

# A FUTURE FOR 55 BROADWAY

by John Hawkins

A public exhibition of the proposals for 55 Broadway and neighbouring buildings was held by Integrity International Group, who recently purchased the complex from TfL with the intention of restoring the Grade I listed building, and converting it to an hotel. The exhibition materials are available via the website [55-broadway.com](http://55-broadway.com) This article provides a summary.

55 Broadway was built between 1927-29 in an art-deco early-modernist style as headquarters of the Underground Electric Railways of London Ltd (UERL), but was taken into public ownership as London Transport in 1933.

The tallest office building in the capital at the time, it was dubbed 'London's first skyscraper' at just over 53 metres, and won the RIBA London Architecture Medal upon its completion. 55 Broadway was awarded Grade II listed status by English Heritage in 1970 and upgraded to Grade I listed status in 2011. The building retains many original features, such as the lobby and landings, as well as wood panelled boardrooms on the 7th floor. The proposed conversion to a high-quality hotel will see these unique features sensitively retained.

The architect of 55 Broadway was Charles Holden (1875-1960), who designed more than 50 LU stations in the 1920s and 1930s. One of Holden's other notable works is the Senate House of the University of London. 55 Broadway was commissioned by Lord Ashfield, Chairman of the UERL between 1910 and 1933. The UERL Vice-Chairman and Chief Executive at the time was Frank Pick, who oversaw many of the Underground's most recognisable symbols, including the roundel Underground sign and Beck's Underground map. He appreciated the importance of design in his work, and had a unique working relationship with architect Charles Holden.

The 55 Broadway building was constructed of Portland stone on a metal frame. Adjoining 100 Petty France was erected in the 1970s and relates in height to neighbouring Albany House, the two properties forming a modest and understated terrace as a whole. It follows the building line of the previous building on the site, Electric Railways (sic) House<sup>1</sup>. The steel element is clad in Portland Stone with a grey/green stone spandrel panel below the windows. The rear façade is a property cladding system with back painted glass panels and strip windows. An unusual feature is an elliptical stair/lift core that forms a transition between this building and the 'Wing Over Station' building. An unsightly and clumsy bridge at the rear links four levels of the building to 55 Broadway. 100 Petty France is to be retained and converted into hotel bedrooms.

The Wing Over Station building was developed as an extension of Electric Railways (sic) House in 1922–24 to designs by Sir Albert Richardson and Charles Gill. It has no street elevations and is utilitarian in appearance. It was innovative for its time as an early example of a building spanning a railway line. It forms one side of the Albany House Courtyard and has a stepping elevation against St. Ermin's Hotel to the rear. It is proposed to reclaim this building in its current form and to convert it to hotel bedrooms.

55 Broadway is a landmark building. At present, the direct route through the ground floor of the building is blocked by the office reception, requiring pedestrians to walk through the arcade which was introduced in the late-1980s. The proposals will seek to reinstate the direct north–south route which formed part of Holden's original vision. Opening 55 Broadway into a more publicly accessible scheme will improve visual and functional links in the heart of Westminster.

The new hotel would consist of around 500 rooms, located in the three parts of 55 Broadway. The existing cruciform structure of 55 Broadway readily lends itself to the conversion from office use around corridors, to high-quality hotel rooms. The premium hotel rooms would be located within 55 Broadway from the 2nd to the 9th floors, whilst smaller rooms would be located within 100 Petty France and Wing Over Station. The structure of the floors and the commitment to working with the heritage of the building would also mean construction and disruption to neighbours would be kept to a minimum. An ancillary food/beverage/retail offer would also be located at the ground floor, helping to activate the area around the site and encourage people into the building in line with Holden's original vision for the site. The first floor would be converted to a series of meeting spaces and conference suites, which would be accessible to hotel guests, visitors and the public. A spa area would be introduced at the ground floor

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1 The article was taken from the original exhibition publicity and edited and was a summary of the exhibition. The term "Electric Railways House" should have been singular in the publicity – Electric Railway House.

and basement level providing additional amenity for guests, local residents and workers. Refurbishing the existing building ensures a more sustainable development whilst protecting heritage.

Under the proposals, the existing terraces at the 10th floor would be enhanced with additional landscaping and planting in order to provide hospitable space for access by guests, residents and visitors to these historically significant spaces with close up views of the 'Four Winds' sculptures for the first time. In the tower above would be a Rooftop Restaurant, Rooftop Bar and Gallery Space.

