

PRESS ENQUIRIES

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FEILDEN FOWLES

PRESS RELEASE

**RALPH ALLEN SCHOOL PHASED
MASTERPLAN****12/2021**

Feilden Fowles' redevelopment of the Ralph Allen School campus in Somerset has reached a significant milestone with the completion of a new dining hall and kitchen (2019), and an eight-classroom teaching block, the Katherine Johnson Building (2020).

This is the latest completed phase of a strategic masterplan commissioned by the school in 2017, following the delivery of two significant buildings designed by the practice: the award-winning Lee Centre sixth form centre (2013) and the Rose Building, a ten-classroom teaching block (2014). Light touch projects within the school campus have included a Jenga wall, larch canopy and outdoor classroom (all 2012), and the recladding and upgrade of windows and roofs to the main block and S Block (2013 and 2015).

The project demonstrates how introducing an organisational structure supported by robust, cost-effective architecture can transform a typical school campus, and the value that a carefully designed masterplan can bring in delivering a holistic vision for a school to enhance its facilities. The masterplan has evolved from small landscape interventions and optimising uses of the whole school campus, into a broader vision showing how flexible education buildings arranged around courtyards can adapt to challenges such as evolving pedagogies and global pandemics.

Ralph Allen School is an academy status co-educational comprehensive secondary school (part of the Palladian Academy Trust) for children aged 11-18 years. It is located approximately 4km from the centre of Bath, bordering the UNESCO World Heritage Site, and within the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Bristol-Bath Greenbelt. The original school buildings were constructed in the 1950s.

The school masterplan

A phased masterplan which sets out milestones towards 2030 has ensured that all the new facilities sit harmoniously across the school campus, and they have been planned to enhance the school's public-facing identity. It has also enabled consistent design principles across the site. All the new buildings are constructed from cross-laminated timber (CLT) or timber and hybrid frames, which significantly improve the embodied and operational carbon of the 1950s campus.

The campus masterplan has enabled the school to accommodate a greater intake of pupils in the forthcoming years (an increase to 1,200 students) by replacing poor-quality existing structures and providing specialist dedicated facilities that were underprovided or lacking at the school.

The architects and client have come to understand the benefits of working together for an extended period, such as recognising the importance of a school masterplan to underpin strategic decisions and to serve as a valuable tool in attracting funding for delivery. The plan has been permitted to adapt over time, while retaining its key concept: the creation of a 'schools within schools' model, of groups of 300 students. Each 'school' has a dedicated courtyard and covered outdoor space for flexible learning and socialising, and all are interconnected via key axes or streets.

Sited in the western zone of the campus, Feilden Fowles' masterplan is intended to supplement and reinforce their earlier projects on this part of the site, adding more teaching space and support facilities, and promoting outdoor circulation. The area that has been built on was previously underutilised – having been used for informal outdoor sports, car parking and storage. The new buildings are naturally ventilated, designed with multiple entrances and equipped with covered spaces and landscaped courtyards to maximise break-out space, which has proven to be a valuable outdoor amenity for pupils returning to school during the pandemic.

Dining hall

The first of the two recently completed phases, the new 680m² dining hall and kitchen, has been built to seat a capacity of 500 pupils in one sitting, offering a dedicated dining experience with views over the new courtyard and across Wiltshire. The building has a secondary purpose as a study space for sixth form students, ensuring it is used throughout the day. The single-storey building, which borders the western edge of the site to form a bookend to the site, has an expressed timber frame throughout, with a glulam structure of larch and Douglas fir, and is naturally lit and ventilated. The height of the main dining space creates grandeur, and the volume's linear roof lights along the edges washes the walls with daylight and creates dramatic shadows as the sun passes overhead. Acoustic lining of all the soffits ensures a calm and relaxing dining experience, and the covered external space allows queuing and social spill-out into the courtyard.

Katherine Johnson Building

A new two-storey eight-classroom teaching block, the Katherine Johnson Building, was delivered for the start of the autumn term 2020, permitting the school to implement Covid-safe procedures across the campus. It is a teaching block for the school maths department, and provides a staff room, learning resource room and WC facilities. The design is the outcome of several workshops between the architects and the mathematics team. All classrooms are dual-aspect, and each of the four ground-floor classrooms and WC offers direct access outside. One of the first-floor classrooms has access to a large balcony. Generous circulation through the building contributes to the airy, spacious atmosphere. Katherine Johnson (1918-2020), the building's namesake, was a mathematician and one of the first African-American women at NASA. The building aims to inspire future generations of students who might not have considered a career in mathematics.

