

Schools newsletter

May 2011

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Leigh Academy, London

Introduction

Welcome to our latest schools newsletter. There have been a number of significant developments since our December 2010 edition, including:

The James review

It was finally released in April, and ran over six months late (if that wasn't call for a detention, I don't know what is!). Industry insiders suggested that it is because, the 'standard flat-pack retail solution' wasn't as simple for retail as first thought; transferring it to schools was even more complex; and as most schools will involve an element of refurbishment, doing so makes it yet more difficult.

The report highlighted other key issues, including, basing capital investment on objective facts and clear, consistently applied criteria; demand led programmes such as free schools will be centrally funded; budget ring-fencing will be abolished; local investment plans will be developed;

devolved formula capital may be retained in sponsor organisations; asset management plans will be centrally held; building bulletins will be revised; some new frameworks will be procured; a central delivery body will be established; a maintenance contract will be established; and the current insurance regime re-evaluated.

We produced a 'Thought Leadership' article on the *James Review* that was widely distributed. If you did not receive a copy of it at the time, either [click here](#) or contact Tina Brown (on +44 (0)20 7061 7000 or via email, tina.brown@davislangdon.com) for your copy.

Capital funding

£800 million was released by the Department for Education (DfE), but as of yet, besides a few free schools, little of this capital funding has reached the market. A total of 71 academies have been earmarked for this funding, with Brighton and Birmingham understood to be the front-runners.

BSF challenge

There has been much made of the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) challenge by the tabloid press. In reality, whilst the judgement technically went against the government, all that Michael Gove has to do is to justify why cutting schemes after Outline Business Case (OBC) but before Final Business Case (FBC) made sense. Given that it has only taken six months to procure Campsmount in Doncaster through the streamlined academies framework route, compared to an average of two years for a BSF scheme, or 9–12 months for an established Local Education Partnership (LEP) scheme, this shouldn't be that difficult.

In summary, the future for schools funding is improving, and over the next couple of months, we have the government's response to the James Review and the release of that capital funding to look forward to.

Project focus

In August 2008, the Department for Children, Schools and Families set up a project to gain a better understanding of the relationship between the school environment and the fundamental shifts in education that were rapidly establishing themselves as a priority.

The aim was for the project, Space for Personalised Learning (S4PL), to identify the spatial features that supported schools in their ability to deliver the new ways of learning and make widely available detailed information on the design interventions — and the ways of arriving at them — that had been shown to achieve the desired change. AECOM's DEGW and Davis Langdon companies assembled a multi-disciplinary management team of experts in design strategy, education, architecture, research and technology who worked closely with 10 pilot schools selected as research subjects.

Paul Wheeler, director at DEGW explains, "in the current economic climate, schools are increasingly looking at how they can make greater use of existing space. The S4PL process is a design briefing process that puts the learner at the heart of the educational service and translates school aspiration into design outcomes through a robust co-design process between the school and a project team."

The data amassed during the project, which includes raw materials, draft interpretations and reports of successful interventions can be found at www.space4pl.org and will remain accessible as an exhaustive account of the project and a rich resource for schools, educationalists and policy makers.

A 'Project Summary' document has been published by the team which provides both a full account of the project — research strategy, execution, conclusions and emergent design interventions and a template for action

based on the totality of the project's findings and can be downloaded via the related document link to the right and can also be viewed here as a page turner. It is intended to provide detailed and practical guidance to everyone engaged in the pressing activity of creating schools and spaces within schools, capable of responding to one of the great cultural shifts of our time — from teacher-led to learner-led education.

Paul Zuccherelli, director at Davis Langdon comments, "this was, without a doubt, one of the largest projects ever commissioned in the field of school design; it was ambitious and complex. I am immensely proud of the project and all the participants. I certainly hope that we can get the benefits of the project spread more widely, as I believe it is a great model and project from which to derive the best for our education spend going forward."

Sector round-up

Sector highlights of the last few months include:

BSEC conference and dinner at Excel

This year's BSEC dinner took place on Wednesday 23 February at The Brewery, in the heart of London where Davis Langdon's Darren Talbot, John McEvoy and Paul Zuccherelli were joined by AECOM colleagues Oz Ablett, Phil Cusack and five guests.

Coinciding with the annual conference, which is the UK's main event catering for everyone involved in education building projects, the BSEC dinner provided the perfect opportunity to network with our industry colleagues and peers.

The dinner presented us the opportunity to entertain our guests from Balfour Beatty, BDP, BCSE, Ellis Williams Architects and European Electronique in an unrivalled setting. Although this was a quieter event than previous years, there were still plenty of



West Hill Primary School, London — S4PL project

people to hypothesise about the shape of the schools market going forward. Unfortunately, in the absence of any confirmed information, hypothesising was where the discussion remained.

Campsmount school

Wates achieved financial close on Campsmount school, delivered on target in all respects, and, as the pilot for the streamlined Academies framework procurement process, it was a significant achievement. The procurement took 22 weeks, saving £4 million and 26 weeks from comparable schemes.

Free Schools

The focus of Free Schools has shifted from parent groups to educational companies and sponsors. The DfE has stated that this is to ensure the quality of future schemes, although there is scepticism in many quarters, with some believing that this may be the beginning of a relaxation of the rules surrounding profit-making companies running schools, in the same way as they are run in Sweden.

Davis Langdon projects shortlisted at the 'Best of British Schools' Awards

Now in its fourth year the 'Best of British Schools' awards celebrate all that is good about our schools and those that create them.

Despite the schools sector having suffered with a significant downturn in capital investment since the coalition government came to power, Davis Langdon's schools sub-sector remains busy and has four of their projects shortlisted in the prestigious British Council for School Environments Annual Awards.

These projects are: **Milton Keynes Academy**, Buckinghamshire and **Chelsea Academy**, London (Excellence in Design for Teaching & Learning: Academy); **Cowbridge Comprehensive School**, Glamorgan (Excellence in Design for Teaching & Learning: Refurbishment, Large Scale Projects); and **Uppingham School**, Rutland (Sports Award - Excellence in the provision of Sports Facilities).

Darren Talbot, Head of Project Management for Schools said: "It is encouraging that during a period where we have seen school's capital funding cut drastically, we are still winning work and delivering projects of this quality. We congratulate the teams from around the business who have worked hard to deliver these schools and we look forward to the imminent release of £800 million in capital that will allow more schools to be transformed into beacons of hope for the younger generation."

The results will be announced at the awards dinner held in mid June.

Hints and tips

Refurbishment and maximising the efficiency of existing and new spaces

The final report for the Space for Personalised Learning project has been released and is available at www.space4pl.org. This project took 30 months of intense research, £3.7 million of project funding and culminated in the completion of 10 pilot school projects. If you want to know more, please contact Stuart Francis (on +44 (0)7595 085885, or via email stuart.francis@davislangdon.com).

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Again, on the theme of existing spaces, the booklet that Davis Langdon, Scott Brownrigg and the BCSE developed is still essential reading for anyone looking to refresh, refurbish or reuse buildings, regardless of their current use. [Click here](#) to view the booklet.

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