

Case Name: Dunelm House, Durham

Case Number: 1434978

Background

Historic England has received an application to assess this building for a Certificate of Immunity from listing (COI). This case has been taken forward as part of Historic England's Enhanced Advisory Services, and costs will be recovered from the applicant. Listing Group commissioned a factual, contextual report on the building from our Research Group, which was produced by Dr Elain Harwood, Senior Investigator, who is a former trustee of the Twentieth Century Society. Dr Harwood was not involved in the production of this advice.

Asset(s) under Assessment

Facts about the asset(s) can be found in the Annex(es) to this report.

Annex	List Entry Number	Name	Heritage Category	HE Recommendation
1	1435499	Dunelm House including landing stage, steps and attached walls	Listing	Add to List

Visits

Date	Visit Type
09 May 2016	Full inspection

Context

PLANNING CONTEXT

Dunelm House is included both in a conservation area and within the setting of the Durham Castle and Cathedral World Heritage Site (WHS). Information provided with the application in April 2016 states that Durham University wished to develop a master plan for the University estate to support the development of a new Estates Strategy. Much of the land owned by the university sits within greenbelt or adjacent to the Durham Castle and Cathedral WHS or in the City Centre floodzone. The University also considered that there are no sites owned by a third party capable of accommodating the scale of development needed. The site upon which Dunelm House and adjacent sites sit is therefore considered key to the development of new, world class university facilities.

On 4th August 2016 we were sent additional material informing us that although when the COI application was made, Durham University had no plans to redevelop Dunelm House, this position has now changed due to proposals in the University's New Academic Strategy, The Accommodation and Estate's Strategy and the initial findings of the master plan exercise. The latter promotes the re-development of the University's buildings on the west side of New Elvet, including Dunelm House, to accommodate several departments in the Faculty of Arts & Humanities; also a large music performance space and cultural facility. The buildings' lack of fitness for purpose, inflexibility and poor condition are cited as the main reasons for this conclusion.

DESIGNATION CONTEXT

In the 1990s Dunelm House was recommended for shortlisting, in our review of higher education establishments, to the Post-War Steering Group and English Heritage Advisory Committee with an invitation to decide whether a Grade II or II* was appropriate. Subsequently a listing recommendation was prepared at Grade II*. Along with a number of other post-war buildings, these recommendations were not taken forward at that time and no recommendation was made to the Secretary of State. Prior to receiving the current COI

application, the building had already been shortlisted for assessment in our forthcoming post-war university buildings project (the only students' union building nationally to be included).

CERTIFICATE OF IMMUNITY FROM LISTING APPLICATION

The University of Durham has applied for a Certificate of Immunity from listing, seeking early certainty about our designation intentions for the site. Accompanying the application a consultant's report includes an appraisal of the technical qualities of the building

Assessment

CONSULTATION

The Certificate of Immunity from listing application is primarily focussed on arguments against the building's fitness for purpose citing specifically the 'Pimlico School Ruling' and other recent casework including Robin Hood Gardens, and the South Bank Centre. In summary the claims made are that Dunelm House is in poor condition, as a result of which it is under-utilised, the original design is inflexible, the concrete of the structure is failing and the roof has never worked properly. These are claimed as intrinsic defects to the original design. Considerations of the building's architectural interest within the application concludes that the architecture is poorly resolved, that the building does not exhibit ground breaking use of materials, it lacks structural innovation and the interiors are not well or attractively detailed. A key document submitted is an Engineering Report (March 2016) referred to here as 'Arup's Report' and a copy of 1972 Architects' Journal: Building Revisited, referred to here as the '1972 reappraisal'.

HE RESPONSE: the building's design quality and fitness for purpose will be considered in the discussion below.

The building's owner and the COI applicant, both the University of Durham; their agent, Montagu Evans; the local planning authority (LPA), Durham County Council; the Durham Historic Environment Record (DHER) and the Twentieth Century Society (C20) were provided with copies of our consultation report.

The DHER and the LPA confirmed that they had no comments to make.

The C20 responded to state that in their view the building should be listed at Grade II*. Specific points made included: it is the only intact students union of the mid-1960s; it is an award winning building; it was designed by a prominent national practice, who designed other university buildings, some having been listed; it has group value with the adjacent Grade I listed bridge, with which it was designed as a coordinated pair and part of the same plan; that the building is capable of repair and that neglect by the university has led to the building appearing in poorer condition than it actually is; there are few external alterations, and the building fulfils the selection criteria on both functionality and design quality.

HE RESPONSE: these are all comments relating to the architectural or historic interest of the building and are therefore addressed in the discussion below.

Montagu Evans responded on behalf of the University of Durham.

(i) A series of comments on some aspects of the wording of the report and the offer of suggested alternative wording. Supporting evidence for two comments contained within the report was requested.

