

Design Statement for Revised Scheme for Proposed House on Land West of Little Tew, West Oxfordshire



Design Statement for Revised Scheme for Proposed House on Land West of Little Tew, West Oxfordshire Meeting the Requirements of Paragraph 84 (e) of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Introduction

This design statement explains a revised scheme for an important new proposed house on land in Little Tew, West Oxfordshire. This scheme, titled for this purpose The Serpentine Lodge, and an intermediate stage scheme, called the Pavilion Lodge, which has been included to illustrate the evolution of the design, were developed from an earlier scheme discussed at pre-app with WODC and presented to the Design Review Panel at Design South-East on 27th February 2023.

We feel that our first scheme was a good example of a modern country house {Figure 2} designed in the Classical style, loosely inspired by a model farm concept and to be crafted in locally quarried stone, both Cotswold and Taynton stone. However, we were challenged by the Design Review Panel to produce a new design which truly integrated plan and elevation and which was more ambitious about modern energy efficiency. We are grateful to the Design Review Panel for setting us an exciting challenge to produce an even better design which we also believe is 'truly outstanding' and indeed unique, not just in its architectural ambition but in its Passivhaus credentials. In order to meet the requirements of Passivhaus standards we have been challenged to move away from the usual tropes of modern classicism.

During our research for this stage of the project, we dipped even further into the stream of the English Baroque style in Oxford and Oxfordshire {Figure 1}, demonstrably a centre for this creative and surprising strand of the stone-masonry tradition of this region. In Oxfordshire, the English Baroque style was not limited to the well-known grand houses and to the famous college buildings of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries but seeped into the local vernacular enlivening village and park. As a point of inspiration it throws up fascinating opportunities for inventive planning and connection with the landscape, in which it is a domestic heart and an ornament, adding a beautifully crafted building to the longer views, composed beautifully into a revived landscape which is kept carefully natural in feel.

The English Baroque style was also revived inventively in the same region in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; in this proposal, after revisiting our first scheme, we aim to reinvent it for the twenty-first. Our "Serpentine Lodge" is not a generic example of revived Georgian architecture transplanted to innocent ground, but a lively basal shoot from ancient Oxfordshire roots. In twenty-first century spirit, we believe that "Serpentine Lodge" will be the first English-baroque inspired house to be built to Passivhaus standard: original architecture aiming at an environmental first.



Figure 1: Finalised design for the new "Serpentine Lodge" proposal.



Figure 2: Early version of the Little Tew scheme.



Figure 3: Aerial view of the first scheme.

First Scheme and Comments

The scheme first presented in February 2023 {Figure 3} was for a classical house consisting of a five-bay wide, two storey block, linked to single storey pavilions on the east and west sides. The north entrance front had a three-bay centrepiece with a pediment {Figure 4} and the south front had a two-storey polygonal bay {Figure 5}. The pavilion wings had Palladian windows on the north and south sides, with split pediments on the south elevation framing dormer windows. The joinery details were based on Georgian types; the sliding sashes and French doors all had small pane sizes. The proposed materials were ironstone rubble with limestone ashlar dressings.

The main entrance led into a double height staircase hall. Double doors to the formal reception room were placed on the principal axis of the house, other rooms were accessed from a spine corridor running east-west on both ground and first floors.

A separate stable and garage block was proposed for an adjacent site {Figure 6}. The house was designed to sit in a landscape designed by Christian Sweet.



Figure 4: North Elevation of the First Scheme.



Figure 5: South Elevation of the First Scheme.

The house was intended to meet the requirements of Paragraph 80 (e) of the National Planning Policy Framework as a “design [...] of exceptional quality” which “is truly outstanding, reflecting the highest standards in architecture, and would help to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas; and would significantly enhance its immediate setting, and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area”.

The Design South East panel did not challenge the classical style of the project but felt that the scheme lacked the qualities of the best classical houses. They advised that the architect should:

“Design the house from the outside and inside, connecting it to the garden, creating a dramatic spatial sequence into and through it and a hierarchy of architectural form and expression on the exterior.”

of sustainability and commit to Passivhaus standard to provide an exemplar to help to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas” and that the scale of the stable block should be reconsidered.

In light of these comments Francis Terry and Associates have developed two new schemes. Whilst the first scheme was a good example of literate classical architecture applied to a new house, and used local materials, it was not seen as exceptional. The new schemes are a move away from the polite neo-Georgian wrapping of sensitive schemes towards a mode that taps into the heart of Oxfordshire’s Baroque architectural heritage and develops it for the twenty-first century.

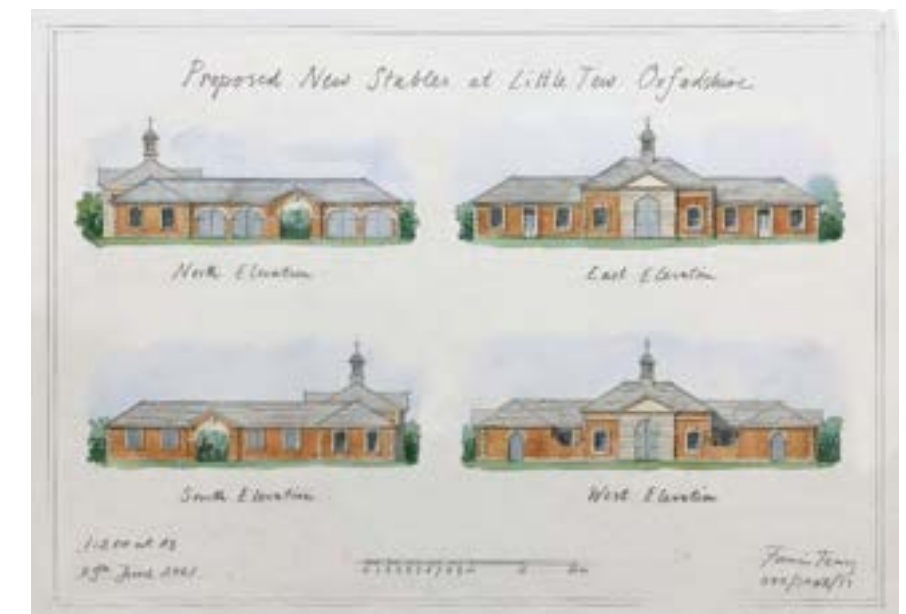


Figure 6: Stables from the First Scheme.

The English Baroque Tradition in Oxfordshire

The style of Classicism most associated with England and with the English Country House is Palladianism. The writings and designs of the sixteenth century Italian architect Andrea Palladio have had enormous influence on English architecture during several key periods.

The first period of influence was during the early seventeenth century when his style was adopted by Inigo Jones [1573-1652]. The English Reformation made access and communication with southern Europe difficult and hampered the adoption of the emerging renaissance styles. The Elizabethan and Jacobean styles had generally involved dressing up late mediaeval buildings with classical ornament culled from a variety of Northern European pattern books.

Jones was able to visit Italy and to obtain a copy of Palladio's *Quattro libri dell'architettura*. His Queen's House at Greenwich is usually cited as the first true Renaissance building in England and is very much Jones's reinterpretation of a Palladian Villa.

Palladio's work was more than a generation old when Inigo Jones took it up, but it offered formulas which could clear up the confused ideas of English architects. Palladio himself was writing against the background of Italian Mannerism. The Renaissance style was well developed by the end of the fifteenth century, but in the early sixteenth century there was a great deal of experimentation by artist/architects such as Michelangelo, who distorted the established forms for dramatic effect. Palladio's aim was to correct what he called "abuses of the orders" by his contemporaries.

Inigo Jones's colleagues and pupils did not limit themselves to Palladio's rules. This era is usually referred to as the **English Baroque**; a period when classical form is treated with imagination and which reinterpreted classical architecture with imaginative form and mood.

Nicholas Stone [1586-1647], a master mason who worked with Jones on the Banqueting House (1622) in Whitehall went on to design the Danby Gate at Oxford Botanic Gardens (1633) {Figure 7} and the porch of St Mary the Virgin, Oxford (1637) {Figure 8}, both of which are heavily influenced by the emerging Baroque style of continental Europe.

