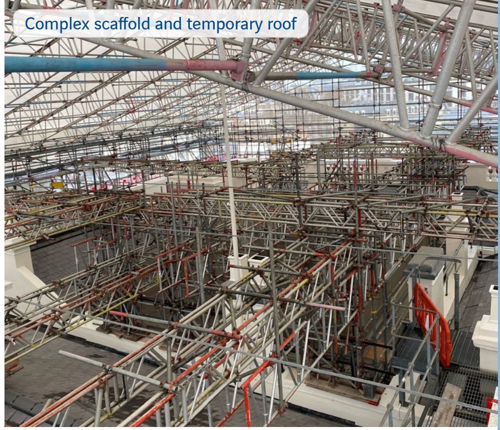

Façade repair and redecoration


Full roof replacement


Complex scaffold and temporary roof

Ministry of Defence: Seaford House Renovation

Building Solutions has completed a major restoration of Seaford House – including a new roof and state-of-the-art heating and cooling systems – safeguarding this 183-year-old Grade II listed military training facility for decades to come

Preserving heritage while enhancing performance

Seaford House, a Grade II listed mansion on Belgrave Square, Belgravia, is one of London's architectural jewels. Built in 1842, it is now home to the Royal College of Defence Studies (RCDS) – a prestigious training centre for senior officers of the British Armed Forces and government. The building includes a grand lecture hall for 110 attendees, eight seminar rooms, and a 26,000-volume library.

Building Solutions, the specialist building and refurbishment arm of VINCI Facilities, was awarded a £2 million, 31-month Design and Build project under the Future Defence Infrastructure Services (FDIS) contract with the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO). Tasked with preserving Seaford House's historic character while installing modern engineering systems, the team have created a sustainable, efficient and dependable environment for RCDS' operations.

Collaboration and communication

The scheme brought together 12 specialist subcontractors and multiple stakeholders, with formal communication maintained through weekly and monthly reporting to the DIO and RCDS. Daily liaison with the RCDS Building Manager and Deputy Commandant ensured works were coordinated to minimise disruption, particularly during key events such as VIP visits from dignitaries, including government and military leaders.

A complex scaffold solution

Erecting fully encased scaffolding around the heritage building proved highly challenging. Initial tie tests failed, and investigations revealed inconsistent brick bonding and insufficient wind loading above the roofline. To protect the structure and ensure safety, Building Solutions paused works and, in collaboration with VINCI's central technical and temporary works teams, developed an innovative approach: using the internal courtyard scaffold as a lateral restraint, reinforced with additional bracing to create a protective 'ring of steel' around the building.

To manage risk, the team introduced strict hold points:

- Completion of the main façade scaffold before roof beam installation.
- Inspection of beams, courtyard scaffold, and remedial works prior to enclosing the roof.
- Final inspection and permits before loading.

The result was a safe scaffolding system, including a 300kg hoist, which was inspected and signed off by VINCI's temporary works and health and safety teams.

Keen to learn from the challenge, Building Solutions has shared the lessons to ensure future heritage projects allow more time to address unforeseen scaffolding issues.

FDIS CONTRACT OVERVIEW

The Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO), part of the Ministry of Defence (MOD), has appointed VINCI Facilities to deliver hard FM, small works, and construction services to its Built Estate across London and the South East of England through the Future Defence Infrastructure Services (FDIS) contract. This seven-year contract is valued at £90m p.a., with an additional £95m for billable works. Building Solutions plays a vital role in supporting and delivering CIDP works for Value Band 3 projects, valued between £1m and £10m.

PROJECT SCOPE OF WORKS

External works

- Complex scaffold to all four elevations.
- Erection of temporary roof.
- Full pitched roof replacement, with insulation, membrane, battens, and slate tiles.
- Replacement of flat kitchen roof with Bauder insulated system.
- Reinstatement of skylights and vents at higher levels to accommodate the raised depth of insulation.
- Replacement of lead flashing and box gutters.
- Structural façade repairs.
- Complete external redecoration of façades, windows, doors, gates, and walls.

Internal works

- Replacement of outdated Versatemp heating/cooling system with a modern energy-efficient solution.
- Upgrades to central plant, including plate heat exchanger, CE-standard pumps, adiabatic dry air coolers, and enhanced thermal insulation.
- New wi-fi enabled Building Management System.

VINCI FACILITIES
BUILDING SOLUTIONS
Working with
Defence Infrastructure Organisation

For further details, please contact us via:
info@vincifacilities.com · Tel: 0300 600 3433

New box gutter

New Versatemp heating/cooling system

Crash deck beneath skylights

Printed ceiling graphic to conceal skylight works from building users

Cutting-edge systems

Alongside heritage repairs, the project modernised the building's outdated services, with key improvements including:

- The outdated Versatemp system was replaced with the latest Versatemp heat pump technology, providing simultaneous heating and cooling across zones.
- A new Trend Building Management System allows precise control, remote monitoring, and proactive maintenance.
- New leak detection sensors safeguard against water damage.
- Central plant upgrades – including a plate heat exchanger, efficient pumps, dry air coolers, and enhanced insulation – deliver consistent 35°C operating temperatures while cutting energy use.

Overcoming water ingress

The project presented two water-related challenges. The first involved legacy heating pipework that was prone to leaking. Although the budget did not allow for full replacement of the pipework, Building Solutions resolved the issue by power flushing the system every evening for six consecutive months. The team then worked with the site's FM team to introduce an appropriate inhibitor and biocide regime to prevent recurrence.

The second challenge stemmed from inaccessible gutters at roof level, which had led to blockages and long-standing water ingress. By installing new lead box gutters and lead flashings in the parapet walls, the team created full access for maintenance and delivered a long-term waterproofing solution. As a result, a persistent problem has now been permanently resolved.

Minimising disruption

With the RCDS required to remain fully operational throughout, careful planning ensured Building Solutions' activities caused minimal disruption to stakeholders:

- Noisy works were scheduled around lectures and visits from dignitaries.
- Rooflight works were concealed internally using a printed ceiling graphic, and internal scaffolding was boxed in with high-quality, fully decorated timber panelling to ensure an attractive appearance.

Accommodating variations

Hidden conditions are common in heritage buildings, and Seaford House was no exception. Demonstrating flexibility, Building Solutions accommodated £300k of variations arising from unforeseen issues within the building fabric. This included:

- Structural repairs: Cracks and water ingress uncovered after the removal of render.
- Lead works: Installation of new gutters and parapet cappings to address leaks.
- Rendering: A significantly higher volume of repairs were required than originally allowed for in the provisional sum.

To maintain momentum and accommodate the expanded scope of works, Building Solutions scaled up its workforce and scheduled multiple teams to work in parallel across the site.

KEY RESULTS

Successfully completed with zero accidents, the project has achieved a careful balance between heritage preservation and modern functionality. The works have not only restored Seaford House's historic fabric but also delivered efficient, resilient building systems, all while ensuring minimal disruption to RCDS' operations.

Following the project's success, Building Solutions has been requested to deliver a follow-on scheme to repair Seaford House's roof dome. The works will include new glazing, leadwork, joists and power supply, as well as internal and external redecorations. Scaffolding valued at £500k is already underway.