

Stevenage Police Station Redevelopment

23rd September 2008



Following the announcement of the recent completion of Hatfield's new £18M state-of-the-art Police Station at Hatfield Business Park, Vincent & Gorbing, Chartered Architects and Town Planners, have revealed the completion of the Phase 1 redevelopment of Stevenage Police Station, also designed by the Stevenage-based architectural practice.

Client

Hertfordshire Police Authority

Lead Designer & Planning Consultant

Vincent & Gorbing – Architect

Structural & Civil Engineer

Brian Cole Associates Limited

Mechanical & Electrical Engineer

Parsons Brinckerhoff Limited

Contractor

Carillion

Employer's Agent

Parsons Brinckerhoff Limited

Cost Consultant & CDM Co-ordinator

Parsons Brinckerhoff Limited

Building Control

Approved Design Consultancy

Landscape Consultant

The Landscape Partnership

Project Acoustic Consultant

Eqqus

Phase 1, a new, contemporary four storey extension to the existing headquarters building, comprises a new custody suite, office accommodation and a reception. Phase 2, which is due for completion in January 2009, involves the refurbishment of the original, existing building. The £13M scheme, based in Lytton Way, adjacent to Stevenage town centre, now provides over 7200m² of floor space (refurbishment and new build) and considerably increases car parking capacity.

Vincent and Gorbing secured the Stevenage Police Station and custody suite project following an interview and selection process by Hertfordshire Constabulary who then appointed Vincent and Gorbing in December 2004 to act as Architects and Lead

Consultants for this highly prestigious project. The contemporary style of architecture of the new building is designed to acknowledge the existing police station and provide a meaningful piece of architecture which makes a positive contribution to the townscape. The red brickwork of the existing building has been re-interpreted in the new building by the use of a red terracotta cladding.

The desire to maximise the use of natural daylight into the existing accommodation resulted in the custody building being set away from the 1970's building. The proposal to build independently of the original building allows flexibility for the future use of the site, including redevelopment options of the existing Police Station.

The orientation of the custody suite is appropriate for the passively ventilated building. The 18.0m wide floorplate responds to the planning of the custody suite at ground floor level and provides a suitable model for cross-ventilation. Alternative methods of cooling the new building were explored with scientists at the BP Institute in Cambridge.

The custody suite includes a central control and charge desk with direct vision to cell corridors, interview and consultant rooms and to all other related activity rooms. There is direct access from the secured detainees' alighting area to the charge desk and holding area. Integral parts of the design are the red, amber and green security zones and the straight corridors have no dead-end situations. All cells enjoy natural daylight and access to an exercise yard and there is separate public access off the green zone, with direct access to key adjacent areas.

The existing police station comprises a part two and part three storey flat roofed building with a central courtyard and a number of single storey ancillary buildings used for garaging and storage. All the buildings are of red engineering brick with a lightweight curtain wall construction to the second floor.

The buildings are set within a surface car park and landscaped areas. The existing site and buildings are relatively isolated from other buildings, due to the surrounding roads, railway and trees, and do not have a strong visual relationship to the surrounding buildings. The site does, however, play a partial role as a gateway to the town centre and as a gateway at the start of Lytton Way. The site context, accessibility and security considerations, combined with the need to locate the new building

adjacent to the existing Police Station, resulted in the identification of the southern part of the site as the most appropriate location for a new building.

The Phase 2 refurbishment plans for the original headquarters building comprise stripping out all the existing division walls and providing new office and associated accommodation with new finishes and services. Operational floorspace at ground floor level will be maximised by relocating the canteen and kitchen areas to third floor level in the new build. Existing staircases will be retained and access improved for more effective circulation. Simple and direct linkage at all floor levels with the new building will be created via a new core area and new windows will be added to enhance lighting to office spaces. The existing second floor level accommodation will be maintained and the existing 'escape staircase' will be utilised as an access stair.

The main principles which have been incorporated into the site plan involve maintaining the same vehicular entrance and exit positions off the dual carriageway, providing a simple and effective traffic flow within the site and a secure area within the custody building area as well as retaining the existing 999 blue light emergency exit route onto the roundabout.

Mark Chandler, Architect and Director of Vincent & Gorbing said:

"The Stevenage Police Station posed a number of architectural opportunities and challenges. These included working with an existing building, the restrictions on site area and access within the new development, as well as the sensitive activities of the end user. The building is located on a restricted but prominent, triangular

island site bounded by cycleway and pedestrian routes and surrounded by dual carriageways and railways. The roads are set within tree lined verges and provide a green, landscaped environment. It was important that the design responded sensitively to these diverse issues as well as the client's requirement for increased floor space. In terms of form and massing, we have designed a simple, contemporary four storey extension which is sympathetic to the existing HQ building. We have used solar control principles with passive ventilation to the upper floors, in particular to the south facing façade and the materials chosen reflect the tonal quality of the existing building.

A building form and appearance which are a positive addition to the Stevenage townscape have successfully been created as have the integration of careful landscaping and mounding with any necessary security boundaries."

Mr Chandler continued: *"The primary aims of the design were to make better use of the site to reflect the location close to the town centre and good public transport services and to allow a phased development of the site to increase accommodation, whilst allowing the existing use to continue whilst the new building was being constructed. We also needed to design an attractive building with a 'friendly' appearance which reflects the role of the building as a key 'public building' and complements the existing Police Station. The sustainability and environmental aspects also needed to be incorporated into the building form and appearance. The security aspects of the site within the townscape environment were naturally vital such as creating an inner and outer secure boundary."*

Ian Potter, Head of Estates and Facilities, Hertfordshire Constabulary, commented:

“Vincent & Gorbing have demonstrated not only their expertise in designing police stations but also their ability to meet the very stringent and challenging design briefs. We are delighted with the new facility which is now being occupied, making way for the phase 2 refurbishment of the existing building.”

Mr Potter continued: *“The site is located in a new town which has a typical new town character and which is recognised as being in need of regeneration. The site is immediately adjacent to the town centre and railway station and can be clearly seen from all sides. It is an island site which is physically and visually separated from the adjacent sites and buildings.*

There is a very wide range of building styles, heights and materials in the vicinity of the site which do not exhibit any locally or regionally distinctive identity and so constructing a more substantial building has helped to reinforce the gateway nature of the police station.”

The schematic proposals were developed by working closely with various members of the client body, including representatives of Estates and Facilities, the Public Access and Visibility Strategy (PAVS) group and the building end user. The Home Office has also commented on the Custody suite design following detailed discussions with specialists. Vincent & Gorbing also received valuable feedback during this process, which allowed the architects to refine their proposals to produce a scheme which met the briefing requirements in full. The scheme also benefited from the Home Office Design Review implemented by CABA (Construction of Architecture in the Built Environment) which took place in March 2005. Their comments were also incorporated into the final proposal.

In March 2008 members of the CABA team and Home Office Review Panel were invited to review the construction phase of the project three months prior to the completion date. The CABA delegation was pleased to see that the architectural concept and integrity of the design had been maintained and realised.

Vincent & Gorbing provide architecture, interior design, town planning and urban design services to private and public sector clients throughout the UK. The practice operates within the commercial, industrial, leisure, retail, interior, housing and town planning sectors. Its client portfolio includes county and district councils, police and fire services, developers, private companies and PLCs, national housebuilders, housing associations and private individuals. ↩

Gross internal areas (sq. metres)

	Existing building	New building	Total
Ground floor	1560.48	1317.65	2878.13
First floor	1218.67	1025.81	2244.48
Second floor		1019.12	1425.47
Third floor		667.73	667.73*

*(Including 232.5 sq.m of plant)