Most prominent architects of the later seventeenth century were influenced by French classical architecture. Sir Christopher Wren [1632-1723] attended Wadham College in 1650 and was later an Oxford professor. The Sheldonian Theatre (1664-69) {Figure 9, Figure 10} was one of his earliest works of architecture. He visited Paris in 1665 when the Louvre was being extended; his later work often includes features such as paired columns which were a hallmark of French architecture. Other architects experimenting with a baroque style in Oxford were Thomas Wood, designer of the Old Ashmolean Museum (1683) {Figure 12} and John Townsend [1648-1728] who designed the Upper Library (1693-96) {Figure 11} at Queen's College.

Sir John Vanbrugh [1664-1726] spent nearly five years imprisoned in France on charges of spying in the late seventeenth century. He was first a soldier, then a playwright; his career as an architect began in 1699 when the Earl of Carlisle commissioned him to design the second grandest Baroque house in England, Castle Howard. This commission was followed by one of England's grandest private houses, in any style: Blenheim Palace at Woodstock, Oxfordshire (1705-22) {Figure 13}. Vanbrugh's work on both projects demonstrated a theatrical sense which was very much the soul of the Baroque style.

Vanbrugh's assistant Nicholas Hawksmoor [1661-1736] designed numerous buildings for the Oxford Colleges in the early eighteenth century. Hawksmoor's buildings were less ornamented than Vanbrugh's but used architectural features in a very muscular way; his Front Quad at Queen's College (1709-33) {Figure 14} and Clarendon Building (1711-15) {Figure 15} exhibit this.

James Gibbs [1682-1754] designed, the most significant baroque building in the city of Oxford, the Radcliffe Camera (1737-49) {Figure 16} in a more delicate variation of the Baroque idiom than that used by the previous generation. The Baroque style was however by this time largely supplanted by the Second Palladian Revival.

Gibbs had been employed as an architect by the Earls of Burlington and Cork and made alterations to Burlington House in Piccadilly in the early years of the eighteenth century. In 1719 he was dismissed by Richard Boyle, the 3rd Earl [1694-1754] who had just returned from a tour of the Veneto where he was greatly impressed by Palladio's Villas. Lord Burlington instead employed Colen Campbell [1676-1729] and William Kent [1685-1748] who shared his vision of a stricter form of classicism modelled on the work of the Italian masters.

Lord Burlington commissioned Issac Ware's new engraving of Palladio's four books of architecture in 1738. This was not the first edition of Palladio in English, but it was the most faithful to the original in its illustrations. Ware's edition was incredibly influential and was a handbook for many amateur architects and builders in the eighteenth century. Specifically, the first book, which detailed the classical orders, and the second, which illustrated the plans and elevations of Palladio's villas, gave a new base of knowledge to those who had not had the advantage of a grand tour. Burlington's influence raised the general standard of English architecture, helping the development of the Georgian style during a period of urban expansion and a proliferation of smaller country houses. The Palladian understanding of the proper vocabulary and grammar of Classical architecture became universal. Palladio's emphasis on proper proportion also allowed thrifty architects to express classical ideas with the minimum of ornament. Chaste design was preferable to bad design; but ornament could be generously supplied if funds allowed.

The Palladian hegemony was supplanted in the 1760s by the neoclassical fashion. Robert Adam [1728-92] and other architects of a younger generation looked directly to ancient Greek and Roman architecture for authority and introduced new novel forms of decoration into the vocabulary. The Radcliffe

Observatory (1772-94) by Henry Keene [1726-76] and Samuel Wyatt [1736-1813], based on the Tower of the Winds in Athens, is a prime example of the neoclassical style in Oxford.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century there was a reawakening of interest in the "late Renaissance" and "Queen Anne" styles. Sir Thomas Graham Jackson [1835-1924] is credited with having invented a new collegiate style for the Oxford Examination Schools (1876-82) {Figure 17} which is largely Jacobean but with later seventeenth century elements and numerous influences from the continental Renaissance. Jackson also made some Baroque additions to Hertford College, including a baroque spiral staircase {Figure 18} and the "Bridge of Sighs" completed in 1914 {Figure 19}. His Electrical Laboratory of 1908-10 {Figure 20} (now the Townsend Building) draws purely on late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century precedents. This example of the revived "Queen Anne" style has elements not unlike Thomas Wood's Old Ashmolean and a centrepiece which combines French Classicism with an English Baroque sensibility with its central arched window thrusting up into the pediment.

Basil Champneys [1842-1935] designed the Old India Institute (1882) {Figure 21} and the Rhodes Building for Oriel College (1909-11) {Figure 22} which are Jacobean in conception but with an emphasis on Baroque Classical motifs. Sir Reginald Blomfield [1856-1942] added the Talbot Hall (1910) {Figure 23} to Lady Margaret College in his "Queen Anne style" which is largely English Baroque, but with an emphasis on the more French features.

The notion that college buildings needed to reference seventeenth century forms persisted in such projects as the New Bodleian Library (1937-40) {Figure 24} by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott [1880-1960]. Although largely Art Deco/Moderne in style, the main portals of the New Bodleian have Baroque pediments.

The English Baroque style has had an influence on the public buildings of Oxfordshire for nearly four hundred years. It has been used repeatedly by the Oxford Colleges, to symbolise the sophistication and cosmopolitan nature of their learning, and in that great monument to the Duke of Marlborough, Blenheim Palace. But the style is one of infinite adaptability, not limited to the public realm. It can be joyous and numinous, playful and quirky. In the next section we examine the influence of the English Baroque on the domestic and more humble buildings of the county and how it became a precedent for our latest proposal.



Figure 7: The Danby Gate, Oxford Botanic Gardens. A very early example of the use of the Baroque style in England.



Figure 8: Porch of St Mary the Virgin, Oxford. Nicholas Stone here employs a plethora of Baroque features in a small area, including twisted columns, broken pediments and scrolls.



Figure 9: The Sheldonian Theatre Oxford. Wren's curved façade expresses the interior.



Figure 10: The door of the Sheldonian Theatre, with a baroque concave niche above it and a wealth of sculptural detail.



Figure 11: The Upper Library, Queen's College: mason John Townsend working in the manner of Wren.



Figure 12: The Old Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. Seen in isolation this door and the sculptural panels flanking the window above it could almost have come from the Louvre.



Figure 13: Detail of Blenheim Palace. The plastic deformation of the frieze is purely Baroque.



Figure 14: The Front Quad, Queen's College, Oxford. Hawksmoor creating a very muscular form of classicism.



Figure 15: The Clarendon Building, Oxford. A straightforward classical composition, manipulated for dramatic effect.



Figure 16: The Radcliffe Camera, Oxford. Gibbs creates a counterpoint of wide and narrow, open and closed.



Figure 17: Oxford Examination Schools, Oxford. Jackson's eclectic design has a Jacobean feel but has details belonging to the Italian Renaissance and the late seventeenth century.



Figure 18: Hertford College staircase, Oxford. Jackson's expressive design draws on French renaissance examples, but is expressed in a more Baroque manner.



Figure 19: The "Bridge of Sighs", Hertford College. The design is more like a Baroque reimagining of the Rialto bridge.



Figure 20: The Townsend Building, Oxford. "Queen Anne" style, incorporating elements from the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.



Figure 21: The Old India Institute, Oxford. Champneys puts a Baroque cupola on a neo-Jacobean building.



Figure 22 : The Rhodes Building, Oriel College, Oxford. The centrepiece incorporates various elements seen at Nicholas Stone's porch for St Mary's.



Figure 23: Talbot Hall, Lady Margaret College, Oxford. Reginald Blomfield's "Queen Anne" centrepiece framed by French quoin. The composition, with its domed porch, is similar to our Pavilion Scheme.



