



16 May 2018

Scott Hay
Planner, Social and Other
Infrastructure Assessments
Department of Planning
and Environment
320 Pitt St
SYDNEY NSW 2000

ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS TO GREYSTANES PUBLIC SCHOOL
781 Merrylands Road, Greystanes
EIS REVIEW - SSD 8778

Dear Scott,

Please find following our review of the SSD 8778 proposal for alterations and additions to Greystanes Public School.

This letter should be read in conjunction with our letter of pre- lodgment consultation advice which was issued to the project team 11 December 2018 and is attached.

We acknowledge that some amendments have been made to the proposal following our previous advice however some concerns articulated in this advice remain. Items that are supported include:

- removal of demountable classrooms and their replacement with permanent buildings,
- retaining of existing play areas including courts,
- siting of new administration building and integration with COLA to include passive surveillance of main entry
- Material palette including revised colour palette
- The separation of the learning building to minimise the bulk and scale (siting of this building remains not optimal)

Continued concerns include the physical presentation of the school to the public realm, its bulk and functionality in terms of wayfinding and accessibility, the consideration of massing and form, selection of materials, integration with topography, detailed landscape approach and design and location of fencing and gates.

In addition, we do not support the proposed noncompliance with the height control and do not feel this is warranted by the design outcome proposed.

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Based on the drawings submitted, our recommendations are as follows:

- Consider reorienting the classroom building to create a stronger street presence and clear public address
- Reconsider the scale and proportion of both buildings including the entry portal to address the surrounding context and provide a welcoming main entry to the school
- Provide additional information on the landscape intent for the whole site and how this is integrated with existing and proposed built forms
- Replace all trees proposed for removal to ensure existing tree canopy is maintained across the site.
- Improved integration of security fencing with landscape and architectural strategy to generally improve the streetscape and public address of the school. Specifically, we recommend integrating planted elements alongside of perimeter fencing to soften this element and provide a more welcoming street address. Other improvements to integrate and soften security measures including using the building line as secure site boundary are also encouraged.
- Confirm if new crossing is to be provided to Bradman Street as per recommendations of traffic consultant. Provide detail of how this integrated with school entry and fencing.

Generally, there is little evidence provided in the drawings and diagrams provided to support the claims made in the design report.

As per our previous letter, we recommend that the following additional information is requested;

- Plans and sections of the proposal showing furniture layouts and program at min 1:200 scale;
- An integrated landscape plan that corresponds to the current architectural proposal and includes detail of all new tree planting
- Detailed plans and summary that describes the after hours and community use strategy;
- Detailed sections at 1:20 that demonstrate typical cladding, window and door details and general construction quality and materials;



- Masterplan for the whole school site including opportunities for future expansion and additional facilities
- A physical materials sample board where materials are shown in the proportion they are intended to be used in the project;
- Site and context plans that demonstrate active transport strategies and linkages with existing, proposed and potential footpaths and bicycle paths;
- Demonstrated engagement with Aboriginal cultural heritage context reflected in design approach and documentation of consultation with local Aboriginal community groups;

In future, we recommend projects are presented to the SDRP early in the design process. The SDRP is a consistent, independent panel for design review of SSD projects. This should be coordinated with GA NSW and DoE to ensure good design outcomes.

Sincerely,

Olivia Hyde
Director Design Excellence
Government Architect NSW



COMMENTS IN RESPONSE TO STATE SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION SSD 8778 GREYSTANES PUBLIC SCHOOL, GREYSTANES

BACKGROUND

On 03 April 2018, the Department of Planning & Environment requested the Government Architect NSW (GANSW) to provide independent design review advice on application SSD 8778 Greystanes Public School at 781 Merrylands Road, Greystanes.

The application is for alterations and additions to Greystanes Public School to allow increased capacity to 897 students. Proposed works include construction of 24 new permanent homebases, covered outdoor learning area (COLA), staff and administration facilities, minor refurbishment of a multipurpose space and the removal of existing temporary learning accommodation and existing administration accommodation.

In conducting the review, GANSW has considered the architectural drawings, landscape architectural drawings, the EIS and its appendices.

REVIEW

This review was undertaken with reference to the GA NSW Design Guide for Schools and Better Placed, An integrated design policy for the built environment of NSW.

In addition, this review has been conducted in light of previous advice issued 11 December 2017.

Items from the previous letter are indicated in *italics*.

