



Currie & Brown is operating at the heart of the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme, advising education authorities and investors every step of the way. This newsletter is the first in a series providing news and comment on projects and events within BSF, Academies, and the Primary Capital Programme.

Contractors on Academy framework initial list

The initial list of contractors for BSF's future National Framework Panel has been issued by Partnerships for Schools (PFS).

Two notable exclusions from the list are Laing O'Rourke and Skanska, both of whom have bid on BSF projects where Currie & Brown have provided technical advice.

It is clear that the quality of design will be a key element of the bidding contractors' offerings, as well as correct interpretations of the Academies' vision and project brief.

John Stimpson, a Currie & Brown Technical Adviser with Academy project experience, says that the strength and experience of the team that supports the named contractors is critical to their success.

"It's important to have confidence in the whole design team, including the architect and building services engineers, that underpins the contractor. They will determine what the buildings are to contain, what they will look like, and how they will perform," added John. "It's not simply about which builder will be selected; it's a much bigger issue that is sometimes missed by clients. The contractors' supply chains, which include their designers, are not revealed until the bid stage."

The PFS National Framework Panel is expected to be finalised by the end of 2009, with 12 companies in the North and 12 in the South selected to build future academies. Successful panel members could be invited to bid for non-academy projects.

Converting the vision into a project brief

Tamasin Dale, Currie & Brown's Education Design Manager, works with schools to develop their vision as well as accommodation needs for future teaching and learning, once Currie & Brown become involved as advisers.

This is converted into an Education and Design Brief that is used to inform bidders on sample schools, or designers for new projects. Explaining her role, Tamasin said: "We have developed a robust consultation process that delivers results over approximately eight weeks. We visit the school every two weeks to discuss specific elements and agree a way forward. The school knows in advance what each session will be about, and what decisions will be required to make sure we remain on schedule."

"Each session is recorded, with notes issued to every stakeholder. We work closely with project managers and the procurement team, so that all parties know what progress is being made."

Tamasin added: "By the end of the 'vision to reality' process we will have delivered to the team the brief that meets best the future needs of the school."

Early progress at Newham

Currie & Brown is working on a BSF project in Newham, London. The team are amidst the approvals process for new projects, and approaching the date for the 'Stage 2' submission on one of its 'Wave 1' non-sample school projects.

Whilst adhering to the process there is scope to create a toolkit of documents that can be used on future new projects. "We've got at least eight more schools to go through the process," reports Alec Davis, Currie & Brown's Technical Adviser. "We are aiming to make the process quicker and more cost effective for the client by standardising the approach."

Working closely with the appointed Local Education Partnership (LEP), the Stage 1 submission included a "dummy run" and presentation to the School, prior to an assessment of the proposed £12m scheme submission by the technical team. The aggregate value of new projects with this client is approximately £60m.

Option Appraisal "Internal Partition Systems vs Masonry Walls"

As technical advisers we are often asked by clients about materials and specifications. One client recently enquired about the durability of internal partitioning systems compared with masonry walls.

Modern internal wall systems are supported by steel framing for rigidity, with boards suitable for every location in a school including moisture resistant and laminated boards with a wide range of options and finishes.

The use of traditional blocks or brick internal partitions combine load bearing capacity with higher levels of sound proofing, but wet trades (plastering) can extend programme times. Therefore internal partitioning systems are often preferred, the deciding factors being:

- flexibility to suit future changes
- the speed of installation
- quicker overall preparation and clean up of site after the work

Currie & Brown's specialist supply chain

Our in-house technical advisers are supported on projects by a range of reputable top flight designers, engineers and other consultants. We also manage a panel of specialist surveying companies. With a growing workload, we are introducing additional panels from which we can select firms and people who will work with us on BSF, Academy and PCP projects, working from our network of offices throughout England.

Building on Success in Halton

Currie & Brown's commission to provide technical advisory services to Halton Borough Council's BSF Programme is proceeding on schedule. Clive Setford, Technical Adviser in our Manchester office reports: "Our contribution to the outline business case (OBC) was delivered to the client on time, even though there were late changes to pupil numbers at some schools, requiring a wholesale re-design of the control options.

"We have built on the quality of the work undertaken to produce a Strategy for Change 2 document which was approved by PfS without any need for alterations to the technical data.

"This is now being used as an example to other authorities as they produce similar quality business cases. The OBC is currently at the 'Peer Review' stage at PfS and we are looking forward to working with the council's BSF team to procure a partner who will take this exciting scheme forward and transform education service provision in Runcorn and Widnes."

Recent Wins

Currie & Brown is delighted to announce new contract wins including:

- The development of outline business cases (OBCs) for four new Academies in SE England. The commission is based upon our existing framework arrangements with the Authority.
- Providing post contract Employer's Agent services to the Open Academy in Norwich.

"A key factor on this success was the strength of our relationship with the client stemming from previous project work in the area," said Alec Davis.



Mexborough School Atrium, 2009

Newsletter Contact

Keep up to date with news and comment on Building Schools for the Future with Currie & Brown. Check our website regularly to find out what's happening in this key area of education investment.

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