

Boathouse to rise again

By Reg Little

SIX years after its historic boathouse was destroyed in a blaze, University College, Oxford, has submitted plans for a strikingly modern £1.8m replacement.

The new boathouse could hardly look less like the Victorian grade II listed structure, which dominated the banks of the River Thames beyond Folly Bridge for more than a century.

The college has opted for a minimalist contemporary design, with glass walls and a roof in the shape of a hovering blade.

University College initially thought about trying to recreate the 1881 boathouse, before concluding that it was impractical to salvage the structure after the 1999 blaze, which also destroyed historic boat race records and photographs.

An informal competition was held to find the best designs for a new boathouse, close to where the River Thames and River Cherwell meet and surrounded by water meadows.

The winning building, designed by Belsize Architects, will stand in the footprint of the existing remains, with a ground floor comprising of three boat bays, a repair bay, changing facilities and a gym. To mitigate the impact of the floodplain, the building will sit on stilts, allowing water to pass freely underneath at times of flooding.

The first floor will house two warden flats and six student study bedrooms, with a club room in the centre of the riverside elevation.

A spokesman for the architects said: "The horizontal and transparent design reflects the landscape and nautical tradition, creating an elegant backdrop for the rowing on the water."

University College has submitted a Listed Building consent and planning application with the existing boathouse at Eastwyke Farm to be demolished.

But Oxford architect Jack McNaney said he was astonished by the modern design.

He said: "The boathouse is a grade II listed building and normally you would be obliged to replace it as it was. Instead the proposal is for a radical example of minimalist architecture that almost resembles something from the 1960s."

"It has more in common with buildings on the other side of the river. It makes you



■ Above: what the new boathouse will look like. Right: the original building after the blaze. Below: the original building in its heyday



wonder why a building like this is listed in the first place."

Mr McNaney, who has previously worked for University College as a consultant surveyor, added: "I know many people in Oxford have a great deal of affection for the old building."

"With so many college buildings closed to the public, this boathouse really was part of the public face of Oxford University."

Concerns over modern design of building

boathouse is undoubtedly a beautiful piece of architecture, but I think I would have preferred a more old fashioned boathouse. I believe public opinion will come down on the side of Victorian pastiche."

But Frank Marshall, University College's estates bursar, said: "The existing structure was essentially

destroyed in the fire. That's why the college decided that what is now needed is a contemporary building, which will be a worthy successor."

He said the new building would better serve the technical and health and safety requirements of rowers than any attempt to recreate an out-dated Victorian boathouse.

University College is hoping building work can begin next year with the boathouse opening in 2007. It would be used by a number of Oxford colleges.

Debbie Dance, secretary of Oxford Preservation Trust, said: "It is disappointing that the original boathouse has been lost and will not be rebuilt."

would not want to see is a pastiche of the original, and University College have put forward some interesting designs where thought has been given to the impact on the river and its surroundings here."

A detailed Flood Risk Assessment was carried out following discussions with

state-of-the-art warning system has been incorporated within the building design.

A public exhibition of the proposals will be held at Oxford Spire Four Pillars Hotel, on Friday, May 20, between 12.30 and 8pm.

Work is soon to begin on Oxford University's Boat Club headquarters at Wallingford Marina. The plans for the £3.6m development had been opposed by Wallingford Town Council because of its

Policing method makes its points

ROADS policing chiefs in Oxfordshire are expecting positive results from the first month of a new point scoring system for officers.

Points could mean promotion for roads policing officers who must score 200 each month under the scheme.

Now Supt Mick Doyle, Thames Valley Police head of roads policing, is gathering the results to evaluate whether the new scheme has been a success.

Supt Doyle said: "We are collating the information, then we will send it to officers to check we have got it all right. It will be analysed in two or three weeks time."

"Officers in the department think it is brilliant because the previous system for them didn't recognise the things they did. Their priorities are about reducing the number of people killed and injured on our roads."

"Our performance system recognises the work they do as family liaison officers which is very important, and the work they do in terms of enforcement."

Different points are allocated to different offences, with 50 awarded for taking the lead at a fatal accident, ten for burglary, drink driving, drugs offences, rape and assault, and two to three for illegal immigrants, shoplifters, pedestrians on motorways and minor traffic offences.

The system was criticised by Thames Valley Police Federation chairman Martin Elliott, who feared that if the limit was raised, it could take away discretion from officers when deciding whether to make arrests for minor offences.

Wedding licence for Teddy Hall

ST EDMUND Hall is set to become the first Oxford University college to be granted a civil ceremonies licence.

Couples can already book college function rooms for wedding receptions, but will now be able to take their marriage vows at the university's oldest surviving educational hall.

The chairman of Oxfordshire County Council, Sher-een Karmali, will grant the licence to the college at a cer-