



4th Quadrant of Victory Square International Architectural Competition Prague – Czech Republic

Jury Phase 2 Assessment Report

Team No. 20: Benthem Crouwel International + Opočenský Valouch Architekti

Phase 2 Assessment

Criterion a): The proposal presents a high quality solution for programme distribution, creates synergies between the activities, taking into account the needs of different types of users of the area.

The project responds very well to the functional and programme requirements in the Brief. The residential block is clearly separated from the office and the UCT building. The plinth functions and connectivity with the metro work well, as well as the position of the Cultural Centre. The housing courtyard comprises maisonettes in the ground-floor zone. The programme even provides a market hall, which is efficiently designed connecting the metro, Cultural Centre, UCT and public space towards Technická Street. Also, the clear separation of the ownership is appreciated.

Placing the Cultural Centre entrance in Technická Street, at the street level and underground is a valuable principle. As a result, the Cultural Centre has no separate grand building, but is fully integrated (similar to other theatres in Dejvice) into a diverse urban environment, as requested in the Brief. Its location in the quiet part of the development underlines its ambition to be turned into a theatre square. This is a clever feature, allowing maximum variability and meeting all the required operational links, including connection to the public transport.

The building programme of UCT is met, its layouts are clear and well-organised with the possibility of variation and further development.

Design of retail is optimal in terms of their size, location, and number of floors. However, in general, there is too much double height space in the commercial plinth and underground.

Criterion b): The architectural and urban design proposal reinforces place qualities and respects the requirements regarding the urban design composition of Victory Square and its surroundings.

The urban design configuration generates a variety of complementary architectural identities, which create a very convincing composition of buildings and interconnected spaces. The oblique hip roofs towards the square, the hierarchy of functions and the diverse and elegant architecture and facades of individual buildings according to their functions create a harmonious whole. The design translated all the requirements of the original regulation into a contemporary appearance.

The moderate white mass of UCT relates well to the close historical building and contrasts with other buildings and becomes an acceptable dominant.

The architectural elaborations are however quite schematic. Facades towards the Victory Square are unfortunately not very attractively conceived, but there is potential for further development.

Criterion c): The proposed public spaces and courtyards are architecturally and functionally interlinked with proposed buildings and enhance the socially cohesive functional mix and diversity of activities.

The architectural volumes create a very attractive sequence of interconnecting, differentiated public and semi-public spaces, the urban plan works well with the permeability. A central square in the middle, open to Technická Street, comprises a sunken patio with staircases, connecting the underground retail area and metro with the above. It creates a forecourt of UCT, Cultural Centre, and a quiet alternative to the main square. But above all provides the Cultural Centre with an attractive double access and daylight condition. Nevertheless, the size and position of the sunken square and tribune is not ideally located and connected to the underground space and the adjacent functions. The piazzetta should not dominate over the main axes of Technická Street.

Criterion d): The proposal presents a high quality solution for the blue-green infrastructure of the development site and contributes to the city's climate goals.

The blue-green infrastructure concept is well elaborated and meets the city's requirements. The green residential courtyard is free of underground construction and offers a good opportunity for a park with large trees to be planted, a new tree line in Šolínova Street and diverse urban spaces with greenery. The proposed vegetation on roofs and the preservation of some of the unmade ground which allows rainwater to soak, is also a positive feature.

Criterion e): The proposal presents a holistic, feasible and sustainable mobility solution for all modes of transport.

The design of transport and mobility is detailed, clear and entirely logical. The pedestrian system and connectivity to public transit stops is very good, the design also successfully deals with the public permeability of the building blocks. Also the parking layout works. However, the logistics and bicycle parking will need to be elaborated in more detail.

Criterion f): The proposal presents a technological solution with a high degree of energy efficiency and flexibility.

The project can be made highly energy efficient and flexible in use. The jury appreciates the concept of unmade ground without underground structures. This should be kept.

Phase 2 Recommendations

Public Space:

- Technická Street should be dominant and continuous in terms of space, trees and materiality in relation to the piazzetta, which should not dominate this crossroads.
- The piazzetta should be reconsidered in terms of heat island effect and landscaping. The vertical connection to this public space should be reconfigured in order to provide better transparency and daylight conditions in the underground space and the adjacent functions, like the Cultural Centre, to fully develop its potential as an inclusive public space. The position and size of the staircase needs to be elaborated so that it becomes a natural part of the square and the underground.
- The relation from the square to Zikova street has the danger to become a dead space and should be improved in terms of placemaking and visibility.
- The jury stresses that the passage towards Evropská Street should be checked on traffic noise impact on the piazzetta.
- The position of the UCT building, which is shifted a little bit into Technická Street should be checked vis-a-vis the axiality and porosity between inside and outside.
- The courtyard of the residential block should be publicly accessible during the day-time, also because the ground floor of the Cultural Centre offers the possibility to accommodate an outside terrace here for the foyer. The access passages should be sufficiently wide and inviting, possible with active street fronts in the plinth.
- The border between public and private zones inside the residential courtyard should be well designed and collectively maintained to avoid anarchy.
- The curved front towards Victory Square needs careful addressing and possibly an arcade and other representative elements.
- The front surface of Victory Square should be negotiated with the design team of the square in order to create an adequate placemaking condition and avoid heath island effects.

Programme:

- There is too much double height retail space in the project, which should be reduced.
- The floor to ceiling heights of office and residential in the two curved buildings facing Victory Square should be brought into balance with the urbanistic symmetry as well as functional and technical requirements.
- The rooftop programme can be reconsidered according to changing demands, consider publicly accessible programme.
- The parking and basements work well, the delivery and bike storage are not adequately addressed in the basement.

Urban Structure and Architecture:

- The architectural elaborations are too schematic and should be improved. For instance the configuration of the curved buildings should be revised and the gables of the curved buildings facing Technická Street should be detailed very carefully. It is also necessary to elaborate the architectural expression of the corner to Zikova Street.

- The jury appreciates the individual expression of the UCT building, its volume and character shall be further developed and harmoniously integrated into the surroundings in the following stages.
- The design consists of very diverse building volumes and typologies, with changing architectural articulations. This suggest the deployment of multiple architects in the scheme, which the jury strongly supports. A balance between overall urban coherence and architectural diversity should be carefully studied and tested.
- For the success of the project, the winner should be in charge of the management of the masterplan implementation.
- The jury proposes to engage the 2nd price winner and possibly other finalists to be invited to design part of the project.