

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN COMPETITION FOR THE SCHOOL BUILDING AT VABADUSE 13 AND SPORTS HALL AT E. ENNO 15 IN VALGA FINAL MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE

Committee session: 26 July 2017 at 12.00–17.00, assembly hall in the school building at Vabaduse 13 in Valga.

Aim of the design competition

The contracting authority for the design competition is Valga City Government, and the organizers are the Valga City Government and the NGO the Estonian Association of Architects . The aim of the design competition is to build a well-functioning and inter-operable sports building in the centre of Valga (as an extension to the stadium building at E. Enno 15) and main school building (by extending the existing school building at Vabaduse 13) with supporting outdoor areas (competition area is 41,316 sq m).

The aim of the competition is to find a design plan in which the architectural solution for the school building at Vabaduse 13 is presentable and dignified in accordance with the context of the city centre; the buildings with planned outdoor areas shall form an architecturally integral complex; the planned school building shall create a modern learning environment that supports and inspires student creativity; an integral, architectural and landscape architecture concept covering the whole area shall be created for the competition area.

Assessment and results

The architectural competition with a submission deadline on 17 July 2017 resulted in 7 design proposals, which all qualified and were recognised as eligible.

The committee assessed the submitted works according to the competition guidelines clause 12.1:

- Architectural quality, functionality and compliance with the terms of reference of the solution;
- Integrity and environmental compatibility, freshness and modernity of the architectural solution;

- Practicability and feasibility of the solution: building efficiency and overall costs during the site's lifetime. Feasibility of the solution.

The committee decided the results of the competition at a session that took place on 26.07.2017 by a simple majority as follows:

I prize (8000 €) goes to the design indicated by the keyword "**Üks ja Üks**",

II prize (6000 €) goes to the design indicated by the keyword "**Central Campus**",

III prize (4000 €) goes to the design indicated by the keyword "**Sipsik**";

Incentive prize (2000€) goes to the design indicated by the keyword "**Ökoton**".

Annexed to these minutes are the committee's comments about the general level of the competition and design proposals. In addition to the committee, Valga city architect Jiri Tintera and director of Valga Sport Meelis Kattai participated in the session as experts.

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Chairman of the committee: Kalev Härk, Mayor, Valga City Government

Members of the committee: Lauri Drubinš, Deputy Mayor, Valga City Government;

Marina Krotova, director of Priimetsa school;

Ülo Peil, authorized professional architect, level 7,

Estonian Association of Architects ;

Kaido Kepp, authorized professional architect, level 7;

Risto Parve, authorized professional architect, level 7,

Estonian Association of Architects

ANNEX:

General comments from the committee

The committee finds the competition successful — the works submitted to the competition were versatile and of consistently high quality, although a distinct solution in compliance with all the expectations and needs was not found. The reason for that was probably the complex assignment, by which a conjoined solution for two completely differently functioning buildings designed for different users in different environments was expected. Consequently, it was difficult for the participants and the committee to find a solution that would be appropriate in every aspect. Ideas that deserve to be realised were present in all four winning works. The aspects of suitability to the environment, adaptability to the urban space and opportunities for further developments were decisive factors.

Further design work should consider that reasonable functionality and convenient learning conditions are priorities for the school. The learning space must have as much light as possible and an efficient ventilation system. Particular attention must be paid to those parts of the school building where children rest and stretch during their time between classes. Learning spaces are expected to be versatile and practical, and include the readiness for smart solutions. Privacy is preferred, despite being located near some of the busiest streets in Valga in terms of pedestrians and traffic.

The school building has to be compact and the school expects a fenced yard to be built. Regarding the sports hall, the committee prefers the organic use of existing stadium building with as little rebuilding as possible. Regrettably, many of the competition entries spent too much energy planning an overly grand sports hall that is clearly beyond the capability and scope of a small town.

In most of the design proposals poor traffic arrangements were noticeable.

I PRIZE – “Üks ja Üks”



The committee considered the design proposal under the keyword “Üks ja Üks” worthy of the first prize as the strongest solution architecturally, functionally and in terms of urban development. The school building with its simple and calm form, use of natural materials and modern architectural language unifies the eclectic school complex into a coherent whole while appreciating the existing building. The extension is in harmony with the local context and scale, creating an urban environment on the currently empty plot on the street corner. Important from the viewpoint of the school are the large windows that provide light for the rooms. The connection to the old building is logical, as are the traffic schemes and access points. The semi-private courtyard created by the extension is appealing, and although it seems somewhat desolate in the current visuals, it could be made more child-friendly and cosy in future designs. The design plan mostly complies with the requirements and works functionally, although some waste of space does occur and there is no layout solution for technological spaces. In its presented form, the suitability of the bicycle shed is also questionable.

The solution for the sports hall is even more questionable. According to the conditions of the competition, the structure of the existing stadium building must be preserved as much as expedient; in the opinion of the committee, the current design concept has changed it too radically. The sports hall has been made too large and long, concealing the view of Valga Upper Secondary School; in addition, the stadium building in its new form resembles the architecture of a renowned stadium building in another Estonian town too closely.

However, the positioning of the sports building on the site plan is very good; the horizontal ribbon windows from top to bottom on the running track level on the ground floor is elegant.

Proposals by the committee for further work on the winning project:

- Structures of the existing stadium building must be preserved and remain in use as much as possible.
- Adjust the height of the heavy athletics training hall and sports hall for ball games to within the competition guidelines.
- Due to the large amount of misused space in the music school building (open bicycle storage in the basement) and in the extension (unused space in the basement), the committee proposes the building be made more compact and set it back from the street corner.
- More detailed landscape design in the courtyard.

