

HALL SCHOOL – SENIOR SCHOOL DESIGN SUMMARY

Existing Building

The building splits into two main sections; on the northern half of the site is the original Victorian school. The southern half of the site is occupied by a small extension added in 1977 and a larger extension, including the hall, added in 1989. The current facilities were compared to space standards in Building Bulletin 103 – Area Guidelines for Mainstream Schools, which is non-statutory guidance for school buildings for pupils aged 3-19 years.

This process was not straightforward, as this is not a mainstream or single site school:

1. The existing buildings and the piecemeal evolution of the site place constraints on use and areas compared to standard BB103 solutions. E.g. due to the many change in levels, warren of corridors and thick internal masonry walls.
2. Age range is different to Primary or Secondary Schools
3. The curriculum is taught in a different way, more akin to secondary education with specialist subject teaching from year 5. This requires a greater number of classrooms.
4. Facilities in the Senior School building are also used by those in the Junior and Middle Schools. There are regular full school assemblies which take place within the Wathan Hall. In addition, the annual school play and regular concerts which also takes place in Wathen Hall and the number of parents are limited due to the restrictions in space. Both the Middle School and Junior School also use the Senior School for their PE, science and music lessons and there is regular movement between sites.
5. The Middle school does not have a playground and therefore uses the Senior School yard. This becomes crowded as there is no alternative space within the buildings. The IT suite currently houses 20 computers which are oversubscribed at breaks, especially during inclement weather.
6. Pupils based in the Senior School also use off-site facilities, such as Games at Wilf Slack Playing Fields
7. There are currently no meeting rooms for peer-to-peer collaboration, Continuing Professional Development (CPD), departmental meetings, training or for the recruitment process.
8. The existing sports hall has a low level ceiling running down the left hand side with a walkway above which makes the space unusable for most sporting activities.

However the comparison of the current facilities to the standard requirements within Building Bulletin 103 was a useful exercise and identified the following areas to address:

1. 4 more classrooms are required to ease existing timetable pressures and allow teachers to prepare for lessons. The new classrooms are not required to accommodate any increase to the school's roll.
2. 10 of the current 21 classrooms, 15 (over 70%) do not meet the standard requirements, either too small, lacking day light or adequate ventilation.
3. Of these 15 classrooms 4 are less than 50% of the required size.

4. The inclusion of 4 additional classrooms and the redevelopment of the current classroom stock will mean that subject areas can be grouped together allowing greater cohesion and development for the pupils.
5. Additional learning resource rooms/areas are required to allow for inclusive Special Educational Needs support.
6. Lack of flexible teaching space, or space for independent learning, which allows teachers to split classes into smaller working groups and gives them an area where they can work. Each space needs the ability to link in with the technology which is prevalent within the modern classroom.
7. Lack of break-out play space particularly during wet weather.
8. Lack of changing facilities for Juniors using the hall.
9. Majority of building is inaccessible by wheelchair with classrooms too small to accommodate a wheelchair user and the corridors also too tight and winding to be navigated by wheelchair.
10. There is no changing or toilet provision for any pupils who have a disability.
11. Beyond this, the circulation is impractical, with access via rooms in use, particularly the halls, with limited links between old and new buildings making class changeover inefficient.

Demolition

A number of factors have been considered when deciding which parts of the building to retain and which to replace:

1. The quality of the fabric; the original building makes a positive contribution to the conservation area whereas the 1989 extension does not.
2. Fitness for purpose; identification of spaces and arrangements which are not functioning well or prevent other parts functioning well.
3. Access for construction; consideration of how frame, materials and machinery can get into the site which is only accessible from the front.
4. Buildability; a significant consideration was how practical the construction would be considering the tight working space.
5. Refurbishment versus new build; we tested whether refurbishment of the hall would be quicker and more sustainable than new build. Considerations included; the logistics of a constrained site, potential for disruption during construction, requirement for complex temporary works, risk of delays and overall carbon use over the projected building life.

Overall we believe we have struck a good balance between retaining original fabric and creating new well-functioning space which compliments the Victorian school.

New Build

The existing school has 21 classrooms, five of which will remain as they are, two will be enhanced through refurbishment, and the new building will contain 18 new classrooms designed to meet modern requirements giving a total of 25. The GIA of the new building is 37% larger than existing, or 24% when only considering above ground area.

In recent years the methods of teaching and the need for learning support has changed meaning the current building configuration has become a constraint on teaching. The new building will provide flexible future-proofed classrooms and enhanced facilities for one-to-one provision and breakout spaces for independent learning.

The new building will provide a lift which will need eight stops in order to provide wheelchair access to nearly all of the retained building with its complex split levels. It will also have spacious circulation and clearer way-finding to enable more orderly class changeovers.

The footprint of the building will not be increased under these proposals therefore surface water run-off will not be increased by the development. The replacement of the bituminous flat roof over the Wathen Hall with a green roof would reduce peak run-off providing a betterment. Further SUDS options have been tested but due to the site constraints are not considered viable.

Summary of Changes since Submission of Planning Application

1. Overall reduction of GIA by 213m² whilst maintaining the required 25 classrooms.
2. Better use of tall spaces in the existing building to allow reduction of height above the hall by over 1.1 metres.
3. Reduction of volume near to the southern boundary, set back by nearly 4 metres in two directions.
4. Reduction of volume near to the eastern boundary, set back by 2.1 metres
5. More cycling provision on site.
6. Enhanced green roof and wall for visual amenity of neighbours with curved form to soften massing.
7. Enhanced BIA and basement construction method.

The refined scheme to go before committee offers equivalent improvements in accommodation required by the school whilst addressing comments raised during the consultation exercise.