

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet (Capital Assets) Committee

22 January 2013

Subject: New primary school at North East Quadrant in Tidworth, including the acquisition of additional land to enable future expansion

**Cabinet member: Lionel Grundy OBE
Cabinet Member for Children's Services**

Key Decision: Yes

Executive Summary

Outline planning permission has been granted for 600 dwellings on North East Quadrant (NEQ) in Tidworth (E/09/1078/OUT). The Section 106 Agreement requires Persimmon Homes to provide a 1.2ha site and a financial contribution to enable the creation of 180 primary school places. The Council intends to use the site and contribution to build a new 210 place primary school in September 2014.

In addition this report highlights the forecasted school places shortfall in Tidworth even following the completion of the new school. With the rising birth rate and the level of housing proposed in the Core Strategy there is a considerable risk that without school expansion, Tidworth children may not be able to gain a local school place. The preferred and most cost effective solution would be to purchase some additional land from Persimmon Homes adjacent to the new school site on North East Quadrant.

This would enable the new school to be expanded to a maximum of 420 places. As the new school is currently being designed it would be possible to design it in such a way to minimise future disruption and ensure that core facilities, such as the hall, were provided large enough for 420 pupils from day one. This option would also be considerably more economical than constructing another new primary school elsewhere in the town in the long term.

Proposal(s)

That members:

1. Approve delivery of the proposed new school at Tidworth NEQ within a proposed budget of £3.5m and from within the already approved capital programme in accordance with the Council's statutory obligation to provide sufficient school places; and
2. Agree to delegate authority to the Service Director for Business

Services in consultation with the Service Director for Schools and Learning to commission and deliver the building project, including negotiation and completion of the required construction contract(s) and ancillary documentation in accordance with Part 11 of the Council's Constitution (Contract Regulations); and

3. Confirm their authority to proceed with the acquisition of land adjacent to the school site on NEQ in Tidworth (estimated cost £500k), and to delegate the completion of necessary legal transactions to the Service Director Business Services in consultation with the Service Director for Schools and Learning.

Reason for Proposal

Delivery of a new school in Tidworth will enable the Council to meet its statutory duty to provide sufficient school places and will comply with the terms of the NEQ Section 106 agreement. Acquisition of additional land adjacent to the new school site will facilitate future expansion of the school as expected to be necessary by 2018.

Carolyn Godfrey
Corporate Director

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet (Capital Assets) Committee

22 January 2013

Subject: Additional land required for school provision in Tidworth

Cabinet member: Lionel Grundy OBE

Cabinet Member for Children's Services

Key Decision: Yes

Purpose of Report

1. To ask the Committee to consider the procurement of a primary school at North East Quadrant in Tidworth, including an opportunity to acquire additional land adjacent to the new school to facilitate future expansion.

Background

2. Outline planning permission has been granted for 600 dwellings on North East Quadrant (NEQ) in Tidworth (E/09/1078/OUT). The Section 106 Agreement requires Persimmon Homes to provide a 1.2ha site and a financial contribution of £2,243,396 to enable the creation of 180 primary school places. The Council intends to use the site and contribution to build a new 210 place primary school to open in September 2014, with the financial shortfall of £1,256,604 being met from DFE Basic Need grant funding.
3. As their development will only produce approximately 180 pupils there is no requirement on Persimmon to provide anything beyond a standard 1.2ha site. The DFE recommend a minimum site area of 1.2ha for a 210 place school and 1.8ha for a 420 place school.
4. The birth rate in Tidworth has increased by 23% in the last 5 years. There are currently three schools in the town, Zouch Primary, Clarendon Infants and Clarendon Juniors. In September 2011 we ran out of reception places in Tidworth, therefore a 2 class extension was built at Clarendon Infants which enabled them to take additional pupils in September 2012. A further extension to Clarendon Juniors is due to commence shortly. Even with these additional places and the new 210 place school to be built at NEQ, it is predicted that there will a significant shortfall of places by 2018.

Main Considerations for the Council

5. Under the terms of the Section 106 Agreement the Council is duty bound to provide 180 primary school places on the school site provided at NEQ. A school for 180 pupils would mean 6 classes, which would necessitate mixed year group teaching. The Local Authority prefers to operate 7 or 14 class schools to prevent the need to mix year groups. Therefore a 7 class school is proposed at NEQ with the financial shortfall being met from the 2012/13 DFE Basic Need grant, which is already allocated to DCE in the Capital Programme.
6. This new school is forecast to reach capacity by 2018 due to the impact of the rising birth rate and new families moving into completed housing on NEQ. Various options have been considered to provide the additional school places required. Further expansion of any of the three existing schools has been ruled out following consideration of the site sizes and existing numbers on roll. Another option would be to approach the MOD to investigate whether there is any other land in Tidworth appropriate for the provision of another new school. However this is likely to be expensive option.
7. In order to investigate whether the 1.2ha site provided at NEQ could be sufficient for a school of up to 420 pupils, an architect was appointed to carry out a feasibility study. This showed that even with a tower design, the parking and external play areas would be severely compromised. A tower design would also be unsuitable in such a residential area. The architect devised several other concepts but all showed that additional land would be required beyond the 1.2ha to extend the school to 420 places (14 classes).
8. The architect produced several concepts for the eventual 420 place school, however the preferred design would require a site of at least 1.8ha. The current preferred option would therefore be to acquire additional land adjacent to the new school site on NEQ from Persimmon Homes. The total additional land required would be 0.6ha. This option would be considerably more economical than constructing another new primary school elsewhere in the town in the longer term to provide the additional required places.
9. The preferred school design, assuming the additional land can be purchased, has been developed to minimise future disruption and ensure that core facilities, such as the hall and kitchen, are provided large enough for 420 pupils from day one. This design requires the additional land to be available to be built on from the outset. In order to open the new school in September 2014, construction will need to commence in June/July 2013, hence the urgency of this paper.

