

Successful school refurbishment case studies

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Wider economic circumstances and reducing public sector budgets clearly have implications for capital investment in school buildings. Together with the recommendations from the James review, this background is likely to mean that over the short to medium term future local education authorities will need to focus on managing their existing school estate to ensure it offers the best possible educational environment.

When it comes to historic school buildings, *Constructive Conservation* is the philosophy that English Heritage believes should guide refurbishment projects. This approach means being positive about the adaptation of historic buildings where it is sensible to do so, in turn meaning that the building can continue to accommodate new uses and equipment and enable modern teaching methods. Such an approach ensures that the inspirational surroundings offered by historic school buildings are not denied to future generations of students, while also reusing finite resources in the interests of sustainability and value for money.

The following are three projects that have been or are shortly due to complete, all of which demonstrate the advantages of the Constructive Conservation philosophy and how historic school buildings can be updated and refurbished for 21st century learning.

Walthamstow School for Girls, London Borough of Waltham Forest. Project architects: Architecture PLB



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The refurbished and partially remodelled Walthamstow School for Girls (built in 1912 and listed at Grade II) recently won the BCSE award for best large scale refurbishment.

The project used the distinctive character and the landscape of the school site to guide the redevelopment - the classrooms within the main school building were refurbished to take advantage of their high levels of natural light and are now used by the languages and English departments, while specialist teaching in subjects such as science and technology subjects are accommodated in a new extension. This takes advantage of a fall away in the ground level and inspiration from the existing layout of the grounds – so the extension contains a large amount of new space by having a lower ground floor and at the same time reducing the scale of the new against the old. There is also a new drama space creating a very striking junction with the original listed assembly hall.

The redevelopment has successfully created a modern and well equipped school while retaining and enhancing its historic character.



Eveline Lowe Primary School, London Borough of Southwark. Project architects: HKR Architects



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Eveline Lowe School was completed in 1967 and listed Grade II in 2006. Its design and layout was ground breaking at the time of its opening, and proved hugely influential both across the rest of the country and elsewhere in Europe. By 2007 changing education patterns together with pressure for school places locally led Southwark Council to consider the redevelopment of the site.

The project refurbished the existing listed building, which is now used as resource, specialist and communal space and which acts as the hub of the school. A series of new (and deliberately modern) buildings have been constructed around the edge of the site to form an integrated enclosure to complement the central listed building, delineating the mix of the old and the new.



King Edward VII School, Sheffield City Council.

Project architects: HLM Architects



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Originally built as the Wesleyan Proprietary Grammar School in 1837, King Edward VII School in Sheffield is listed at Grade II*. As such, it is among the top ten per cent most important historic buildings in the country.

Sheffield City Council's approach to the refurbishment of the school was very much a heritage-led one. It commissioned a listed building strategy, which identified in detail all the characteristics and elements that contributed to the building's special interest, as well as those of less importance.

This report, together with the involvement of the conservation team at the City Council, informed the development of the refurbishment proposals by ensuring that those areas and features of the building with significance were retained and that the remodelling and refurbishment reinforced the historic character of the building. A sympathetic extension at the rear elevation of the building also provides new accommodation for subjects heavily reliant on IT equipment.

