

Located in a conservation area, and on a tight urban site offering limited opportunities for expansion, the proposals aimed to maximise the investment by delivering additional accommodation at the heart of the campus without the need for demolition and replacement of any existing buildings.

The brief was to investigate opportunities for a new social hub space within the existing Hobday building on the RVC's Camden campus. Typical of many large institutions, the challenge they faced was how to meet the requirements of 21st Century university education and research within the confines of a 20th Century building.

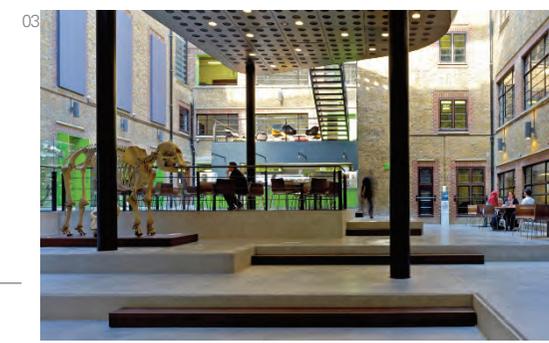
The resulting conversion has cleverly transformed a redundant courtyard into a vibrant social learning environment, allowing students and staff to meet in an atmosphere more akin to a city square than an academic institution.

The new space is made up of satellites of the surrounding facilities, predominantly the existing refectory in the form of a new café servery, and a striking timber 'pod' elevated at the heart of the courtyard provides an annex for the existing library. Accessible from the library via a first floor

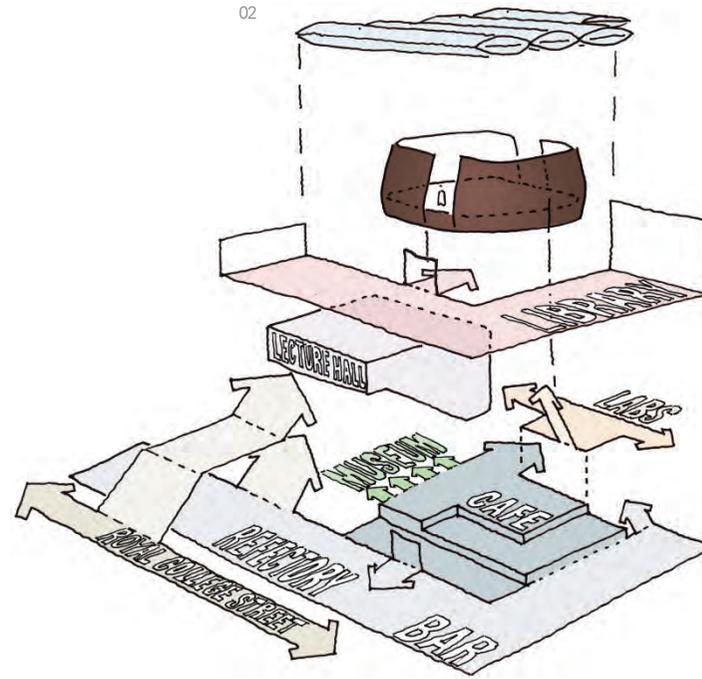
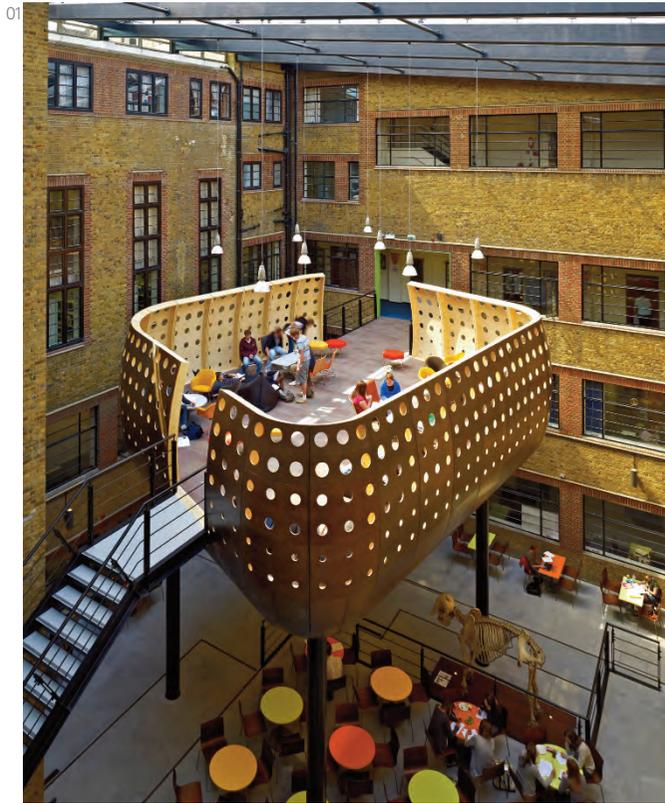
link bridge, the pod provides a semi-public reading room with perforations to enable those working inside to remain connected to the surrounding street-life atmosphere below, as well as creating a dramatic focus at the centre of the space.

The aesthetic approach and budget constraints determined a 'light-touch' conversion. A new ETFE roof canopy encloses the courtyard at the highest level to ensure the maximum natural light is drawn into the courtyard below. With legacy maintenance upgrades to the existing elevations, and a palette of self-finished materials, this thermally-enclosed atrium retains the ambience, light and acoustics of an outdoor environment.

New displays of the College's collections and large animal skeletons bring the life and purpose of research to the fore; these self-finished materials and delicate museum installations help to create the unique character of this exciting project. The courtyard floor has been terraced with polished screed, that mediate between the split basement level and create generous zones for café seating and informal gathering, with a platform lift incorporated to provide step-free access.



01 Elevated reading room 'pod'  
02 Museum collection displays  
03 Split-level basement floor



Total Area : 505sqm GIA  
 Procurement Type : Traditional Contract (JCT SBC 05)  
 Local Authority : Camden Council

The space has opened up the College both physically and socially, improving circulation, wayfinding and legibility throughout the building and encouraging interaction between academic groups working on different floors. By connecting the atrium to the surrounding Hobday building, use of the library, refectory, offices, teaching and common rooms has been optimised, the entire building rejuvenated and overall educational experience on campus enhanced.



- 01 Social learning courtyard
- 02 Spatial diagram
- 03 Longitudinal section
- 04 Occupied courtyard floor
- 05 Exterior of timber pod