The main public access point to the hotel would be via the eastern arm of the cruciform on the corner of Broadway. A secondary access would be located on Petty France. The main hotel reception will be on the first floor, with concierge and guest service desks on the ground floor. The ground floor would consist of a series of restaurants and retail units, that would be accessible to the public, creating a place in which visitors, residents and workers could wish to spend time, meet and relax throughout the week. The current station ticket hall is not affected.

The expected time scale sees planning submission in late 2019, with the planning decision expected in Spring 2020, a start on site in late 2020, and a projected programme of 18-24 months.

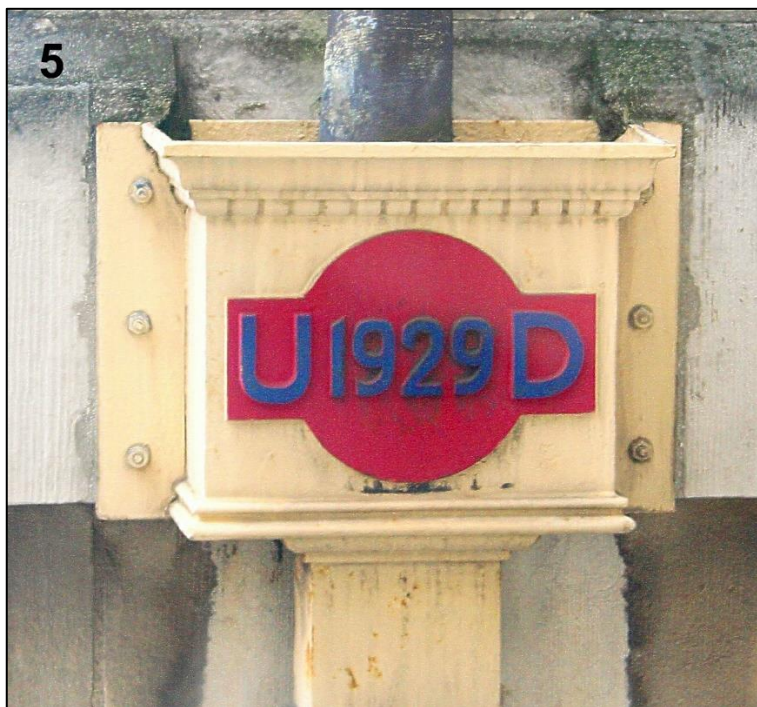
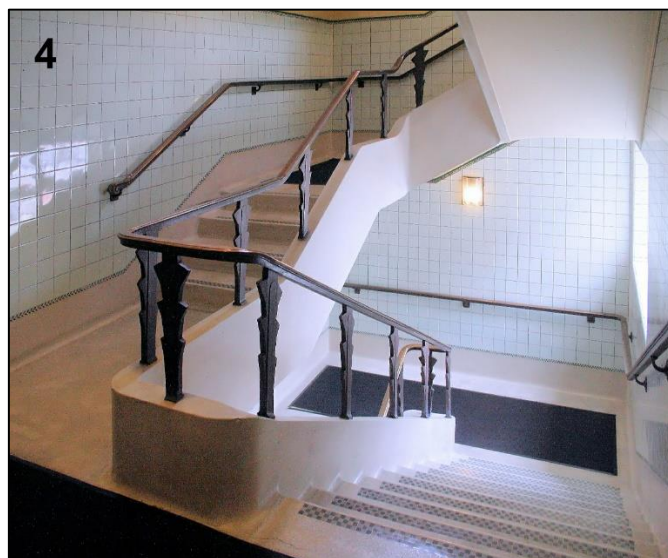
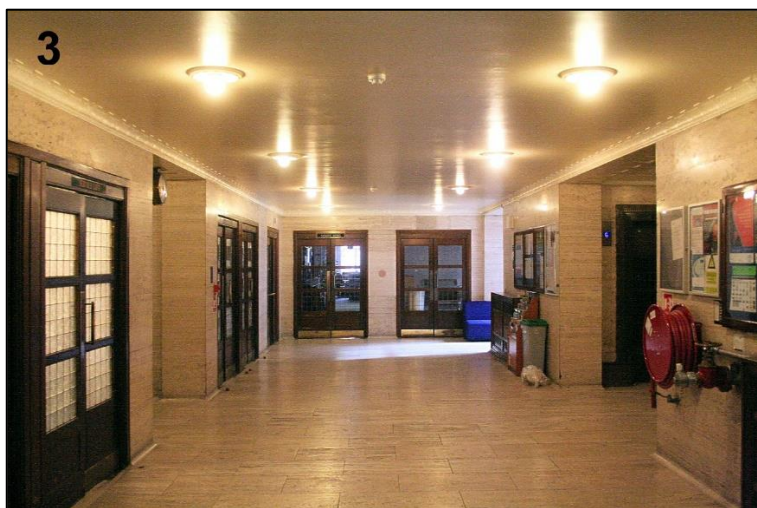


