

Bishop Challoner: The Learning Village

In 2002 Kent Architecture Centre (KAC) were commissioned by consultants DTZ, to work with stakeholders to generate a visionary strategic, spatial Masterplan that would help guide the expansion of a successful East London Catholic girls' secondary school within an extremely constrained site, to accommodate boys from a nearby school which was closing, and develop the enlarged school as an innovative learning resource for the wider community. KAC also advised on the selection of the design team to see this complex project through to realisation, and facilitated a 'Design Day' workshop in July 2003, bringing together the newly appointed design team, led by Perkins Ogden Architects, and the wider school community and decision-makers, to kick start the collaborative design process.



The concept of the 'Learning Village', coined by KAC to describe the provision of educational, cultural and recreational resources for the local community, turns the problem of accommodating expanded school facilities within a restricted site into an opportunity to invest in the regeneration of the area, using education, in its broadest sense, as a catalyst for improvement.

KAC were engaged for their skills in strategic spatial analysis and creative thinking to develop a clear brief, combined with their inclusive approach to operating within a complex, multi-stakeholder environment, engaging effectively with the school's visionary leadership team, the wider school community, the faith communities, Tower Hamlets councillors and officers, and local people, facilitating the sharing of aspirations, concerns and ideas at the critical early stage of the project.

Paul Pearson from Perkins Ogden Architects said "Kent Architecture Centre's early work on the conceptual masterplan, which suggested the idea of spanning Lukin Street to unify the divided site, provided the springboard from which the innovative solution to this complex project emerged"

The high quality school buildings and spaces, designed by Perkins Ogden Architects, which now occupy the site, and the outstanding results that the school has achieved, are the best testimonials a project could have.



Links: http://www.bishop-learningvillage.towerhamlets.sch.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&catid=33%3A-the-learning-village-story&id=67%3Anew-facilities&Itemid=144

<http://www.perkinsogden.com/pdf/5216-1.pdf>