Figure 24: The New Bodlian Library, Oxford. Aside from the broken pediment with its escutcheon and angels, Giles Gilbert Scott plays Baroque games with superimposed layers of pilasters.

The Baroque Tradition in Domestic Architecture

Smaller Houses in Oxfordshire

Classical design ideas are first used seriously in Oxford's domestic architecture in the late seventeenth century. Dutch classical architecture had an influence on the architecture of the Restoration period; this can be seen in the additions Hugh May [1621-84] made to Cornbury House (1665-7) {Figure 25}. The Carolean style tends to be bold and simple in line, but with passages of elaborate ornament, particularly internally.

The smaller early eighteenth century houses of Oxfordshire often have interesting design pedigrees due to the long construction period of Blenheim Palace and the presence of many skilled masons in the county as a result. The Townsend and Smith of Warwick dynasties of builders worked with most of the major architects of the eighteenth century and were capable of designing in their styles.

The great House in Burford (1697-1705) {Figure 26} is an example of an unnamed mason producing a very Vanbrughian combination of Classicism with castellations. In the same small town is a house from the early eighteenth century (now a Methodist Chapel) {Figure 27} with a boldly rusticated façade and giant Corinthian pilasters.

Heythrop House (1706-9) {Figure 28, Figure 29, Figure 30} designed by Thomas Archer [1668-1743] and carried out by Francis Smith of Warwick is unusual for quoting the two greatest Italian baroque masters Bernini and Borromini. Both the architect and his client had visited Italy and were familiar with the more plastic interpretations of the classical style.

Archer also quoted Borromini during his remodelling of Aynhoe Park (1706), which overlooks the Cherwell Valley, in a dynamically curved doorcase {Figure 31}.

Vanbrugh House {Figure 32} in St Michael's Street, Oxford was designed by Bartholomew Peisley III for his family in 1721. As one of the masons at Blenheim palace he was well able to imitate Vanbrugh's style and produce a very robust design with a giant Doric order.

Woodperry House (1728) {Figure 33} at Stanton St John was designed by William Townsend [1676-1739], the son of John Townsend who worked as a Mason for Vanbrugh at Blenheim and for Hawksmoor on the Clarendon Building. Woodperry is baroque in its composition but relatively restrained in detail. Ditchley Park (1722) and Kirtlington Park (1742) by James Gibbs show the same architect adopting two different approaches to similar sized projects, the first is cast as a miniature

baroque palace, the second (executed by William Smith of Warwick) as a more strictly Palladian villa, following the changing fashion. Manor Farm, West Challow {Figure 34}, was given a new brick façade in the 1720s complete with emphatic key stones and a central tower in a reduced version of the Vanbrughian/Hawksmoor manner.

In the later eighteenth century there were fewer new country houses built in Oxfordshire. According to *The Buildings of England Oxfordshire: Oxford and the South-East* and *Oxfordshire North and West* guide books one of the few domestic buildings of national significance from that period is Nuneham House (1756) by Stiff Leadbetter [1705-66] which is Palladian in character.

The domestic architecture of Oxfordshire in the nineteenth century was very eclectic; but despite excursions into Gothic and Jacobean, the taste for rich Classicism remained. Headington Hill House (1856-8) {Figure 35} in Oxford, designed by the sculptor John Thomas [1813-62] is one of the larger private houses of the era and is in the Victorian "Italianate" manner, freely combining numerous features from Italian architecture. In the 1880s the fashion for villas in the "Queen Anne" style began. The first of these were No.s 27 & 29 Banbury Road, Oxford (1880-81) {Figure 36} by J.J. Stevenson [1831-1908]. The Victorian version of "Queen Anne" was a picturesque style which combined elements from the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries in asymmetrical compositions; it would lead to a more serious revival of classicism by the end of the century.

In the twentieth century we find Sir Edwin Lutyens [1869-1944] designing baroque portals for Middleton Park (1935-38) {Figure 37, Figure 38} near Bicester, where they contrast with the stripped-down nature of his late personal classical style. The same sort of combination can be seen at the old Post Office (1930-1) {Figure 39} in Chipping Norton with its strong Gibbsian door surround set against a plain Georgian façade.

A County Tradition

Oxfordshire is a county with a tradition of classical architecture dating back as far as any in the country. All forms and fashions of classicism are represented in the area; but there is a persistence of forms which predate the great national expansion of Palladian Georgian architecture in the mid eighteenth century and tap into a broader European tradition. As a result, the buildings of the county often have a dynamic playfulness to them.

With the work of Archer, Vanbrugh, Wren and Hawksmoor, and the revival in the nineteenth century, Oxford is an unusually baroque county. It is the intention of Francis Terry to build upon this lively tradition and develop it for the twenty-first century. The new proposed scheme, the Serpentine Lodge, is one where the Baroque sensibility and language are fundamental to the design. No transliteration of idiom or modernist paraphrase could truly capture the same effect.



Figure 25: Combury House, Charlbury, Oxfordshire. Hugh May's elegant Carolean addition to an older house.



Figure 26: The Great House, Burford. The classical language of the lower stories is fairly conventional, the attic storey and crenelated parapet are much less conventional.



Figure 27: Methodist Chapel, Burford. Formerly a private house, it shows the influence of Hawksmoor and Archer. There were originally parapet urns.



Figure 28: Heythrop House, Oxfordshire. Archer employing the language of a continental Baroque palace for an English country house.



Figure 29: Detail of windows in the style of Bernini at Heythrop House.



Figure 30: Door at Heythrop House, with a Borromini style concave cornice.



Figure 31: Detail of Aynhoe Park, another doorcase by Archer, again with a concave cornice.



Figure 32: Vanbrugh House, Oxford. Not designed by Vanbrugh.



Figure 33: Woodperry House. William Townsends Baroque composition with layers projecting forward of and slipping behind the main block of the house.



Figure 34: Mannor Farm, West Challow. A baroque facade on a vernacular house.



Figure 35: Headington Hill House, Oxfordshire. Eclectic Italianate designed by sculptor John Thomas.



Figure 36: Banbury Road, Oxford. An early example of the "Queen Anne" style incorporating Baroque features in an asymmetric composition.



Figure 37: Main entrance to Middleton Park, Oxfordshire. Lutyens plays Mannerist/Baroque games with rustication.

