

Planning Application P/2016/0870 – Public Inquiry

Proof of Evidence of Sarah Hague Headteacher Les Quennevais School

A Vision for a New Les Quennevais School:

Currently the students of Les Quennevais School are significantly disadvantaged compared to all other Jersey secondary schools by its poorly designed and inadequate accommodation. The Serco VFM report of 2010 clearly stated the building was “not fit for purpose”.

Schools should be more than functional spaces, they should inspire. It is vital that we do not lose sight of this in our quest, desire and commitment to deliver what our young people in the west of the island should be entitled to. Those with little appreciation of the positive effect good school design can have are failing to see the bigger picture. It is quite simply the children who will miss out. Our only driver for a better school environment is to provide the best education we can for our children and future generations. Failure to seize the opportunity in front of us will send a clear message to our young people for years to come. A message that resoundly tells them they were not important enough for us to be bold, creative, forward thinking and aspirational for them. Instead of lighting fires within them we risk losing them to a dull, poorly resourced and unsatisfactory educational experience. Additionally we will compromise the abilities of our teachers who will be prevented from delivering the curriculum to the best of their potential.

School communities are not just buildings and a brand new building does not make a school successful. However, it is the biggest and potentially best resource, after teachers themselves, open to our disposal. If you have harnessed a workforce, committed to raising standards and a student body excited about the possibility of a new dawn educationally – a new building will enhance and exceed all possibilities for our children. This quite simply is where magic can happen. A combination of committed professionals and willing students in a building that inspires and underlines the importance of learning is a truly exciting combination.

At Les Quennevais School we are serious about raising standards through excellence and enjoyment. To do this we need a new building that can adapt and respond to recent and future educational and technological change. Our students and staff deserve a school design and learning spaces which are flexible enough to perform in a different way to the existing structure; a building which both students and teachers find stimulating as well as functional.

To deliver the best and most effective education, exploiting all the possibilities of the Information Age, our school building must reflect advances in technology, provide a pleasant and comfortable environment for learning and include design features to stimulate the students' imagination and aspirations. These things will not come about by adapting and tweaking the current 50 year old structure. School building design requirements have changed and must now respond to major drivers previously not considered, such as:

- Developments in education and the major advances in our understanding of the brain and how we learn.
- The need for flexibility and adaptability in the organisation of the classroom environment.
- Developments in technology and mobile learning opportunities.
- The inclusion of more students with special educational and physical needs attending Les Quennevais School.
- Developments in building technology and sustainability.

Our community has become the poor relation when considering school facilities and building provision within the secondary sector of education in Jersey. The west of the island deserves to have a school building which is a beacon for learning, reaching out to the whole

community. The following words summarise what we feel a new Les Quennevais school building would provide for this community;

Aspirational
Inspirational
Beautiful
Adaptable
Sustainable
Inclusive
Safe
Flexible
Technologically enabled
Multi-user
Fun
Pride

We believe a new Les Quennevais School building would have measurable impact on;

- student attainment
- student behaviour and attendance
- staff and student morale
- recruitment and retention of staff
- community partnership and out of hours use
- integration of technology in learning
- designed in adaptability and flexibility
- environmental impact and running costs

Our community deserves a speedy resolution to an issue that has been highlighted for years and is now starting to limit what the students and staff can achieve. Ultimately this kind of impact will affect the island as students move into the workforce.

Below are the Les Quennevais School community's comments regarding redevelopment of existing site:-

If we were to remain on the existing site, the building design will be focussed on fitting into the existing site and using the existing buildings and not on the requirements for providing an education to meet the educational and emotional needs of students, the wider community, Jersey and the world in the 21st Century.

- Significant amounts of temporary accommodation would be needed during the build.
- Major disruption to the running of the school would occur over a lengthy period affecting a whole cohort of students' throughout their complete experience of secondary schooling.
- The loss of a sports pitch used by the school and public. Encroachment within the currently protected open space changes the nature of the sport and leisure focus of the area north of the Railway walk.
- The existing building will continue to have higher running and maintenance costs than a new build which can use new technologies. Legacy features (including asbestos) and previous alterations have to be worked around when updating learning spaces thus causing increased cost for minor improvements e.g. refurbishing a classroom, wiring for new technology

