

Proposed Renovation to the Stevenson Library Building
 The Scots College
 29-53 Victoria Rd, Bellevue Hill, NSW 2023

20 November 2017

Architect's DESIGN STATEMENT

The aim of this introductory statement is to provide background information on the design process which has led to the current architectural project.

The Existing Building

The existing Library building is best described of being in a Neo Brutalist style, with exposed concrete frame & slab, insitu concrete & concrete blockwork infill panels, contrasted with steelwork awning shade structures & dark metal framed glazing, banded horizontally across the principal [Oval] elevation.

It is a five storey, 'muscular' & squat structure which the authors believe was designed in the 1970's. It is sited within the embankment along the edge of the Oval and presents as a fairly blank, un-articulated composition, albeit for some large, vertical insitu concrete blades which project eastwards.

It's inclusion within the heritage precinct is somewhat incongruous in that it 'jars' with the adjacent & adjoining heritage listed structures which it sits between. These are delicately detailed, particularly Aspinall House, in stark contrast to the 'robust' detailing of the Library.

Heritage listed buildings include:

Aspinall House b1883 in the Victorian Italianate Style
 and

The Middle School Building b1914 & renovated in 1938 in the Georgian Revival Style.

Both the design & siting of the Library appear to have ignored these structures, with neither its composition nor its detailing paying them any reference. It has truncated the circulation pathways across the site on top of the embankment & along the Oval [north to south], which it simply blocks & re-directs pedestrian movements around the various ground levels abutting the building envelope. Refer Figure 1.

The building does not appear to have a main entrance or 'front' door, rather it is entered from the Quadrangle [main point of entry off Victoria Rd] by descending a few steps before entering a concrete stairway leading up or down to the its various floor levels. Currently the second floor level is the main circulation route through the building and is positioned 2.0metres above the Quadrangle.

The building has no lift and few if any accessible provisions.

Services are well past their shelf life, with air handling being provided by a series of individual/stand alone condensers, the electrical supply has little spare capacity as the main switch board is fed from a board in another building and the distribution boards it supplies are at max capacity.

Spatially the Library no longer provides areas which support the College educational vision, pedagogy or strategy for collaborative learning & student support.

The Library no longer occupies the inner level and mezzanine.



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Background

The College has undertaken various studies to refurbish parts of the building, however these have been abandoned as a 'band aid' solutions to fundamental difficulties with the structure which requires complete re-evaluation.

The Principal Dr Ian Lambert enunciated a vision for the Library as a new 'hub' for the College, a central point for students, staff & visitors as both a Library, a teaching & learning resource & a place to bring counselling staff together and create a Student Support Centre.

That vision also saw the building as an embodiment of a tradition, underscoring a cultural identity & a rich Scottish heritage.

The Scottish Baronial Style is placed correctly between the Italinatate Style & Georgian Revival periods and creates a sensitive link which gives the precinct a historical neat fit, representing the association with Scots history, Scottish values & traditions which are at the core of the Scots culture.

Refer Figure 2.

The Proposed Renovation

A key aspect is the creation of a focal point within The College and one which directs movement directly from the point of entry from Victoria Rd.

The building is intended to be the hub & heart of The College to which students & staff gravitate.

The Black Watch Café is to remain at the Oval level, though expanded across the floor plate & refurbished so that continues as a huge focal point for the student body throughout the school day.

Active learning environments will be established throughout the building and will be based upon the Colleges recent experience where it has started a move away from the traditional classroom and develop activity based learning environments which see a variety of collaborative learning spaces in which students move between group or individual settings following an introductory class briefing. Refer Figure 3.

Improving cross campus circulation routes improves connectivity between Departments & buildings and is a priority to help unify & integrate the College.

Students moving north and south along the edge of the Oval are now brought within the building.

Those crossing the Quadrangle now enter at the main entry level and a large stair at the base of the Atrium allows an unfettered connection between these levels to simplify student access.

The pathway from the Graeme Clark Centre will extend across the top of the [adjoining] embankment to lead students through new doors to the north elevation, into the main entry level.

The overarching goal is to create better links across the campus by improving external circulation between buildings, simplifying levels & entry points in order that directions are obvious & movement more natural & fluid. Creating better physical & visual links between this building and others will be critical for the success of the project.

Internally an atrium links the ground floor with upper levels. A large stair flight runs between here & the main entrance at the first floor to facilitate easy movement between them.

The atrium is placed behind the eastern façade to take advantage of the grand vertical bay windows across the fenestration and throw light over the adjoining spaces.

While the lower levels are seen as the vibrant hub with students constantly moving through, the upper levels are to be quieter learning & support spaces. The atrium is the physical & visual link between these floors ensuring that the facility is interconnected & intertwined with student life.

Better connectivity will enhance links to other programs across the College campus.