HE RESPONSE: where we consider it appropriate we have noted the suggested wording in the relevant sections of the report and in particular have slightly expanded our comments on the 1972 reappraisal, aspects of which are also discussed further below under various headings. A request for supporting evidence for two comments made in the report was dealt with as a Freedom of Information Request and responses were sent to the applicant on 21st July 2016.

(ii) The response included a detailed cost report for the repair of the building and a request that this is taken into account in formulating our advice.

HE RESPONSE: Historic England can only take into account issues relating to the historic or architectural interest of the building in formulating its recommendation. Issues of repair costs fall outside of this remit.

(iii) On 4th August Montagu Evans sent us additional material informing us that when the COI application was made, Durham University had no plans to redevelop Dunelm House but that this position has now changed due to proposals in the University's New Academic Strategy, The Accommodation and Estate's Strategy and the initial findings of the master plan exercise. The latter promotes the re-development of the University's buildings on the west side of New Elvet, including Dunelm House, to accommodate several departments in the Faculty of Arts & Humanities; also a large music performance space and cultural facility. The buildings' lack of fitness for purpose, inflexibility and poor condition are cited as the main reasons for this conclusion.

HE RESPONSE: Historic England can only take into account issues relating to the historic or architectural interest of the building. Issues relating to the wider planning intentions fall outside of this remit. We can consider the functionality of a post-war building in so far as this impacts on its interest, which is discussed below.

DISCUSSION

The assessment of buildings for listing is governed by the DCMS' Principles of Selection for Listed Buildings (March 2010). This document sets out that architectural and historic interest are the sole statutory criteria for listing with further guidance provided by Historic England's Selection Guides. It also states that 'particularly careful selection is required for buildings from the period after 1945'. Our Selection Guide for Education Buildings (April 2011) states that 'Higher education buildings of the post-1945 period include some of the most exciting buildings of their day, and can be of international importance. Architectural interest will be determined sometimes by questions of successful functionality, as well as by consideration of design quality.' Following established precedent, one consideration in assessing the architectural quality of a post-war building is the extent to which its design meets the original brief. The success in delivering the requirements of the brief is one gauge of effectiveness of the design. This is distinct from the building's suitability for current uses since these evolve in relation to legislation, policy and practice and cannot be expected to have been anticipated in the original design.

This assessment will address issues relating to the architectural and historic interest of Dunelm House in turn: aesthetic quality; planning; level of alteration; significance of the architects; historic significance; group value and the effectiveness of its design. While such an approach is essential to produce a reasoned evaluation of the building's qualities, these need to be considered together in order to form a coherent and balanced view of the building's architectural and historic interest.

AESTHETIC INTEREST AND DESIGN QUALITY

Dunelm House is an award winning building, holding both a Civic Trust Award and the RIBA Bronze Medal for 1966. It was praised in the architectural press and has always been widely admired in its own right as well as for the strong, modern group it forms with Kingsgate Bridge. It is a significant example of the Brutalist style, and thus reflects the latest in architectural thinking for its date. The shuttered concrete finish is attractive as is the fine detail seen, for example, in the frameless windows, and the understatement afforded the entrance is a common design aesthetic of the Modern Movement, developed, for example, by Denys Lasdun at the National Theatre, London. The choice of a composite concrete roof, criticised by the applicant as 'visually dead and heavy' actually gives texture to the roofscape, especially seen from the bridge and the higher part of the historic peninsula. Given the sensitivity of the site, which is overlooked from the historic peninsula, the choice of the roof was a specific response to a difficult problem and is a modern interpretation of the town's historic pantile roofs. Internally, the principal spaces are generous and the quality afforded them is visible, for example the ballroom and cafeteria both have high ceilings moulded with curved surfaces and the latter is top lit by clerestory glazing. The building was designed ahead of other Brutalist listed buildings in England such as Preston Central Bus Station and Carpark, Lancashire (NHLE: 1416042; Grade II) and the Royal National Theatre, LB Lambeth (NHLE:1272324; Grade II*) as well as unlisted buildings including the South Bank Centre (Hayward Gallery, Queen Elizabeth Hall and Purcell Room) LB Lambeth, and compares in design quality to all of these.

Historic England considers Dunelm House to be an expressive building, carefully designed as a balance of horizontal planes, as a series of half-open drawers in a cabinet, with vertical accents provided by the monopitch roofs, the rhythm of mullions similar to those of Le Coubousier's Monastery La Tourette, and the vertical accent of the single chimney. The impact is visually striking. The 1972 reappraisal also described the way the horizontal layers of the building are visually broken up to create interest and balance. In this it resembles other listed post-war university buildings, such as the long horizontal blocks by Leslie Martin including Middleton Hall, University of Hull (NHLE: 1419695 Grade II). Overall this is a quality post-war design of dramatic sculptural form and considerable architectural interest.