Future plans for the 2030 vision include a drama studio (phase 3) and theatre and performing arts space (phase 4).

Fergus Feilden, Director, Feilden Fowles, said:

"The latest phase of the masterplan resolves the western side of the campus, prioritising circulation spaces and connections to the landscape, and creating new informal social spaces which support learning. On their own, the new buildings provide the school with a much-needed resource. When viewed together, they create a new high-quality environment for the pupils to socialise and learn in. As an alumnus and parent of two students at the school, it's been gratifying to deliver a vision for the school which will have a lasting impact."

Andy Greenhough, Headteacher, Ralph Allen School, said:

"We are immensely pleased with the revitalised campus. I can honestly say that the dining hall is the finest school dining hall I have ever been in. Both buildings provide an extra dimension, and have formed a new external quad. What was once an underutilised area is now a vibrant and inspiring part of the campus."

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NOTES TO EDITORS

Works to date:	Larch canopy and outdoor classroom (2012) Jenga wall (2012) Main block renovation (2013) All weather pitch (2013) Lee Centre (2013) Rose Building (2014) S Block renovation (2015)
Address:	Ralph Allen School, Claverton Down Rd, Avon, Bath BA2 7AD
Site area:	5.3ha (whole school site)
Masterplan area:	1.1ha
Completion:	June 2020
Gross internal area:	Dining hall and kitchen 680m ² Katherine Johnson Building: 700m ² (approx. 735m ² with stairs)
Practical Completion:	Dining hall and kitchen: Sept 2019 Katherine Johnson Building: Sept 2020
Construction value:	Dining hall and kitchen: £1,860,565 Katherine Johnson Building: £1,865,000
Commissioning client:	Palladian Academy Trust
Architects:	Feilden Fowles
Main contractor:	H. Mealing & Sons
Structural engineer:	Momentum Consulting Engineers
Services engineer (pre-build):	e3 Consulting Engineers
Services engineer (build):	Integrated Design Partnership
QS and project management:	Peter Gunning & Partners
Planning consultant:	Rocke Associates
Ecology company:	Johns Associates
Landscape architect:	SEED
Arboriculture:	Assured Trees
Transport:	IMA Transport Planning
Glulam frame subcontractor:	Allwood Timber Construction (dining hall)
Kitchen specialist:	Space Group (dining hall)
Steel frame design & fabricator:	Robbin Engineering (Katherine Johnson)
Photographs:	© Jim Stephenson



Feilden Fowles is an award-winning London-based architecture practice, founded in 2009 by Fergus Feilden and Edmund Fowles. Committed to a low-tech approach, the practice delivers socially and environmentally sustainable buildings across a variety of sectors. Feilden Fowles aims to make architecture that is rich in character and distinct in identity, while seeking simple and holistic solutions with an ambition to achieve net zero carbon buildings. Their buildings emerge from legible design concepts which inform the detailing and construction processes. Projects are underpinned by a strategy of longevity over short-termism, using robust yet adaptable structures, and simple but beautiful materials.

Notable current projects include student accommodation at Green Templeton College, University of Oxford; a new dining hall at Homerton College, University of Cambridge; a new central hall at the National Railway Museum in York; and the Urban Nature Project at the Natural History Museum, which will reimagine the gardens surrounding the museum.

Built works to date span across culture, education, heritage, commercial and residential sectors. Examples include the 2019 Stirling Prize finalist The Weston visitor centre and gallery at Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Wakefield; The Fratriy, Carlisle Cathedral, Cumbria; Charlie Bigham's Food Production Campus, Somerset; a new London studio for global design and innovation firm IDEO; the Fitzjames Centre, Hazlegrove School; and Waterloo City Farm, where the practice's award-winning studio is located.

The work of the practice has been recognised with a number of awards, most recently: Architect of the Year and Public Architect of the Year in BD's Architect of the Year Awards (AYA) 2021; Civic Trust Award 2021 (The Weston, Yorkshire Sculpture Park); Architects' Journal 40 under 40 practice in 2020; Stirling Prize Finalist 2019 (The Weston, Yorkshire Sculpture Park).

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