

## Context

George Eliot and Charles Ward Building, formerly Coventry Art College, Cope Street, Coventry



Figure 1. North entrance of former Art College from Cope Street., known today as The Charles Ward building.



Figure 2. North entrance, looking east along Cope Street



Figure 3. Final construction phase of the former Lanchester College of Technology in the 1960's known today as The Charles Ward building.

## Assessment – Discussion

Coventry College of Art, Cope Street, Coventry (now George Eliot Building and Charles Ward Building, Coventry University) - a three-storey block of 1954 and a seven-storey block of 1960. They were designed by Donald Gibson in co-operation with the Director of Education, the Art College Principal and the Parks Superintendent. The lower block was built during Gibson's time with W. G. Sealey and J. C. Barker assisting. The 7-storey block was built during Arthur Ling's time as City Architect. Work on the taller block was delayed at the request of the Ministry of Education and then designated part of the Technical College. As a result, the College of Art lacked the space and facilities to operate satisfactorily and was finally re-housed in its present building in Gosford Street in 1968.

It is part of the first post-war phase of buildings for further education in the city. It features in Gibson's early plans and the models for the civic area on display in the glass box in the Architects Department and is an example of Coventry's post-war modern vernacular architecture.

## Assessment – Criteria

Assessing the heritage asset against the Local List criteria; the heritage asset is valued locally for the following:

**Historic:** It demonstrates the city's commitment to art education after the Second World War. In terms of illustrative interest, it was and is part of the complex of modern buildings designed for the Technical College (now Coventry University).

**Artistic:** It is an example of a post-war Coventry vernacular - simple, elegant and functional. The low block was built with precast steel components; its strong frame allowed the addition of a third storey a few years after completion. The taller block was built with precast concrete elements - floors, staircases, columns, and beams - which allowed construction in record time.

**Community:** The buildings helped to shape the artistic identity of a generation of art students like the Pop Art painter Roger Jeffs, who has recalled its formative influence on his generation in the early 1960s.

**Evidence:** Plans for city centre, early 1950s, History Centre. Documents in History Centre (Art College 1 and 2); Booklet on Opening of College of Art in Cope Street. Coventry University Archive: Dick Hosking papers. Leamington Museum and Art Gallery: Dick Hosking biographical album.

**Age.** This was part of the first phase of civic buildings in Coventry. See: 'Coventry College of Art': a 5-year plan', Coventry Evening Telegraph 10 August 1950; Coventry Standard, 23 July 1954; Coventry Evening Telegraph, 7 December 1957.

**Rarity.** It is probably the very first post-war purpose-built art college in England and a rare survivor of a building type which flourished in the 1960s and early 1970s in the aftermath of the Coldstream Report on art education. Most of the art colleges of this period in cities elsewhere have now been demolished or drastically altered.

**Integrity.** The low block was given a third storey in the late 1950s, and a guard rail later added to the roof. The area at the base of the 7-storey block has been partly infilled.

**Coventry's identity.** Contributes to the understanding of the large scale redevelopment of the city post war, notably in external appreciation from junction of Little Park Street and New Union Street.

## Conclusion

The application for local listing is valid and therefore the proposal may be promoted for public consultation. Further to the findings of the public consultation, CCC conservation officer will finalise recommendation for a future Cabinet Member Meeting.

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