

OLD COLLEGE,
ABERYSTWYTH



LOCATION:	ABERYSTWYTH, CEREDIGION
CLIENT:	ABERYSTWYTH UNIVERSITY
COMPLETION:	ONGOING
VALUE:	£53M
SIZE:	8,521M2
SERVICE:	CONSERVATION ARCHITECTURE, INTERIORS, LANDSCAPE
SECTOR:	ARTS & CULTURE
CONTRACTOR:	ANDREW SCOTT LTD
STRUCTURES:	MANN WILLIAMS
SERVICES:	HOARE LEA
COST CONSULTANT:	BLAKE MORGAN/ RPA
LISTING:	GRADE I
AWARDS:	PLANNING AWARD, BEST USE OF HERITAGE IN PLACEMAKING



Old College, Aberystwyth was the first constituent college of the University of Wales and as such is intrinsically linked with the development of higher education in Wales and of enormous cultural significance. It is an iconic, Grade I listed, Victorian Gothic display of eclecticism and one of the UK’s most architecturally significant buildings of the period. Its evolution was far from simple; its appearance and layout is the result of phased development between the 1790s and 1898. Since Aberystwyth University’s shift in focus to the Penglais campus in the 20th century, Old College gradually lost relevance, its complex arrangement of interior spaces struggling to adapt to contemporary user requirements and pedagogical methods.

Austin-Smith:Lord has worked with the University to preserve the iconic building, whilst re-imagining it as a vibrant heritage and cultural attraction that will educate, engage, and stimulate enterprise and research; a project that will deliver major socio-economic benefits for both students and the wider community by throwing open Old College’s doors to enrich lives and stimulate learning across all ages and user groups.

Austin-Smith:Lord produced a series of feasibility studies following appointment in 2012, with several updates to reflect rapidly changing market conditions. Following a successful NLHF Round 1 application, Austin-Smith:Lord partnered with Lawray Architects to deliver the project, managing the conservation and landscape architecture packages and interior design for the entire scheme.



Working closely with Cadw and Ceredigion County Council’s Conservation Officer we have devised a thorough programme of repairs based on detailed investigation and research and are providing conservation advice to other design team consultants and Lawray Architects as Lead Designer to ensure works to the historic fabric is to the highest standards.

Our Interior Design proposals are also developing in parallel with intensive research into colour schemes and materials that would have been used in the Victorian construction process, while the landscape will be redeveloped to provide a softer and more welcoming context that re-orientates the building to the seafront promenade with barrier free access to all entrances. In addition to new seminar rooms and multi-purpose teaching and training spaces, including a moot court and staff office accommodation, there will be a new visitor welcome centre, volunteer facilities, new atrium, rooftop function room, café/ restaurant, bar ship and 31 hotel rooms.

Community and cultural engagement facilities will include art galleries designed to National Museum of Wales requirements to host visiting exhibitions of national significance, while the Old Hall and Library will be restored for festivals, activities and functions. Other permanent exhibition spaces will host University collections and showcase University research projects. The Council Chamber will be restored to its 19th century student

common room appearance to host the UK’s first Centre for Dialogue for 60 participants in an in-the-round setting.

A World of Knowledge will include a Centre for Science with a cinema and virtual reality experience, a Centre for Advanced Study, 24 hour student study spaces, artists’ studios and a printmaker’s studio. This zone will also include spaces for curricular and non-curricular learning facilities for schools and colleges in West Wales. Finally a Business Enterprise Hub will provide spaces for young entrepreneurs in the creative and digital sector.

To facilitate these works, the mechanical, electrical and data services are being completely renewed, using passive technologies where possible. Within the restrictions of the building’s listing, windows are being either double glazed or provided with secondary glazing and roofs insulated to maximise the building’s capacity for energy efficiency, while the fire strategy has been holistically reviewed and sensitively designed to minimise impact on historic doors and finishes.

The plans are supported by Welsh Government, Ceredigion County Council, National Museum Wales, Hay Festival and National Library of Wales. Old College has projected annual gross revenues of £2.33 million, 48 new jobs, 900 training places, 400 annual volunteering places and will contribute £3.55 million annually to the region.