PLANNING INTEREST

The steeply sloping site was one of the most challenging in the country at the time, but the response is a highly successful bold and creative design. The building's complex plan is carefully stacked with its boat house at the bottom followed by the principal halls as they are not in such full-on use as the bar, coffee bar and cafeteria. These come next up the building, with the smaller rooms and offices at the top, together with a caretaker's flat for easy supervision of the building. The massing of small-scale to the street and large scale to the gorge, is notable. Designed for significant numbers of students to move around and to meet each other, a large proportion of circulation space is necessary and at Dunelm House there are large landings (retaining some original concrete benches and ash trays) where students can socialise, but few corridors.

From some landings fine views of the east end of Durham Cathedral can be appreciated through the clerestory glazing, reinforcing the care with which the building was planned. In cross section the building is organised with a spine staircase linking all levels of the building in the form of a street descending down through generous spaces from the entrance at the rear to the river terraces below.

LEVEL OF ALTERATION

The building was designed on first principles that are considered all the way through, with concrete to a careful finish outside and in, and with built-in details. We have carefully considered the alterations made to the building since its construction and with reference to the 1972 appraisal. The external form of the building is largely unchanged; an added stair and replacement doors and some replacement fenestration do not detract from its robust design. Similarly, despite some remodelling of individual spaces such as the bar and coffee bar and the more recent reorganisation of the former staff space, the internal layout remains reasonably intact and the form of the original large spaces including the ballroom are relatively unchanged. It is regrettable that the simple exposed concrete walls of the interior have been largely over-painted, but the texture of the board-marked concrete remains visible, as do the original quarry-tiled floors. We acknowledge the refurbishment of the bar and cafeteria and the loss of their original decorative schemes and that only a handful of original concrete fittings remain and most doors have been replaced; the latter changes in particular are commonly made to post-war buildings and do not necessarily prevent a recommendation to list, although can be a factor in grading.

The original simple nature of the interiors is hardly surprising, nor is the subsequent diminution of detail: this was a university union building designed for hard use, and it is to be expected that it will bear the signs of half a century of student use. In June 1966 Robert Donat, who photographed the building for *Architectural Review*, commented 'It was tragic to have to take pictures before the students have moved in and turned it into their own. The building cries out to be used - even abused; it can stand it - and longs for its complement of life and people'. The internal losses have to be balanced against the overall interest of the building and in this case we feel that they are relatively minor and their impact on the clear interest of the building is outweighed by the very many positive qualities.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ARCHITECTS

Founded in 1939 Architects' Co-Partnership has claims to be the first post-war architectural practice, whose innovative design of the Brynmawr Rubber Factory, Gwent (Grade II* listed in 1985) certainly established them as a major British architectural firm; seven of its buildings in England have been listed. The architect of Brynmawr, Michael Powers, is recognised for a series of gracious, well-crafted educational buildings that introduced modernism to Universities such as Oxford and Durham. His much-admired 1958-60 Beehives building at St John's College, Oxford (NHLE:1278860; Grade II) is understood to have brought the firm to Durham University's attention when seeking an architect for their own project. Richard Raines's work at Dunelm House was the most important of the firm's rising generation of assistants. He combined a traditional knowledge of architecture with specific training under its leading British teachers, John Killick and Peter Smithson at the Architectural Association. Powers and Raines combined an established and well-regarded architect with a rising young talent and pupil of Peter Smithson, and the overall quality of Dunelm House stands as a testimony to the quality of this partnership. The extent of Sir Ove Arup's involvement in the Dunelm House project is unclear, but he was at least involved in the re-design of the roof: it was unusual for him to be personally involved in the design for the company's large projects at this time, and this therefore adds to the claims to interest.

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

Student unions and university-funded recreational buildings are a distinctive genre and are far fewer in number than the mainstream of teaching and residential buildings. Dunelm House is significant as a rare and little-altered example of a students' union from their prime era of development between 1961-6. It is the foremost students' union building of the post-war era in England (1945-2000); internationally the only other students' union of the 1960s to be widely published is Dipoli, the union for the technical university at Otaniemi in Finland by Raili and Reima Pietilä. Completed in 1966, it is a powerful Brutalist building of concrete, rough natural stone and copper that contains an auditorium, catering and conference facilities within a highly complex, organic plan. The range of facilities and their informality at Dunelm House also reflects the social and cultural interests of sophisticated young people at the very moment in time when youth culture took the nation's centre stage. This demonstrates that the university and the architects were very forward thinking in their design in wanting to provide this, and in keeping with this, the opening night featured, not a standard ball as for its predecessors, but a concert by the influential American Jazz pianist and composer Thelonius Monk.

FUNCTIONALITY ACCORDING TO ORIGINAL BRIEF

The brief was for communal, recreational student facilities and staff areas, on a steeply sloping site and all requiring very separated spaces. Two particular elements of the design have been highlighted by the

applicant as being unsuccessful, namely the roof and an inflexible plan form. It seems that there have always been leaks from the design of the composite roof and we accept that the building is not perfect, but we are unaware of any serious repair or mitigation ever having taken place including replacement of the roof covering, indicating that the building's fifty years of continuous use has not been significantly affected. It is true that the building was not designed to be flexible and we reiterate that the brief required separateness of functional spaces. A need to incorporate future flexibility was not part of the brief. We understand that some areas are under-used, but the building has in any case proved a degree of flexibility in that many of the smaller spaces have been adapted to new uses and that the principal spaces are mostly still used for their original functions.

