Press release

Design Engine appointed for new student accommodation project at St Hilda’s College, Oxford

Multi-award-winning architects, Design Engine, have been appointed for a new student accommodation project at St Hilda’s College, University of Oxford, following an invited competitive interview which focused on the practice’s design approach rather than any single definitive solution.

The project encompasses new undergraduate accommodation, gym and academic support facilities as part of a second phase of development at the College.

Design Engine have been tasked with formulating a proposal which respects and enhances the grounds of St Hilda’s College and its stunning location on the banks of the River Cherwell, opposite the Oxford Botanic Garden. The site includes a Grade II listed student residential building designed by Peter and Alison Smithson (formally opened as the Garden Building in 1971) and the Jacqueline du Pré Music Building by van Heyningen and Haward Architects opened in 1995.

Alongside Design Engine Architects, the St Hilda’s College project team includes engineers HRW (Structures & Civils), QODA (M&E), Bidwells (PM), Ridge (QS) and Turnberry (Planning Consultant).

This new project is the second part of a two-phase strategic development. The first part, started in 2016 with a Gort Scott scheme, is due for completion in the autumn of 2020.

This new project will enable the College to realise its wish to be able to offer accommodation to all those undergraduates who want it, for the duration of their degree.

Subject to the granting of Planning Consent for this second phase, the project would deliver additional student rooms for the start of the 2023/24 academic year.

Professor Sir Gordon Duff, Principal of St Hilda’s College, commented: “The Project Steering Group and Governing Body Fellows were particularly impressed by insight shown by Design Engine to the environment and ethos of St Hilda’s.”

John Ridgett, Director at Design Engine, said: “We are delighted to have been selected for this prestigious project and look forward to working in collaboration with the College and the whole project team to deliver a fitting environment for future St Hilda’s students.”

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Notes to editors
Design Engine are a multi-award-winning architecture practice founded in 2000 with studios in Winchester, London and Exeter. They work across all scales and sectors and are proud that their work has been recognised by critics, awards and, most importantly, repeat commissions from clients. In 2014 Design Engine’s John Henry Brookes Building for Oxford Brookes University won a RIBA National Award and reached the midlist of the Stirling Prize. In 2016 the Student Services Building at Arts University Bournemouth won a RIBA Regional Award while in 2017 AUB Design Studios and the University of Winchester Winton Chapel were both winners in the RIBA Awards in the South-West and South Regions respectively. In 2018, the Hubert Perrodo Building at St Peter’s College, Oxford won a RIBA Regional Award and was WAN Awards EMEA Region Education winner. In 2019, the Charterhouse Science & Mathematics Centre has won a RIBA South-East Award and is a Civic Trust Awards National finalist.

St Hilda’s College, Oxford was founded in 1893 and was the last of the women’s colleges established in Oxford to give women the right to continue their education. Today, with close to equal numbers of women and men at both undergraduate and graduate level, the College remains true to its founding principles and continues to promote equal opportunity and social inclusivity while expanding the boundaries of knowledge and human potential. St Hilda’s prides itself on cultivating pioneering, independent thinkers, whatever their background.

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