

Design Review Report

Holyhead Primary School

DCFW Ref: 62

Meeting of 22nd January 2015



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

Meeting date	22 nd January 2015
Issue date	4 th February 2015
Scheme location	Holyhead, Anglesey
Scheme description	Primary School
Scheme reference number	62
Planning status	Pre-application

CONFIDENTIAL

Declarations of Interest

None declared.

Consultations to Date

A consultation programme is in progress.

The Proposals

This scheme seeks to consolidate three existing schools into one new primary school. The selected site includes an existing Edwardian Grade II Listed school building with an attractive frontage to the north, but dilapidated extensions to the rear. Proposals are for the rear extensions to be demolished, and the remainder converted to provide nursery and reception accommodation. A new building for the older children would be built on land behind the existing buildings, with a new main entrance to the south on Garreglwyd Road. The site is opposite an existing secondary school, with which the primary school will share playing fields. The scheme presented at this review was designed speculatively to support the developer's bid and without a thorough brief. Since awarding the project on these 'outline business case' assumptions, the local education authority has been evolving the brief with the selected design team and contractor.

Main Points in Detail

This review was carried out at a good, early stage in the project, and it was pleasing to see that the client and design team were receptive to fresh thinking, even if it required a new design approach. The evolving brief will require some of the initial design ideas and strategies to be revisited. The practice of using the outline business case for bidding processes leads inevitably to the need to revise the approach based on the implications of further and more detailed information and requirements emerging, when the design process begins in earnest. The client must understand that a definitive brief is now

required, and that changes to that brief further into the design process are likely to have negative time, cost, quality and coordination implications. The team are to be credited for their willingness to consider changes and rethink the approach to parts of the design. However, the programme for planning submission and delivery of the project seems impossibly constrained and we would urge serious re-consideration of the timetable.

The following points summarise key issues from the review, and should be used to inform work ahead of making a planning application:

Access, Entrances and Circulation

It is necessary to have more robust survey information about how people will arrive at and approach the new school, and where they will be coming from. This will better inform arrival and entrance strategies which can start to shape the form and layout of the buildings and landscape. Access, entrances and circulation would be a sensible starting point for arranging the complex functions of the school.

Vehicle Movements

Vehicle movements should not dictate the main pedestrian entrance location. It would be appropriate for the 'main' entrance to be prioritised for pedestrians. Consideration should be given to both those arriving by car and on foot or by other modes, and the relationship between them.

Vision for Internal Spaces

The Design Commission would like to see a strong vision for the quality of the internal spaces. A school should be a comfortable and inspiring environment in which children can learn, interact and grow. This applies to both treatment of the existing building and the new building/s. Daylight, views, scale and relationship to outside and other inside spaces will all contribute to the quality of environment achieved.

Operation of School

Organisation of spaces should be in line with proposed operational organisation/teaching and learning approach of the school, and should make sense of spaces in the existing building, as well as any outside spaces which may be created.

Ground and First Floor

Ground floor classrooms have the potential to easily benefit from direct relationship to outside spaces. The team should bear this in mind when planning the new build elements of the scheme. For example, the first floor might not be as large as the ground floor in order to maximise the number of classrooms which may open up to outside.

Use of existing building

A rigorous assessment of the use of the spaces in the existing building is required, especially as the brief has evolved since the outline business case/tender stage design. The existing volumes should accommodate uses appropriate to their character and scale, and which fit with the organisation of the school as a whole. Different approaches to the use of the existing buildings with the new additions should be tested.

It will be useful for the team to establish a clearer understanding of the conservation constraints and priorities, and it then should be possible to evolve a creative solution that strikes an appropriate balance between retaining and repairing the heritage asset

and meeting the required educational needs and opportunities. It will be important that Cadw is approached with a thoroughly researched, well justified, persuasive and clearly communicated design solution. Early and meaningful input from Cadw would assist this process.

Organisation of new buildings on the site and relationship to existing

Development of the brief and a clearer understanding on the part of the designers as to how the school may operate, provides an opportunity to reconsider the way in which the new build elements are organised on the site.

The relationship between the old and new buildings requires further consideration. It may be appropriate to join the new to old, rather than having total separation between them. The treatment of the old buildings where existing extensions are removed also requires further detailed consideration, and the surveys which have now been instructed will help determine this.

The new build does not necessarily need to be a single two-storey building. It might be more appropriate to have a number of volumes which relate to the organisation of the school and make sense of the external spaces. Such an approach may facilitate a solution that has a more comfortable relationship with the existing building and fits better on the site. It would be good practice to test a number of options with the most recent brief and other site constraints in mind.

Impact on Neighbours

The impact of new development on neighbouring properties is important, especially on residential properties adjacent to or opposite the site. The positioning of entrances and new buildings within the site will be important in this respect.

Landscape Design

The landscape design strategy for a school is as important as the design of the buildings themselves. Landscape design should form an integrated part of the process from an early stage, as relationships between inside and outside spaces are crucial. As with the building design, the landscape should be defined in relation to the operation of the school, whilst providing for delight and a sense of safety and well being for the children who use it.

Sustainability

Sustainability and energy use must be integrated from the outset of the design process, otherwise costly and complicated technology will be required to achieve standards or targets. The Design Commission would recommend that the team refers to Welsh Government's *Practice Guidance: Planning for sustainable buildings* document which can be downloaded from the Welsh Government website. This sets out a best practice approach to fully integrated sustainability.

Good sustainable design will have an impact on early decisions such as building form, orientation and layout to maximise the benefits of passive design, such as daylight, natural ventilation and solar gain/shading. These qualities of good passive design also contribute to a comfortable, healthy and inspiring learning environment.

Outside the Site

As well as internal considerations, the boundaries and environment outside of the site should be thought about carefully. This scheme has the potential to contribute positively to the streetscape, but the boundary treatments, relationships between buildings and streets, and landscaping at the edges of the site will have to be well-designed.

Security is usually an important issue for schools, and, if not carefully planned, a security fence can make the school feel intimidating and defensive rather than welcoming and inclusive. Using buildings as part of the security line, and including a gathering space at the entrance (outside of the security line) can reduce the negative impact of security fencing.

Comisiwn Dylunio Cymru Design Commission for Wales is the trading name of DCFW LIMITED, a Private Limited Company established under the Companies Act 1985 and 2006, Company No: 04391072 incorporated in England and Wales as a wholly controlled subsidiary of the Welsh Government. Registered office: 4th Floor, Cambrian Buildings, Mount Stuart Square, Cardiff CF10 5FL T: 029 2045 1964 E connect@dcfw.org. The comment recorded in this report, arising from formal Design Review through our Design Review Service, is provided in the public interest for the consideration of local planning authorities as a material consideration, and other users of the Design Review Service. It is not and should not be considered 'advice' and no third party is bound or required to act upon it. The Design Review Service is delivered in line with DCFW's published protocols, code of conduct and complaints procedure, which should be read and considered by users of the service.

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

Attendees

Agent/Client/Developer:	Andy Garner, Wynne Construction
Architectural/Urban Designer:	Peter Fisk, Lovelock Mitchell Architects Stuart Hadfield, Lovelock Mitchell Architects
Local Authority:	Gareth Thomas, Isle of Anglesey County Council Dewi Francis Jones, Isle of Anglesey County Council
Design Review Panel:	
Chair	Alan Francis
Lead Panellist	Angela Williams Jonathan Adams Mike Gwyther-Jones Jen Heal, Design Advisor, DCFW Amanda Spence, Design Advisor, DCFW
Observing:	Carole-Anne Davies, Chief Executive, DCFW