The COI application focuses on the condition of the concrete and Arup's technical report. The latter concludes that the spalling concrete is a result of insufficient concrete cover which in some places is 'significantly less than the original design specified depth'; this is suggested as 'poor workmanship'. This does not constitute a design flaw affecting the performance of the building; the impact of concrete spalling is that the building requires repair, not that it renders it unfit for purpose. While it is difficult for us to assess the extent to which poor maintenance has contributed to the issue, the Arup Report is clear that the external concrete is repairable.

There is no demonstrable evidence that Dunelm House showed major physical problems suggesting it failed to fulfil its original purpose. No major alterations have been made to Dunelm House that suggest problems of use. None of the issues of functionality raised by the applicant, some of which are referred to in the 1972 reappraisal, have prevented the successful functioning of the student union for fifty years, which is a testament to the quality and success of its design.

GROUP VALUE

In a lecture to students in c 1970, Professor Douglass Wise, Head of the School of Architecture at Newcastle University, described Kingsgate Bridge and Dunelm House as 'the greatest contribution modern architecture has made to the enjoyment of an English medieval city' (quoted by Martin Roberts in *The Buildings and Landscapes of Durham University*). The designs of the Grade I listed Kingsgate Bridge (National Heritage List for England: 1119766) and Dunelm House were part of the same project to expand university provision off the historic peninsula and across the gorge. Ove Arup and Partners acted as engineering consultants for both structures which, executed in shuttered concrete, are a coordinated pair. This coordination can be seen for example in the careful positioning of the south elevation of Dunelm House, which is separated from the flanking wall of the bridge by a narrow flight of steps, creating the impression of a steep alleyway between the two structures when viewed from the older parts of the city. Additionally, the union building's careful massing of shapes and the choice of materials respond both to its sensitive site and to the bridge. In 1966 Robert Donat in *Architectural Review* said that 'Bridge and Building should really be judged together'; taken together Dunelm House benefits from a clear group value with Kingsgate Bridge which form an elegant modern group, and to a lesser but still significant degree with the World Heritage Site of Cathedral and Castle Precinct, to which it is seen in various local views and indeed acts as a counterpart.

Dunelm House is included in Durham City conservation area, within a sub-character area described as a very diverse multi-layered historic environment. The setting is the densely wooded, steep river gorge, with the World Heritage Site of Durham Cathedral and Durham Castle providing key visual points. Dunelm House is a stand-alone landmark building next to Kingsgate Bridge which is intrinsic to the setting of the bridge, providing a context and understanding to the development of this section of the conservation area. Therefore although it is a break from tradition in terms of style and materials, the local planning authority consider that it makes a positive contribution to the conservation area, with which we agree. Furthermore, as a pair Dunelm House and Kingsgate Bridge are acknowledged as a Modernist intervention that responds well to the river landscape and act as a successful contrast to the historic architecture of the Peninsula. Any building that responds well to its surroundings is generally accorded greater architectural and, possibly, historic interest. This has been taken into account in the overall assessment of the architectural and historic interest of Dunelm House.

CONCLUSION

Dunelm House has been recognised by Historic England as a post-war building of special interest since it first became eligible for listing in the 1990s. In 2016 it is the only students' union on our revised shortlist of post-war university buildings for listing assessment. This demonstrates our rigorous selection process to 'list only the most representative or most significant examples of the type'. The building stands comfortably alongside the best post-war university buildings, and it is therefore recommended for listing at Grade II; consequently a Certificate of Immunity from listing should not be issued.

In recommending the extent of designation we have considered whether powers of exclusion under s.1 (5A) of the 1990 Act are appropriate, and consider that they are, which is made clear in the proposed List entry.

REASONS FOR DESIGNATION DECISION

Dunelm House, University of Durham 1964-6 by Architects' Co-Partnership, is recommended for listing at Grade II, and a Certificate of Immunity from listing should not be issued, for the following principal reasons:

- * Architectural interest: a significant Brutalist building that reflects the latest in architectural thinking for its date;
- * Design quality: in response to its extraordinary site, it was carefully designed as a balance of horizontal planes, with vertical accents provided by the monopitch roofs, the rhythm of the mullions and the vertical accent of the single chimney; the impact is striking;
- * Planning: a carefully stacked plan representing a creative response to its brief on one of the most challenging sites in the country at the time, resulting in a bold and highly successful design;
- * Architects: an important building in Architects' Co-Partnership portfolio, designed by talented young architect Richard Raines, who combined an international knowledge of architecture with specific training under its leading British teachers, John Killick and Peter Smithson at the Architectural Association;
- * Group value: it benefits from a very strong group value with the Grade I listed Kingsgate Bridge, and to a lesser but still significant degree with the Cathedral and Castle Precinct World Heritage Site, to which it acts as a visual counterpart across the river;
- * Historic interest: the foremost students' union building of the post-war era in England, which compares with students' unions being built around the world in the 1960s.

