

3.0 BRIEF ANALYSIS

3.1 WHA-E SCHOOL SPECIFIC BRIEF

This section sets out the overarching aims, aspirations and requirements for the Winterstoke Hundred Academy Expansion at Locking Parklands. The information has been taken from briefing documents provided by NSC and the Cabot Learning Federation. In addition detailed considerations of the accommodation and operational aspects of the proposal have been developed in discussion with Ian Garforth Principal of WHA.

Functionality, practicality and adaptability are the key criteria for the new school with environmental sustainability integral to the design and operation of the building. The building must facilitate excellence to be achieved in teaching the current curriculum while being mindful of potential changes to teaching best practice and curriculum delivery in the future and the subsequent adaptability this may require.

The Vision for the School

Educational Performance

Research has shown that the quality of the building and wider environment in which humans learn will have a significant impact on the success of the teaching being provided. It is essential therefore that this new school is designed to maximise the learning potential of its inhabitants. The formal curriculum will require a range of appropriate, well equipped teaching spaces to be delivered well, and these are listed in the accommodation schedule. However, an equally important steer to the design can be the approach to more subtle curriculum issues.

The learning that takes place outside the formal timetable – in outdoor spaces, the corridor or during lunch – has been described as the 'informal curriculum'. The way such spaces are designed and managed can have a significant impact on opportunities for informal learning. For instance, seating areas and quiet corners encourage social interaction, and easy supervision can reduce bullying.

The message you get as you enter the school is another crucial influence on learning. The presence or absence of enthusiasm for and opportunities for learning can be sub-consciously 'read' in the frontage, the foyer or the corridors of a school, as well as in its classrooms. The school should be able to present an individual atmosphere, avoiding an institutional character, through welcoming entrances and interesting display whilst adhering to safeguarding needs and appropriate building and site security.

Inspirational Environment

It is important that the young people using the school feel comfortable in the space and able to express themselves. They will respect spaces designed with their needs in mind. They require

well thought out spaces which are light, airy and comfortable, and which welcome them to the school and create a sense of belonging.

Staff Satisfaction and the School Workforce

As well as a learning institution, the school is also a workplace and must provide a high standard of working accommodation for teaching and non-teaching staff. A good quality working environment encourages positive self-esteem which in turn encourages better performance and promotes a natural sense of achievement at work. It is essential that staff feel that their efforts are valued and rewarded, and an excellent working environment supports the school's recruitment and retention strategy.

The emphasis should also be on creating capacity for teachers to focus on teaching, and activities that directly support teaching. It is also about enabling headteachers to lead, as well as manage. Accommodation must therefore provide teaching spaces that can be adapted to different models of curriculum delivery, and space that enables teachers to get the most out of the time they have for preparation planning and assessment. This will support flexible ways of working and effective teaching and learning more generally.

Pupil Satisfaction

Pupils' satisfaction of with their environment can affect behaviour and self-esteem, and ultimately the willingness and ability to learn. All pupils, including those with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities, should feel that their needs are respected – not only in teaching areas, but in toilets, circulation and the school grounds.

Pupils will range from those with physical disabilities to the able bodied; from those who are fascinated by new technology to those who excel at sport or the arts; from those with learning difficulties to those who are gifted achievers.

The design and disposition of spaces can be used to enhance and extend the pastoral support structure in order to create a sense of belonging, especially among younger pupils. It is therefore important to develop ways for pupils to get to know the building and each other gradually. Pupils can be grouped in various ways at different times, offering them the opportunity to discover new friends, interests and places within the school.

Community Involvement

The school will front the main arterial road into Weston-Super-Mare from the east and sit on one side of a busy T-junction. It will therefore be a visible part of the local, and wider community, and must be readily identifiable as a school while also being welcoming.

It is a building which will make a significant contribution to the community and must be appropriate for its surroundings. The architecture of the school may usefully express the value of education in the community and give a positive image of the school. The school should be designed to make the visitor feel good and want to find out what happens inside the building. Attractive landscaping around the buildings can create an inviting entrance frontage, with a welcoming reception area that is immediately identifiable and feels safe and secure when visitors, pupils and staff arrive.

Beyond the families of pupils who will interact with the building during the normal academic year for occasions such as parent's evenings and school events, it should be anticipated that some facilities such as meeting and performance spaces will be used outside of the academic timetable by local clubs, groups and societies. In addition, it is hoped that structures can be put in place so that the sport facilities can be hired for use by the wider community outside the school day.

Key Design aspects

The following aspects should inform the next stage of design.

Flexibility and Adaptability

Like any school buildings, the design will need to be flexible enough to allow for short-term changes, for instance different layouts in a room to suit various teaching styles, and adaptable enough to suit longer term changes due to both evolutionary and revolutionary change: from developments in ICT to innovations in curriculum delivery. It will also need to be responsive to changes in the way we use buildings due to pandemics such as Covid-19.

The activities that happen in schools are likely to change substantially over the longer term. Only the dedicated specialist spaces – kitchens, halls, plant rooms and primary circulation areas, including staircases – are unlikely to move. However, they should be positioned carefully to allow for future change around them. Every other space, from offices to serviced practical areas, is likely to be reorganised to some extent over time.

Practically, it is important that classrooms are cuboids and are a standard size. This is so that different classes can use different classroom spaces, as opposed to certain lessons having designated classroom spaces with different sizes that are unsuitable for other subjects. This also ensures that space is well utilised, with standard sized classrooms preventing the creation of awkward spaces that are difficult to incorporate into the school layout.