

E d u c a t i o n S e c t o r



**University of Southampton
Students' Union**

Client: University of Southampton
Quantity Surveyor: Northcroft
Structural Engineer: Anthony Ward Partnership
M & E Services Engineers: White Young Green
Planning Supervisor: Perkins Ogden Architects
Contractor: Bluestone plc

Date: Completed in November 2002
Value: Approximately £3.5 million
Floor Area: 1,500 sq m new build and 2,000 sq m refurb

Project Description

The Students' Union was constructed c1964 to the design of Sir Basil Spence and was the most southerly building in Spence's landscape masterplan for the Highfield Campus. The building occupies a steeply sloping site and it is arranged on four levels which cascade down the slope. The upper levels command magnificent views over Spence's landscaped gardens.

The building was designed for 4,500 students and has remained largely unchanged since then. The University now has a population of 15,000 full time and 5,000 part-time students. By 1999 it had become clear that the Union building no longer catered adequately for the needs of the increasing number of students and, since a new building was not viable, the University decided to embark upon the complete refurbishment and re-organization of the existing building. Perkins Ogden Architects were appointed for the project in May 2000.

Early discussions with the Union users highlighted the need for a new and attractive facility in which to hold events, additional bar space, a new servery, upgrading of the refectory and an uplift in the general look and appeal of the building. By current standards, the fire escape and fire separation characteristics of the building were badly deficient and its mechanical and electrical services installations had far exceeded their designed lifespan. From the outset it was clear that the Union would have to continue to operate within the building while construction works were carried out. The project was implemented in a series of phased contracts involving complex temporary arrangements and close liaison between all concerned.

Education Sector

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Project Description Cont.

Circulation within the building was particularly poor. There were no orientating views to the outside from the existing stairs and corridors and people often would get lost. We recognised the need for major architectural intervention to re-define circulation within the building and we proposed a new glazed link and staircase which would order and unite levels 2, 3 & 4, making the whole building more intelligible and accessible.

The scope of the project was rationalised and reduced several times to meet the tight budget and this to a large extent inspired the overlapping of functions in the new facility. The new glazed link enabled the former debating chamber to be radically modified to provide a new multi-purpose facility which acts as a cinema with access from level 3 and a black-box nightclub with access from level 2. The link contains new bars at both levels, which act as foyer bar to the cinema and warm up / chill out space to the nightclub for major events. At night the glazed link is transformed into the core of the entertainment event zone with rooflights, fans, lighting and sound systems helping to create the appropriate ambience. The new glazed link is sited in a courtyard between blocks of the existing building, allowing the opportunity to incorporate the courtyard into the scheme as a useful and attractive external space. The new glazed mall at level 2 opens completely so that activity can spill out onto the courtyard which is finished with new decking. The building is accessed at its upper level (level 4), which has been radically altered. The main concourse has been cleared to give direct access to the new glazed link and stair. New reception facilities and an internet café have been provided and the former ballroom has been converted into an up-market Bridge Bar, serving drinks and snacks.

Procurement

The phased sequence of works began in summer 2000 with the replacement of the servery within the level 3 refectory. A year later the Union was closed for the summer vacation when the building's incoming and spine electrical services were completely replaced along with new fire detection and alarm and emergency lighting system. The main construction contract began in November 2001 and completed 12 months later under a PC Works traditional form of contract, negotiated on a 2-stage basis. The works to upgrade levels 3 & 4 of the building were carried out during the Summer vacation 2002.