Countersigning comments:

Agreed. Dunelm House is an important award-winning Brutalist building. The foremost students' union building nationally it was designed by a significant architectural practice with the design cleverly and dramatically responding to a very difficult site in the Wear Gorge, and as a counterpart and compliment to the adjacent Grade I-listed Kingsgate Bridge. Post-war buildings are not recommended for listing lightly and the bar for listing them is set necessarily high. However, this building has continued to fulfill its students' union function for 50 years, which is a testament to its high quality design. It fully merits its place on the List at Grade II.

V. Fiorato, 26th August 2016

Further Comments:

Agreed, also.

I visited with the Adviser and saw first hand the special architectural quality and remarkable contextual response of this building, which merits listing at Grade II.

Emily Gee

Head of Listing Advice

2 September 2016

Annex 1**List Entry****List Entry Summary**

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

Name: Dunelm House including landing stage, steps and attached walls

List Entry Number: 1435499

Location

Durham Students Union, Dunelm House, New Elvet, Durham, DH1 3AN

The building may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County	District	District Type	Parish
	County Durham	Unitary Authority	Non Civil Parish

National Park: Not applicable to this List entry.

Grade: II

Date first listed:

Date of most recent amendment:

Legacy System Information

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

Legacy System: Not applicable to this List entry.

Legacy Number: Not applicable to this List entry.

Asset Groupings

This List entry does not comprise part of an Asset Grouping. Asset Groupings are not part of the official record but are added later for information.

List Entry Description**Summary of Building**

Students' Union Building including steps, landing stage and attached walls, 1964-6 by the Architects' Co-Partnership: partner-in-charge Michael Powers; job architect Richard Raines; engineers Ove Arup and Partners. Brutalist style.

Reasons for Designation

Dunelm House, University of Durham 1964-6 by Architects' Co-Partnership, is listed at Grade II for the following principal reasons:

- * Architectural interest: a significant Brutalist building that reflects the latest in architectural thinking for its date;
- * Design quality: in response to its extraordinary site, it was carefully designed as a balance of horizontal planes, with vertical accents provided by the monopitch roofs, the rhythm of the mullions and the vertical accent of the single chimney; the impact is striking;
- * Planning: a carefully stacked plan representing a creative response to its brief on one of the most challenging sites in the country at the time, resulting in a bold and highly successful design;
- * Architects: an important building in Architects' Co-Partnership portfolio, designed by talented young architect Richard Raines, who combined an international knowledge of architecture with specific training under its leading British teachers, John Killick and Peter Smithson at the Architectural Association;
- * Group value: it benefits from a very strong group value with the Grade I listed Kingsgate Bridge, and to a lesser but still significant degree with the Cathedral and Castle Precinct World Heritage Site, to which it acts as a visual counterpart across the river;
- * Historic interest: the foremost students' union building of the post-war era in England, which compares with students' unions being built around the world in the 1960s.

History

DUNELM HOUSE

As early as 1957 the University of Durham decided to expand E of the historic Durham peninsula where it had previously built. A new students' union was planned at the head of New Elvet, joined to the peninsula university buildings by means of a new footbridge across the Wear gorge. The new bridge, Kingsgate Bridge, was commissioned from Ove Arup and Partners and was completed in 1963 (Grade I; National Heritage List for England: 1119766). In 1961 the Architects' Co-Partnership (ACP) was commissioned to design the students' union, following testimony from St John's College Oxford where the firm had designed the much-admired Beehives building in 1958-60 (Grade II; NHLE: 1278860). As at St John's, the partner in charge was Michael Powers, but at Dunelm House the design was by a young assistant Richard Raines. From the outset Ove Arup & Partners was part of the design team as consultant engineers. The builder was John Laing, one of the leading contractors of the day, who completed construction at a cost of £350,000.

The university brief for the building was very specific and Raines had to meet it 'exactly'. Communal facilities were needed so that the 70% of students living in university accommodation could meet those living in other colleges and the 30% living independently had a meeting place. There was to be staff space too and the brief required very separated spaces for these functions. Substantial accommodation was to be built on a steeply sloping site that stretched from the domestic character of New Elvet, down 15.4m (50ft) to the dramatic landscape of the Wear gorge, where right at the river's edge the architects were to provide a boathouse (Roberts 2013). It was essentially to be a recreational building, designed to provide a wide range of cultural and social opportunities for students outside the curriculum, with a cafeteria, bar, coffee lounge, assembly and meeting rooms. The building was funded by the University Grants Committee and cost considerations were a determining issue. The drawings were made in 1962-4, and Dunelm House was built between 1964-6. The opening of the building in 1966 saw a concert performed by Thelonious Monk, the influential American Jazz musician and composer.

