The Spencer Building

Architects Sandy Wright and Kirsty Shankland describe how the project to extend and redevelop the Corpus Library is progressing.

Ground has been broken and construction work begun on The Spencer Building, comprising a new Special Collections Centre and Library extension, which is being delivered to rigorous Passivhaus standards of construction, energy use and environmental control. The College aims to deliver a pioneering and highly sustainable building emblematic of its future development. The design adopts Passivhaus principles of high levels of insulation, airtightness and efficient heat recovery. The appointed contractor Kingerlee Ltd is expected to undertake rigorous construction auditing systems to ensure that sustainability targets are delivered.

The proposal to redevelop the modern Staircase 6 building adjacent to the Old Library derives from a long-standing ambition to provide additional study space for students and Fellows, as well as to create a new and expanded fit-for-purpose specialist archival store and reading room. The redevelopment will also give full disabled access to all parts of the Library, including the historic Old Library, which is currently inaccessible to those requiring a passenger lift. The aim was to develop a design that sensitively integrates the existing historic spaces with the need for modern facilities.

An intricate demolition procedure was implemented to ensure the careful dismantling of the Staircase 6 building both to protect the adjacent structures and to interfere minimally with College life. The team continues to work closely with the Conservation Officer and local planning department as things are uncovered on site and decisions on material selection are made.

Though the new elements of the scheme explore a contemporary architectural language, they take their cues from the existing historic buildings, and the elemental qualities of stone. Modulating daylight and manipulating light and shadow are ways in which thoughtfully designed masonry buildings can create definition on both a civic and human scale. Sandy Wright says, "Our use of materials reflects an understanding of their inherent characteristics which informs the structure, function and meaning of our buildings. We look at what materials can do and we also embrace a culture of craft and making".

External walls are predominantly ashlar stone cladding to match a large, triple glazed window on the north elevation. The new flat roof will be made of lead, but also inset with photovoltaic panels. The roof that pitches towards the Garden Quad will be clad in slates to match a large, triple glazed window on the north elevation. Internally, a palette of materials such as oak and brass will give pleasure to both eye and hand. Mock ups of key joinery items, such as a sample bookcase as oak and brass will give pleasure to both eye and hand.

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We are grateful for the support of our benefactors and endeavour to express our appreciation in a variety of ways. Everyone who gives a donation to the building, of whatever size, will be offered the opportunity to have their name included in a Benefactors’ Book. Entry level for inclusion on the Donor Board in the ground floor foyer of The Spencer Building is £25,000. We may also offer naming opportunities for major philanthropic donations. We also look forward to thanking our generous donors in person at the annual Benefactors’ Garden Party.

To learn more about The Spencer Building and to take a virtual tour, please visit our dedicated website www.thespencerbuilding.co.uk.

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£10,000 each First and Second Floor Bookcase Bays
£7,500 each Third Floor Group Collaborative Working Desks [four readers], one of which is DDA [Disability Discrimination Act] compliant
£5,000 each First and Second Floor Reading Rooms Pair of Desks [photo to the left]
£2,500 each Third Floor Reading Room Single Desk Spaces [long desk area on the video]
£2,000 each Third Floor Single Bookcases [behind the long desk area on the video]