

O'Donnell + Tuomey and ADP win York University student centre contest

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BY RICHARD WAITE



Proposed Student Centre for The University of York, view from University Square (west elevation)

Source: Infinite 3D

O'Donnell + Tuomey and ADP Architecture have won the The University of York's competition for a 'landmark' £35 million student centre

The pair were selected ahead of Herzog & De Meuron, Hawkins\Brown, Adjaye Associates and Danish star Dorte Mandrup to land the commission for the 5,000m² 'carbon negative' sustainable hub for students and main square at the heart of the Russell Group university.

The project will deliver a new centre for the University of York's 19,000 students on a site between Vanbrugh Way and Harewood Way to the south side of University Road. It will house office space for student unions and student services, dining areas, a variety of exhibition spaces, study areas, winter gardens and a rooftop garden.

The building is being hailed as a sustainability 'benchmark' for other future campus developments. The building is expected to be built from natural materials and renewable

resources, including reconstituted stone and recycled steel, with plans for solar panels, rooflights and solar control glazing.

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According to the design team, ‘the sculpted, tapered form of the building is designed with a distinctive beehive character, appropriate to its role as the hub of student life, while taking its place in the context of other York campus landmarks, including the library, the Central Hall and the lake’.

Designed by RMJM and built between 1966-68, the Central Hall was described as York University’s ‘architectural *tour de force*’ by Historic England when it handed the multipurpose building a **Grade II listing in 2018**.

The university is part-way through a **£750 million expansion project at nearby Heslington East, masterplanned by BDP**.

John Tuomey of O’Donnell + Tuomey, which has been shortlisted five time for the RIBA Stirling Prize without success, said: ‘The brief asked for a welcoming front door for the university, a new space at the heart of the action, a new student centre at the crossroads of connection between city and campus.

‘The architectural form, employing modern methods of construction and principles of environmental responsibility, responds to the material characteristics of the place.’

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Foyer of the proposed York Student centre (contest win May 2022)

Charlie Jeffery, vice-chancellor of the University of York, described the building as ‘a once-in-a-generation opportunity’ for the institution to improve its existing student experience with an ‘iconic, technologically smart, student-focused space for all of our students’, adding: ‘Some of our students and staff have already been involved in the design process and we intend talking with many more of them over the coming months to ensure this really is a building for students, designed with students.’

The original contest brief called for a ‘high-quality design team’ for an estimated £4-7 million contract, with each shortlisted team receiving a £9,000 honorarium to draw up concepts to RIBA Stage 2.

Building work on the new centre is expected to begin in September 2023 for an opening in the 2024-5 academic year.



Central Hall, University of York