The building was publicised and received some praise in the architectural press. It won a Civic Trust Award, and the RIBA Bronze Medal for 1966, and has always been widely admired in its own right as well as for the strong, modern group it forms with Kingsgate Bridge. An appraisal of the building in 1972 by Jack Lynn writes positively about the building and also comments on the lack of flexibility in the plan form and cites a number of shortcomings of the functioning of the services and the interior decoration, while acknowledging the shortcomings as 'relatively minor troubles in a heavily used building' and that 'Dunelm House has stood up well to harsh treatment'. The Architects' Journal on 26 October 2011 published a report entitled 'Britain's best university buildings: Student Unions', which identified a 'top five' that included Dunelm House and the Cambridge 'GradPad' as its 1960s' examples.

The external form of the building remains largely unchanged, with the exception of an additional set of external stairs added in 1965, replacement main doors and some replacement fenestration and secondary glazing. The internal plan remains largely intact too, although there have been alterations to several of the main spaces: an attempt to remedy water ingress through the roof was provided by the addition of brackets to anchor some of the tiles in place; the cafeteria received a false floor and a new screen, counter and furniture and the original decorative scheme was replaced; the original Scandinavian interiors of the bar were replaced and it was enlarged by incorporating the former reading and billiard rooms and a new counter was installed; the former coffee lounge has been partitioned, with most of it converted to offices; original doors designed as

frameless plate glass have mostly been replaced; an additional stair to the bar mezzanine was added in c1970 and a reception area inserted and secondary glazing was added to some parts of the building. In 1989-90 the N part of the building, formerly the separate staff accommodation, was converted to a separate Careers Advisory Service, itself converted in 2013 for use as the University English Language Unit. Some time before 1996 the original caretaker's flat was converted to offices. The form of the original large spaces including the ballroom are relatively unchanged however. More recently stair lifts have been fitted onto the main staircase. The original design of the building included a number of built-in seats, ash trays, lighting, phone booths and a billiard table pedestal, of which a few examples of ash trays and benches remain, and a few original light fittings are retained within plant rooms.

THE ARCHITECTS

Architects Co-Partnership has claim to be the first major post-war practice. It was established in July 1939 as the Architects' Co-operative Partnership by 11 friends who had met at the Architectural Association. They shared youth and an innocent idealism and wanted to work together as equals and in the modern idiom, and to build buildings that would be socially useful. Their most important single commission was Michael Powers' (1915-94) rubber factory at Brynmawr near Ebbw Vale, Wales, designed in close collaboration with Ove Arup and Partners, which provided model working conditions with fine welfare and recreational facilities. It was the most innovative building in Britain of the immediate post-war years and was listed Grade II* in 1985 (demolished with listed building consent 2002). In the early 1950s ACP built many schools and laboratories, they designed the administration and VIP wing of the Festival of Britain and they soon secured university work. The Beehives at St John's College, Oxford was led by Powers and built in 1958-60, and ACP also designed three houses for college fellows (1963, all listed Grade II). Powers also designed a new entrance to the President's Lodgings at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, completed the building of the St Paul's Choir School (1963-7, Grade II*) and designed three residential schools for the National Spastics Society that were pioneering achievements in designing for the disabled. He also worked at Bryanston and Hanford schools in Dorset, and on ACP's Wolfson Building at Trinity College Cambridge (1972). Though lacking the ideological drive of some partners, Powers is considered the most sensitive architect of the team, and he is recognised for a series of well-crafted educational buildings that introduced modernism to universities like Oxford and Durham where traditional, classical architecture had previously held sway. Overall seven of the practice's buildings have received listed status.

By the early 1960s it was left to a rising generation of assistants to reinvigorate the practice, made possible by the office's relaxed structure that enabled each partner to encourage new talent. Of these Richard Mitchell Raines's work at Durham was the most important. Born in 1929 in the United States, he entered the Architectural Association, and between 1956 and 1958 he studied under John Killick and Peter Smithson. Other tutors included James Stirling and James Gowan, while John Summerson and Reyner Banham taught architectural history. Recently graduated, Raines joined ACP in 1961 and assisted Michael Powers on 'several small buildings' before he was entrusted with Dunelm House. In 1969 he joined Arup Associates, where his work included the innovative Bush Lane House completed in 1976, which won the Structural Steel Design Award and an RIBA award for 1977 for its external frame. Raines left for Austin-Smith: Lord Architects in 1983, working mainly on interiors and although now (2016) he is semi-retired, he remains a registered architect in private practice.

Richard Raines was interviewed by Historic England staff in March 2016: he stated that while he regretted the separation between the facilities for staff and students, he had no say on this or other matters and he also had to fulfil all the university's requirements within the rigid cost limits of the University Grants Committee, which was tightening its budgets in 1962. Raines also worked closely with a team at Ove Arup and Partners led by John Martin, who had been Arup's assistant on the bridge, but was most insistent that at Dunelm House the engineer's role was secondary, and that close collaboration with the consultants was critical. He described 'a most happy collaboration' between most involved. It has been suggested that the nature of the roof was a late design change, but this is denied by the architect who insists that the design of the roof was an integral part of the design overall, but that the tiled covering was agreed only after special funding was secured from the Royal Fine Art Commission.

