The Society of Antiquaries at Burlington House

Expressions of interest for an RIBA Stage 1 Design Plan

Following the purchase of a 999-year lease of our premises at Burlington House in October 2024, the Society of Antiquaries now seeks to commission an RIBA Stage 1 Design Plan to explore the development potential within our grade II* listed apartments.

Expressions of interest are invited from architect-led multidisciplinary teams with experience of the conservation needs of an historic building housing a library and collections. This essential first step will:

- Assess the building's condition and plan for its repair and conservation.
- Explore new possibilities for visitor spaces.
- Improve the accessibility and sustainability of the building.
- Optimise the use of our limited space and consider the viability of options for increasing it.

The plan will lay the groundwork for transformative capital investment, providing scope, a budget and specialist assessments to guide sensitive renewal of the building while preserving its historic character. We have a budget of £45,000- £50,000 (exclusive of VAT) available for the preparation of the Plan and envisage its delivery by 30th September 2026.

Further work on the project will be subject to securing funding through the Development Campaign; but we anticipate that it will take place in 2027. However, the substantive project design will be subject to a future open tender, to comply with National Heritage Lottery and other potential funder's procurement rules.

Selection criteria

We are looking to appoint a multi-disciplinary team with expertise and familiarity with the conservation needs of an historic library and collection in a listed building, whilst working sensitively within these constraints to bring the functionality of the premises up to modern standards. An important part of the work is to contribute to consultation sessions with Fellows, Affiliates and other stakeholders. We will hold a first in-person consultation with the Fellowship on 23 April 2026 at Burlington House, coinciding with our Anniversary Meeting.

While architect-led, the selected team will include the following skills:

- Quantity Surveying, with experience of historic buildings.
- Structural engineering, with expertise in working with historic structures.
- Mechanical and electrical engineering, with experience in working with sensitive historic interiors.
- Project Management.

Our decision to appoint will be based on:

- Experience of the team in similar projects (historic buildings with libraries and collections).
- How they would engage with us to fully understand our needs and aspirations for the building.
- How they would approach the commission, and in particular, take into account the views of the Fellowship in their assessments.

Timetable

Practices wishing to express an interest in preparing the Plan should submit details of their proposed team, together with examples of similar or relevant projects undertaken by the practices involved, by 18th March 2026. Submissions should not exceed 10 pages of A4.

Long-listed teams will be provided with a full brief and relevant background material by 23rd March and invited to submit a costed proposal by 8th April, following a briefing day at Burlington House on 31st March. Interviews of short-listed practices will be held on 13th April 2026.

Contact

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