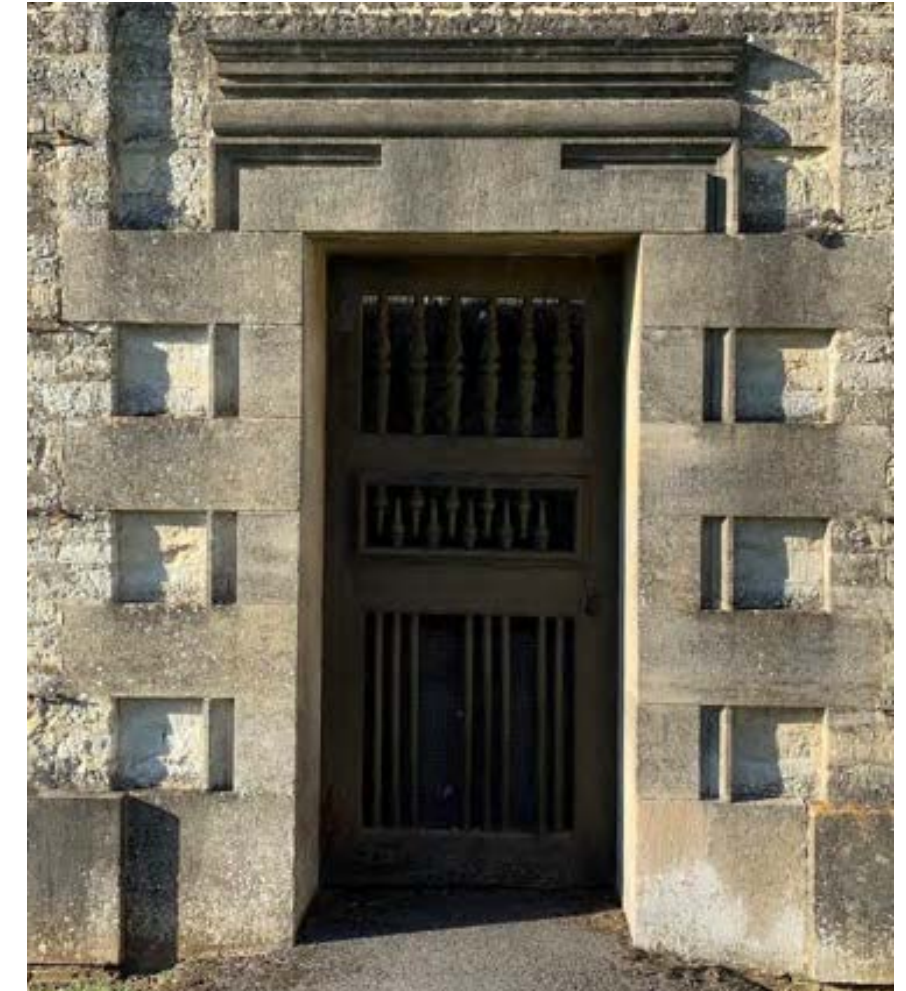


Figure 38: Detail of Middleton Park. More fun and games with a Gibbs style surround.



Figure 39: Old Post Office, Chipping Norton. The one architectural feature is a Gibbsian doorcase.

The New Scheme

The new proposed scheme occupies the same location and same approximate footprint as the one submitted in February 2023, but differs from it in internal arrangements. Two new schemes were originally prepared, the “Pavilion Lodge” and the “Serpentine Lodge”, which were nearly identical to each other apart from their entrance fronts and main entrance halls. As the spatial sequence was identified as an important element which needed development by the design panel, the different entrance fronts and halls are described first with the elements in common to both designs being described later. The Pavilion Lodge scheme has been abandoned in favour of the more radical Serpentine Lodge.

We have imagined a house that is a satellite of a great estate, such as a dower house or a hunting lodge. As such it is an adornment to the landscape, rather than its focal point, whilst completely engaging with the best of architecture.

In both cases the approach to the house from the public road is through newly planted woodland to the north which opens into the Upper Park. The drive sweeps through an area of grassland, dotted with trees in a naturalistic way, in the English landscape tradition. The visitor arrives obliquely at the entrance forecourt before turning to see the house revealed.



Figure 40: North elevation, Serpentine Lodge Scheme.

The Serpentine Lodge – Finalised Proposal

In this scheme {Figure 40} the forecourt is flanked by a pair of single storey quadrant wings. The wings terminate with niches containing urns, of a type similar to those used by Vanbrugh at Castle Howard {Figure 46}, above which are garlands inspired by those on Lutyens' Orangery at Hestercombe {Figure 51}.

The wings frame the north elevation which is five bays wide and two storeys high. The centrepiece of the façade is three bays wide, with a serpentine profile. This centrepiece is articulated by pilasters and ashlar rusticated in bands in a manner often used by Hawksmoor, the bays are divided by French quoins. The central bay has a semicircular porch, as in the first scheme, but the wall above it is faced in ironstone and the first floor window is circular and framed by a swag and lambs tails.

At attic level we have a Dutch gable type arrangement, partially inspired by the Tomkin's Alms House in Abingdon {Figure 50}, framing a Palladian window. Two “chimney stacks” crown the building and act as part of the ventilation strategy.

This lively elevation is preparation for the entrance hall, which in this scheme is circular and domed. The height of the apex of the dome is equal to its width, echoing the proportions of the Pantheon {Figure 52}. Openings in the dome allow in light from the first floor windows and allow the space to be viewed from the first floor corridor. The surface of the vault would be coffered in classical style.

The Pavilion Lodge: the Interim Revised Scheme

The Pavilion Lodge scheme {Figure 41} was the more restrained of the two options. The central block of the house is five bays wide and two storeys high. The outer bays are faced with ironstone with limestone quoins at the corners. The central three bays break forwards and are clad in limestone and are further emphasised by a pediment. Single storey quadrant wings project forward on each side of the façade creating a sense of welcoming embrace. The wings are terminated by pavilions with a Palladian window motif on their front and sides.

The form of the entrance front is reminiscent of Woodperry House, and the mood is that of Palladian classicism enlivened by a baroque sense of movement in the manner of the Oxfordshire houses designed by masons who had worked for James Gibbs. The main door is sheltered by a semicircular porch with Tuscan columns and an ogee lead roof. This form of porch was particularly popular in the later Georgian and Regency period; there are good examples at Luckington Court {Figure 42} in Wiltshire and The Charter House in Hull {Figure 43, Figure 44}. The origin of the design of the roof, and its crowning finial, is Gibbs' St Mary Le Strand (1714-24) {Figure 47} in London.

The square form which is emphasised on the façade is a foretaste of the entrance hall; this is a double height cube room. The hall leads on to the main cross axis of the house through a screen of columns, and also opens onto the first floor corridor through openings above. The precedent for this room is principally the Hall at Castletown {Figure 48}, Co. Kildare, but is also influenced by the one at Ditchley Park {Figure 49}.



Figure 41: North Elevation, Pavilion Lodge Scheme.



Figure 42: Luckington Court, Wiltshire. A plain Regency example of a semicircular porch.



Figure 43: The Charter House, Kingston upon Hull. A demonstration of the use of a semicircular porch in a composition similar to the Pavilion Scheme.



Figure 44: Detail of the Charter House porch showing the lead covered dome.



Figure 45: Detail of frieze to porch at Sewerby Hall, East Yorkshire. The garland decoration is similar to the proposed frieze at Little Tew.



Figure 46: Hestercombe, Somerset. Garland and keystone on Lutyens designed Orangery.



Figure 47: St Mary le Strand, London. The elaborate underside of Gibbs semicircular porch.



Figure 48: The entrance hall, Castletown, Co. Kildare. A double height space similar to the one proposed in the Pavilion Scheme.



Figure 50: Tomkin's Alms House, Abingdon, Oxfordshire. The centrepiece of the Serpentine Lodge design was partially inspired by the top section of the gateway.

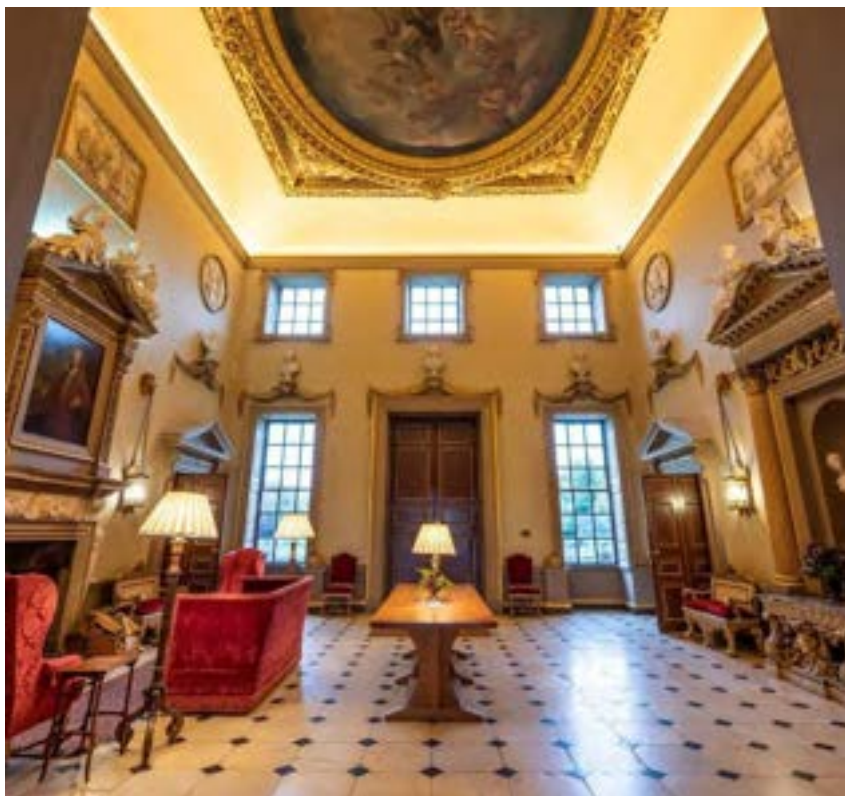


Figure 49: The entrance hall, Ditchley Park. Another double height hall.



