

darlaston swimming pool walsall

category Leisure
client Walsall Metropolitan
Borough Council
value £4.5m
date 2001
awards + RIBA Award 2001
+ Civic Trust Commendation 2002

The design concept is guided by two generators; the expression of the hilltop setting and approach by users. They inform the design of the two main building elements, the pool hall and ancillary change area which contrast in form and material.

The ancillary changing area accommodates the fitness suite, changing village, WCs, showers, lockers and stores, and requires enclosure, privacy and a sense of security. This enclosure orientates visitors so that they follow its wall from the site entrance, skirting the car park, until the wall enters the pool hall envelope at the far end. The wall, which is brick, reflecting the brick making heritage of the site, is an essential boundary to the centre and a part of the landscape. Slots are created along the length of the wall to offer passive surveillance of the car park from the heart of the centre.

The pool hall has an open, light filled environment formed by a folded timber semi – monocoque structure across the west wall and roof. The clerestory glazing and the full height glazing at the end of the pool hall will have fully controllable external louvres.

“ It sits aloft a substantial manmade mound and, seen against the sky, one might read it as a mini-acropolis. A modest and secular one, of course, but nevertheless a conscious symbol of civic pride built to a brief for (and by) the community it serves. The approach to the building reinforces this impression, with oblique views slowly unfolding to reveal a balanced composition of clearly articulated complementary forms.”

Lorenzo Apicella,
Architecture Today,
September 2001

