

4 March 2014

Subject

Report on Coffee With the Neighbours information meeting held on 4 March 2014

Location: Special Collections Museum Café, Oude Turfmarkt 129

Date: 4 March

Time: 19:30-21:00

Opening

Martijn de Ruiter, City Centre Campus programme manager, officially opens the meeting at 19:40 and welcomes the audience members. Martijn provides a brief introduction on the development of the various UvA campuses. The University of Amsterdam is working to build four open city campuses that connect the city of Amsterdam with the university and combines the benefits of both. In future, related academic disciplines will be clustered at each campus. The humanities programmes will be located in the City Centre, at and around the Binnengasthuis site and the Oudemanhuispoort. The UvA is seeking to regroup to a total of four city campuses. The buildings on the various campuses will be renovated in several phases and developed into vibrant meeting places for students, staff, businesses, institutions and locals.

Martijn outlines the rest of the evening's programme. First, the renovation of the former CREA building on the Grimburgwal (Turfdraagsterspad 15-17) is discussed. Roberto Meyer of MVSA Architects then offers further details on the provisional shell design for the new City Centre University Library on behalf of the architects' group, consisting of MVSA Architects and J. van Stigt architect's office. The second part of the meeting consist of an information market, offering audience members an opportunity to ask questions on various issues and view the scale model.

This edition of Coffee With the Neighbours was organised in follow-up to the meeting on 17 October 2013, which saw architects outline their vision on the design challenge for the City Centre University Library.

PART 1

Progress of renovation work on former CREA building on Grimburgwal (Turfdraagsterspad 15-17)

Alex ter Haar, City Centre project manager, offers a progress update on efforts to renovate the former CREA building (BG2) for Art, Religion and Cultural Science. The building was entirely stripped and prepared for construction in the summer of 2013. To their surprise, construction workers discovered a very special attic space during the preparation work. Fungus growth – the result of years of leakages – will have to be removed before the attic can be renovated.

Preparatory work

Various preparatory activities will have to be completed before the former CREA building can be renovated in May/June. Asbestos was found in a total of five locations while preparing the building for construction. Three of these sites have been cleaned up, with the remaining two set to be removed in March and April. This asbestos removal has been conducted in phases due to the fact that the final two locations are in the crawlspace beneath the floor. These efforts will coincide with the removal of the floor on the ground floor and an indoor soil analysis. The latter will be conducted in view of the need to analyse historical soil contamination, a common occurrence in the old city centre. We do not expect the analysis to yield any unexpected results. Demolition of the floor on the ground floor may cause a certain degree of noise pollution.

Renovation work

Renovation work is set to start in May/June. Parts of the building will be restored as closely as possible to their former state. For example, false ceilings will be removed in order to restore the rooms to their full former height. The historic stairwell will also be returned to its former glory. Other activities include:

- The internal installation of some 130 new foundation piles. The piles will be wound into the ground, and there will be no need to install a sheetpile wall.
- repair of the façade; repair of the window sills and removal of all subsequent extensions between BG2 and the adjacent building (BG1). Repair of the roof and installation of transparent roof hatches in order to ensure sufficient daylight.
- all floors will be reintegrated and redesigned; renovation of the main staircases, ceilings, wall finishings and redesign of the layout.

Renovation activities are expected to last a total of eleven months. A contractor will be selected and assigned to carry out the renovation work in mid-April.

ALSC framework

Unfortunately, work on the building may result in some inconvenience. Despite the fact that a large portion of the work will be carried out indoors, a certain level of noise pollution is to be expected. For example, the ongoing demolition of the floor surface on the ground floor, the construction of scaffolding along the façade and demolition of the section and conservatory (at a later stage) will all cause a certain degree of noise. An Accessibility, Liveability, Safety and Communication (ALSC) framework has been developed in consultation with the local residents' delegation and the City Centre urban district. This framework will serve as a guideline for the contractor while carrying out the necessary activities. The ALSC framework is available for download on the UvA website www.uva.nl/binnenstad and can be found under the header 'Publications'.

Provisional design for City Centre University Library

Roberto Meyer presented the provisional design for the shell of the City Centre University Library on behalf of the architects' group, consisting of MVSA Architects and J. van Stigt architect's office. The Conservatorium Hotel on the Baerlestraat is a good example of a joint effort by MVSA & Van Stigt to repurpose a late 19th century monumental building. The provisional design for the City Centre University Library was based around the structural design by BiermanHenket. This structural design is featured on the UvA website www.uva.nl/binnenstad and can be found under the heading 'Publications'.

Application for physical environment permit and partial amendment of zoning plan

In February, the UvA submitted a physical environment permit application for construction of the new City Centre University Library to the City Centre urban district. In addition to the physical environment permit, construction will also require partial revision of the zoning plan as the plan for the new City Centre University Library deviates from the current 'Post Code Area 1012' zoning plan in four areas. For a detailed explanation of the above four points, see the www.uva.nl/binnenstad website, under the heading 'Publications'.

Historic and modern elements

The provisional design for the new University Library strives to balance a respectful approach to the existing historical elements and the need for a building with the facilities and design one would expect of a modern university library and study centre. For example, a bay window was added to one of the façades of the Second Surgery Clinic in the nineteen fifties. The various building façades were recently measured and listed and all newly designed windows will be based around the original design.

Main entrance and bicycle parking entrance

The main entrance of the City Centre University Library will be situated at the original ambulance entrance of the former Second Surgery Clinic. In the provisional design, the size of this characteristic entrance has been doubled to create a spacious entrance and offer a direct view of the atrium from the Vendelstraat.

