

**From:** Ben Marston [mailto:Ben.Marston@jesticowhiles.com]

**Sent:** 06 December 2010 12:23

Please find our response below:

The idea of the use of a darker blue-grey brick came as much from the Academy as from ourselves as architects. There was a desire not to have a building that looks like every other one, but to have one which looked a little different, but also encapsulating the nature of being an Academy and celebrating the specialism of the Arts. The choice of the blue-grey colour brick, is a deliberate contrast with the vibrant colour of the panelised theatre which forms the corner piece on the eastern and northern elevations, and celebrates the Academies specialism right on the frontage. A corner of the theatre is then 'peeled back to reveal the activity within as people approach. This bold use of colour is continued as an accent colour around the elevations. In our view, the effect of the colour is heightened by the use of the darker brick. The main entrance being celebrated with a triple-height glazed frontage, which again is accented against the darker brick. We think this elevation works well in its context.

We disagree that the material choice makes the building look forbidding and austere. The substantial quantities of glass, the accenting of coloured panels, combined with the green setting of the preserved existing trees and new planting, will not give that impression, in our opinion. At the time of the pre-application meeting, the materials palette was not fully determined, but was illustrated in the material provided. The palette of materials was however carefully selected in consultation with the school, and formed a key part of the public consultation exercise. There were no adverse comments made about the material selection - samples were on display - indeed there were a significant number of complimentary comments about the 'exciting and innovative design'. No one mentioned they didn't like the dark brick. The materials are probably best reviewed by way of samples. We have prepared a materials board, which is currently at the Academy.

In terms of the comments from the Architect Panel, these are of course subjective. We do not believe that the east façade, with the large brightly coloured theatre set at a deliberate counterpoint to a blue-grey brick elevation is 'bland', and is designed to provide the 'uplifting experience' on approach. This has been a specific point of discussion with the Academy during the design development. The windows are punctuated as deep as they can be within a single-brick thick façade, a deeper reveal would come at a cost premium, on a project which has a very tight budget. Similarly, with respect to the southern elevation, brize-soleil was considered, but is not as cost-effective as solar control glass. Calculations have shown solar control glass to be equally effective. The design shown in the perspectives presented at the pre-application stage inevitably moved on, a number of material options were prepared, and the final decision was an absolutely unanimous one by the client group. The selection of a bold colour for the theatre cladding over the 'lighter paneling' was intentional and is seen as appropriate to the specialism.

Kind regards

**Ben Marston**

## Clarification of Architects' Panel comment on Oasis Lord's Hill Academy

- North and east brick facades

The dark grey brick section of the North East Romsey Road frontage is 12.4m high and about 42m long with an additional strip about 2m high and 11.5m long suspended above the glazed entrance.

We commented that in our view there is insufficient detail in this façade to relieve it; it is neither pristine in its flatness nor sufficiently modelled. We have referred to the following:

a) depth (window reveal) and b) brick colour; both of these are in our view important aspects of the design.

The depth of window reveal is presumably as that in the architects' St Paul's Academy, Greenwich – 100mm, where the window frames are inserted behind the brickwork. This is considered inadequate where the facades are less-rich as in the Southampton building with only occasional coloured panels set into the window openings, and none breaking up the mass of brickwork. The Southampton building is also 50% taller.

Our view on the choice of brick colour is rational and consistent. It is ironic that we are being criticised for being subjective in considering a building that professes to foster the arts – please see quotation below. We believe that the “dark grey” brickwork (as described in the DAS) will appear gloomy in most conditions. Notably the public facade facing the car park off Redbridge Lane will never see any sun.

The use of a continuous “plinth” of dark grey brickwork 3 metres tall to the ground storey is in our view too harsh a commentary on the need for robustness.

A brighter coloured brick would be more suitable and would relate better to the context.

The price of blue engineering bricks will allow a brick of good quality to be chosen without additional cost. There will also be no need to colour the mortar.

- South facing facades

Our comments stand on the blandness of the southern facades and the arrangement of coloured panelling. The choice of solar control glass over brise soleil is disappointing as it:-

a) fails to provide any modelling to the building's façade, and

b) dulls down the view through the windows for occupants.

- Roof-top plant

The scale bar on the Site Plan Proposed appears to be incorrect. The building will be viewed from twice as far away as implied by the scale bar. The effect of this will be to make the roof-top plant more visible on seeing the building from the public roads, undermining the architects' desire for clean horizontality. If a ground floor plant room is not to be provided then the plant ought to be shown on the drawings, with:

an indication of whether it is to be finished in silver thermal insulation wrap;

at a true scale having consulted an m&e engineer; and

including the additional height that represent acoustic mountings as appropriate.

A site section will demonstrate whether the plant is then visible.

Quotation:

“Art is never a commodity. Commodities are identical units of sure value bushels of wheat, say- whose price fluctuates from time to time and place to place. Art works are one-of-a-kind ... items, materially worthless, which have in common that a price is asked for them. Their value is entirely subjective.”

Peter Schjedlahl, New Yorker, 16 Feb 2009.

**Julian Boswell BA BArch MSc RIBA  
Chair Southampton Architects' Panel 08 December 2010**