

**CABINET MEMBER FOR PUBLIC HEALTH AND EDUCATION -
13 JUNE 2018
NEW PRIMARY SCHOOL IN NE WANTAGE, OXFORDSHIRE
REPORT ON CONSULTATION AND APPROVAL FOR SCHOOL
SPECIFICATION**

Report by Director for Children's Services

Introduction

1. The host site for this planned new primary school is the 1500-home development permitted as application P13/V1764/O and now known as Kingsgrove.
2. The adopted Vale of White Horse Local Plan Part 1 plans for significant housing growth across Wantage and Grove, including:
 - 1500 homes at Crab Hill (Kingsgrove)
 - 2500 homes at Grove Airfield
 - 885 homes at Monks Farm, north of Grove.
3. A further 400 homes are proposed in the Vale of White Horse District Council Local Plan 2031 Part 2 which was submitted to the Secretary of State on Friday 23 February 2018 for independent examination.
4. Over 1000 other new homes on smaller sites across the Wantage and Grove area have been either permitted or completed in recent years.
5. School capacity growth is being planned strategically across Wantage and Grove, and includes a mixture of expansions (Charlton Primary School has already been expanded and Grove CE Primary School is planned for expansion from 2020) and new schools, including the school covered by this specification.
6. Planning for the new school is underway, and the school is currently planned to open in September 2020. However, this will be subject to review as the development progresses.
7. This report summarises the consultation held regarding the proposed educational specification of the new primary school for NE Wantage and seeks approval for the final specification. This will then be used as the basis for attracting potential academy sponsors.

Background

8. Oxfordshire County Council will not run the new school. The 2011 Education Act says that all new schools are expected to be academies/free schools. This law means that they are not run by the county council except in exceptional

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circumstances. Instead, academies are run by independent academy trusts. These trusts can be set up by lots of different organisations, including educational specialists, employers, existing local schools, charities, religious groups and community groups.

9. Oxfordshire County Council's role is to plan for and secure sufficient school places and find a potential sponsor for the new schools. The government has set out a bidding and selection process for choosing new school providers. From this, the Cabinet meeting of 4 September 2012 approved a new process for the identification of sponsors for new academies to meet the needs of population growth:
 - i. Undertake a public consultation to identify the academy model to be implemented.
 - ii. Invite initial expressions of interest in running the school, including through the DfE website.
 - iii. Assess expressions of interest and then invite detailed bids from three or fewer providers to show clear plans of how they will contribute to the raising of education standards, add diversity of choice and which best fits the local requirements and meets the needs of those within groups offered specific protection under s149 Equality Act 2010.
 - iv. Assess bids against criteria and rank in order of preference. Agree a preferred option to be approved by Lead Member for Education or Cabinet as appropriate.
 - v. Submit report to Regional Schools Commissioner for decision.
 - vi. Proposal developed with provider approved by Regional Schools Commissioner through sharing vision of community, county and sponsor.
10. The first part of the process is to write an educational specification for the new schools in order to invite bids from potential academy trusts wanting to run it. The public consultation on the draft specification for the primary school at NE Wantage has now taken place. From this, the specification for the school has been finalised. The purpose of this Report is to provide information on the consultation outcomes, and seek Cabinet Member approval to move onto the next stage of the process: inviting interested parties to submit outline expressions of interest to run the school, based on the proposed specification at Annex 1.
11. The expected pupil generation of new housing in the Kingsgrove development, as well as across other planned developments in Wantage and Grove, has been modelled using the council's PopCal tool, based on current knowledge about the timing of house building and the types and sizes of housing. The timing of houses could vary depending on housing market conditions.

Consultation

12. The public consultation to inform the development of the education specification for the new primary school was conducted by the School Organisation &

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Planning team between 16 April – 14 May 2018. The purpose of the consultation was:

- To invite comment on the draft education specification to be used as the basis of identifying an academy sponsor for the new school;
 - To act as pre-notification to potential sponsors of the future bidding process.
13. The consultation was publicised through the county council consultations website and. Invitations to join the consultation were targeted at local councillors, schools, and other stakeholders. There were no responses to the consultation.
14. To secure an academy sponsor in appropriate time to allow the school to open in September 2020, approval is now sought for the educational specification for this school.

Proposed specification for the new school at NE Wantage

15. The school will be:
- A 2-form entry school.
 - Age range: 2-11.
 - Admission number: 60
 - Total places provided for Reception to Year 6: 420 places.
 - Inclusive of a nursery for 2- and 3- year olds: the exact number of places to be confirmed.
 - Co-educational.
16. The school will also be expected to contribute towards meeting local needs for wraparound care and childcare.
17. The school's catchment is expected to be primarily the Kingsgrove strategic development area in NE Wantage but may draw from a wider area to meet population pressures in Grove and Wantage.
18. The detailed specification is provided in Annex 1.

Next steps

19. The Cabinet Member is requested to approve the draft specification attached as Annex 1 as the basis for stage (ii) of the academy provider process outlined in paragraph 9 above, the invitation of expressions of interest from potential providers. Such expressions of interest would be sought from June 2018, and short-listed by officers, with short-listed applicants invited to submit a detailed proposal by October 2018.
20. A further report would be submitted to Cabinet Member in November 2018 to confirm which provider the county council wishes to recommend to the Regional Schools Commissioner for approval.

Equality and Inclusion Implications

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21. Section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010 imposes a duty on the Council to give due regard to three needs in exercising its functions:
 - Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act.
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic, and those who do not.
22. There are no equality and inclusion implications arising from this report.

Risks and mitigation

23. There is a degree of uncertainty about the precise timescale of the school's growth as it will be influenced by factors outside the county council's control, including the housing market. To mitigate against this risk, providers will be sought who are able to be flexible in how quickly the new school will grow. Providers will be specifically asked in the application process how they will manage these uncertainties. Until a funding agreement is signed with the provider, the county council will be able to renegotiate details of timing should conditions change.
24. If the specification proves unattractive to potential sponsors, we may not be able to identify sufficient providers interested in running the school. The county council is already aware of academy trusts interested in bidding for this school. In cases where an academy provider cannot be identified, the Department for Education expects to be able to assist.

Financial and Staff Implications

25. The direct financial implication of this report is the cost of the process of seeking expressions of interest, which is planned for and met within the normal CE&F budget provision. There are no significant financial implications or risks at this stage.
26. Local authorities are required to make provision to support new schools prior to opening, to cover set-up costs, as well as during the period until the school reaches full capacity, as during this period they are not able to benefit from economies of scale. To this end, the Schools Forum has approved the establishment of a Growth Fund from the Schools Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant.

RECOMMENDATION

27. **The Cabinet Member for Public Health & Education is RECOMMENDED to approve the specification for the new primary school for NE Wantage, Oxfordshire.**

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Annex 1 Draft specification for new primary school at NE Wantage, Oxfordshire.