

Event Title: Space for students that adds to identity and place:

Event Date: 4th February 2020

Location: University College London's new Student Centre



Overview

One of the key projects in University College London's (UCL) ten-year estate transformation project across its Bloomsbury estate, at Canary Wharf and at Stratford, the new Student Centre has been a success on many levels. It has delivered a brief that required a student-focused building that achieved a substantial uplift in the amount of student-dedicated space on campus, set a benchmark for high quality design and for sustainability at the university and improved the public face of UCL while linking in with other projects on campus such as the new Wilkins Terrace and the Lower Refectory.



The evening visit held on 4th February was attended by over fifty members of HEDQF started with presentations by Professor Anthony Smith, Vice-Provost Education UCL, who outlined the vision and the consultation work carried out with students to inform the detailed brief and David Young the UCL Project Manager from Estates who explained the background to the building on what had been an old ugly bomb site, part developed with the Bloomsbury Theatre (opened in 1968 and recently refurbished), and the remainder filled with temporary buildings that have now been swept away and



replaced with the new 24-hour access Student Centre. They were followed by James Eades of Nicholas Hare Architects who explained not only the design principles but the collaborative design and procurement approach adopted in order to achieve this high quality building, James Hepburn of BDP Engineers on its sustainable design and finally Amad Uddin who manages this very popular building.

Following the presentations delegates split into groups for guided tours of the completed project to witness first-hand the building in use and the design quality achieved. A HEDQF Building Data Sheet is currently under preparation and will be uploaded to the website in due course.

Student Centre

With growth in student numbers, University College had a problem of space for students to study and collaborate on project work. If you had visited a few years ago you would have found students sitting anywhere and everywhere they could find, in particular on the internal and external steps of the Wilkins Building, a characteristic which has been reinterpreted within the atrium of the new building.

quality, student-focussed building planned around a well-lit central atrium space, providing 1000 study spaces in a variety of different configurations from quiet individual to noisy collaborative, (with 647 monitored by an UCL app so that students can see where there is vacant space), a student wellbeing centre, one-stop shop for student enquiries and a cafe.

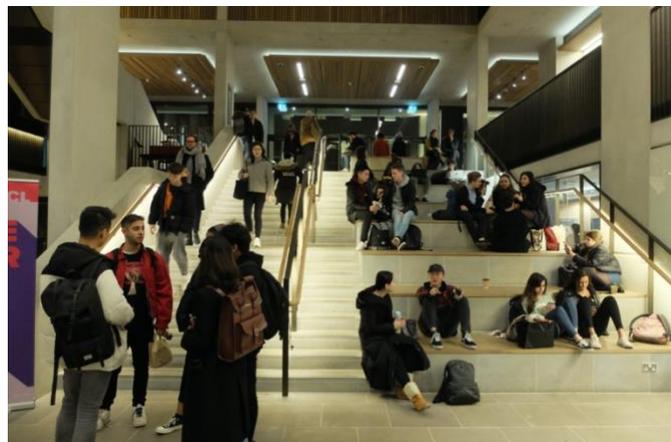


Sustainability has been key, setting a benchmark for future projects both in terms of flexibility for future use and for its environmental credentials which achieved BREEAM Outstanding, including its 'passive-first' philosophy of design making best use of natural light throughout the building, 250 m² of photovoltaics on the roof, a ground-source heat pump for summer cooling, automatic opening windows for natural ventilation in spring and autumn, water-efficient sanitary fittings, investment in high quality, long-lasting materials that not only enhance the overall student experience but minimise future maintenance and investment in green landscaped spaces for students to enjoy and to encourage biodiversity.

In urban terms, the Student Centre has healed a scar at the corner of the campus and, for the first time since the Second World War, the Wilkins Building and its adjacent quadrangles have a coherence with new high-quality landscaped public spaces that provide interconnections between the different

changes in level, with the public welcome into the ground floor level, beyond which the spaces become UCL-dedicated.

In doing so, the university has enhanced its presence to the outside world, with a street frontage onto Gordon Street that is opening and welcoming and provided new routes through, with public art included from staff and alumna of UCL – Rachel Whiteread, Professor John Thomson and Alison Craighead, providing an artistic link to the unique Donor Wall designed by Dr Sarah Fortais in the Wilkins Terrace, where the hands of the UCL Circle of Benefactors have been cast in bronze and aluminium.



Many thanks to the speakers and to Chris Shore, Director of Capital Projects, UCL Estates and his staff and to Nicholas Hare Architects for organising the event, held in the newly refurbished Refectory teaching/seminar room, itself an example of the quality of design that UCL is achieving.



All images courtesy of Simon Fraser, HEDQF