10. Persimmon Homes were first approached about the potential for any additional land for the school in March 2012 and subsequently developed their site plan to leave an area adjacent to the school site free. In the plans attached to the Section 106 Agreement and those submitted for reserved matters, Persimmon have shown the area as required for potential school expansion and suggested that it could form an additional area of housing in the future should it not be required for the school. Initial discussions with Development Services have resulted in general support for the proposal and confirmation that there is nothing in the section 106 agreement or outline planning permission that would prevent the land being used for expansion of the school.
11. Persimmon Homes have suggested that the Council should make them an offer for the site but indicated that they believed it was worth £500,000. Their original masterplan, which has outline planning permission, showed 20 properties on the land in question. Since the preferred school design was selected in November, Property Services have been investigating the land acquisition and have commenced discussions with Persimmon. The latest status of negotiations will be reported verbally at the meeting.

Environmental and climate change considerations

12. An Energy Officer from the Council's Energy Team will become a member of the project team to inform the development of the concept design. As part of the design process there will be a selection and evaluation process to identify the most appropriate technology to deliver the corporate targets of managing down revenue spend and reducing the corporate carbon footprint. Currently there are significant financial drivers related to certain technologies, for example biomass heating, which would generate an income stream throughout the expected life of the plant, reducing or offsetting some of the operating cost of the school. This benefit could be realised while simultaneously reducing the carbon footprint of the facility, promoting sustainability and supporting local fuel production in line with the localism agenda. These potential benefits can be realised cost effectively in the current environment, but the benefit and financial viability will be reduced if the project is delayed and the incentive scheme is restricted or withdrawn.
13. The concept design for new school at NEQ will be developed to achieve a 40% reduction in carbon emissions over building regulation standards, and designed to achieve a BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Assessment Method) rating of 'Very Good'. This sets the standard for minimising carbon impact throughout the design, construction and future use of the building.
14. The scheme will incorporate a rainwater recovery system to reduce water usage and a range of renewable technologies designed to meet approx. 40% of the anticipated energy requirements. Furthermore careful design will ensure that all of the passive elements of natural ventilation and day lighting are fully embraced to create an environmental and sustainable school building and fantastic learning resource.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

13. The construction of a new school and purchase of the additional land will enable all children who live in Tidworth to be able to attend a local school, promoting cohesive communities. With the rising birth rate and the level of housing proposed in the Core Strategy there is a considerable risk that without expansion, Tidworth children may need to be transported out of the town to other areas with surplus places. As the Draft School Organisation Plan also predicts shortfalls of spaces in Ludgershall, Amesbury, Larkhill, Bulford and Salisbury, the distance that some pupils may have to travel could be significant.

Risk Assessment

13. As identified above there is a risk that without the new school and additional land the Council may be unable to meet its statutory duty to provide sufficient school places as required under the Section 14 of the Education Act 1996. Pupils may have to travel considerable distances to access an available place. At present no other site has been identified within Tidworth to enable expansion of an existing school or provision of another primary school.
14. Another risk inherent in this proposal is that the price demanded by Persimmon is unaffordable to the Council. In the event of this happening, the Council is not obliged to purchase the land and would instead need to investigate with the MOD other sites within the town which could be suitable for another new primary school.
15. A risk register for the delivery of the primary school will be available throughout the project and will be available upon request.

Financial Implications

16. The preferred concept design has been costed at £3.5m including build, fees, surveys, planning and building regulations, legal fees, furniture, fitting and equipment. The purchase of land is currently estimated at £500,000. These costs will be met by the Section 106 contribution from Persimmon plus DFE Basic Need grant funding. This Basic Need funding is already within the approved Capital Programme funds have already been ringfenced to achieve the 210 place school including an estimate of the likely land acquisition costs and larger core facilities.
17. No funding is currently identified to fund the expansion of the school to 420 places by 2018, which is estimated to cost £1.4m. Further housing developments in Tidworth, including any military housing, would generate additional section 106 contributions which would contribute towards the required funding. The Local Authority also submits an assessment of forecasted shortfalls in school places annually to the DFE in order to obtain the Basic Need grant funding. If the Local Authority can evidence the requirement for additional places that cannot be funded by section 106

alone, it is very likely that the DFE would provide the funding required but this does represent a future risk. A further capital allocation would have to be applied for from the Council or the scope of the scheme reviewed. This same risk applies across the County in many towns where a shortfall of places has been identified through the Draft School Organisation Plan.

Legal Implications

18. Procurement of the building contract will be conducted in accordance with the Council's contract regulations and any relevant legislation.
19. The acquisition of the land would be subject to the normal precontract legal enquiries and due diligence.
20. Schedule 11 of the Education Act 2011 requires that if a local authority in England thinks a new school needs to be established in their area, they must seek proposals for the establishment of an Academy. Procedures for implementation are currently being developed for Changing Schools Board.

Options Considered

21. The options considered are discussed in the main body of the report above.

Conclusions

22. A new primary school is required at NEQ in Tidworth from September 2014 to provide sufficient school places for local children. It is also apparent that there will be a further shortfall of places in the town by 2018 which would be best addressed by extending the new school. To facilitate this expansion the Council needs to acquire additional land adjacent to the new school site.

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Corporate Director

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Background Papers

The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this report: None

Appendices

None
