

18 June 2013

Built Environment Officer: Ms Ros Devereaux
Amafa AkwaZulu-Natal
P O Box 2685
Pietermaritzburg
3200

Dear Amafa

Durban University of Technology:
Additions and Alterations: S Block Phases 1 and 2: Steve Biko Campus

We are instructed by the eThekweni Metro to submit our drawings to Amafa for approval as structures exist on the site that are beyond 60 years old and attach the following in support of our motivation for approval:

- 1 Locality Plan showing the new building in relation to the existing structures.
- 2 Record of photographs of the adjacent existing buildings (D, E and S Block)
- 2 North Elevation of the new computer teaching facility

Location

Initial layouts located the new development in the gardens fronting S Block with extensive horizontal and vertical links to the S Block circulation pattern. The Ground Floor Areas were populated with functions such as Campus Square, Student's Cafeteria and Campus Book Shop.

When the final budgets were prepared to support Government funding the scope of work reduced the programme sufficiently to allow review of the location and leave the central campus courtyard for future more comprehensive development programmes and relocated to the parking area, west of S Block.

Planning

The new building is seen as defining the new entrance to the western campus and to S Block beyond and marks the separation of vehicular and pedestrian systems. The roads and parking layouts remain largely unchanged other than minor re-alignment and definition. The pedestrian routes are also more clearly defined and articulated by lift, stairs and ramps in the entrance lobby. The new sky-bridge on the third storey is to anticipate future upper-level links to enhance student interaction within S Block.

The clearly defined functions of the Co-Operative Education Unit (CEU) are located on the ground floor to the south of the development, near existing plant rooms and other service components to leave space to the north largely vacant for future definition.

Form

The five storey building, with its long axis orientated east-west across the pedestrian route from the security controlled Gate 9 in the west houses the single volume entrance lobby with lift and main stair to upper level teaching facilities. Each elevation responds individually to its respective orientation - narrow openings to the west with large areas of screen walls to minimize afternoon solar gain, gallery walkways to the teaching venues to the east.

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The solid brickwork wall of the south elevation offers protection against prevailing inclement weather while that of the north elevation would act as an internal party wall in any future northward expansion programme.

Existing Buildings

The corner of the site defined by Botanic Gardens Road and Steve Biko Road is populated with existing buildings (A - E on the accompanying Site Plan) generally defined by having plastered walls under red tile roofs and estimated to be older than 60 years. The five identified buildings do not have more than that in common and do not define a sense of enclave or precinct of related language. Milena, the immediately adjacent campus administration building (E) is some 20 meters from the ground floor parking area of the new building, separated by landscaped gardens and an existing driveway.

The attached photographs illustrate a utilitarian three storey building of mixed scale and often awkward geometries of no significant heritage or preservation merit. Uncontested argument for future campus development could readily find its way to suggest that it be removed. However, its presence does provide edge and definition to the central campus garden courtyard.

The site plan shows the computer teaching building to be too far removed from the other existing buildings to have any impact on them in terms of finishes, scale or modelling. In fact it proves difficult to see them clearly through the screening of numerous mature trees.

Conclusion

The western entrance to the S Block has for a long time been defined by an open parking lot, the concrete pedestrian bridge and the daunting facade of the vertical, corrugated concrete-block finish of S Block's facade. It is intended to provide and define a new entrance to the S Block system while also anticipating future campus expansion. It is located to initiate the sense of enclosure needed to contain the pleasant open courtyard space already defined by the campus library and S Block itself.

It is felt that the building is sufficiently removed from the existing older structures on the site as not to impact on any character they may express either as a group or individually.

We are able to provide any additional information to assist you in your deliberations and look forward to your favourable response.

Yours faithfully,



Kevin MacGarry
Architects Collaborative

