



Birds-eye view over the fishpond towards the visitor centre showing the surrounding landscape.

INTERPRETATION/ DESIGN STRATEGY

Taking into consideration the requirements of the brief; the historic context of the park, the consultation responses; and the constraints of the site, a strategic approach to the proposed visitor centre has been developed.

These key development principles relate to relevant design objectives and represent a careful response to the contextual analysis. Thus the building responds to the specifics of the site in terms of views, topography, access and community need, including:

Landscaping

The opportunity exists to consider the building as an element of the landscape, like a rock in a river, with the building forming terraces, cascades, steps and planted areas that are inhabited with soft and hard landscaping forming either a route or a still moment to pause and sit. This can then extend into the immediate surroundings with landscaping helping to direct pedestrian flows and to create a legible and pleasant context to the building, giving opportunities. As such the building and its immediate context also become a rich opportunity for enhanced biodiversity. For further information, please refer to Landscape Architect's proposals.

Layout

Key cues from the existing site analysis were established to inform the design development of the visitor centre:

- The building should realise views over Fish Pond and its setting, and reconnect with long distance connections to elements of the estate and Neath Valley including Ivy Tower, focusing orientation, window placement and route on these key axes;

- The building should welcome visitors from both the car park level and Fish Pond level, providing a clear legibility and good pedestrian flows whilst acting as a hub of activity for all park users;
- The building should establish clear zones of activity to ensure acoustics, movement, and functionality are complimentary, and maximise sustainable commercial opportunities in its operation;
- The building should carefully consider layout and lighting in terms of the potential for light spill within ecologically sensitive areas of the site;
- The building should be fully accessible to all.

Form, Scale and Massing

Key driving influences in relation to the form and scale of the new visitor centre have been established from the analysis, to ensure the building responds to context:

- Be sympathetic to the context in form, responding to the parkland setting and location adjacent to Fish Pond;
- Be respectful to the immediate context in terms of scale, utilising the existing topography to embed the visitor centre within the site;
- Recognise the existing mature tree line and dense vegetation as forming the backdrop to the proposed visitor centre. A delicate balance must be reached in which the proposed building remains subservient to the existing, natural context whilst not being lost or anonymous.
- To break up the overall massing and scale of the scheme through judicious use of materials, whilst carefully integrating technologies and plant to ensure a clarity of composition.