II PRIZE – “Central Campus”



The second prize was attained by a design proposal with an urban development solution that is well-considered and fitting to the local context. The new section of the school house provides Kungla Street with a wider street space, while creating a cosy courtyard on the other side of the building. In addition, the new sports hall is inventively and logically positioned, altogether forming a fully functioning campus. The older layers are treated with respect, leaving the existing buildings independent while lightly and delicately connecting them with the clearly distinguishable new buildings. However, such a solution sacrifices the overall compactness of the building complex, and therefore also energy efficiency.

The architectural language of the extension to the school building is modern and fine, but the materials of the external facade are not suitable for the existing milieu. The facade treatment,

especially in the main access zone, is uninteresting, cumbersome and does not appear like a school building. The design plan is spacious, organic and logical, only the winter garden is an extravagance in the Estonian climate. Preserving the old brick building and giving it a function is a good idea, but its renovation might be too expensive for the city.

The solution for the sports hall, albeit slightly over-dimensioned, is the best in the competition. The wrestling hall required by the conditions is omitted, while the gym is too large. The use of stationary seats in the sports hall meant for ball games is not feasible – they should be removable.

III PRIZE – “Sipsik”



The committee decided to give the third prize to the design proposal under the keyword "Sipsik" mainly for its fresh and distinctive solution for the school building. Preserving only a separate facade from the early 20th century building is risky both from the perspective of heritage conservation and aesthetics, but this solution deserves highlighting — matching the facade with the sharp and rigid cubic shape provides a pretty good result. The school building is simple and functional; the layout is distinct and spacious. The outcome is very compact, and a good solution also in terms of urban development — a strong, yet modest volume. The same explicit style continues in the courtyard. A square, separated by a staircase in front of the school, creates good public space, but a schoolhouse implies a more private courtyard and the possibility for outdoor classrooms. Currently, the solution is too open to the traffic.

The solution for the sports hall, however, leaves an unfinished impression; it is not properly resolved, and the “saw teeth” on the facade seem incidental. The sports hall is limited to only one 3D view.

Incentive prize – “Ökoton”



The design proposal "Ökoton" has provided a solution with a very pleasant and warm atmosphere for the school building and a comprehensive landscape design around the complex. It includes plenty of space indoors, an appealingly car-free inner courtyard and outdoor spaces. The existing brick building has been used cleverly and multi-functionally. With simple techniques, the old school building's design plan has been extended and its functioning improved. However, the architectural appearance does not correspond to the existing buildings and urban space, and the use of the roof lines and windows in the inner courtyard is gimmicky and feels unnecessary in an ensemble that is already eclectic in its architecture. Both the extension for the school building and the sports hall exceed the required dimensions. The sports hall blocks the view of the upper secondary school building, but is otherwise one of the best solutions in the competition. The design of the rooms is well planned, including the warm up track in the passage, entrance, light, etc. At the same time, lighting in the sports hall for ball games might be problematic.

“Haare”



The design proposal “Haare” fills the corner of Kungla Street with an extension, giving the street a solid end, but the closed and dull glass facade feels cumbersome and passive. A total breakthrough from Kungla Street establishes a good view of the stadium and sports hall and is good as an idea, but leaves the pedestrian street overly schematic, empty and desolate. The schoolyard would end up being too open and accessible, ruling out a cosy semi-private atmosphere. Courtyard entrances without wind protection are not reasonable in the Estonian climate.

The sports hall is functionally well-solved — it follows the line of the sports field, is clearly detached from the stadium building and connected by a small passage above ground. A pragmatic and functional solution. Entrance from the school building to the sports hall is unresolved.

“Learning Tide”



Based on the design proposal “Learning Tide”, the committee highlights the good idea to bring the school’s main entrance to the corner of the street, creating a small square. A bold, large and representative entrance, but the size of the lobby is exaggerated. The layout is well-designed and offers exciting rooms for learning and recreation. The facade design for the corner of Kungla and Vabaduse streets is modest, does not compete with the old building, yet is not very much like a schoolhouse, and lacks diversion space. The rhythm of various square windows is interesting but does not provide good lighting conditions for the classrooms. The courtyard is more exciting, where a nice landscape and atmosphere are created along with spaciousness and transparency.

The sports hall is massive and too large — it engulfs the existing stadium building and leaves an obtrusive impression, concealing the view of Valga Upper Secondary School.

“Vaksal”



The authors of the design proposal “Vaksal” have exaggerated different styles, materials and symbols; the result is a very diverse and inconsistent solution. The use of the aesthetics of the train station does not justify itself in the case of a school building, especially in the case of an already eclectic architectural ensemble. The glass facade of the extension feels dull and not school-like. There has been no attempt to step into dialogue with the old school building; it is not even featured on the images. In addition to the existing access from the old building, the new building would require another entrance. From the point of view of urban development, the emergence of a square that adds space and a place (with a fountain) on the corner of Kungla

Street is agreeable. The logistics work, yet there is too much space for parking and concrete dominates the courtyard. Another incomprehensible aesthetic decision is the sports hall with its amorphous form and oversized dimensions. The stadium building has been radically changed. Administration costs for multiple entrances are unreasonably high. The inner logic of the rooms does not work well. Placing the gym inside the surface is appealing — the view of Valga Upper Secondary School is maintained between the grandstand and the sports hall.