

LES QUENNEVAIS SCHOOL, ST BRELADE, JERSEY

PROOF OF EVIDENCE – PLANNING APPLICATION : P/2016/0870

Introduced by Barry Freeman ARB, RIBA

JERSEY PROPERTY HOLDINGS ARCHITECT'S RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

With over 35 years of experience in the team, we have established a national reputation for high quality public architecture; our awards, Civic Trust Awards, Renovation Projects and New Build Primary, Secondary and Special Needs Schools speak for themselves.

We strive to achieve a high standard of detail which is both practical and resilient, undergoing rigorous technical reviews through each stage of the design.

We have proven our expertise and organisational structure to be able to respond to our Client's needs and we provide a bespoke and responsive range of design and programme management services.

Introduction

A new Secondary School west of the Island gives us a unique opportunity to transform secondary education into an innovative learning environment that will inspire pupils to achieve. A high quality modern School building with up-to-date technology will raise standards and will play a crucial part in assisting the School to enhance its learning.

The overarching aim is to create for both students the community, a School they need, deserve and is highly functional.

The challenge is to provide an attractive, imaginative and stimulating environment, which is safe and secure for students to learn in.

A new Secondary School, west of the Island, will add a positivity to its locality.

The School will embrace the surrounding residential and open amenity spaces of St Brelade by providing an important end stop for Les Quennevais area and create an important amenity for the Community as a whole.

It creates a point of difference, its own expression, yet it is a good neighbour to the surrounding buildings.

It allows filtering and movement through the site and maintains the open vistas to the west.

The innovative street scape and careful portioning of the entry element adds a new and innovative character to the area and sets itself apart from the neighbouring spaces and buildings in colour, materials, scale and detail.

Special requirements of Schools and Colleges in Jersey are currently assessed against the UK Department of Education (DfE) standards (Revised Island Plan 2011, Para 7.7) – "Guidelines for Secondary Schools (Building Bulletin 98)" (Department for Education and Skills).

Head Teacher, Senior Management and Design Team visited a number of exemplar Schools in the UK and found the sterling nominated "Cornelius Vermuyden School,

Canvey Island to meet its requirements. Majority of School designs visited were found not to be the right scale or meet the SEN needs for a rural School and raised more questions than answers.

SUSTAINABLE DESIGN APPROACH

We are currently adopting BREEAM (International Standards), through the BRE, on this project, providing best practice in sustainable design and measuring a building's environmental performance.

Our aim is to introduce sustainable technologies, rainwater harvesting, solar collectors and achieving "very good" standards in energy conservation. Passive design principles by the use of natural light and ventilation moderates the internal climate of the building.

SENSE OF COMMUNITY

The School is at the heart of the community. In this way we can promote co-location and a sense of belonging and integrate it into urban life.

The design responds to our Clients needs with intelligence and meets the project brief, vision, context, affordability and sustainability, attention to detail is critical.

PRE PLANNING ADVICE

Design consideration by the Jersey Architectural Commission based on generic and outline proposals were put forward. Our first meeting with the panel focused on the fact the building was elongated and presented a crescent form which subsequently was omitted and the footprint was reduced. Elevational treatment was briefly discussed and all parties agreed the need for a more harmonised choice of materials. Courtyard areas were shown to be too tight in scale. Orientation of the building to the road was questioned and the front elevation needed to have a civic presence.

The second meeting was attended by the Deputy Head of the School to give the School's perspective. Orientation and civic frontage was discussed further. 3D modelling images were presented showing the open vista and it was explained in depth, the feelings and aspirations of the public, School and the Design Team to retain this vista.

The amended elevations presented showed a more civic approach with a focal entrance to the School.

The landscaping and ecological studies were at an early stage and have since been submitted in further depth within the EIA Report.

We stated that the School will be seen as the 'Book End' to the built-up area and elongating the elevation would simply block off the open vista to the west and the building mass would be brought closer to the road, whereas our proposal allowed the landscaping to break up the viewing time of the building and its scale.

Post design discussion and analysis took place by the Design Team after each meeting to take into account the comments made and, other than the orientation of the building we believe the scheme has addressed or omitted the commissions concerns.

Our response in considering the orientating of the building focuses around our strategy; the School environment must give an impression of liveliness, with attractive spaces and a general feeling of pleasantness which it is difficult to define.

The main consideration when orientating the new School building on the east-west axis were therefore:

High levels of natural light via large windows to the classroom are optimum, moderated by a need to avoid glare from direct sunlight. Glare is now a greater issue because of the widespread use of interactive whiteboards and computer projection in UK classrooms. As part of the design process, TNG Consulting Engineers Limited have carried out a daylight calculation for the new School to establish whether the teaching spaces comply with the recommendations of Building Bulletin 90, Lighting Design for Schools for Daylight Levels.

Utilising the above considerations, a good cost-effective daylighting solution for the new Les Quennevais School design has been achieved by proper orientation of the building to both maximise the potential of natural daylight and to also ensure that the least area of the building is located within the highest acoustic zone.

