The Design Review Guide for Secondary Schools has been prepared by the Western Australian Office of the Government Architect (OGA) as part of its role to improve the quality of the state’s built environment. Design Review is an important mechanism within a range of initiatives being developed by the OGA to implement the state’s built environment policy: ‘Better Places and Spaces’. The Policy can be viewed online at: www.finance.wa.gov.au/betterplaces

February 2013
What is the purpose of Design Review?

Design Review is an important part of the Office of the Government Architect’s (OGAs) role in managing design quality to support Government’s commitment to improve the design quality of the State’s public buildings and spaces. Coordinated Design Review of secondary school projects will be a principal focus of the OGAs Design Review activities for BMW, with the intent to:

- Ensure good design outcomes and value for money in secondary schools;
- Provide independent and expert design quality advice to Government;
- Build knowledge within Government of education design issues and their importance; and,
- Facilitate the State Government’s commitment to leadership and best practice in the delivery of good education environments.

BMW’s BraTS team will take up responsibility for technical review of secondary schools outside the OGAs scope, at key stages during delivery.

Who participates?

Secondary school Design Review will involve the following stakeholders:

- Lead designers of the consultant team;
- BMW project management;
- High-level representatives of the Department of Education’s infrastructure delivery team;
- Additional consultant team members, such as Landscape Architect, Quantity Surveyor and ESD Consultant (where appropriate); and,
- The Government Architect and OGA representatives.

What is Design Review?

Design Review involves understanding the design vision for a project and assessing how this vision is implemented ‘on the ground’. It is intended that secondary school proposals be subject to a minimum of two Design Reviews at key stages in the project timeline. The staging, range of participants and the scope of a Design Review may vary from project to project, though use of the Education Design Standard 02 as part of the project briefing is an important pre-requisite. With early engagement, the OGA is able to assist project managers with establishing a Design Review process appropriate to the project’s program.

Why conduct Design Review?

There is a broad understanding within Government that good design is key to achieving value for money. Design review is an important tool within a range of initiatives identified to improve the design quality and sustainability of the State’s public works. Design Review offers an opportunity to seek additional independent expertise at key stages of project planning and delivery.
What is ‘Good Design’?

Good design is about functionality, performance and build-quality as much as innovation and creativity. Good design means that buildings and spaces function in a way that contributes to the quality of life for those who use them. Good design improves the delivery of public services, gives a sense of identity and community, can improve user health and safety, and help build a sustainable future. Good design delivers value-for-money as well as better buildings, particularly when attention is paid to the full costs of a building’s lifetime.

For more information, see the OGAs Good Design Guide.

When will Design Review take place?

In general, Design Review can make the most impact at the earliest stages of the design process – during concept and schematic design – where the brief is being tested through initial formal responses and the strategic design intent is being established.

It is important that the scheduling of Design Reviews is considered carefully in order to make the most impact on the project’s design quality without impeding project timeframes. This means that Design Reviews should be coordinated with project design deliverables.

For this reason the OGA recommends scheduling a minimum of two Design Reviews. The suggested timing of these is as follows:

- Concept/Schematic Design Phase (master plan and initial built form)
- Design Development Phase (prior to the submission of the DD Report deliverable)

Ongoing reviews to monitor progress may be scheduled as appropriate, however in all cases, they are best affected when design changes can still be accommodated.

BMW project managers are requested to advise the OGA of the project timetable and, through further consultation, establish suitable dates for the Reviews at the earliest opportunity. The OGA can also assist in preparing briefing and Request documents so that Design Reviews can be signalled as early as possible within the project delivery process.

BMW’s BRaTS team will undertake technical reviews and coordinate document checking prior to tender, and should be consulted for the scheduling of reviews.
1. Set appropriate design quality expectations for the project at the earliest opportunity.

2. Engage the OGA for advice in preparing Brief and Request documents.

3. Include the OGAs Education Design Standards in briefing documentation.

4. Alert consultants by outlining the Design Review process and design quality expectations generally within briefing documents.

5. Schedule Design Reviews in the early project stages to coincide with project deliverables.

6. Allow enough time in the program for response to Design Review reporting.

How does Design Review work?

Through Design Review, the OGA can provide independent expert advice to BMW, Department of Education and consultants on the design quality of a project, based on the guidance contained in the relevant Design Standards. The Design Review process consists of a formal presentation to the OGA by the lead design consultant followed by the preparation of a Design Review Report by the OGA. The formal presentation format includes:

- A visual presentation of the proposal by the design consultants to the OGA.
- Open discussion between the design consultant, the OGA and other attendees to clarify the design intent and response.
- A closed session where the State project team and OGA may discuss any further issues (where necessary).

How to ensure Design Reviews can make the most impact:

- It is anticipated that reviews will take between 1 and 2 hours in total depending on the scale of the project and the issues for discussion. Notes should be taken by the BMW Project Manager to record major decisions, outcomes and directions (should they be given within the Design Review meeting).

  To facilitate proper preparation for a review, the project manager is requested to distribute the project brief, design drawings and copies of relevant Design Reports to the OGA at least 5 working days prior to the Design Review meeting.

  BMWs BRaTS team will liaise with project managers to undertake desk-top reviews of project documents as necessary.

Design Review Report

Within a week of each review, the OGA will provide written feedback to the BMW project manager in the form of a Design Review Report. The findings of the report will be structured around the key principles of the OGAs Education Design Standard. The report is to be used as a reference in subsequent reviews and/or ongoing design quality monitoring.

Scheduling the next Design Review

Design Reviews should be arranged with the OGA at least three weeks in advance of an anticipated date. However each project team should indicate at the earliest possible opportunity the anticipated timeframe for their project to enable reviews to be scheduled accordingly.
In the initial design presentation, both the project brief and the nature of the site should be outlined prior to a description of the project. Project descriptions should proceed from the general to the particular. Ideally, clear definition of the project vision and architectural/urban design principles is recommended before a more detailed account of the proposal is undertaken.

Presentation material will depend on the project stage, its size and context. Project deliverables should provide a general guide as to what would be expected as part of the presentation. Some material may not be explicitly requested as part of project deliverables but nonetheless be valuable to explain decision making within a Design Review. For instance, diagrams demonstrating how the design team have proceeded from an analysis of site conditions and briefing material to initial site planning and formal decisions are vital. Diagrams demonstrating pedagogical considerations are also encouraged.

It is important that consultants demonstrate their knowledge and interpretation of the project site in relation to its surrounding context. Site plans, sections and elevations, should show clearly the following:

- Which parts of the site are built on, showing clearly existing buildings to be retained, existing buildings to be demolished, and new buildings;
- What land is in the client’s ownership/control;
- The division between the public and private realm;
- Adjacent functions and urban context showing the relation of the site to surrounding areas and to public transport and road networks;
- The location and extent of listed buildings and conservation areas;
- Consideration of views to and from the site;
- How people and vehicles move to and through the site; and,
- The exposure of the site relative to important environmental conditions.

All plans, sections and elevations of proposed buildings, and drawings generally should be annotated sufficiently to explain purpose of spaces and rooms, orientation and scale. Detail drawings are encouraged to show impacts of materials and structural configurations at the ‘human’ scale. The use of models to explain projects, is strongly encouraged. At the early stages of a project, even rough sketch models can be valuable as are 3-dimensional views or BIM imagery.
Assessment of design quality will utilise as a minimum the OGAs Education Design Standards and the project’s briefing documents including the RFP and Business Case material where appropriate. Where design benchmarking has also been developed within the project planning phase, this material may also be used within Design Reviews.