

The first group started by describing how they felt that the environmental requirements of the office space were the critical factors (Fig. 11.1). They had done a literature review of all the research they could find on office space and had arrived at a sketch design of a 'typical bay' showing the structural and service systems for providing shelter, power, comfort and light while maintaining a relatively uninterrupted floor space to give flexibility of layout. The building, they thought, could be assembled by replicating these bays as desired and as the site permitted.

By contrast the second group took the view that office space itself was not difficult to design and they had focused their attention on some rather unusual features of the site. (Fig. 11.2) The suburban parkland site was located between two major radial roads connected by a footpath. This group had noticed that the competition brief had stressed the importance of not presenting a remote or forbidding image to the ratepayers. They decided to build their office around a covered mall which followed the line of the footpath and thus brought the public right through the building. Taken together with the banks of trees, south-facing slope and considerations of screening noise from the busy roads this enabled our second group to develop proposals for the siting and massing of their building. The next phase, they explained, would be to fit the various departments into the building adjusting the envelope where necessary.

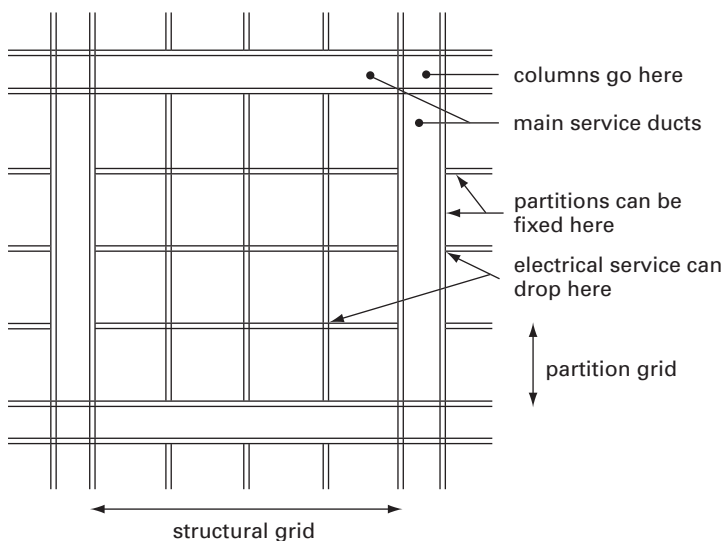


Figure 11.1

A student group present their early work in designing an office building

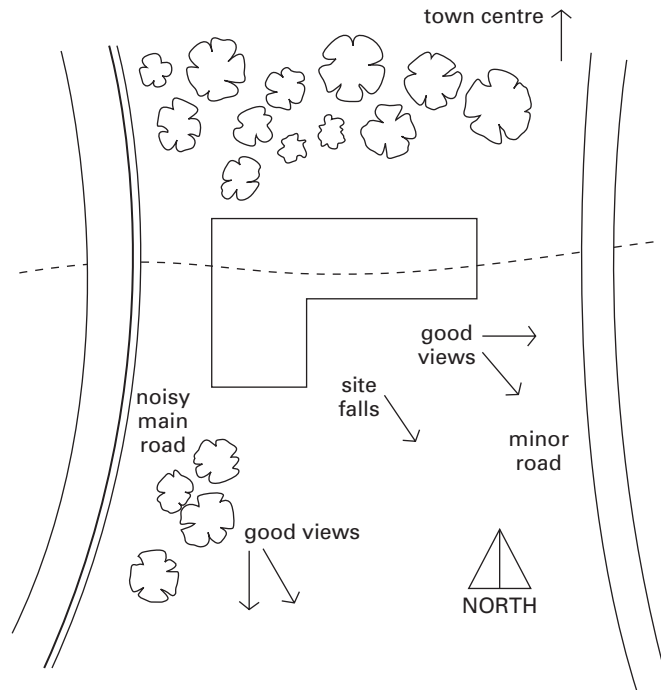


Figure 11.2

The second group seem to be concentrating on quite different problems

The third group had focused more on the visitors rather than just the regular inhabitants of the building (Fig. 11.3). This group were anxious to avoid what they saw as the usual failings of such buildings, that is, presenting large inscrutable façades with unclear structured interiors in which it is easy to get lost. For them the whole structure of the organisation provided the stimulus to building form. Each section and department were to be clearly articulated using a hierarchy of open spaces linked by well-defined routes to a central entrance court.

It is difficult to decide whether any of these approaches are better than the others and it is certainly not possible to declare any to be either right or wrong. Although at first sight these three approaches may seem rather different, in fact they share basically the same overall strategy. In each case a group of sub-elements of the overall problem have been clustered together and elevated to the role of form generator.

What differentiates the three is simply the kind of constraint which has been used in this focal role. The first and last group concentrated on the way the building should be organised by focusing on internal constraints while the second group looked at the external constraints imposed by the site. The first and second groups looked at constraints generated by two different types of