





## THE SITE

### Peculiar shape presenting a particular challenge

The site of the Federal Environment Agency lies in the former *Gasviertel* (gas quarter), which between 1855 and 1991 contained a gasworks and numerous factories and businesses. The structures adjoining the site are heterogeneous: to the north and east, residential houses built in the *Gründerzeit* style; to the south, turn-of-the-century commercial buildings mixed with retail development from the 1990s; and westwards, finally, rail and road infrastructure with its transition to the *Dessau-Wörlitzer Gartenreich*.

The actual shape of the plot results from the availability of individual lots at the time. In the south, it forms a very compact area which becomes narrower in the middle and veers to the east in the northern part. This gives the site its peculiar shape whose development presented a particular challenge.

## BANDS OF COLOURED GLASS

### Reflecting the urban surroundings

The colour scheme is an important part of the architectural idea, supporting the intention in urban development to never show the building all at once, but just in fragments. The façade consists of eight horizontal stripes - four alternating bands of timber and glass. The bands of untreated larch cover the breast and ceiling area of each storey and will eventually take on a silver-grey hue through weathering. The glass bands comprise the windows, which are set back about 30 cm, and glass 'blocks' of varying width and colour in between, which are flush with the timber bands. The night-time cooling shutter in each room is integrated into the window jamb, which is 30 cm deep.

Spread across the façade are seven 'families' of colour, the colour family of each section of the building responding to the urban features it faces. For instance, in the section facing the northeast - towards the city - warm reds predominate whilst the western façade reflects the greens and blue-greens of the park. The bands



of glass of varying colour and the shape of the building break down the uniformity created by the rows of identical offices and lend the building its particular character.

## THE LIBRARY

### Europe's largest German-language environmental library housed in an old and a new building

The library is housed in two building parts, the listed old 'Building 109' and a new connecting hall. A structure known as 'the joint' closes the remaining gap between the main office building and the connecting hall. The old building was gutted to then create three levels made of reinforced concrete for shelf space. The roof of the single-storey connecting hall rises to a height of around 15 m in front of the old building, making it significantly higher than the latter. This allowed for the creation of a broad band of windows which supply the library with daylight. The form of this element creates a chimney effect which contributes to ventilation. From outside, the sculptural connecting hall presents itself with a special façade design. Its brick skin takes up the material language of the old building and alters it to form a bridge between old and new.



## THE CANTEEN

### Pavilion flooded with light invites people to linger

The canteen is a free-standing structure in the western part of the site. It consists of two separate buildings. The solid brick block with functional rooms is clad with brick, developing out of a 'garage wall' which begins at the western boundary of the site to then become an acoustic barrier, keeping the noise from the adjacent federal road away from the kitchen area.

The transparent canteen stands like a pavilion in the green space surrounding it. Its roof is supported by slender steel columns whose lively positioning in space is meant to convey the impression of an artificial grotto. With its glass façade, its sky-lights, and the daylight-fleeting pond on its south side, it requires almost no artificial lighting.



## THE WÖRLITZER BAHNHOF

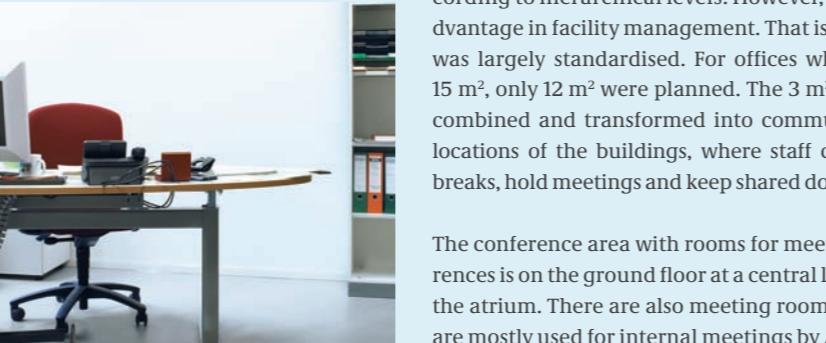
### Historical buildings to old and new 'gateway'

Standing at the site's entrance is a listed building, the old 'Wörlitzer Bahnhof', which now houses the offices of a small working unit of the Agency. The Wörlitzer Bahnhof was once the starting point of the Dessau-Wörlitz railway and the gateway right in the middle of town to a area of old-scale gardens and farms known as the *Wörlitzer Gartenreich*. The covered area behind the building, which today is used as a bicycle parking facility, plays an important role for the orientation of the main building as it determines its initial alignment.

## THE OFFICE CONCEPT

### Greater flexibility and cost-effectiveness through standardisation

The office building is a four-storey, 460-metre-long structure in the form of a 'snake' with office space on either side of a central corridor. The office walls to the corridor are 65 % glazed. This transparency was only dispensed with in certain areas such as



the offices of Agency directors or the Staff Council, whose walls to the corridor are made of plasterboard. The offices have a minimum area of 12 m<sup>2</sup>, both those facing in and those facing out. For public buildings it is permitted to vary office sizes according to hierarchical levels. However, this tends to be a disadvantage in facility management. That is why the size of offices was largely standardised. For offices which could have been 15 m<sup>2</sup>, only 12 m<sup>2</sup> were planned. The 3 m<sup>2</sup> regularly saved were combined and transformed into communal rooms at central locations of the buildings, where staff can spend their lunch breaks, hold meetings and keep shared documents, for example.

The conference area with rooms for meetings and video conferences is on the ground floor at a central location accessed from the atrium. There are also meeting rooms on each floor, which are mostly used for internal meetings by Agency divisions.