Figure 51: Castle Howard, North Yorkshire. Detail of urn in niche.



Figure 52: The Pantheon, Rome. The greatest dome of the ancient world and the model for many Renaissance buildings.



Figure 53: Kedleston Hall, Derbyshire. An example of the Pantheon model being used in English domestic architecture.

Interior Planning

Spatial progression is very important in Baroque architecture. The transition from outside to inside is often mediated by transitional spaces. The circular hall is a form found in both churches and houses in the English Baroque style. Hawksmoor created a circular vestibule at St Anne's, Limehouse {Figure 54, Figure 55} and experimented with the idea of a circular hall at Castle Howard. Circular entrance halls seem not to have been common in Oxfordshire during the Baroque period, although we could see this deficit as being eclipsed by Gibbs's decision to make the whole plan of the Radcliffe Camera circular. Francis Terry's main inspiration was the Pantheon at Stourhead {Figure 56}, Wiltshire, designed by Henry Flitcroft [1697-1762].

Herbert Baker [1862-1946] created a circular entrance hall for Rhodes House (1926-28) {Figure 57} in Oxford, which is entered via a mini pantheon. Seely & Paget, created a domed entrance hall at Eltham Palace (1933) {Figure 58}, London. Their "restoration" in the style of Christopher Wren has a convex entrance façade and, although adopting a radical Art-Deco style {Figure 59} for its interior, is analogous in scale and function to the proposed pantheon at Little Tew.

While the entrance hall of the Serpentine Lodge scheme is smaller than the domed hall of Kedleston or the Stourhead Pantheon, the Rhodes House entrance hall demonstrates that the powerful ancient Roman precedent can translate well to the more modest scale of our proposed country house. With careful detailing it will be possible to articulate the archetypal forms in a way congruent with the nature of the dwelling.

The entrance hall leads on to a corridor on the east-west axis of the house. Arrangements in both schemes are identical beyond this point. The door directly opposite the front door on the north-south axis leads to the formal reception room. This reception room is the largest space in the house and fulfils the role of the drawing room in historic houses. On its south side it is enlarged by a semicircular bay which gives panoramic views of the landscape to the south.

Returning to the main east-west axis, and turning to the west, an arch gives on to the main staircase, another arch leads onto a circular tribune which is top lit with a balcony at first floor level. Doors to left and right lead to a study and a Butler's pantry, straight ahead is the library and an informal reception room.

Returning once more to the axial corridor, the first space beyond the centre is a lift lobby. Beyond the lift lobby the axis continues to another tribune, balancing the one to the west, which leads on to the family snug on the right, and straight on to a lobby between the kitchen and the dining room.

At first floor level there are five bedroom suites arranged off an axial corridor and the tribune landings. A sixth bedroom suite is located in the attic.

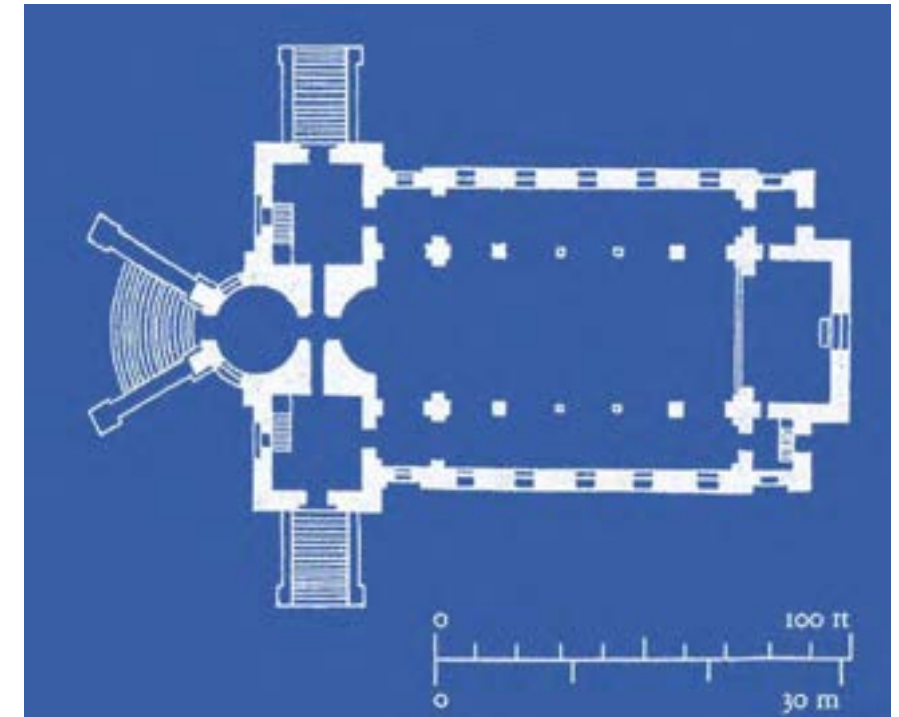


Figure 54: Plan of St Anne's Lime House, London. Hawksmoor constructs a dramatic special sequence, a flight of steps, a circular vestibule, and a narrow passage before the full interior of the church is revealed.



Figure 55: Entrance of St Anne's Limehouse showing the external expression of the circular vestibule.



Figure 56: The interior of the Pantheon at Stourhead.

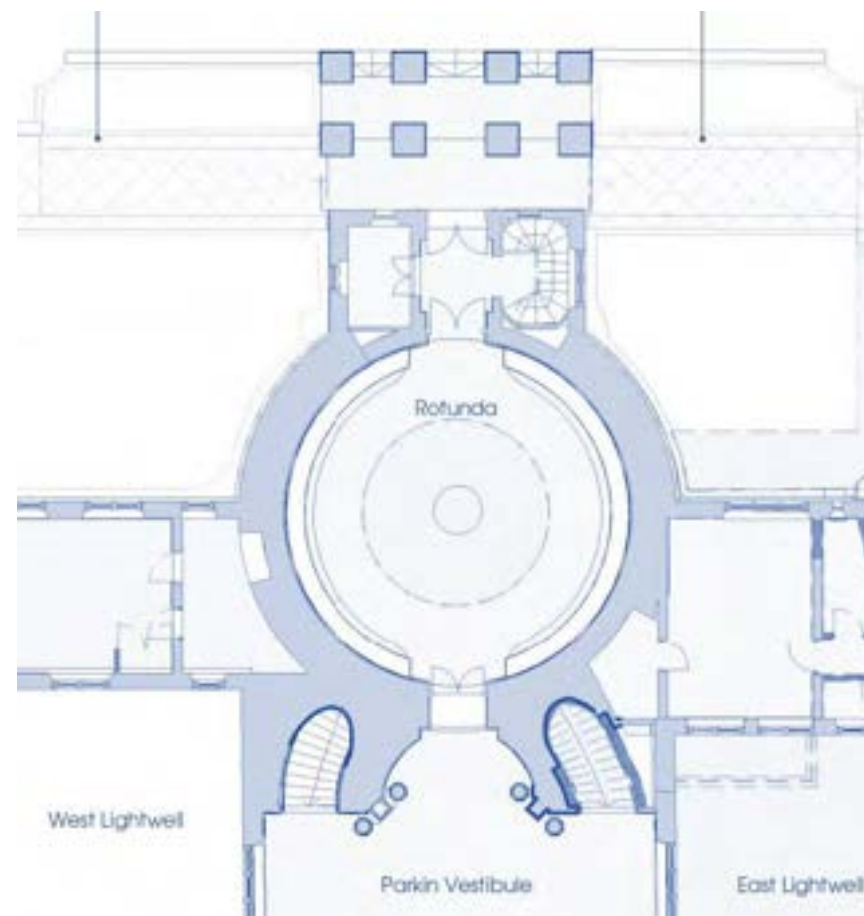


Figure 57: Plan of Rhodes House, Oxford. Herbert Baker uses a mini-Pantheon as the entrance to the building.