Early orientation of the building on a north-south axis proved problematic in that most classrooms would therefore primarily face either east or west. BB90 states that in the UK, for fenestration in this orientation, direct solar gain is less easily controllable due to low altitude strong sunlight from the east at the beginning of the School day (especially strong during the winter months) and low altitude strong sunlight from the west at the end of the School day.

To maximise the opportunity for internal daylighting, the School has remained on an east-west axis, parallel with La Route des Quennevais, with the majority of teaching spaces facing either south (best) or north (second best) creating a situation that is easy to control. East-west facing apertures are known to receive twice the amount of solar radiation in the summer and in the winter.

Finally, changing the orientation of the building would go against opinions set down as part of the consultancy period with the Public and School as a key piece of urban design within the Parish.

Post Planning Application we asked to present the scheme to the Commission and Planning did not consider it necessary.

KEY OBJECTIVES

- Good clean organisational and legible plan (special needs facilities / public access).
- Well-proportioned efficient spaces set out by Exemplar, UK Schools and must be fit for purpose.
- Circulation well thought through and generous.
- Good environmental wellbeing appropriate to achieve the best from everybody.
- Full utilisation of the site and the School to have a presence within the community.
- Attractive external spaces and relationships to the area.
- Community involvement (critical factor) and use of the School and Public Library.
- Robust and cost effective detailing.
- Flexible design facilities to respond to change and expansion.
- Design standards set as the benchmark to question or copy as good practice [DB '98 and Associated Design Guides].

DESIGN OBJECTIVES

- Take on board End User knowledge.
- Value for money.
- Extensive experience and knowledge has been brought to the design solution.
- Building meets / responds to the brief and rises to the challenge of design quality and sufficiently robust to achieve a good solution. We have a responsibility to ensure the building can meet pupil numbers in the west of the Island, special educational needs and is in the most appropriate location.
- Consultation with the public was critical in understanding their opinions and views.
- Designing a fundamental infrastructure, minimising impact on the open space around the site.

SITE PLANNING

The building is sited on an axis of east to west allowing the open vista from Route de Quennevais to remain a major expanse of green.

Landscaping and planting will play a major, vital role in screening and blending the building into the natural environment allowing wildlife and flora of the area to be reinstated.

Links with the footpaths and cycle paths have been developed and access points agreed with the School Management Team to police bikes and cars on site.

A focal node (entrance) is created centrally to give a presence with access from the south and north.

All parking bays are discreetly screened by trees or planting.

The form of the building represents and maximises the opportunities for a place of learning and takes full account of the site and its assets without impacting on the surrounding open spaces and buildings and the amenities of the area. The School becomes identifiable from afar, yet sits comfortably into the semi-rural skyline. The façade creates a visually rich screen of constantly changing patterns of light and movement, expressing its internal functions of learning to outside places of learning with an ever changing layer of visual change to the urban landscape.

Service, parking, buses and cycle access have been carefully considered providing simple and secure facilities without impacting on the pedestrian movement through and across the site.

A simple palette of materials detailed carefully creates an impression of quality and longevity. Decoration is applied through the layering of light and shadow over the building.

URBAN RESPONSE

The varying functional need for a community School needs creates a challenging and a positive contribution to the urban form of the area.

The design response has successfully addressed the following:

- Create the appropriate scaled entry point into the School.
- Current aesthetic appeal for an educational Secondary School to become a place of learning.

- Address the sensitive contact of building in the Green Zone achieving a design which sits comfortably within a mixed scale of building form and character.
- Create an interesting and engaging street scape and maintain open vistas across to the west.

ELEVATIONS AND MATERIAL / APPEARANCE

Primary cladding materials are light buff brown brick coloured render, dark aluminium seamed cladding and horizontal timber boarding. The materials enhance and establish a dialogue and visual connection with neighbouring buildings along Route de Quennevais (Communicare, Fire Station).

Featured planar / curtain walling to entrance and window areas with fully glazed floor to ceiling height panels to maximise transparency.

It is intended that this restrained palette of materials will help in making what is a complex building (in terms of massing), legible and welcoming to users. Indeed it is hoped that the materials will allow the building to blend into its surrounding.

MASSING / SCALE OF BUILDINGS

- Window and door proportions are formed to accommodate the correct amount of daylight proportional to the room size and function.
- Building set back from public road allowing the building to be viewed from afar and seen up close when visiting.
- Use of indigenous plants, such as gorse will break up the scale of the building form.
- Scale height of the School to neighbouring buildings is not seen in context with each other as there is a division of green landscape.

CONCLUSION

Overall Islanders expressed strong support, along with the Education Minister and Education Department for the concept of a new School. Traffic concern, access and transport links, noise, value of neighbouring properties have been reviewed and answered.

A new School is long overdue. The current site is not viable to meet modern School design requirements without building in the green zone. We believe this is the right solution.

The design process, in conjunction with the consultancy process, has served as a visible proof of how the design evolution of this School has developed having regard to best practise and guidance by the community.

In addition, it has provided a tangible link with those interested in the School, design the technical assessments and our best design responses based on knowledge and experience.

We believe our application is based on a good understanding of local character and circumstances physical, social, economically and meet the Planning Policy.

QUOTE

“When you also have 21st Century building with the right facilities, that’s when magic happens”

*Sarah Hague
Head Teacher*