

NEWS

Architect bricks it

Work has begun on Mitchell Taylor Workshop's £1.2 million library for a private school in Somerset.

The 600sq m building, which also contains computer rooms, classrooms and offices, is the practice's second design for the site, at King's College in Taunton.

The benefactor, a past pupil, rejected the first as being too modern for its surroundings which include two grade II listed stone buildings.

The original design was flat-roofed and fully glazed, with vertical copper fins to screen out direct sunlight. The final version uses hand-made bricks.

The project is due to be completed in February.



Minister hints at Finsbury closure



Lubetkin's Finsbury Health Centre was built in 1938.

David Rogers

The government has given the strongest hint yet that it is siding with the local health authority wanting to shut down Finsbury Health Centre.

An NHS Islington board meeting is due to be held on July 22 to respond to the local council's demand that the north London grade I listed building, designed by Berthold Lubetkin, should be retained as a health centre.

The health trust wants to sell the complex and relocate services elsewhere, arguing that it would cost too much to bring the crumbling 1938 structure up to scratch.

Speaking during a House of Commons debate on the centre last week, health minister Paul Burstow said: "I understand the [NHS] trust has pursued various sources to fund the refurbishment, including the Heritage Lottery Fund, but these have not been available due to the eligibility criteria used.

"With this in mind, clearly there is an important issue that needs scrutinising about the costs and benefits of keeping the health centre open. Would that money be better spent on providing services to local people elsewhere rather

than in the existing building?"

The minister said the trust had estimated it would cost £1 million a year to keep the centre open — as opposed to £600,000 in rent for a new building.

But Islington MP Emily Thornberry questioned whether these figures are correct.

"That estimate is based on a stage 1 costing exercise... and it was not carried out by an expert in historic buildings," she said. "Whenever I have met NHS Islington it seems to come up with a new figure as to how much this would cost."

Barring a change of heart by the trust, a final decision on the future of the centre, which was last refurbished 16 years ago, is likely to be made by health secretary Andrew Lansley.

Thornberry said she was "very concerned" the trust would allow the health centre to deteriorate in the meantime.

An NHS Islington spokeswoman said "basic maintenance" of the building would be carried out to allow it to continue as a health centre but admitted: "No major refurbishment works will be undertaken until a clear decision has been made about the future of the building."

Practices regenerate to form Sadler Brown

Hopper Howe Sadler and Reid Jubb Brown, two of the North-east's top architectural firms, have merged to form new practice Sadler Brown Architecture.

Both firms are regeneration specialists. Reid Jubb Brown recently redesigned the Haymarket Hub and Metro Station in Newcastle and is working on a family home in Northumberland which is being filmed by Channel 4's Grand Designs.

Hopper Howe Sadler is responsible for the award-winning i6 Charlotte Square development, a business centre, in Newcastle.

Kevin Brown, a director at Sadler Brown, said: "The merger will make Sadler Brown Architecture one of the region's larger and

most awarded architectural firms.

"We will have over 10 award winning architects working out of our Newcastle offices and a support team which doubles that number."

The new business also has a partner firm, Bowker Sadler Partnership, in Manchester.

Director Christine Howe explained: "Our relationship with Bowker Sadler Partnership gives us access to new markets like urban regeneration and social housing, whilst at the same time being able to draw upon the resources of a further team of architects and support staff.

"It means we are now easily able to handle multi-million pound projects."