

Design Review Report

Eastern High School,
Cardiff

DCFW Ref: 65A

Meeting of 17th November 2014

19 January 2016 – DCFW has learned that the Eastern High School scheme has planning permission for a scheme that is substantially different from the one that was reviewed in November 2014. Therefore, this report will not relate to the existing scheme but to that presented at the review.



Declarations of Interest

Panel members, observers and other relevant parties are required to declare **in advance** any interests they may have in relation to the Design Review Agenda items. Any such declarations are recorded here and in DCFW's central records.

Review Status

CONFIDENTIAL

Meeting date	17 th November 2014
Issue date	26 th November 2014
Scheme location	Trowbridge, Cardiff
Scheme description	School
Scheme reference number	65A
Planning status	Pre-application

Declarations of Interest

None declared.

Consultations to Date

Public consultation was undertaken during the site selection process. The design team have undertaken consultation workshops with the college and school regarding the type of space they would like within the school. Pre-application meetings have also taken place with the Local Planning Authority.

The Proposals

The proposal is to provide a building to accommodate both Cardiff and the Vale College and Eastern High School following the closure of Llanrumney and Rumney High schools. It will accommodate 1,200 high school and 500 post-16 pupils. Following a site selection process, the facility is to be provided on the existing Coleg Glan Hafren site in Trowbridge and development will be phased to allow the continued use of some of the existing facility.

Main Points

The Design Commission welcomed early consultation on this proposal and appreciated the clear presentation on the current status of the project at the review meeting. It is clear that the design team have a very good understanding of the proposed building and the requirements to which they are working.

Design Guidelines

The need to adhere to BB103 has resulted in a significant reduction in the floorspace of the building and very restrictive design parameters. Through the use of Revit the design team are able to constantly review the design to ensure that it is compliant with the BB103 standards and are, therefore, working well within them. The design approach at

the concept stage is adding quality and value to the proposals over and above the standard but there is further scope in the following design stages to develop and refine the design to add greater sense of identity and articulation to the building.

The BB103 standards are resulting in some areas of concern for the Commission, particularly regarding the circulation spaces. The 2.4m corridor width within the school block is very narrow for the movement of 1,200 pupils. We understand that there is limited scope to amend this but consideration should be given by the client and future occupiers, to how this would work and whether any changes could be made to overcome any potential issues.

Layout

In the siting and orientation of the building the design team have taken account of flooding and noise constraints as well as the surrounding urban grain and potential for solar gain. Orientating one wing of the building to face due south raised some concerns regarding overheating and glare but it is understood that the modelling suggests that this is not an issue. The Commission would like to be further assured of this. If glare is to be dealt with through the use of internal blinds these need to be considered in the design of the windows to ensure that they can be integrated effectively. In general, early consideration of the internal design of all of the spaces will usefully inform the overall building design. 3D representations of key internal spaces should be developed to test and confirm the approach to interior architecture.

The building concept is logical with a central shared/public area and two wings that enable the separation of the high school and post-16 functions. This strong concept needs to be carried through the development, articulation and communication of the design as it is currently lost or diluted in places. Currently the two wings have a very similar design and consideration should be given to whether they should have more distinct identities whilst still forming part of a coherent overall design.

Entrances

The main entrance to the high school wing is tucked in behind the hall and therefore lacks prominence from the main approach to the building. This entrance could be given greater distinction through the design of the building and surrounding landscape.

The main/public entrance could have a view through to the courtyard space beyond but the central serving areas in the dining hall would need careful design to achieve this. The Commission would like to see this view maintained but the internal space also needs to be practical and so warrants further consideration in terms of how this space will function in order to ensure that this approach will work.

Additional glazing has been added to the sports hall elevation that helps to break up the large solid facade and balance it with the very open, glazed adjacent facade. Light from high level translucent sections of the sports hall will be helpful in indicating life and activity in this space in the evening when other parts of the school might be closed.

Landscape Design & External Areas

The Commission is keen to see a high quality landscape scheme continue through the design and delivery of the school as the external areas are important amenity space for pupils. The plaza at the front of the building is a large space that needs to provide a

welcoming approach and attractive setting for the building whilst also ensuring that the space has a human scale and appropriate sense of enclosure. The strong initial design concept for this space need to be carried through and a lighting strategy should be integrated at an early stage. Consideration should be given to how the building and plaza will form part of the fabric of the neighbourhood rather than being separate from it and this may influence decisions regarding the location of secure fencing and gates. Management and maintenance of the external spaces should also be considered at the design stage.

It is encouraging to hear that the treatment of the road in terms of pedestrian crossings and bus movement is already being considered. The flow of people is significant in the overall function of the site and should continue to be considered in the design proposals for the road and landscaped areas around the building.

Response to and contribution to context

The presentation material provided little in relation to how this building responds to or fits within the context of surrounding development. The setting back of the building from the street reduces its dominance on the properties on the opposite side of the street but matters of scale, materials, overlooking and boundaries with surrounding properties should be fully explored and explained.

Conclusion

At this early stage the building and landscape design is well considered. The Commission would like to see the identity of the building as a whole and each of its components developed as the design process continues. Given the constraints of BB103, the shared/public areas and external spaces must be designed to the highest quality to be successful and add value to the contribution that this building makes to the neighbourhood both functionally and aesthetically. The Commission would welcome further consultation as the project progresses.

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A Welsh language copy of this report is available upon request.

Attendees

Agent/Client/Developer: Bev Bailey, Cardiff Council

Architectural/Urban Designer: Chris Howe, Atkins
Michael Bool, Atkins

Design Review Panel: Jamie Brewster
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