



New canopy extension and the original 1930s grandstand concrete canopy. (Photograph: Tuomas Uusheimo)

### Helsinki Olympic Stadium Refurbishment and Extension

Helsinki Olympic Stadium is a building with significant national value. It is a combination of pure functionalist architecture of the 1930s and the external appearance of the 1952 Helsinki Olympics. During its lifespan, the stadium had undergone several changes and extensions creating valuable historic layers. The key objective of the project was to ensure that the conservation and revitalizing of the stadium preserves the cultural values of the heritage as well as responds to all future requirements of international sport events.

In order to preserve the iconic form and respect the previous historic architectural layers of the stadium, the functions that did not easily fit the existing building frame were placed underground. The underground extension includes new multipurpose premises, sports facilities, logistical spaces, technical spaces and an indoor running track. In addition to the underground extensions the stadium had to undergo changes to improve public safety and comfort. New entrances to the stands and the public galleries under the structures ensure the free flow for the public during the events. A new canopy covers the stands almost entirely. The old bench rows were replaced with new individual seats meeting the UEFA standards. The conservation respected and preserved the original 1930s and 1950s architecture.

The stadium would have been at the end of its service life by 2020 if no improvements had been made. The key issue was to understand how to make the historical stadium meet future requirements while also preserving the valuable architectural heritage. The project had a wide range of stake holders and interest groups. We organized workshops to find out the core future needs of the stadium. The project partners agreed on the theoretical framework; the best way to preserve the architectural heritage was to keep the building in use. A toolset of methodological analyses was applied to understand the potential functional needs. Transformation guidelines were formulated based on the historic building surveys. Three categories were defined: limited, mixed and high transformation potential. We came up with four architectural approaches: preservation and conservation, preserved areas with new interventions and additions, reinstatement and new construction.

The conservation aimed to save as much of the old as possible, using original materials and building methods. The plastered facades and the visible concrete structures with the brickwork were restored to their original appearance. Utilitarian expression was set as the architectural approach for the new premises in order to relate to the material and structural expression of the stadium. The palette included rough exposed in situ concrete, thick rubber mat, steel and wood. The new multipurpose halls were clad in tinted white wood as a “mirror image” of the white painted concrete textures in the existing stadium premises. The longitudinal corridor connecting the new underground premises has a repetitive character formed by the continuous rhythm of concrete columns framing rectangular wooden niches, which refers to classical gallery facades. Three of these niches open towards the grandstand as lightwells to give a sense of orientation. The color palette was kept in monochrome tones with wood as the distinctive color in the underground premises. All the materials used in the project are directly attached to the history of the stadium and are timeless and durable. Together they form the new refurbished Helsinki Olympic Stadium.



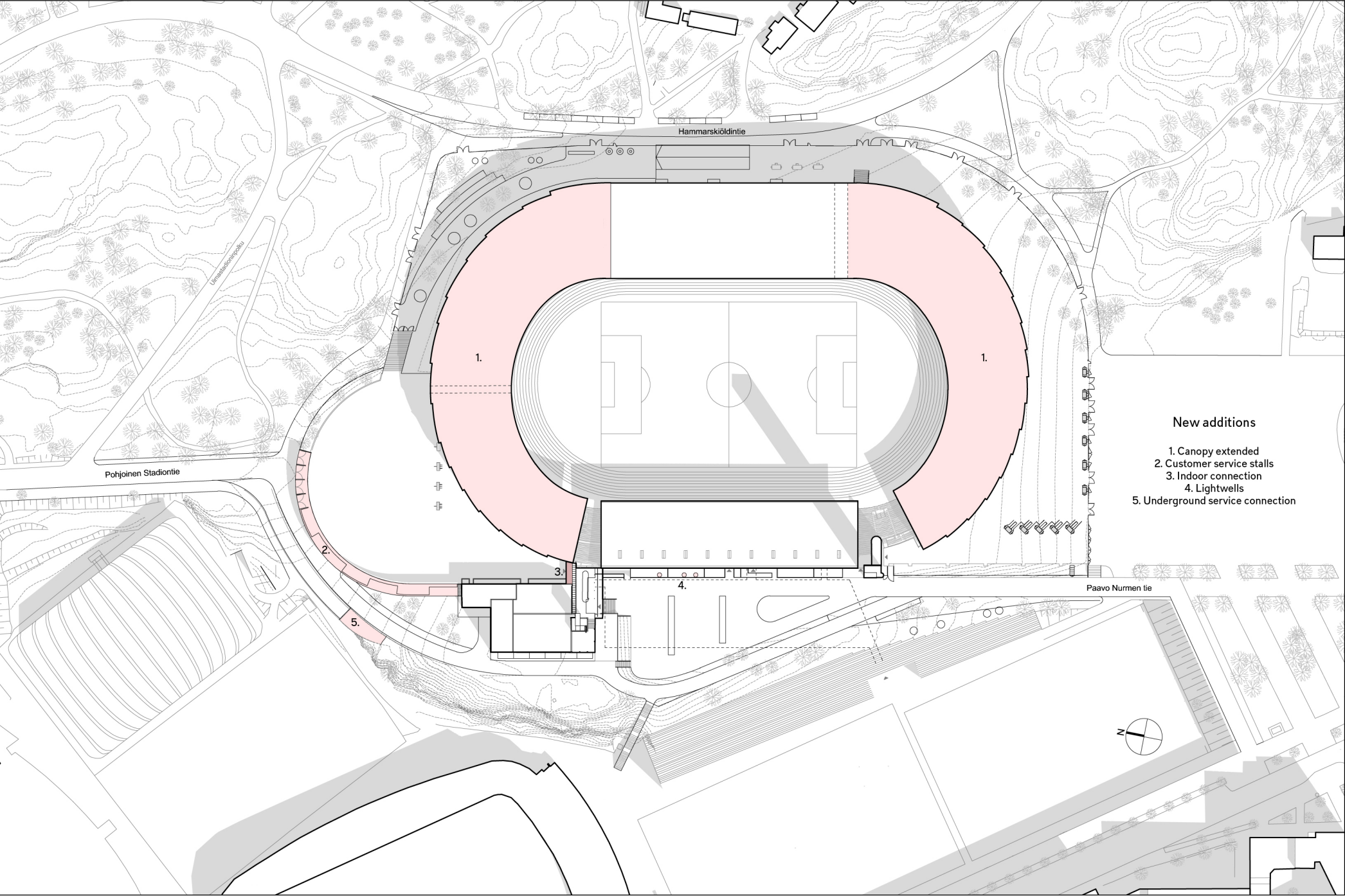
Stairset to the stands (Photograph: Tuomas Uusheimo)



Indoor warm-up track (Photograph: Tuomas Uusheimo)



North stand and the new wood clad canopy. (Photograph: Wellu Hämäläinen)



Site plan 1:2000