

## **DETAILED PROJECT APPRAISAL**

**APPRAISAL NO. ED747**

**NAME OF SCHEME:** The Cooper School, Bicester – Provision of new Sixth Form Accommodation

**START YEAR:** 2010/11

**BASIS OF ESTIMATE:** Pre tender estimate

### **1. INTRODUCTION AND DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT**

At its meeting 26 May 2009 Oxfordshire County Council's Cabinet approved a statutory proposal to extend the age range of The Cooper School Bicester to include a new sixth form (report ref CA6). The sixth form is required to be operational from 1 September 2011.

The addition of a Sixth Form at The Cooper School is part of a broader 14 - 19 strategy in Bicester. The Cooper School will continue to work closely with the other secondary school in the town, Bicester Community College, Bardwell Special School and Oxford and Cherwell Valley College to jointly offer a wide range of academic and vocational courses. The addition of a sixth form at The Cooper school will provide an additional educational opportunity in a town which currently offers little choice post-16.

The sixth form centre will be housed in a new purpose built building which will include the following facilities;

- 7 Classroom Spaces
- Business Studies/ICT space
- 2 – small group rooms
- Common Room/study area
- Social/café space
- Servery
- Office
- Storage facilities
- WC facilities (including fully accessible facilities for disabled users)

To ensure that sufficient accommodation is in place to support the change in age range at the school the project also includes an extension to the school's science faculty to provide 2 additional science laboratories and alterations to the Design & Technology area to create an engineering workshop.

### **2. JUSTIFICATION AND ASSESSMENT OF NEED**

At the meeting on 25 November 2008 Cabinet agreed to the publication of formal proposals to expand the age range of The Cooper School from 11-16 years to 11-18 years (report ref CA11), the statutory notice was published by

the Authority on 26 March 2009. At its meeting 26 May 2009 Oxfordshire County Council's Cabinet approved extending the age range of The Cooper School to include a new sixth form with effect from 1 September 2011.

The justification for providing the sixth form at The Cooper School was detailed in the May 2009 report and remains unchanged;

Currently students have to leave for post-16 provision at Bicester Community College, or other schools and colleges outside the town, with many students having to travel 15 miles or more to Oxford or Banbury. The school and the local authority believe that this is lowering the aspirations of students at the school, and deterring students from staying in education, leading them into low-level occupations with little chance of progression or improvement. This belief is reinforced by a recent analysis (2008) of the Longitudinal Survey of Young People in England by the Cabinet Office, Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the Institute for Fiscal Studies, which found that students in schools with a sixth form have higher post-16 and university aspirations than those in schools without.

An analysis by the Connexions service of Year 11 students' intentions (March 2009) showed that while 100% of students at Bicester Community College (which has a sixth form) intended to stay in education in 2009/10, only 73% of students at The Cooper School planned to do so. This compared to 83% of students across Oxfordshire and 86% within the East Oxfordshire 14-19 Consortium. 26% of students at Cooper School were neither planning to stay in education or had secured education or training – compared to 17% for the county as a whole and 13% for the local Consortium. This indicates that the lack of sixth form provision at The Cooper School may be discouraging students at the school from staying in education. Extending the age range at The Cooper School is a key element of the Bicester 14+ Partnership's strategy to increase participation in education for students at this school.

In recent years Bicester has experienced significant population growth. Further growth is projected, including significant new dwellings as part of the South East Plan. This planned housing growth originally indicated that an additional 850 secondary places would be required by 2011/12. In order to increase choice and diversity in secondary education within Bicester, it is planned to meet this demand through a new 14-19 learning centre, with a joint collaborative offer being put forward by the town's two secondary schools and The Oxford and Cherwell College, with some access to courses for pupils from Bardwell Special School. The addition of a Sixth Form to The Cooper School forms part of this strategy.

The accommodation for additional school places for secondary education in Bicester will be located within the South West Bicester development. The S.106 agreement for South West Bicester was signed in 2008 securing both a site and a contribution for the provision of secondary education against future housing to be developed in this area. The timescales for this have been adversely affected by the slowdown in the economy and officers are still working with developers to establish a realistic timeline for the delivery of the site and capital resources. The current information indicates the site

becoming available to the County Council in late 2013 and the triggering of initial payments towards the facility could start a few months earlier with the substantial amounts following on from autumn 2014 although this is entirely dependent on economic factors affecting the rate at which new homes are built. As well as the financial contributions from the South West Bicester development contributions are expected from other residential development (via S106 agreements) planned both in and around Bicester including major housing schemes at Gavray Drive and the former RAF Upper Heyford again the likely timing of those payments are related to the progress of housing in the respective areas.

