Factory block. A limited number of rooms retain large amounts of the original fixtures and those parts which survive are of value and will be left intact. No change is proposed, for example, to the remaining original staircases or the eastern end of the administrative block.
- 5.5 These proposals preserve the special interest of the listed building and are in line with notional guidance and local policies R25, R26 and R27