Student services & student support are to be a focal point in the facility with counselling brought to the forefront, as opposed to being tucked away. The intention is to bring Counselling staff out of a 'clinic' style environment into a circulation hub to encourage interaction & normalise their relationship with students, to an everyday and ordinary experience. Boys who may be reluctant to seek counselling help for fear of stigmatization will benefit here as staff will be part of the building mix intermingling with student activities at all levels.

Architectural Approach

One of the greatest exponents of the Scottish Baronial Style was David Bryce 1803 to 1876, an Edinburgh based architect who designed important buildings in most of the prominent towns throughout Scotland. Including Fettes College; Bank of Scotland Head Office & the Royal Infirmary in Edinburgh.

His work is of particular interest for the renovation of the Library on two counts:

- 1 – many of his works were of a similar scale & of a similar mass to the Library
- 2 – many were dramatic & sculptural asymmetrical compositions.

The latter approach enabled the Library design work to explore & apply a range of forms, modelling & massing compositions without being tied to a rigid symmetrical arrangement.

This has enabled the design to successfully address the link with different eternal ground levels surrounding the building, to create an arrival point & a main entrance in the south west corner, where previously there was none, noting that none could be achieved centrally across the main eastern elevation [addressing the Oval].

Features of the composition include a small tower to mark the entry; grand bay windows to take advantage of views to the Oval & beyond while flooding the interior with daylight; a small turret on the NE corner stands above the ground level entry & large windows look along the embankment to the north: castellations surround the upper terrace.

Treatments towards the north west are more subdued in reference to Aspinall House, ensuring that the building neither detracts nor overwhelms its heritage significant neighbour.



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SUMMARY

The Principal Dr Ian Lambert enunciated a vision for the Library as a new 'hub' for the College, a central point for students, staff & visitors with an array of functions brought together to create a Student Support Centre.

The proposal was conceived as an embodiment of a tradition, underscoring a cultural identity & a rich Scottish heritage. The building renovation will create a sensitive link giving the precinct a historical neat fit, representing the association with Scots history, Scottish values & traditions which are at the core of the Scots culture.

The renovation is an opportunity for a timely upgrade of all infrastructure & services, to which are well past their 'shelf life' & which by necessity will be designed from first principals with a view to future proofing the building for upcoming technological changes. The experience of the past twenty years which has seen a rapid expansion of IT & communication services and their impact on building infrastructure and service delivery, has demonstrated that buildings need to provide greater flexibility to enable services to adapt & change as technologies roll out.

The proposal will improve connectivity between the Library and other departments & fields while broadening student support services.

The building shall be accessible to all, regardless of physical condition.

The proposal will give the building a new lease of life as a central & vibrant hub at the heart of The College.



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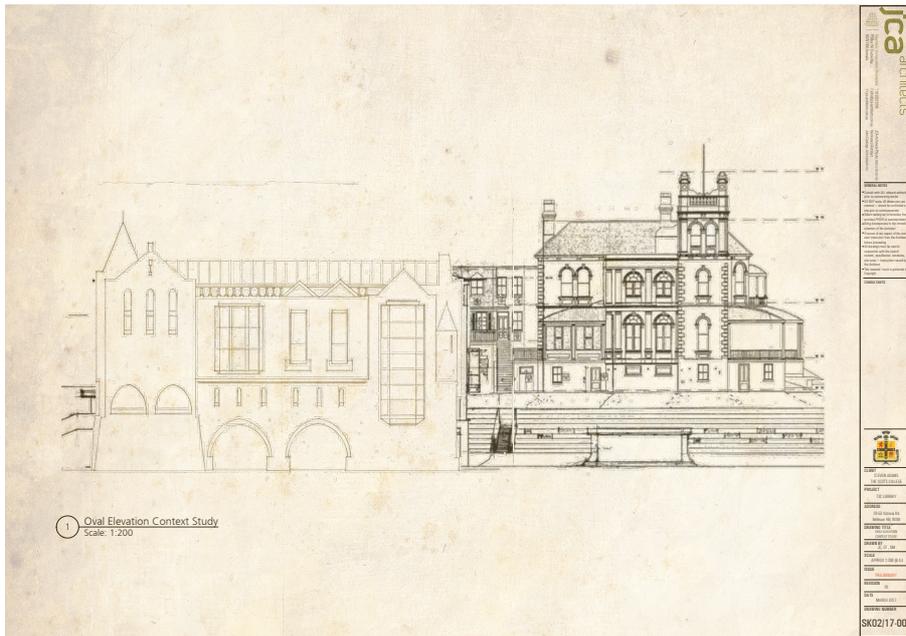
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ILLUSTRATIONS



Figure 1
The existing Library. Building detracts from the heritage precinct.



1 Oval Elevation Context Study
Scale: 1:200

Figure 2
The Scottish Baronial Style creates a neat historical fit between two heritage listed buildings.



Figure 3
Collaborative learning environments integrated with the Library



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