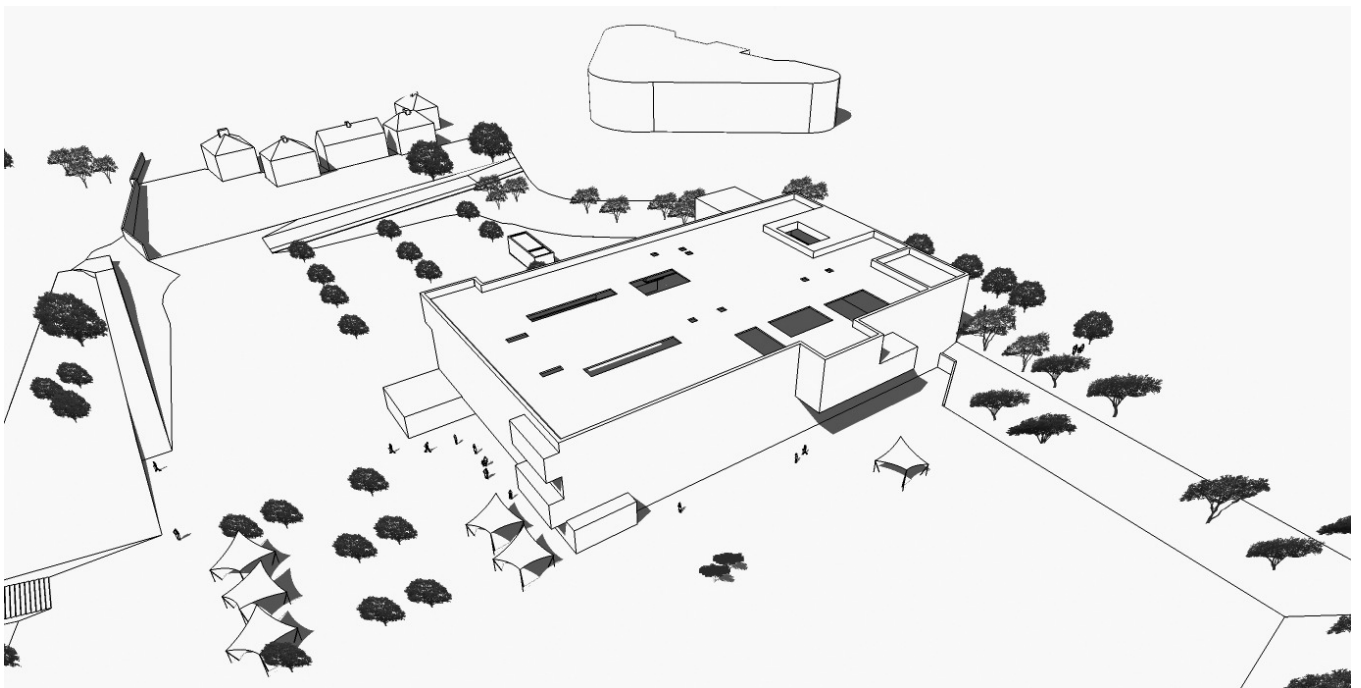

Wolverhampton BSF South Wolverhampton & Bilston Academy Statement of Community Involvement

September 2010

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Rev. P00



■ Statement of Community Involvement

This Statement of Community Involvement is a record of the consultations which have been conducted through the design process for the South Wolverhampton & Bilston Academy. It covers the consultations with the school's senior management team, with technical and educational advisors from Wolverhampton City Council, student engagements, sessions with teachers, and with Wolverhampton's Planning Department. Each of these engagements have been valuable in helping to develop a robust high quality design that will respond to the needs of the local community, and which will help deliver the education transformation aspirations of Wolverhampton City Council.

The community involvement for the school can be divided into the following headings:

- Liaison groups
- Media coverage
- Pre application discussion with statutory and non statutory consultees (Development Control, Major Applications etc.)

South Wolverhampton & Bilston Academy

Throughout the design development a robust user consultation process has been used to ensure that all design proposals are reviewed, tested and refined, so that the developed design as far as possible addresses the practical and educational issues, as well as providing a strong architectural design. The consultation process will continue throughout the project: a series of engagements have already been programmed for the next academic session.

Local Community

Community consultation events in the form of a public viewing were held at the Academy Wolverhampton Road East campus on 21st September 2010, and at the Prosser St School on 23rd September 2010. Both events were facilitated by Wolverhampton City Council.

Wolverhampton City Council

Wolverhampton City Council have been consulted throughout the projects development, issuing a letter of comfort and advice on 24th November 2008. Pre-application planning meetings have continued to take place with various relevant members of Wolverhampton City Council. These discussions have allowed members of the planning team to gain an understanding of the proposed development and provide feedback for the Design Team to review and implement as necessary.

In addition, there is a programmed monthly strategic planning meeting with the Local Education Partnership to review all the BSF Wolverhampton projects and focus on specific issues.