The following aspects of the proposal are supported: removal of demountable classrooms and their replacement with permanent buildings, retaining of existing play areas including courts, siting of new administration building and COLA including passive surveillance of main entry. Whilst we acknowledge amendments to the form and massing, materiality and entry, concerns remain with these elements and the overall site planning, massing and presentation to the public realm.

1. Context, built form and landscape

The following was previously recommended for further consideration and remains of concern:

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- *The bulk, scale and location of proposed buildings should relate appropriately and contribute positively to surrounding context, particularly how the proposed form contributes to the perceived bulk and scale of the building from the street and surrounds (note overall, building forms appear overbearing in their context).*
- *Site organisation as well as the design of the entry should provide a clear, generous and inviting sense of address to the school as well as optimising orientation.*
- *The siting of the buildings should allow for ease of connection and wayfinding to and through the site (especially at ground level – note that there is currently a lack of direct connection between ground level classrooms at different RLs).*
- *Outdoor areas or 'balcony' spaces should be large enough to accommodate active play (or otherwise demonstrate likely uses – more information is required to show how these upper level balcony spaces will operate).*
- *landscape strategy should integrate pathways, ramps, fences, handrails and stairs seamlessly and should demonstrably respond to likely movement patterns across the site, particularly in relation to the changes in levels across the site.*
- *the location of the south east wing of building reduces the overall amenity of the site by removing current view and opportunities for passive surveillance to the open green space to the north. It is highly recommended this is reconsidered.*

Generally building forms appear poorly scaled and imposing on the street. The site organization as well as the design of the entry and street facing facades should provide a clear, generous and inviting sense of address to the school and indicator of the importance of a school as a focal point for the community.

Whilst the integration of the COLA with main entry is supported, the new entry portal feels oversized with a large wall separating street from school entry. New buildings should read as clearly institutional whilst responding to the scale of neighborhood development.

Whilst the retention of significant tree canopy to boundaries is commended, further consideration should be made to softening the impact of the hard line of fencing along Merrylands Road through the integration of soft landscaping along this boundary and consideration of additional tree canopy within this zone.

Landscape plans generally should be updated to include and respond to the current architectural proposal.

2. Sustainable, efficient and durable

The following was previously recommended for further consideration and remains of concern:

- *The approach to façade treatment should reflect a considered approach to window shading as well as optimising natural ventilation (especially central areas of the zone B buildings);*
- *The planning and floorplate organisation of buildings should optimise classroom orientation, natural ventilation and daylight penetration through the buildings, particularly areas such as the central spine of the new classroom buildings;*
- *Strategies to minimise heat gain through summer and allow for night purging should be considered (both in relation to architectural and landscape approaches);*

The designers have adopted a passive environmental design strategy. No active heating, cooling or mechanical ventilation systems for inhabitable rooms have been proposed other than for IT infrastructure.

The passive design objectives identified in the submission are supported, however evidence has not been provided to demonstrate that the proposed design achieves the indoor environmental conditions for year-round thermal comfort.

Whilst we support the intent for North / South orientation to the new learning building, the majority of learning spaces are oriented South or East / West with limited natural light and ventilation provided to central communal and circulation areas between classrooms. In addition, many of the learning spaces have openings on only one side, limiting opportunities to encourage natural ventilation through the space. The reliance on sliding doors and cross building ventilation through multiple teaching spaces is considered improbable.

In addition, whilst there have been some improvements made to façade treatments, further consideration should be given to window shading and solar control in response to orientation.

Further details of the green Travel plan including provisions for bike parking and end of trip facilities should be provided.

3. Accessible and inclusive

The following was previously recommended for further consideration and remains of concern:

- *Clearly legible accessible connections across the school should be seamlessly integrated to support an inclusive experience (more information is required to demonstrate this, including connections to play areas);*

The proposal includes one lift which is centrally located and associated with one of the main staircases providing an equitable access path within the new learning building.

Whilst improvements to the new main entry, administration and COLA are acknowledged, further detail indicating accessible paths of travel across the school site should be provided. This should include opportunities for future upgrade of existing facilities to ensure universal access to existing learning spaces and new and proposed playground areas. This should be formalised into a masterplan for the site to guide future development.

The reliance on intrusive security fencing to street edge is considered a hindrance to inclusivity and a positive school address. Opportunities to soften this element should be considered.

It is not clear if there is any provision for out-of-hours community use. Further detail should be provided on management strategies for out of hours access and shared facilities including indication of accessible areas with the school campus.