Figure 58: Eltham Palace, London. Seely & Paget's whimsical take on the style of Wren, with a convex arcade forming the main entrance.



Figure 59: Entrance Hall, Eltham Palace. The domed hall provides a place for the visitor to reorientate their self. The modernistic styling is by Swedish designer Rolf Engströmer.

Other Elevations

The south elevation consists of a five bay, two storey block, with single storey wings linked to the east and west sides. The centre of the composition has a two-storey polygonal bay and a central door with a broken pediment. The wings both have Palladian windows.

The east and west elevations of the wings are both five bays long. The west elevation has five French windows, while the east has alternating doors and windows. In both cases the central three bays have a trellis veranda at ground level and three dormer windows above. Both of these elevations face onto terraces which are sheltered by hedges and relate to the circular lawn to the west and pool to the east.

Passivhaus

The new scheme has been developed with environmental concerns in mind. The concept of the Passivhaus is that of a dwelling in which there is high resistance to heat flow between the outside and the inside of the building. There are no real precedents for new classical country houses built to such rigorous standards. The Design Review Panel has given us a real challenge in combining traditional aesthetics with modern environmental design; but it is a welcome challenge, and one which has allowed us to explore precedents which were largely ignored by the Neo-Georgian architects of the twentieth century.

Increasing the levels of insulation to reach Passivhaus standards was relatively straight forward for the walls, floors and roof, but not for the windows and dormers.

Windows

The proposed triple glazed window units are not suitable for the type of small pane “Georgian” vertical sashes commonly found in modern classical houses. Instead, a larger unit size in hinged casements has been adopted for this project. Similarly, the cheeks of the dormers carry extra insulation which will not fit within the profile of a typical timber and metal dormer; the attic windows have therefore been given moulded ashlar surrounds with pediments.

Both of these decisions lend a French feeling to the design. We see this as appropriate as English Baroque has a strong French influence, in part due to Wren visiting France, not Italy. Larger pane sizes than were common in England were used by the French in the eighteenth century, and casements were much more common there than sliding sashes. The French also have a tradition of treating dormers in an emphatically architectural way.

In Oxfordshire we find that there was much use of decorative gables, though not always combined with windows. The old quad at Oriel college (1620s) {Figure 65} has a profusion of shaped gables, all blind, only in Basil

Champneys's Rhodes building, three centuries later, do they become dormers {Figure 66}. There are more shaped gables at Cobb House (1672) {Figure 64} in Burford, but these have only blind ovals in them.

In the vernacular tradition of the county stone dormers are not uncommon. The addition to Radcot House of 1660 {Figure 62} has three gables which effectively form two storey dormers, complete with oval windows in the upper levels.

Wren (or one of his contemporaries – Pevsner is not certain) designed three bay attics on the front quad of Queen's College (1710s) {Figure 67}. These features on the east and west ranges have curved pediments and are terminated with decorative scrolls. The placing of the pediment on top of the attic, above the main cornice level, and the use of a curved pediment, are both features of French seventeenth century architecture; particularly of the Louvre.

In England we find precedent for the use of large pane sizes in Raymond Erith's rebuilding of the Great House in Dedham in the 1930s {Figure 60}. Erith was always keen to reflect the true spirit of Georgian architecture, rather than apply a neo-Georgian style to his work. Before the general adoption of sliding sashes, English windows were of the casement type which can still be seen at the Old Ashmolean Museum {Figure 61}. Cross casements with stone or wooden mullions and transoms contained metal casements with leaded glass. The size of the glass quarries was related to the glass making technology of the time, with larger pieces being preferred.

The proposed new windows therefore will be designed as casements incorporating triple glazed units offering the highest practical level of insulation. With the integration of modern draft stripping, the proposed windows will be able to achieve a very high level of insulation, resisting heat loss in even the coldest conditions, but without appearing aesthetically compromised.



Figure 60: The Great House, Dedham, Essex. Erith's house uses Georgian style and precedent without seeking to directly imitate historic examples. The large pane sizes reflect the glazing technology of the 1930s.



Figure 61: Casement windows, The Old Ashmolean, Oxford. The limitations of seventeenth century glass making meant that many small glass quarries had to be leaded together to form a single sheet.



Figure 62: Radcot House, Oxfordshire. The three gables are effectively double decker dormer windows.



Figure 63: Vernacular houses, St Giles Street, Oxford. Stone faced (and rendered) dormers.



Figure 64: Cobb House, Burford, Oxfordshire. The shaped gables add emphasis to the windows below. It is not difficult to imagine attic windows in the blind ovals.



Figure 65: Old Quad, Oriel College, Oxford. A lively Jacobean roofline with shaped gables and a classical centrepiece.



Figure 66: Detail of the Rhodes Building, Oriel College, Oxford. Champneys seem to have adapted the shaped gables from the old quad as dormers for his new building.



Figure 67: Detail of Queens College, Oxford. A triple dormer with a distinct French influence.



Figure 68: Ventilator, Radcliffe Camera, Oxford. A small cornice gives architectural presence to a simple feature.

Development and Precedents

The aim of this project is to produce a unique design, but with reference to local precedents, and to display a coherent progression of architectural spaces. The presence of some of the most sophisticated architects of the early eighteenth century in the county has given Francis Terry a myriad of possibilities to quote both the English Baroque school and the continental influences which created it. The architect is informed by a deep knowledge of architectural history and the nuances of the classical language allowing him to offer a higher degree of sensitivity “to the defining characteristics of the area”, as required by the NPPF, than many of his contemporaries.

The superseded Pavilion scheme, which owes much to the Gibbsian interpretation of the Palladian tradition was the first to be developed. The semicircular porch gives focus to the design and adds a convex curve to answer the concave curves of the quadrant wings. Francis Terry experimented with a number of arrangements of this front. Some versions incorporated Palladian windows, including one based on Barmante's Nymphaeum at Genazzano {Figure 70} and the Villa Pojana.

With the idea of a double height entrance hall established, the use of different forms of first floor windows was considered. The idea of adding three circular openings at first floor level, as at Biddesden House in Wiltshire {Figure 72}, was explored. There are numerous examples of Georgian houses with three oculus windows in their facades; Wallsworth Hall (1740) {Figure 73} in Gloucestershire has them, as does Nicholas Hawksmoor's King William Court at Greenwich Hospital. The addition of ornament to a circular window was common in the baroque period {Figure 74} and was much imitated in the Edwardian revival of the style {Figure 76}. It was ultimately the single round window at Eyford Park (1910-12) {Figure 77}, in the Gloucestershire Cotswolds, by Guy Dawber [1861-1938], with its surrounding swags which became the model for the Serpentine Scheme.

The Pantheon element of the Serpentine Scheme came about when Francis saw a circle drawn on the CAD plans of the Pavilion Scheme to check the room was a true square. The notion that the hall could be circular developed quickly into the idea of a domed hall. We subsequently discovered the drawing by Hawksmoor for Castle Howard which shows a circular hall in a similar relationship to the corridor on the cross axis {Figure 84}. The domed hall at Kedleston has a similar plan to the proposal, with four niches at the corners of the space {Figure 88}.

At Kedleston an outer dome is signalled externally by a lead dome rising above the parapet {Figure 89}. It must be noted that the deliberate expression of domes on the outside of a building wasn't a feature of ancient Roman architecture, but came about during the Renaissance under the influence of Islamic art. The smaller dome of the Pantheon scheme does not rise to the height of the attic and is therefore expressed externally by different means. Bending the façade to reveal the curved interior was an intriguing idea. The Corinthian Villa (2004) {Figure 90, Figure 91} in Regents Park by Quinlan and Francis Terry is believed to be the first example of a serpentine façade in England; however, the internal wall behind this façade is flat. The Pantheon scheme gave Francis an opportunity to revisit the serpentine façade idea, but this time in a more fully integrated way.

