

AVANTI ARCHITECTS WINS FLOREY DESIGN COMPETITION



Image © Avanti Architects 2014

The Queen's College, Oxford is delighted to announce that the team led by Avanti Architects has won the design competition to update the Grade II listed Florey building, widely regarded as an emblem of modernism. Avanti will now work to develop their scheme for the project and determine construction priorities.

The design competition which was launched last September sought an exceptional team to conserve and restore the forty-year old building, to add additional facilities, rethink the site and achieve exemplary energy design.

The Jury chose the Avanti team (who collaborated with ARUP and J&L Gibbons) from the six practices shortlisted to develop concept designs at the design competition's second stage.

Dr Linda Irving-Bell, Home Bursar, said:

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This competition was quite a revelation to the College, as the innovative ideas proposed were beyond our expectations. We were particularly delighted with the possibilities that Avanti showed us in respect of the Florey Building, and the flexibility of ways in which we might move forward. We are currently discussing these possibilities further with Avanti before decisions are made about the final brief.

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Malcolm Reading, competition organiser and adviser to the Jury, said:

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These were all serious and creative schemes but two came to the fore, and Avanti had the edge in their approach. Their team brings together a rich expertise of working with modernist buildings, giving them a new life with great respect to their recent past.

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Amir Ramezani, director at Avanti Architects said:

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We are delighted to have the opportunity to work with the Queen’s College to fulfil their vision for the Florey Building. The regeneration of the building sets many intellectual challenges and we look forward to assisting the College in making a massive qualitative improvement in how the building is perceived and enjoyed by residents and visitors alike.

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Six teams were shortlisted in the contest for the project. The others were teams led by: Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios , Hawkins\Brown Architects, John McAslan + Partners, Levitt Bernstein Associates and Nicholas Hare Architects.

The Florey is regarded as one of the great post-war modernist buildings in Britain. It is among the few surviving works of the architect James Stirling, acclaimed as the most brilliant designer of his generation. It was recently identified by The Guardian as one of the top ten student residences in the world.

Avanti , who are known for their work with landmark modernist buildings, recently won the grand prize of the Xi’an Conference of Modern Architectural Heritage Conservation Project Competition, hosted by Docomomo International, ICOMOS and UIA, held at Xi’an University of Architecture and Technology.

For more details on the competition, please see:

<http://competitions.malcolmreading.co.uk/florey>

MEDIA ENQUIRIES:

For media enquiries and further information on the project, please contact, Dr Linda Irving-Bell at The Queen’s College on 01865 279135 or via email at linda.irving-bell@queens.ox.ac.uk

Notes to Editors:

The Queen's College, one of the oldest constituent Colleges of the University of Oxford, was founded in 1341 by Robert de Eglesfield, a chaplain in the household of Queen Philippa of Hainault, who named it in her honour. Parts of the current College date back to the 17th century and replace the earlier medieval College buildings that had fallen into disrepair in the 16th century. The Baroque Front Quadrangle has been called 'the grandest piece of classical architecture in Oxford' and was heavily influenced by Nicholas Hawksmoor. Since the late nineteenth century Queen's has developed a strong academic reputation and recently endowed a scholarship in memory of the Iranian student, Neda Agha-Soltan. Today, although candidates from all possible backgrounds are welcomed and northerners no longer have preference, the College remains conscious of its history and traditions and values its ancient links with Cumberland, Westmorland and Yorkshire.

www.queens.ox.ac.uk

The Florey Building (1971) was designed by James Stirling, one of the most inventive and often controversial, British architects of the post-war period. The building, which provides accommodation for undergraduates and post-graduates, was commissioned by Lord Howard Florey, the Queen's College Provost and a Nobel Prize winner, who sought 'the best building by the best architect to attract the best students and also research funding'. Architectural historians often group the Florey with Stirling's other two university buildings of this phase of his career: The Engineering Department at Leicester University (1959) and Cambridge University's History Faculty and Library Building (1964). However, the Florey remains distinctive in its response to context: the river setting, endlessly captured and replayed in its glittering, faceted courtyard façade.

The American critic, Amanda Reeser Lawrence in her book *James Stirling Revisionary Modernist* has described the Florey's design as, '...perhaps the purest moment of release - Stirling's "wildest" moment, in which he strays further from anything else in either his own work or the work of others.'

The annual Stirling Prize for Architecture commemorates James Stirling's original talent and is now Britain's leading architectural prize. English Heritage listed the Florey Building Grade II in 2009.

Malcolm Reading Consultants provides pre-project services, briefing and strategic and master planning advice on capital projects in the UK and worldwide. Its team specialises in the arts, culture, heritage and public realm, helping clients achieve world-class design for their buildings through selecting, briefing and managing teams.

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MRC is the leading independent organiser of international architectural competitions based in the UK. Recent competitions include those for the UK Pavilion at Milan Expo 2015, Canterbury Cathedral, the Olympic Park Legacy Company, the Cadogan Estate, the Victoria and Albert Museum's Exhibition Road project, the UK Pavilion for Shanghai Expo 2010 and the Glasgow School of Art.

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