

LEARNING BITES

EDITION 2

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SEMINAR SERIES

Lessons from Jubilee School

Jubilee School opened two and half years ago as part of the reorganisation of Lambeth Schools. Originally intended to be a refurbishment, the scale of the project increased to the development of an entirely new building.

Located in Tulse Hill, Brixton, South London, it was felt that the school should be a significant, high quality building which would act as a focus for the community. This led to the design of a huge cantilever roof which acts as a sun deck, a performance space and as a beacon for civic pride.

The Brief

The original brief was complex and required provision for a range of services including a Sure Start centre, nursery, infants school, junior school and an SEN unit. One of the major challenges for the design was to fit this provision into a site with limited space. The plans were kept relatively simple and were based on floors; with the infant school on the first level, juniors on the second and breakout areas to the rear. Although the original building was in reasonable condition, it was calculated that the new school building would cost £1 million pounds less than a refurbishment. To maximise sunlight the new school was placed on the far edge of the site, with classrooms facing the playground and a plinth facade all the way around made from robust material to discourage graffiti.

Sustainability

Sustainable features include natural ventilation via wind chimneys, lit up at night to provide an interesting architectural feature, and a sedum roof. The roof overlooked by neighbouring tower blocks provides a bit of 'green relief' to the urban landscape. In addition, each classroom has a light well and there are light level sensors on all electric lighting.

“the school should be a significant, high quality building which would act as a focus of pride for the community”

Construction

The original playground was in need of improvement so all available space was used; games and trails were marked onto the playground and a timber drama deck was constructed. This was further enhanced by a surrounding nature garden. Furniture designer Andrew Stafford was commissioned to provide bespoke furniture for the break out spaces. An RSA grant enabled the school to work with artist Martin Richman who came up with an interesting 'glowing glass' design for the reception desk. The lighting in the external corridors were visually improved and art features were designed onto the windows which did not have planning permission to look out onto residential property. Mature branding was designed for the school by Studio Myerscough.

LEARNING BITES

The Learning Bites are designed to provide open access to all the learning and informed discussion from the School Works programme of events.

This edition has been produced from the "Lessons from Jubilee School" session of our "Richard Feilden Future Schools Seminar Series" on 23rd March 2005.

Chaired by School Works Managing Director, Ty Goddard, we invited Paul Monaghan, of Architects Allford Hall Monaghan Morris, to share his perspectives on the project.



Basic Bites:

1. Capital costs and maintenance cost must be closely tied together. There needs to be more creative thought about how capital costs can be spent wisely to support sustainability, ensuring that money is saved on running and maintenance costs. Money spent upfront can create savings in the long term.



2. Re-use and re-build where possible. Be careful what gets knocked down; at Jubilee the focus was on the little things.

3. Shape and cost. Think creatively about space guidelines to maximise useful space. This in turn can reduce costs. Jubilee placed circulation space externally to allow for larger classrooms. Paul Monaghan, architect of Jubilee School, used their previous project Notley Green County Primary School in Essex as an example of creative use of space; the school is laid out in a triangular form.



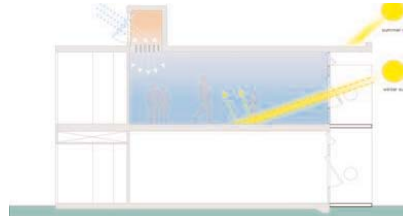
4. Briefing can be over complicated, taking many factors into account. There can be a triangle of different interests between politics, teaching and architecture. Early consensus on briefs is essential, making the potential for problems decrease. For example, Jubilee teachers wanted the SEN unit to be separate whereas the head wanted it integrated into the building. The placement of the toilets was changed after the construction was complete, creating extra costs. The lesson is that briefing at the wrong stage can cost money. An approach to briefing that builds consensus early on; helps to manage expectation; draws out potential problems and improves internal relations, not only produces a better building, but also saves money on unnecessary alterations.



5. Keep strategies simple.

6. Sustainable design can be exciting and unusual. Some of the elements used in the Jubilee project were:

- a. Sedum Roofs.
- b. Replenishable materials such as the Bamboo Floor.
- c. Recycled materials such as "Made of Waste" and Newspaper insulation.



- d. Maximising use of natural light and ventilation such as the use of wind chimneys and solar gain.
- e. Robust detailing for life.

7. Project champion - It is important to have a clear understanding of how the new building should be used. This avoids spaces being underused or wasted.

8. The environment should be a backdrop to teaching.

9. Participation is important. There were some problems with public consultation. Emotions were riding high as some people were against the closure of the original school. Participation helped to ease the situation.



10. Security, health and safety need to be written into the plan. At Jubilee, the retrofitting of external fencing compromised the original vision, according to the architect.

11. Award nominations do help to enthuse and recognise everyone's efforts. Jubilee was shortlisted for the The Prime Minister's Award for Better Public Building, and a RIBA award.



Did you Know?

~ The Jubilee Primary School project was part of a Lambeth initiative for four primary school developments in the borough. The initiatives were aimed to re-examine and re-define the conventional usage of schools and their facilities.



~ The methods and tools for teaching are changing rapidly, particularly with developments in IT. Hence, school provision should embody flexibility to respond to these changes.

~ Jubilee contains a Special Educational Needs facility for the hearing impaired. In addition to providing mainstream opportunities for these pupils, the school will become a centre of excellence for the teaching of the hearing impaired.



~ The main contractor undertook regular site tours for the school children and the local community providing an immediate way to experience the building process. The name of the school, Jubilee Primary School, was selected by the staff, children and local community to celebrate the opening of the new school in the Queen's golden Jubilee year (2002).



~ The new school was built on the site of the existing Brockwell Primary School (a 1950s building in need of significant renovation and upgrading; this option proved not cost effective). The pupils of the existing school were temporarily re-housed in another building during the construction phase.

~ Dealing with individual feelings towards a project, including those of teachers, parents and students can improve the progress of construction. Consultation from a variety of sources was considered in the building of The Jubilee Primary School.

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