



**partnerships for schools**  
building schools for the future

This case study from an early BSF project focuses on the first three schools built through Leeds City Council's BSF Wave 1 programme, and CABE's contribution to the process.

It examines the value of independent design review and collaborative design workshops.

### Key project information

**Number of schools in LA:** 39

**Wave 1 BSF programme began:** 2005

**Number of schools in first phase:** 14

**New build schools:** Allerton High, Pudsey Grangefield, Rodillian (all open Sept 2008)  
Cockburn School (to open 2009-10)

**Refurbishment:** Temple Moor High School/SILC (open Sept 2008), Allerton Grange School (to open 2009-10)

## The value of independent design advice: enabling design quality in Leeds BSF

### Project description

Leeds City Council is an experienced development client. It has built up a public private partnership team of over 30 staff with considerable PFI expertise. The council is a strong advocate of good design and retains its civic architect, who is able to advise the council across its capital programme. Education Leeds is a not-for-profit company owned by the council, formed in 2001 to deliver education support services in the city. It was already an experienced education client, having delivered seven secondary and 20 primary schools.

### Role of the CABE enabler

The CABE enabler supported the client to achieve the best designs for its BSF programme by:

- **contributing to regular design reviews throughout the bidding process.** These involved interactive sessions of people representing bidders, the client, users, enabler and local architect.
- **providing an independent view of design quality during the design development phases.** These were an essential part of raising the aspirations of

those involved, encouraging a continuous creative process from all parties in the project.

- **sharing a knowledge of school design**, presenting exemplars of good design and introducing techniques for balancing and reviewing design/value options, including the use of CABE publications and design quality tools.
- **supporting the local authority's high design expectations** by challenging bidder schemes that did not appear to have the potential to transform the schools and the activities in them. Bidders and their design teams were encouraged to make their schemes simpler and of better value, to improve legibility, circulation and adjacencies and use consistent architectural forms and materials.

The main lesson from the process for the project architect of one of the completed schools was simplifying the schemes and increasing their legibility.

### Developing the vision

Leeds had a well-developed vision and set of objectives for its BSF programme. The aim was to create environments in which 'teachers can teach and pupils can learn'.

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School design aspirations were supported by 10 urban design principles that originated from Leeds' public private partnership unit. Adapted for the BSF programme, the principles were sent to all bidders as part of their information packs.

Enabling efforts focused on the bidding process in design and evaluation workshops. The client design advisor's urban design principles were used to stimulate interaction at workshops with bidding design teams. Criticism and encouragement were both applied to maximise design potential in line with the design brief.

The preliminary design schemes benefited from this process of continuous review. The enabler helped the BSF team to realise simpler, more architecturally legible solutions, and to improve core design elements such as site organisation and building 'footprint' location, circulation and room adjacencies, architectural presence and quality, and consistency of forms and materials.

Design quality indicators (DQIs) formed the basis of the evaluation matrix used in the initial review of the shortlisted bidders' design proposals at ITN (invitation to negotiate)\* Stage 1.

\*The BSF process has now changed, with the ITN stage replaced by invitation to participate in dialogue (ITPD) or invitation to continue dialogue (ITCD).

## Procurement

A pre-qualification questionnaire was issued for bidding consortia in 2005. A long list of six consortia was formed and the enabler commented on the design teams' submissions. Between December 2005 and March 2006, three ITN Stage 1 design workshops were held with three shortlisted consortia. In April 2006, the enabler took part in the evaluation (based on the design quality indicators) of the six school designs submitted by each of the three bidders (18 design proposals).

In July 2006, another design workshop was held with ITN Stage 2 consortia, now just two bidders, to review the 12 design proposals. In May 2007, the preferred bidder took part in a design workshop reviewing the six revised schools designs and three further designs for phase II of Wave 1.

Close attention was paid to design excellence in the bidding rounds of phase I because the successful contractor was expected to deliver the remainder of the local authority's BSF schools.

## Key design aspects of the schools

### **Pudsey Grangefield Maths and Computing College by Faulkner Brown**

- New-build PFI project for 1,145 students, costing £22 million
- Simple L-shaped design cleverly maximises the use of the tight, sloping site
- Takes full advantage of daylight and views
- Organisation of circulation routes encourages 'intelligent movement'
- Described by the school as a 'civilised place' and 'a pleasure to use and visit'.

### **Rodillian Specialist Performing Arts College and Children's Centre by GHM Rock Townsend**

- New-build PFI project for 1,250 students, costing £28 million
- Works well within the restrictions of a confined site
- Distinctive character, with an impressive public entrance, a dramatic double-height dining space and associated external court protected by the two school accommodation wings
- Colour and a variety of elevation treatments used imaginatively, adding to the appeal of the building to students, visitors and the community.

### **Allerton High Business and Enterprise Specialist School and Multi Faith Centre by Watkins Gray International**

- New-build PFI project for 1,150 students, costing £23.5 million
- An office-like character well suited to a business and enterprise specialist school
- 'Grown-up' presence with an inviting entrance and impressive double-height arrival space
- The building's plan responds well to the shape of the site
- Internally, the building functions well and has a spacious feel.

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## Lessons learned

Leeds Council with Education Leeds built on their experience of earlier PFI capital programmes by using a continuous design review process. Further lessons have been learned from the BSF enabling and procurement process. Some have been taken up as best practice across their development portfolio, such as the use of design workshops being adopted for all major new buildings. This reflects Leeds' strong in-house team; local authorities with less in-house capacity would benefit from the earlier engagement of their enabler.

Other conclusions are:

- Independent ('detached') design advice from the enabler was valuable.
- Collaborative design workshops involving all the stakeholders, the bidding teams and the advisers are a good tool for improving design proposals and achieving the best creative contribution from all parties.
- A strong independent client design advisor and design champion willing to challenge a local authority, combined with enabling expertise and an experienced development client, all help in supporting design quality in BSF.
- The urban design principles briefing sheets were very important to the design process, as were good feedback notes from the design workshops. The ability to look beyond the school site and consider its relationship to the neighbourhood is advantageous.
- Good enabling techniques and design outcomes in the BSF process can trickle down to other areas of a local authority's capital programme.
- Reviewing the design proposals can help get the basics right. Generally, the design proposals iteratively reviewed in this way reduced unnecessary complexity and architectural cliché, and improved affordability.
- Design development of the external space and school grounds may have benefited from additional time or further input of the architect on site.
- The relationship between the enabler and the BSF delivery team, the schools, and other stakeholders, is a key element in the success of enabling and achieving good design outcomes. The enabling time allocation of 10 days proved insufficient, even with an experienced local authority.

## Key contact

Jackie Green, Director of Learning Environments and Planning, Education Leeds  
Email: [jackie.green@educationleeds.co.uk](mailto:jackie.green@educationleeds.co.uk)

## Further information

This case study was supplied by CABE. Since the CABE schools design panel was set up in 2007 to assess BSF sample and non-sample schemes, the role of the enabler has changed. It is the client design adviser, rather than the enabler who works with the sample schools and bidding teams, and who comments on design. This scheme was delivered under the old arrangement. For more information see: [www.cabe.org.uk/schools](http://www.cabe.org.uk/schools)

More information about Leeds BSF can be found at: [www.educationleeds.co.uk/BSF/bsfinleeds.html](http://www.educationleeds.co.uk/BSF/bsfinleeds.html)