The most famous use of a serpentine façade is Borromini's Church of San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane (1646) {Figure 92} in Rome. Curvaceous facades became popular for Italian churches, but can occasionally be found in secular buildings. The façade of the Villa Eleonora at Noto, Sicily {Figure 93} by Paolo Libreri is a significant precedent. It dates from the early eighteenth century when the town was completely rebuilt following an earthquake in 1693. The rippling façade of the villa is also articulated by pilasters with banded rustication, and also had a round window in the middle bay. Francis Terry has had a long fascination with the use of curve and counter curve in Italian Baroque architecture as exemplified by the church of Santa Maria del Pace in Rome {Figure 85, Figure 86}. The wings of the church curve back behind its convex façade giving the impression of a curtain being withdrawn to reveal the building. Woodperry House has echoes of this embracing and layering effect, with its quadrant wings swinging forward in front of the central block of the house, and its side wings providing a more distant backdrop.

The major rooms in both plans have well defined geometries of their own and determine the articulation of the exterior. The corridor on the cross axis is a classic feature of many English country houses. The addition of unusual sources of natural light lends a sense of drama to the internal circulation. The tribunes with their balconies are inspired by the top lighting of the stairs at Ashburnham House in Westminster {Figure 94}. There is a more direct precedent at Moggerhanger (1790-1812) {Figure 95} by Sir John Soane [1753-1837] where the lightwells are separate from the staircases.

The final design achieves a synthesis of baroque precedents, reinvigorating the English Baroque tradition of Oxfordshire. The architectural spaces created offer drama and the old Vitruvian virtue of **delight**; the **firmness** of the building will not be in question and the **commodity** is enhanced by the use of classical precedents to meet contemporary needs.



Figure 69: Sketch based on Barmante's Nymphaeum.



Figure 71: Sketch with Palladian window on first floor.



Figure 70: The Nymphaeum, Genzano.



Figure 72: Biddesdon House Wiltshire. Three circular windows illuminate the upper part of the double high hall.



Figure 73: Walsworth Hall, Gloucestershire. Three circular windows in the attic.



Figure 74: Circular windows, Fountain Court, Hampton Court. An example of the elaborate surrounds sometimes associated with this sort of window.



Figure 75: CAD and freehand sketch showing the abandoned idea of three circular windows.



Figure 76: Edwardian Baroque window, Dyson Building, South Kensington. The swags and lambs' tails became a trope of this period.



Figure 77: Eyford Park, Gloucestershire. The inspiration for the single round window in the Serpentine Lodge scheme.

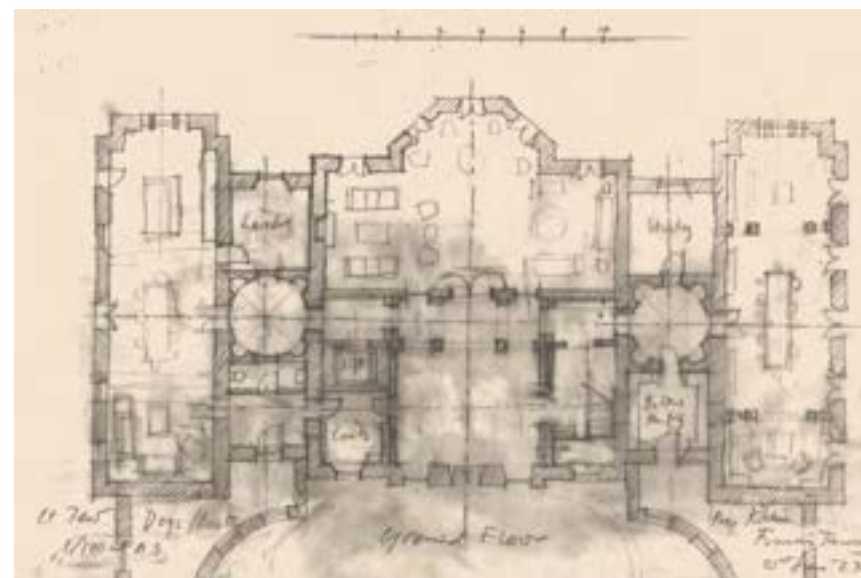


Figure 78: Sketch plan showing the tribune halls at either end of the cross axis.

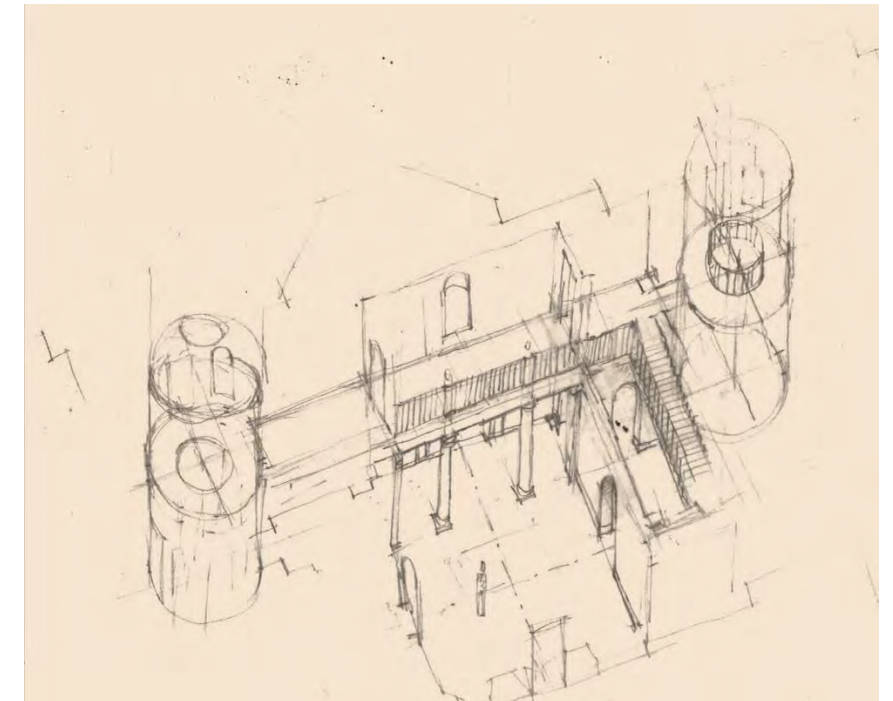


Figure 79: Isometric sketch of cross axis and tribune halls.



Figure 80: Sketch of scheme with double columns and draped oculus.



Figure 81: Sketch of scheme with single columns and draped oculus, with sketches for capitals.



Figure 82: Sketch of scheme with single columns and draped oculus.



Figure 83: Scheme with French quoins and banded pilasters.



Figure 84: Early sketch for Castle Howard by Nicholas Hawksmoor showing a circular main hall beneath the dome.



Figure 85: Santa Maria de Pace, Rome. The various elements give the impression of advancing and retreating.



Figure 86: Sketch by Francis Terry of Santa Maria del Pace, Rome.