Sir Ove Arup (1895-1988) founded his engineering firm in 1946, which engineered many post-war buildings including Park Hill, Sheffield and the Barbican, London. Arup had little personal involvement with these schemes with the exception of Kingsgate Bridge. His strength was less as a designer than as a profound intellectual who gave the firm its academic prowess, which was reflected in the ethos with which he managed the firm. As well as attracting a remarkable team of engineers, Arup's interest in architecture led him in 1952 to employ an in-house architect, Philip Dowson, and in 1963 to found Arup Associates, a parallel multi-disciplinary practice of architects, engineers and quantity surveyors.

STUDENTS UNION BUILDINGS

Students' unions originated in the United States in 1896 as buildings providing a range of recreational and catering facilities for students living at home or in 'digs', unconnected with a representative or political organisation. In the United Kingdom, similar student buildings became a feature of red-brick universities and smaller higher education colleges; the first was 1910-13 at Liverpool University (NHLE: 1068368), and both it and the 1924 building at Newcastle University (NHLE: 1355263) are the only two listed student union buildings in England. The National Union of Students in the United Kingdom was founded in 1922 as part of the peace movement that followed the First World War, and specifically as an arm of the Confederation International des Étudiants launched in Prague to improve understanding and friendship between the future leaders of different nations. The rapid expansion of higher education after the Second World War included several new students' unions with early examples in a minimally classical style. Only slowly did modernism take over for university buildings, and the students' unions illustrate this story in miniature. Examples include: Birmingham by Neville Conder (1958-62); Newcastle extended in 1960-4 by William Whitfield, and the Richmond Building in Bristol, opened in 1965 by Alec French & Partners. Universities with a strongly collegiate structure and with most of the students living in close proximity, such as Oxford, Cambridge, Reading and the new universities built in the 1960s, do not have a major students' union building; an exception, though not technically a students' union, is the Graduate Centre built by Cambridge University by Howell, Killick, Partridge and Amis from 1964-7 (NHLE: 1407952) which provides dining facilities and meeting rooms for graduate students. The reduction of government funding for new building after 1965 brought an end to the boom in university buildings including students' unions. The reorganisation of colleges of higher education as polytechnics from 1965 onwards saw more students' unions established but little new building; the few examples from the 1970s were very modest. However, more new students' unions have been built since the 1990s when the former polytechnics were given university status. Examples include Sunderland by Faulkner Browns and Paisley by Page & Park, both from 2004.

Details

Students' Union Building including steps and landing stage, 1964-6 by the Architects' Co-Partnership: partner-in-charge Michael Powers; job architect Richard Raines; engineers Ove Arup and Partners. Brutalist style.

MATERIALS: reinforced concrete construction, part in-situ, part pre-cast, and clad in foamed slag aggregate from the Consett Steel Works, with some boardmarking. The roof is formed of pre-cast concrete interlocking slabs sixteen feet long by two inches thick.

PLAN: a broad central staircase links the road and river, with wide landings on each level from which the other accommodation is reached on either side. The building thus steps down, with balconies on several levels. The principal spaces comprise: bars, a cafeteria, the Margot Fonteyn Ballroom and a gymnasium, with ancillary accommodation around them and the largest rooms, including the gymnasiums and ballroom, set at the bottom and the smaller offices at the top. Student and staff accommodation was kept separate within the plan.

EXTERIOR: the building abuts the Grade I listed Kingsgate Bridge and is situated on a site that is steeply sloping. The building thus steps down the slope of the ravine to the River Wear and has seven levels, with small-scale massing to the street and large-scale to the river gorge. The site enables bars and cafes to be built on several levels and to make the most of the spectacular views. The roof, which is a mixture of flat and E and W sloping forms, is formed of pre-cast concrete interlocking slabs, which form a serrated roofline above the eaves on all elevations; a small, central roof garden has been incorporated. Rainwater outlets from the concrete gutters set within the building structure are provided by chains and gargoyles in some areas. The concrete cover of all elevations displays spalling and delamination with reinforcement visible in areas; discolouration is clearly evident and patch repairs have been attempted. Mullioned windows throughout are set at a maximum of six-foot centres with a minimum of one foot, and the opening lights have two-foot centres. Much of the glazing is fixed directly and set back behind the irregular projecting mullions, the rest is in metal surrounds. The mullion pattern is repeated in the clerestory glazing within the roof which serves the cafeteria, main bar and staircase.