*The end of an era took place on Wednesday 4 December 2019 when Mike Brown (Transport Commissioner for London) lowered the LU flag (Left) at 55 Broadway for the last time. It was said that the flag had been "flown proudly since 1929". The flag is going to a new home in The London Transport Museum.*

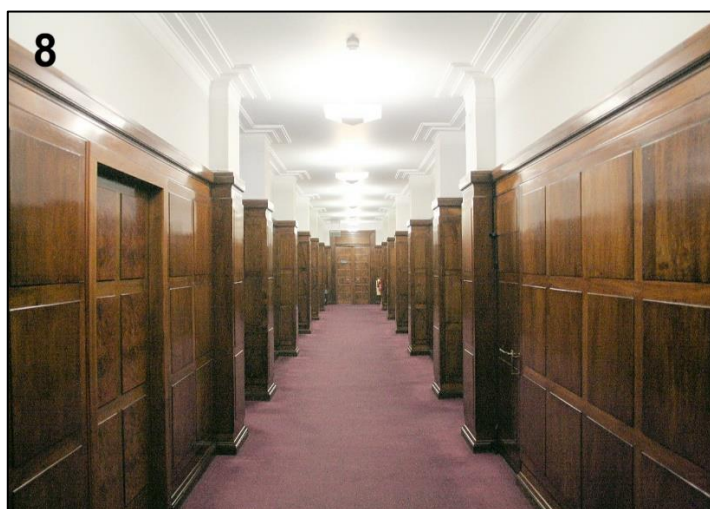
The flag type shown has certainly not been flown since 1929 and for most of the time it is thought the flagpole was bare. At least the occasion was marked though. There was a frayed all-red roundel version in the 1980s but before that? Perhaps just the Union Flag on special occasions? The Armed Forces Day, Olympic and LGBT+ flags have also been featured in the 21st Century.





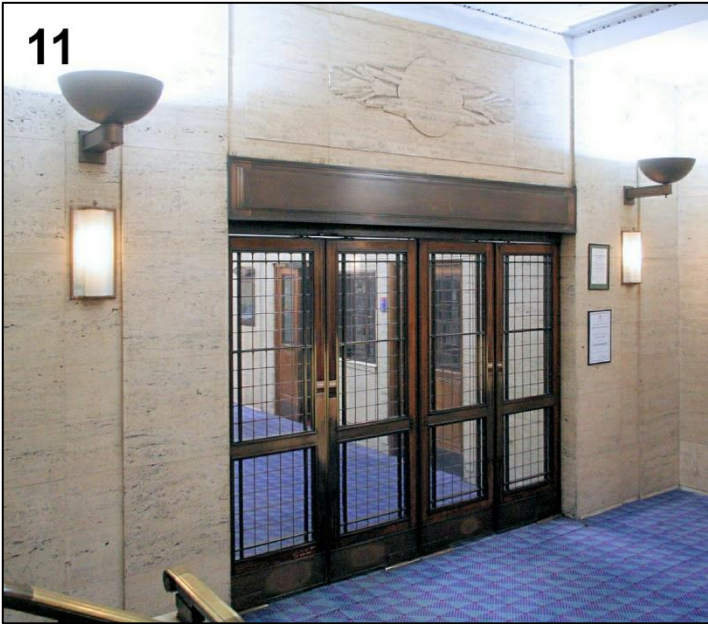


4 – Main staircase. 5 – Drain head with UndergroundD device. 6 – Cutler Mail System letter box in a lobby area.



7 – Reception area with wood paneling. 8 – Long hallway with wood paneling and red carpet.





**Photos:** 7 – Lift lobby area on 7th floor (note the higher ceiling). 8 – Wooden panelled 7th floor corridor leading to the Chairman's office. 9 – The former Chairman's office, latterly used as a meeting room. 10 – Lord Ashfield's portrait in the former Chairman's office. 11 – View from bottom of the main staircase looking towards reception.

12 – The Lord Ashfield memorial. It was originally located on the east corner of the building and relocated to bottom of main staircase after shopping mall opened.

**All 55 Broadway photos: Kim Rennie**