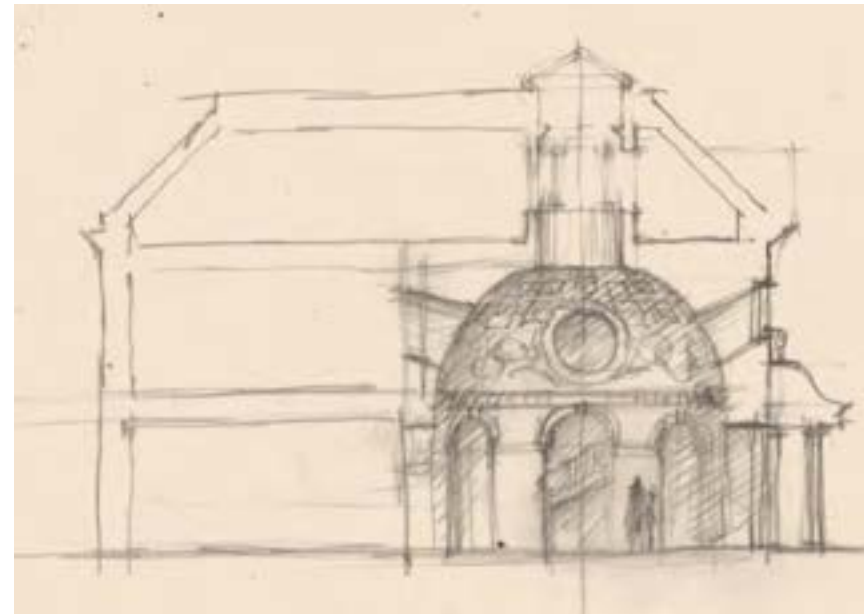


Figure 87: Sketch section through the Serpentine scheme showing the "Pantheon" dome.



Figure 88: Niche in corner of circular plan, Kedleston Hall, Derbyshire.



Figure 89: Kedleston Hall, Derbyshire. The dome peeps above the parapet in Robert Adam's design.

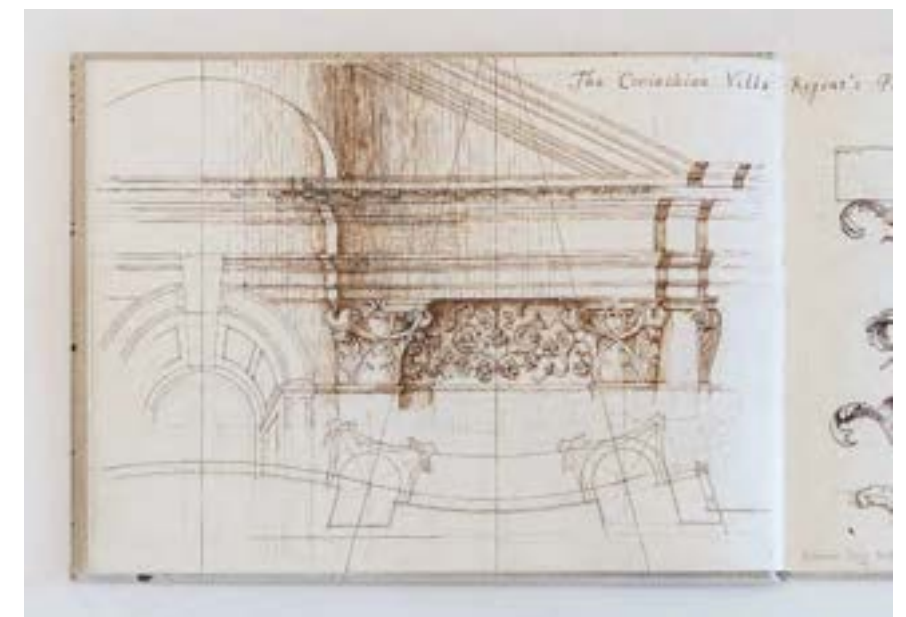


Figure 90: Sketch by Francis Terry for entablature of the Corinthian Villa. With its serpentine form.



Figure 91: The Corinthian Villa, Regent's Park. The first serpentine façade built in England.

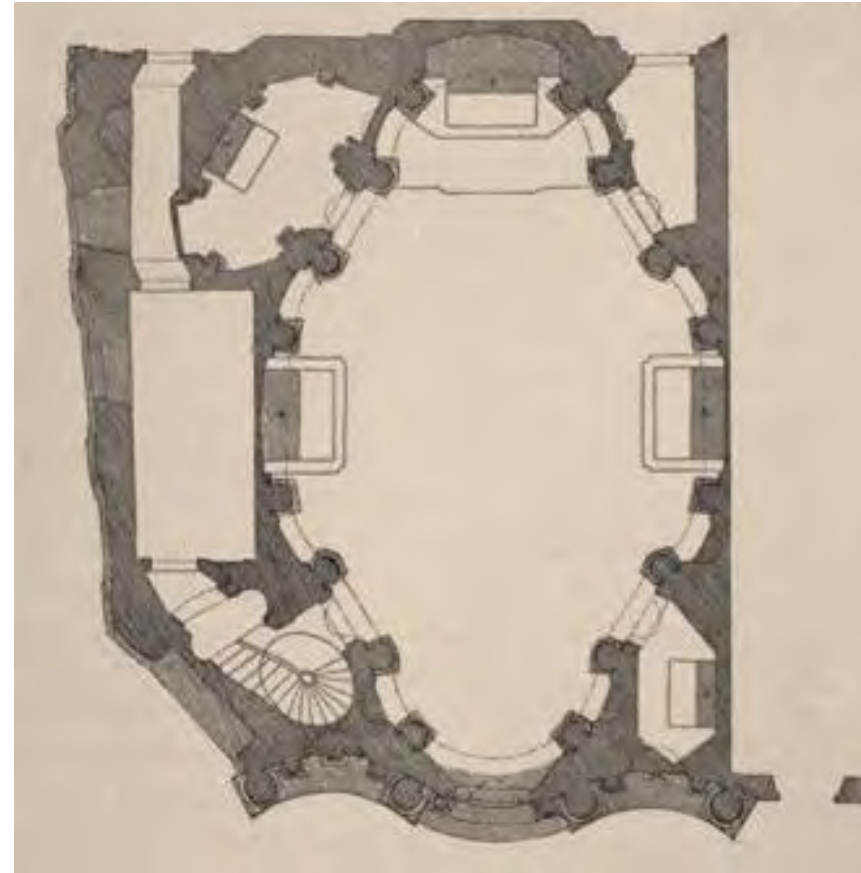


Figure 92: Plan of the Church of San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane, Rome. The curvaceous façade expresses the curves space within.



Figure 93: Villa Eleonora, Noto. An example of a serpentine façade on a domestic building.



Figure 94: Staircase at Ashburnham House, Westminster. The space opens into a gallery at attic level.



Figure 95: The tribune, Moggerhanger. An oval lightwell with a skylight over.

The Stables

The stables have been reduced in scale compared to those in the first submission. In the original scheme there was a two storey pavilion with a rusticated arch linking the two sections (Figure 6). In the new scheme there are now two smaller buildings (Figure 96), one containing garages, the other stables, linked by walls and gateways to form a courtyard. Instead of a grand two storey central block, there are now two single storey pavilions flanking the entrance with a simple Tuscan order.

The materials match the main house, but the architectural language is toned down to reflect the building's subsidiary nature. The inspiration comes from the simpler examples of eighteenth and nineteenth century stable yards which are almost utilitarian but retain a degree of formality and architectural presence.



Figure 96: New proposal for stables.



Figure 97: Stables at Mottisfont Abbey, Hampshire. The pavilions linked by walls and gates are similar to the latest proposal for Little Tew.



Figure 98: Stables at Manderston House, Berwickshire. An example of a restrained approach to the architecture of a stable block.

Conclusion

We have taken the ideas suggested by the Design Review Panel and have used them to turn a good ordinary house into what we believe is an exceptional work of architecture. The new scheme presented is intended to demonstrate a knowledgeable, literate, approach to Classical architecture. Many Oxfordshire precedents have been assimilated into the composition, along with elements from continental architecture which help to refresh the local baroque tradition. As Lutyens was able to integrate many ideas from the broader European Classical tradition to produce houses that were unmistakably English and unmistakably Lutyens, so we aim to produce a house that is unmistakably Oxfordian and unmistakably Terry.

The adoption of large pane glazing, and architectural dormers is a direct consequence of improving the insulation to meet Passivhaus standards. Both these features have precedents in the local architecture but have not previously been employed in exactly the way now proposed.

The progression from external courtyard to entrance hall to any of the main rooms via the spine corridor should be one of architectural drama and incident, lent even more drama by the revelation of the landscape on the other side of the house. The design draws on a wide range of influences to produce something coherent, new and (it is hoped) of exceptional quality.

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