Council member briefings

A series of council member briefings have taken place with particular focus on the Options Appraisal work for Prosser St School.

Local Neighbourhood Partnership

Bilston Leisure Centre

A meeting with the Leisure Centre team took place to discuss boundaries, car parking, services and possible shared opportunities. A dialogue has continued following this meeting.

Secure by Design -

An on-site walkround has been carried out with Capita Symonds Security and Wolverhampton Police Architectural Liaison Officer to review the current and proposed site boundary treatment, entrances, building façade and layout, CCTV and alarm systems. This has resulted in the Security Strategy outlined in the Design and Access Statement.

Sport England -

The scheme has been presented to Sport England and their remarks incorporated into the current proposal to ensure that adequate and appropriate sports facilities are to be provided. Revised drawings and relevant information have been issued to keep Sport England up-to-date with the design process.

MADE -

The regional architecture and built environment centre reviewed the design for the Academy on 16th August 2010, and return a positive endorsement of the design to date.

The MADE report is attached.

■ Statement of Community Involvement



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27th August 2010

Dear Richard

South Wolverhampton & Bilston Academy

Thank you for presenting the Stage I proposals for this Academy to the West Midlands Regional Design Review Panel at its meeting in Wolverhampton on 16 August 2010. The Panel had the opportunity to visit the site before the meeting and therefore appreciated the complexity of the topography and the challenge this presents.

Since the new Academy is expected to raise educational achievement and aspiration in an area with currently low expectations, it is important that the building has a strong public presence and is inviting to both students and the community. Whilst the location is currently obscured, this will change with the development of the Bilston Urban Village and Bilston Leisure Centre. The decision to adopt a compact, four storey design will ensure that the Academy is not dwarfed by the mass of the Leisure Centre. However, the Panel was concerned about the future approach and foreground to the building.

Many of the students will walk or cycle to the Academy along the pedestrian spine boulevard linking Bilston Urban Village and its new housing to the town centre. The Academy will be separated from this pedestrian spine route by an access road and car parking for the Leisure Centre, and a roundabout immediately in front of its entrance. The Panel felt strongly that this would be an unsatisfactory and inappropriate approach. There should be a generous and traffic-free pedestrian connection between the boulevard and the Academy, culminating in an attractive square in front of the entrance. This is essential to the provision of a safe and adequate access for the hundreds of students arriving on foot and bicycle to this sole entrance to the Academy.

The Panel suggests that urgent discussions take place with the relevant Council departments to reconfigure the design of this area to ensure a good route from the Academy entrance to the boulevard and thereby to the main entrance to the Leisure Centre. The Panel did not consider that a footpath across the car park to the rear entrance of the Leisure Centre would be good enough given the shared use of sports facilities between the two buildings.

■ Statement of Community Involvement

It was acknowledge during the meeting that the Academy and Leisure Centre have staggered parking requirements across the average day and that a shared car park would make for a more efficient use of land, construction and management costs. The Panel was given to understand that the Council has rejected this possibility; it thinks this is a decision that should be reconsidered.

The Panel was impressed by the quality of the locally listed old school buildings and was pleased to know that an options appraisal is underway to identify a future for them. It suggests that this exercise should go beyond a search for alternative Council uses. The buildings may well lend themselves to a residential use such as sheltered housing. The Victorian parts of the school are particularly attractive with their gables and large windows and form an attractive courtyard with the Edwardian addition. They are well-built with durable materials, and in the Panel's view it would be irresponsible to demolish them simply to create car parking space.

Turning to the new building, the Panel considered that the design was successful in meeting a complex brief. The three metre change in site levels has been used to provide entry into the heart of the building, and the compact planning has reduced the space given over to circulation. The Panel was particularly impressed by the avoidance of corridors and the creation of routes that regularly engage with open rooms or double height volumes, making for an interesting interior. It also welcomed the location of the two main staircases within open volumes, and recognised the advantage of this in discouraging bullying.

The Panel suggested that there should be more than one lift for such a large four storey building to avoid problems during a mechanical failure. It also drew attention to some potential circulation problems at garden level around the main hall and the science and technology areas, which may require some adjustment to the planning.

The Panel also raised the question of long-term flexibility and adaptability of a building whose layout has been designed around a specific educational approach requiring four separate skill zones and four distinctive faculties. It is essential to ensure that there are sufficient general purpose classrooms to meet changing patterns in teaching and learning. The Panel also recommended that the foundation design and structure should be built to accommodate an extra storey in case there is the need to expand the building in the future.

In summary, the Panel commended the organisation of the building and its positioning on the site. However, it urged the LEP to work with the Council to secure a better approach to the building from the pedestrian boulevard, and to secure an element of shared car parking between the Academy and Leisure Centre.

I hope that the design review was helpful to you and to the Council (to whom this letter is copied). If you have any questions or comments arising from the review please get in touch with me.

Yours sincerely,



David Tittle
Head of Design Excellence

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