

## PROJECT CLOSURE REPORT

### COBTREE MANOR PARK VISITORS CENTRE

#### DESIGN APPROACH

The previous building provided a small kiosk facility with a small kitchen serving refreshments and a limited selection of hot food to visitors. The previous building accommodated public toilets which were subject to antisocial behaviour and a lack of facilities to serve the parks growing 'family user' requirements following major enhancements to the play areas.

These key aspects and the importance of a delivering a high quality building within a sensitive park environment were captured in a brief at the outset of the project and formed the basis of a competition to identify a preferred design solution for the new visitor's centre.

Three design proposals were submitted which were reviewed and scored to identify a preferred architect. Guy Holloway architects were successful and developed planning phase drawings that were submitted to the planning department for consideration and subsequent approval.

It is considered that this process was successful in delivering a building that is sympathetic to its landscape with its larch cladding boards and modern contemporary interior. Key views were identified in the design competition documents and the building with its bi-fold doors capture these aspects well, including the main play areas enabling parents to supervise their children. In good weather the bi-fold doors can be opened to make the interior café and multi-use room feel like they are in the park, whilst also enabling visitors to enjoy a warm and comfortable space during winter months.

The main visitor space is flexible in that it can be separated into two smaller rooms, enabling its use to be adapted as required. The buildings security was also a critical aspect of the design and therefore large shutter doors were incorporated as part of the overall design solution.

The design was continually reviewed during construction and additional storage was incorporated into the layout. The building has also been designed with low maintenance highly durable materials and mechanical and electrical systems that

require low maintenance. A gas supply was installed as part of the works to provide gas fired heating and cooking components instead of electric to reduce future energy costs.

Whilst additional storage was incorporated during the project, feedback has suggested that additional storage would have been useful, however, overall the design is considered to be a real success and has met the design objectives established at the beginning of the project.

## CONSTRUCTION

Following a successful planning approval process, the drawings were developed into construction phase plans that were competitively tendered to identify a preferred contractor. Following this process Harpers were appointed to undertake the construction works.

Regular bimonthly board meetings were chaired and recorded by the Project Manager which clearly recorded all decisions, financial positions and project risks as well as providing regular project updates.

Progress was hampered during the winter months and weald clay ground conditions which caused flooding during the groundworks stage. This highlighted the need for effective ground water drainage systems which were installed to capture this water and to disperse it away from the building footprint.

Following early delays, the works progressed diligently and Harpers generally performed well. The works were practically complete on the 19<sup>th</sup> June 2015 and the building has been operational since the 2015 school summer holidays.

Starting operations during this period was identified as a critical milestone, to maximise income during the school holidays. The building was operational during this period, however, the kitchen could not be fully utilised until a number of final installations were completed.

Overall the capital works phase was successful and completed to a high standard of quality. Works identified at the final end of defect inspection will be completed after the summer holidays, when visitor numbers will be reduced.

These final works will attend to any defects identified following completion of the scheme.

<b>FINANCIAL</b>
<p>A budget of £1,159,125 was set for the restoration of the park over three phases and following the completion of the final phase which included the visitors centre a marginal overspend of £5,535 is identified equating to a variation of 0.47%.</p>
<b>FINAL STEPS</b>
<p>Complete final end of defect works in September and close construction phase.</p>