

**CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, EDUCATION & FAMILIES  
9 NOVEMBER 2015**

**NEW SECONDARY SCHOOL AT SW BICESTER  
(KINGSMERE DEVELOPMENT)**

**Report on consultation and approval for school specification**

**Report by Director for Children's Services**

**Introduction**

1. Cherwell District Council is developing a new Local Plan to guide development of the district up to 2031, and significant housing growth is planned for Bicester. This plan includes proposals for:
  - North West Bicester (Eco-Town) – at least 5000 homes in total, 1793 of these by 2031, with new primary schools and a secondary school
  - Graven Hill – 1900 homes, with a new primary school
  - South West Bicester (Kingsmere) – 1631 homes already planned in Phase 1, with another 650 proposed for Phase 2, with new primary schools and a secondary school
  - South East Bicester – approximately 400 homes

There will also be other developments, including in surrounding villages.

2. A new secondary school is planned for the SW Bicester development (Kingsmere) to open in 2018; in the longer term another new school is planned for the NW Bicester development.
3. This report summarises the consultation held to inform the educational specification of the new secondary school for SW Bicester, , and seeks approval for the final proposed specification. This will then be used as the basis for attracting potential academy sponsors/

**Background**

4. 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 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.
5. Oxfordshire County Council's role is to plan for and secure sufficient school places and to find a potential sponsor for the new schools. The government has set out a bidding and selection process by which new school providers are chosen. 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 county council has completed a public consultation and has used responses received to it to inform the writing of a new secondary school's specification.

6. 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 such as this:
  - 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.
7. The public consultation to inform the development of a specification for the secondary school at SW Bicester (Kingsmere development), and to hear views on school capacity strategy for the area generally, has now taken place. On the basis of this a draft specification for the school has been developed. The purpose of this Report is to provide information on the outcomes of the consultation, 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.
8. The expected pupil generation of new housing in SW Bicester (Kingsmere) has been modeled 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. The development is already underway and some houses are occupied.

## **Consultation**

9. The public consultation to inform the development of a specification for the new secondary school was conducted by the School Organisation & Planning team 7 September 2015 – 18 October 2015. The purpose was:
  - To gather local community views to help shape the specification of the school and choice of sponsor.
  - To act as pre-notification to potential sponsors of the future bidding process.
10. The consultation was publicised through the county council consultations website and local library. Invitations to join the consultation were targeted at

local councillors, schools, and the Kingsmere Residents' Association. The county council Communications team produced a press release to help publicise it, and a public "drop-in" session was held in Bicester to allow interested parties to talk to officers about the proposals. A briefing session was also held for Bicester Town Council at one of its regular meetings.

11. X individuals and organisations responded to the consultation. The strongest themes emerging from this feedback can be summarised as:
  - i. Concern that the age range will not include post-16 education.
  - ii. Agreement that more secondary school places are needed.
  - iii. Desire for a broad curriculum, whatever the specialism.
  - iv. Broad support for sport, health and wellbeing specialism, provided it is inclusive for disabled children and a firm agreement on using the Sports Village facilities, and the community using the school's facilities, is in place. This to include during school holidays.
  - v. Broad support for the Special Resource Unit focus on Social, Emotional & Mental Health and a desire for these specialist skills to be part of all school staff's training so that it benefits the whole school community.
  
12. In order to secure an academy sponsor in good time to allow the school to open in September 2018, approval is now sought for the educational specification for this school, which has been informed by this consultation.

### **Proposed specification for the new school at SW Bicester (Kingsmere development)**

13. The school will be a 600 places 11-16 age range secondary school, with an Admission Number of 120 when it is at full size. (Given the opening of a new Studio School in Bicester in 2016, there is no current need for additional sixth form places.)
14. It is proposed that the school has a particular focus on sports, health and wellbeing, both for its own pupils and also shared with the wider community.
15. The specification includes 8 places reserved for specialist resourced SEN provision, primarily for children with Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs.
16. The school will be located on the site previously identified within the SW Bicester (Kingsmere development) site.

### **Next steps**

17. 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 3 above, the invitation of expressions of interest from potential providers. Such expressions of interest would be sought during spring 2016, and short-listed by officers, with short-listed applicants invited to submit a detailed proposal by late April 2016.

18. A further report would be submitted to Cabinet Member in June 2016 to seek a decision on which provider the county council wishes to recommend to the Regional Schools Commissioner for approval.

## **Equality and Inclusion Implications**

19. 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.
20. The draft specification seeks to increase equality of access to education for children with disabilities by including the provision of additional SEN provision.

## **Risks and mitigation**

21. 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.
22. If the specification proves unattractive to potential sponsors, we may not be able to identify sufficient providers interested in running the school. In cases where an academy provider cannot be identified, the DfE expects to be able to assist.

## **Financial and Staff Implications**

23. 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.
24. Additional revenue funding for specialist SEN resourced provision is referred to under "Supporting vulnerable learners and those with special educational needs". This funding will come from the Dedicated Schools Grant High Needs Block, and will be factored into allocation decisions for this budget.
25. 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**

26. **The Cabinet Member is asked to note the outcomes of the consultation and is RECOMMENDED to approve the specification for the new secondary school for SW Bicester.**

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Annex 1 Draft specification for new secondary school in SW Bicester