Opportunity could be made for integrated public art strategies at key entry spaces and breakout areas. It is unclear if any public art strategy is in place.

4. Amenity

The following was previously recommended for further consideration and remains of concern:

- *Clear and accessible wayfinding should support an inclusive and positive student experience and relationship to the surrounding neighbourhood (see above notes re ground level building connections and accessibility)*
- *A diversity of sheltered and open play spaces should be provided and integrated to the landscape plan as well as site-wide wayfinding and connectivity*
- *Greater use of the topography of the site and integration of the built form and landscape design to facilitate improved connections between learning spaces and outdoor areas (whilst minimizing stairs), and the creation of covered outdoor play and learning spaces*



Whilst a variety of informal learning spaces have been provided surrounding the new building, the distinction between circulation and activity spaces should be further refined.

The landscape plan has not been updated in accordance with the latest architectural plans. A revised and integrated landscape plan should be provided that clearly articulates a detailed landscape proposal for these spaces. Wayfinding and connectivity across the site should also be considered and integrated in the landscape approach.

The proposed movable partitions – dividing classrooms from corridors – present potential acoustic and/or visual and ventilation issues and should be reconsidered or further developed.

The location of the administration building ensures passive surveillance of the main entry and COLA. The proposal would benefit from softening the boundary fencing to provide increased community amenity adjacent to the public footpath on Merrylands Road.

5. Health and Safety

The health and safety of the student and staff population has been generally well considered in the proposal. Further consideration could be given to inclusion of a new pedestrian crossing at Bradman Street for pedestrian access and drop off / pick up as per the recommendations of the traffic consultant.

The refurbished multipurpose space is well located to enable for its potential co-use by the community – as noted elsewhere, it is unclear whether there is a plan for community use of school facilities after hours.

Some parking spaces are proposed to be removed under the proposal to allow for improved separation of pedestrians and vehicles on the site which is commended. Car park spaces will be under the recommended number for staff levels with additional staff parking available off site. Safe access to off-site parking should be considered.

Schools should support safe walking and cycling to and from school through connections to local bicycle and foot paths and the provision of bicycle parking. This should be included in the Green Travel Plan with notes included on the architectural drawings.

6. Whole of Life, flexible, adaptable

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- *Indication of likely future adaptability and flexibility (further information is required, such as an overarching master plan approach)*

Whilst we support the intent for future flexibility of classroom spaces to respond to changing pedagogies, there is little evidence in the drawings to support the claims of the design report. Indicative alternative layout plans are required to explain how learning spaces can accommodate future collaborative learning or future pedagogical approaches.

Clarification is required as to how the internal spatial planning relates to or is consistent with current or future intended pedagogical models for the school – including response to consultation with educators or principal. Internal typical elevations to show the operability of partitioning would also be beneficial to understand noise issues and a whole-of-life-cycle approach.

7. Aesthetics

The following was previously recommended for further consideration and remains of concern:

- *Architectural and landscape approaches should be consistent and reflect a consideration of the school's presence within, and positive contribution to, the community (current approach does not suggest this)*
- *Colour graphics and signage should be integrated to the design of both buildings to give consistency and add to the legibility of the buildings and enhance wayfinding across the site. The signage in its current form does create a positive impression from the street and should be reconsidered holistically to align with overall concept for the school*
- *Graphics and signage should be integrated to the overall design approach rather than applied*

A range of architectural devices have been used across the facades of both the academic and administration buildings, including “pop-out” windows with green and blue trims, aluminum fins and areas of brick and fibre cement cladding. There are several variations in the composition of these materials on different elevations including the use of misaligned datums.

Whilst there has been some improvements to the elevations and general appearance proposed, concerns remain regarding the cohesion and appropriateness of the building presentation. Overall the aesthetic composition of the proposal would benefit from a simpler, clearer design approach that also



acknowledges existing buildings, the landscape, signage, fencing and gates as a part of the overall composition.

The materials have been chosen for durability which is important given that the enduring attractiveness of the school relies upon quality construction. Further detail should be provided on the proposed detailing of these materials including cladding and lining materials, window systems and sunshading to ensure a quality built outcome consistent with the claims made in the design report.

DESIGN EXCELLENCE PROCESS

GANSW are not aware of any design excellence process that has been undertaken for this project. It is noted that the architectural firm is not included on the NSW Government Architects Pre-Qualification List for Strategy and Design Excellence.

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