The bicycle parking facility beneath the Second Surgery Clinic forms a key part of the City Centre University Library. A ramp from the Vendelstraat with a gradual slope will lead directly to the bicycle parking facility. The new facility will offer space for approximately 950 bicycles, offering parking space for both University Library visitors and Faculty of Humanities staff and students from the surrounding buildings. Liveability is a key factor in the design of all public spaces. For example, an assessment is being conducted to determine whether the façade adjacent to the bicycle parking entrance can be fitted with a noise-absorbing 'green carpet': a vertical garden. Planting greenery against the bicycle parking entrance will ensure that visitors do not park their bikes against the façade. The entrance will also be locked at night. For more information on the rationale for locating the bicycle parking entrance on the Vendelstraat, see the memorandum entitled: 'Rationale for City Centre University Library bicycle parking entrance location', which is available for download on the UvA website www.uva.nl/binnenstad and can be found under the heading 'Publications'.

Atrium

In addition to the renovation of all existing spaces, an entirely new glass roof will be installed over the courtyard to create a large atrium. The glass roof will 'fold' over the buildings like the leaf of a tree. This presents an architectural and technical challenge, as the various buildings bordering on the courtyard differ in height. The characteristic turret on the Binnengasthuisstraat (also known as the telephone tower) is the most prominent feature in this regard. The floors of the various buildings – the Convent and Second Surgery Clinic – can be accessed by means of the staircase anchored to the roof's supporting structure.

New Construction

The corner of the Nieuwe Doelenstraat and Binnengasthuisstraat – currently used as a parking space by hotel de L'Europe – will feature a newly built section of the City Centre University Library. The ground floor will offer space for the University Library canteen, with study places located on the various floors. The provisional design for the new construction elements features a three-dimensional façade screen, referencing figures and symbols used in the humanities. This screen will help reduce the amount of light emitted towards the houses across from the newly constructed section. The new construction elements will be further elaborated during the subsequent design phase.

PART 2

Chérie van der Meer, the new City Centre Campus area manager, introduces herself to the audience. She will strive to ensure optimal accessibility, liveability, safety and communications during construction of the City Centre Campus, and can be contacted with any questions, suggestions or complaints regarding the ongoing work. Email: omgevingsmanager-binnenstad@uva.nl or 06 2115 5032. During the second part of the meeting, participants had an opportunity to visit the various tables, view the scale model and discuss the relevant themes.

Summary of audience member questions:

1. How should I interpret the word 'optional' with regard to the bicycle parking facility's night exit? Answer: the architects assessed various locations for the parking facility entrance, taking various factors into account. The entrance on the Vendelstraat was found to be the most optimal location. The physical environment permit application also features a night entrance and exit – after 23:00 – in the Nieuwe Doelenstraat.

If the entrance in the Vendelstraat proves to cause substantial inconvenience in the late evening hours once the City Centre University Library is taken into use, the night entrance and exit in the Nieuwe Doelenstraat may be used as an alternative. For a more extensive explanation of the relevant considerations, please see the 'Rationale for City Centre University Library bicycle parking entrance location' memorandum, which can be found at www.uva.nl/binnenstad under the heading 'Publications'.

Note: For the sake of clarity, the UvA has supplemented the answer provided by the architect during the information meeting.

2. Why isn't the entrance to the bicycle parking facility located in the newly built section?

Answer: The ramp to the University Library bicycle parking entrance must be comfortable and easy to use. In order to promote use of the parking facility, there must be a direct connection to the porter's lodge and main entrance. The newly built area is the only possible location for an entrance to the indoor loading and unloading bay. Amongst other purposes, the bay will be used to load and unload books and stock the University Library canteen.

The newly built area should also feature the canteen's emergency exit. The creation of a bicycle parking entrance in this section of the building – in addition to the other two necessary entrances/exits – would be detrimental to the uninterrupted building line, which makes up part of the designated conservation area. This would be in deviation from the zoning plan. For a more extensive explanation of the relevant considerations, please see the 'Rationale for City Centre University Library bicycle parking entrance location' memorandum, which can be found at www.uva.nl/binnenstad under the heading 'Publications'.

3. How much light will the buildings on the other side of the street pick up from the newly built façade section?

Answer: The newly built section will consist of a three-dimensional façade screen and an indoor glass façade. The façade screen will help shield light from the buildings on the other side of the street.

4. When will the definitive design be completed?

Answer: The Design Team is currently elaborating the provisional design into a definitive design. This will involve elaborating the building layout and design, and further technical elaboration. As of the moment upon which the physical environment permit application is submitted, the municipality will have 26 weeks – with a possible extension of 6 weeks – to formulate a draft decision. The municipality will simultaneously formulate a draft decision on the requisite partial zoning plan revision. Both draft decisions will then be made available for inspection, offering an opportunity to lodge objections.

5. What will happen if the assessment shows that the selected bicycle parking entrance location is unsuitable in terms of ensuring optimal liveability at the Binnengasthuis site?

Extensive efforts have been made to find an optimal solution. The ultimate decision will be subject to a large number of factors. An assessment will be conducted to determine whether additional measures will have to be taken in order to reduce or minimise inconvenience.

6. Why was no preliminary assessment conducted in order to take stock of the local residents' requirements/wishes and prepare a design on the basis of this information?

Conservation of the monumental buildings is key. The modified programme for the University Library/study centre will have to be accommodated within this framework. This will require modifications to the building that can affect the surrounding environment. The UvA and its selected architects are working to implement these changes in a manner that takes the interests of all stakeholders into account.

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