The W elevation fronting the river is broken down into a series of concrete boxes terraced into the riverbank ending with the boathouse and landing stage, which is reached via steep steps and has its own entrance onto the river. This elevation appears to be divided into three vertical units externally, that break up the bulk of the exterior. The solid wall of the projecting ballroom dominates the central unit with the cafeteria and roof terrace above with a clerestory window. To the right is the solid wall of the Vane Tempest Hall, with coffee bar and

with its separate terrace and clerestory windows above. To the left is the former staff quarters situated above a car park level. The S side has a steep flight of steps leading to the upper level entrance and behind is a large asymmetrical mullioned window to the main range, with to the right a replacement plaster bust of Ove Arup. To the right is a prominent corner chimney set in its 'L'-shaped corner behind the main range, within a sunken yard. An original entrance on this elevation is fitted with replacement double entrance doors at the corner of New Elvet; the latter is reached by a ramp and steps from the bridge and a shallow concrete stair from the roadside. An entrance in the E elevation on the level below is reached up a cranked covered way parallel to the street from the N, above which rise the low cantilevered boxes on this side. The N elevation has a wall pierced by hexagonal openings below a ramp now serving the English Language Unit in the former staff area on this side of building, which extends over a car park and vehicular service access from New Elvet. The former staff area is reached by a separate stepped access and has timber double doors that repeat the mullion motif.

INTERIOR: the original plan of the building is retained with entrances at the rear, from which views of the building down to the river terraces are gained. Access through the building is provided from the road to the ballroom by means of a large staircase, which forms a spine through the building with wide landings to each level, and which serves the various rooms; some of these landings give fine views of the E end of Durham Cathedral. At the foot of the slope the boathouse is entered from outside. Throughout, floor coverings are mostly quarry tiled and vertical and horizontal surfaces are exposed board-marked concrete, now all painted over (with the exception of those in some storage and plant rooms). Walls are almost all structural and support the cantilevered form of the building as it descends the ravine. The topmost floor mainly comprises offices and the former caretaker's flat, the latter retaining its original plan with a series of rooms to the lower floor and a mezzanine level reached by a staircase. Bars, a shop, offices and the cafeteria are set on the two intermediate levels, with a central roof garden accessed from the upper of these floors. The cafeteria is one of the principal spaces and is a double-height space with clerestory glazing and a curved acoustic ceiling formed of slatted timber; it has an inserted raised floor over part of it. Doors through the W wall give access to a two-level roof terrace. The former coffee shop on the same level has been converted to an open plan office. Below these floors is the Vane Tempest Hall, a smaller performance space with a wooden stage, a timber-boarded floor and an acoustic, boarded roof. A set of concrete steps leading down to the principal hall, the Margot Fonteyn Ballroom, with a sunken, sprung floor and high, acoustic, boarded ceiling. These large volumes are deliberately concealed by being at the bottom of the site. The former staff accommodation at the north of the building including a dining room, bar, lounge and guest rooms has been converted to offices, and while some spaces remain intact, others have been pierced and subdivided.

Overall the various interiors are plain and simple. Concrete furniture was originally built-in and purpose designed and at least three fixed concrete benches and three ash trays to two of the landings remain, and a single concrete bench to the bar roof terrace, but otherwise most of these original fittings have been removed. A single original pivoted and frame-less door is retained on a semi-external door adjacent to the former coffee shop. Various service* and plant rooms* are arranged across several floors and in some of these, the underside of the ceilings below the original roof are water stained indicating that there has been water ingress.

* Pursuant to s.1 (5A) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 ('the Act') it is declared that all plant, sanitary ware and kitchen fittings are not of special architectural or historic interest.

Selected Sources

Books and journals

Pevsner, N, *The Buildings of England: County Durham*, (1983), 233-4

Pocock, D, *The Story of Durham*, (2013)

Powers, A, *Modern Architectures in History*, (2007)

Roberts, Martin, *The Buildings and Landscapes of Durham University*, (2013), 88-96

'Dunelm House, Student's Union, Durham; Architects' Co-partnership' in *Interior Design*, (November 1966), 518-523

'Building Revisited: Dunelm Students' Union of Durham University: Architects Co-partnership' in *Architects' Journal*, (May 1972), 1017-1026

Powers, A, 'A Thoughtful Brutalism' in *C20 Magazine*, (Spring 2012), 34-7

'University of Durham: Dunelm House' in *Architectural Review*, Vol. 134, (Oct 1963), 282

Donat, J, 'Dunelm House Durham' in *Architectural Review*, Vol. 139, (June 1966), 451-61

'Rainwater Outlet: Dunelm House, University of Durham' in *Architects Journal*, Vol. 144, (Aug 1966), 403-4

Websites

Arup, Sir Ove Nyquist (1895–1988); *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 01-06-2016 from <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/40049>

Other

Dunelm House, Durham University: Application for a Certificate of Immunity from Listing, Supporting Information; Montagu Evans, March 2016

Map

National Grid Reference: NZ2764342128



© Crown Copyright and database right 2015. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100024900.

The above map is for quick reference purposes only and may not be to scale. For a copy of the full scale map, please see the attached PDF - 1435499_1.pdf