While teachers at The Cooper School currently help to deliver some of the shared courses at Bicester Community College, the addition of a Sixth Form to The Cooper School will enable it to participate fully in the provision of educational opportunities for the whole 11-19 age range, making best use of staff expertise to raise standards, and helping it to recruit and retain the best teachers.

### 3. **OTHER OPTIONS**

A feasibility study was undertaken by Property Services in 2009 to establish the most cost effective way of delivering the required accommodation. This feasibility considered a number of options for the location and design of the new building.

Implementing the agreed scheme is considered the only way that the new facilities can be provided and be operational by the September 2011 deadline.

### 4. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

#### (i) **Capital**

The project was included within the CYP&F Capital Programme (Forward Plan) in the November 2008 Monthly Monitoring Report submitted to Cabinet on 20th January 2009 (CA5 - Annex 6). The funding has initially been identified within 'Other Basic Need 09/10 to 13/14' provision already included within the Capital Programme Forward Plan. Officers continue to explore opportunities for securing funding from the capital fund currently managed by the Learning & Skills Council (LSC) to support this project N.B. The allocation of these resources is expected to become the responsibility of the Young People's Learning Agency from April 2010.

The estimated cost of the project is £4.4m. This cost includes expenditure of £90,000 to create a new engineering facility within the existing D&T area, this element of the project will be managed directly by the School.

Also included within the capital funding is £600,000 'Growth Point' Funding following a successful bid to the Department of Communities

and Local Government to enable the project to be a 'Zero Carbon' building (see section 6 below).

The school will also contribute devolved formula capital towards this scheme through the procurement and funding of loose furniture and equipment (including ICT) requirements, for the new facilities.

As this project will also support the wider 14-19 strategy to meet demand arising from population growth in Bicester the County Council will continue to explore opportunities to secure S106 developer funding to support the capital cost of this project.

(ii) **Revenue**

Day to day revenue costs will be met through the schools delegated budget. This project will increase the floor area of the school by 1,613m<sup>2</sup>; this additional m<sup>2</sup> will impact on the floor area element within the Individual Schools Budget (ISB).

At present revenue funding for post 16 provision is provided by the Learning and Skills Council but by September 2011, when this proposal would become active, funding for education for 16-19 year olds will be allocated by the County Council.

(iii) **Risk**

An assessment of risk has been carried out by Property Services and Atkins, a Risk Register is being maintained for the project.

(iv) **Whole Life Appraisal**

The County Council property consultant has been required to utilise whole life appraisal techniques during the design phase and bring forward recommendations that take account of energy efficiency, repair and maintenance and durability.

## 5. **STAFFING IMPLICATIONS**

Additional staffing requirements will be met through the schools delegated budget.

## 6. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

In November 2009, Cherwell District Council (in discussion with the County Council) submitted a bid to the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) for a share of £60million ring fenced Growth Point funding, to facilitate initial planning and capacity building in relation to eco-towns and in this case, North West Bicester. This funding stream includes provision for 'Early Demonstrator Projects' to showcase some of the new

technologies and higher standards of design and build anticipated in the eco-town.

As part of the bid to DCLG, the County Council included a proposal to enable the new sixth form centre at The Cooper School to be built as a “Zero Carbon” building and to be energy cost neutral.

In February 2010 DCLG confirmed that the bid, which included £600,000 to enable the Cooper School Sixth Form block to become a zero carbon demonstration project, had been successful. Funding will be provided by DCLG with match funding from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). Cherwell District Council will receive the grant direct from DCLG before the end of the financial year. High level discussions are still taking place at Executive level between CDC and OCC, to determine the mechanism for a proportion of the overall grant money to be made available to the County Council to help fund the Cooper School project and other elements.

Creating a ‘Zero Carbon’ building will be achieved by a significant improvement in insulation standards, far better air tightness of the building construction and low energy fittings and equipment including lighting. This will be combined with measures to displace the use of grid electricity which is inefficient due to generation and transmission losses. Local generation will include the use of Photo Voltaic Cells. Any electricity generated on site but not used by the school will be exported back to the national grid. An export tariff provides an income stream to offset other energy costs.

Other sustainability options are currently being assessed for their potential impact on both the initial capital budget and on future revenue costs. Where it is appropriate and cost effective to do so consequential Improvements would also be made elsewhere on the school site. Energy savings from those measures would offset any energy usage in the new building to contribute to a net neutral impact on the schools energy costs.

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