- Access to the school via the residential estate is dangerous and existing issues will not be addressed. The number of vehicles driving through the estate and parking/waiting to pick up causes bottle necks, congestion and increases risk to students crossing roads from between moving and parked vehicles. This risk will increase as numbers of students increase.
- Bus drop off/ pick up solutions proposed will effect surrounding residential buildings, require access across the Railway Walk, or take up the sites footprint further. Buses currently disrupt lessons during pick up as they park close to classrooms- all proposed solutions are unsatisfactory.
- Parking for staff, library and parents is inadequate during school events and day to day. This would be further reduced by the proposed extension of the existing building into parking areas.
- Ventilation and heating of the existing building is highly inadequate, results in high costs and a poor learning and working environment for students and staff during hot and cold periods. Solving all these issues on the current site and building will be very difficult, if not impossible, and add significant costs.
- Safeguarding is a major concern on the existing site due to its open aspect. The Site is accessible on 3 sides from public areas. Public Footpaths pass through the site and along the boundary. The Railway walk divides the main building from the proposed and existing sports facilities thus increasing safeguarding and security risks. A split site would require a very expensive solution to overcome these issues. Any travel time between sites reduces the focussed learning time available.
- The already restricted site would not accommodate a larger school if changes to 14+ school structures require a larger West of island school.
- The existing buildings have safety issues regarding circulation space, particularly in corridors and stairwells. It is not possible to solve these issues within the existing structure or through the improvements proposed.
- The Restricted site will not allow for the larger more flexible learning spaces required by a 21st century school. Redesign of learning spaces is restricted and hampered within the existing and proposed building. The 2011 VFM survey stated the existing site was not fit for purpose for teaching and learning.
- The identified issue of enabling a whole school assembly space and the use of such spaces during exam periods are not overcome. PE use of gym/trampolining space is still disrupted during exam periods and larger school events.
- The existing building contains asbestos materials which are safely managed now but would be disturbed during any refurbishment, raising extra safety concerns and inflating the cost.
- Service access requires vehicular and personnel movement onto hard play space and within the school building during and after the school day creating safeguarding and safety issues.
- Hard play spaces are inadequate under current regulations and would be further reduced under these schemes.
- The shared use of public changing facilities at the Sports Centre remains a safeguarding issue. Currently there are insufficient changing rooms on the school site (2) used by 80 students at same the time resulting in a very cramped experience for students- there is no space available to increase this in the proposed redevelopment.
- The dual/ shared public and school use of pitches and the Sports Centre causes issues re booking and access during and after school hours. Decisions made outside of the school control have a major impact on curriculum delivery e.g. the recent removal of 2 netball courts for the Tennis club, timing of when to seed pitches.

- The external facade of the current building requires constant maintenance and needs replacement.
- The drainage and sewerage system of the school is struggling to cope as it is now 50 years old and designed for a far smaller number of students than are currently in or proposed to be in the school.
- The current felt roofing is failing regularly allowing rainwater ingress and requiring ongoing repair costs.
- As the designated school for students with physical needs many aspects of the current building are not acceptable and a refurbishment would fail to solve them e.g. the width of corridors, students inability to access all areas of the school at all or via lifts which open onto occupied classrooms, small classroom sizes making access and participation in learning far more difficult than it should be thus not meeting these students entitlement to an inclusive education.
- Modern expectations and demands for learning support, small group and 1-1 interventions, exam dispensations etc. require a far larger number of small work spaces. These are not available in the current building and would be difficult to coherently design into a refurbishment.

A New Build:

The school's strongly preferred option. The preferred site identified through the lengthy public consultation process in 2015 is the School's strongly preferred option. This will enable the following:

- An aspirational bespoke school can be designed which will be focussed on the requirements for educating students to meet the educational and emotional needs of students, the wider community, Jersey and the world in the 21st century. Features from proven excellence in school design, researched from across the UK and beyond, can be incorporated to ensure the greatest impact on student learning.
- An environment can be created which enhances well-being for students and staff and is purposely designed to maximise aspirational opportunities for learning.
- This option would meet requirements of all currently expected school building standards.
- Modern and flexible learning spaces would enable community, including primary schools, access to cutting edge specialist music, drama, sport, science, computing and design technology spaces and equipment.
- The site will enable a design to meet best practice principles, such as subject adjacencies for allowing greater interaction and creative learning. The site will also allow more communal learning space to be incorporated.
- Income could be generated for the school through evening and weekend lettings of facilities.
- Design principles would utilise the outside space to ensure the removal of disruption and safety issues presented by service access during and after the school day.

- No temporary accommodation would be required and the existing site could operate until a full move to the new site. There is no requirement for a phased building or disruption to the school.
- The space allows the design of a two storey building using natural materials and landscaping to limit the visual impact.

We have involved our students and primary school students in this process from the very beginning. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity for our young people to learn from a real life project such as this. We have sought their opinions on whether we needed a new school and the advantages and disadvantages of the current building.

They have been actively involved in designing what an 'ideal learning space' should look like working alongside Professor Stephen Heppell. Their thoughts and ideas became a reality as we re-designed an ICT space in current site – they were excited about doing more of this, but the current site offers little flexibility or funding for this to be realised. They have attended debates, consultations, discussed their views with Politicians, media and the public. They have had the chance to work alongside the architects and had an input into a future new building. They have learned so much. How sad it would be for them if the final lesson learned in this process is that their vision, their hopes and expectations are not recognised.

- Our moral purpose as educators is to unlock understanding in each child. A school building should remove barriers – not create them or add to them.
- The educational landscape has gone through a period of exceptional and unprecedented change in the last 2 years.
- We need to be ambitious for our children the emphasis on quality first teaching is paramount. Curriculum design and teaching and learning needs robust planning and access to first class resources that will empower, not hinder teachers in their ability to raise standards.
- Educationally what got us here, won't get us there. The current building is holding back curriculum opportunities and therefore life chances for our students.

There comes a time....

When a boy becomes a man
 When fear turns to bravery
 When thoughts must turn to belief
 When this belief must turn into action
 There comes a time, when the time must be taken

This time is now

