

## **DCFW response to revised proposals Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama**

**5<sup>th</sup> June 2008**

DCFW welcomes the opportunity to comment on the revised proposals and the careful thought that has gone into this response to the detailed conclusions of the Design Review Panel. We commend the design team for the way in which they have engaged with us, and we think that the scheme has the potential to be exemplary, providing that what is shown can be delivered.

### **Procurement**

We agree that the procurement method being proposed [Develop and Construct] can deliver the required quality, but only if sufficient time is allowed at the pre-tender stage. We think that the programme is too tight, with not enough time ahead of the tender process to get the right level of detail [especially in the design of services] in the Employers Requirements, and for that detail to be accurately costed. We would like the client to consider novating the architects after Stage F.

While offering some degree of cost certainty [but no guarantee of completion date], we think that this procurement method does not necessarily deliver best value for the client, and means that less of the available funding will actually be spent on the building.

### **Sustainability**

We welcome the commitment to achieve BREEAM Excellent, which is a condition of WAG funding. We urge the team to carry out a BREEAM assessment at an early stage and use the results to guide the design development.

### **Timber Cladding**

The Panel agree that Option a is preferable, but we are not convinced that either option is the optimum solution. Briefly:

- Instead of turning silvery-grey, the timber is more likely to go dark grey, black and green, as a result of mould growth and lichen. The close proximity of the trees and the northern orientation would make this inevitable. However, the curved form should ensure that the weathering is graded and this may actually suit the inverted conical form. The client should be made aware that weathering will be a major factor in the appearance of the new building.
- The only significant area which will weather non-uniformly is that immediately beneath the oversailing roof and the relationship between roof edge and top of cladding needs careful thought.
- We think that battens or shingles will be better able to realise the curvaceous form than would be the case with bigger, flatter cladding panels.
- We suggest that the design team consult TRADA for their advice

## Roof

We are very aware that the sharp, blade-like roof edge will be difficult to achieve, especially with a curved roof of varying plan radii, and this is where the Develop & Construct process will need a lot of attention and monitoring. Each of the edge profiles illustrated would be acceptable at this scale, and it may be better to adopt one that a Contractor is best able to achieve, rather than force a difficult or bespoke solution (provided the 'bullnose' is avoided!) Even site cut, bespoke panels will struggle to cope with the geometry.

The recess at the junction of roof and walls will be used by birds, and pigeon or gull droppings do not go well with the hi-tech aesthetic!

See these pictures of Foster's Folkstone Academy, taken a few weeks ago, with the same kind of over-hanging roof.



## **Theatrical aspects**

The loading and service arrangements now appear much more convincing. We note that the Local Planning Authority has been consulted on this and we would like to be reassured that the Highways Department has also accepted this solution.

We accept that the problem of the 'main entrance' being out of line with the pedestrian crossing cannot be improved upon.

We appreciate the inclusion of space over the courtyard theatre for a fully working fly tower at a later date.

We note that the height of the concert hall has come down to 13 metres and we assume that the acousticians are happy with this?

We still have doubts about the complete separation of the gallery level from the stalls level, around the full perimeter of the hall. The high parapet exacerbates the separation, and we wonder whether this is this really what is required?

## **Public Realm**

We think that the revised footpath arrangements are a definite improvement, although we think that the illustrations of the path to the dock feeder are misleading. This is directly north of the concert hall and there is an area on the east side of the footbridge that will always be over-shadowed by it.

The quality of the public realm and frontage, and the mature trees shown, need to be protected during the process of highway improvements.

Cindy Harris  
Head of Design Review