

Division(s):

CABINET - 17 SEPTEMBER 2013

Space Standards for Schools

**Report by Director for Environment & Economy
and Director for Children's Services**

Executive Summary

1. The County Council's space standards for primary and secondary schools have been reviewed, building on the outcomes arising from the 'James Review'. The outcome of the County Council's review is to recommend that the space standards for new schools:
 - Should be higher than the minimum proposed by the Education Funding Agency to ensure that new schools are fit for purpose
 - Should incorporate the desire for new schools to be capable of providing facilities that can be used by the wider community
 - Retain the requirement for school sites to have sufficient space to allow for future growth
 - Maintain the size of classrooms at the current level of requirement
 - Promote more efficient space within the school building as a means of delivering better value for money
 - Promote more efficient design of building as a means of helping reduce operating costs

Introduction

2. The current Primary School Brief for Oxfordshire County Council has been developed over a number of years responding to and building on:
 - National area guidelines for schools (Building Bulletin 82 [BB82] and latterly Building Bulletin 99 [BB99]),
 - Oxfordshire County Council's design/area priorities;
 - The needs of pupils with Disability and Special Educational Needs
 - Early Years and community provision.

The last review was issued in early 2007, when the national education and economic picture was very different to today.

3. In 2010, Education Secretary Michael Gove commissioned an independent review of capital spending on schools in England. The outcome, known as the James Review (2011), concluded that better value could be derived from standardised designs and specifications which could be applied to a range of Schools.
4. This has led to the Education Funding Agency (EFA) issuing an indicative baseline design for a 2 form entry primary school which, compared to previous space standards, illustrates that educational need can be efficiently designed within a smaller overall area
5. Given the projected pressure on school places and the likely reduced levels of capital available to meet that demand it is recognised that there is merit in re-assessing the County Councils space standards for schools. This accords with the Councils Corporate Plan to make the most of its limited capital resources to support the achievement of a 'Thriving Oxfordshire'. Once agreed the new space standards would also be used to define the County Council's requirements in those instances where a new school is delivered by a developer as part of a new development.

Methodology

6. A detailed comparison of current standards, historic national standards and new base line standards issued by the EFA has been carried out. The new baseline standards set EFA's view of 'minimum' standard that is achievable in an optimum design. A review then took place to consider the deliverability of the new standards in a wider context accounting for potential site constraints and the Council's current standards.
7. The review focussed upon the most common new school provision delivered within the County; a 2 Form Entry (2FE) primary school. The outcome of the review was shared with officers and head teachers (see item '4. Consultation' below) which resulted in a defined accommodation schedule for a 2FE school.
8. The principals adopted for the 2FE school have then been extended to other common sizes of primary school.
9. A comparison was then made between the outcome of the review, the historic national standards and new base line standards issued by the EFA to set a benchmark which has then been applied to proposed secondary school space standards.
10. Annex 1 provides detail of the approach followed. Annex 2 defines the outcome as proposed detailed standards applicable to 1FE, 1.5FE, 2FE, and 3FE primary schools with Nursery provision. It also set out the formulaic approach to be applied to secondary school provision.

Consultation

11. The proposed changes arise from an officer assessment based on advice from our consultants Carillion, in light of analysis of the national baseline designs issued by the EFA.
12. Consultation has taken place with representatives of political groups, governors, Diocese and head teachers through the School Organisation Stakeholder Group.
13. Feedback was also incorporated into the proposed schedules following meetings held with Head teachers at the following selected schools that have received 'Outstanding' Ofsted inspections.
 - Watlington Primary School
 - Ladygrove Park Primary School, Didcot
 - Chilton Primary School
 - St Andrew CE Primary School, Chinnor

Primary School Space Standards

14. The overall proposed space standards result in
 - a reduction in area of between 9% and 12% from the 2007 OCC Primary School Brief
 - an enhancement above the base line designs issued by the EFA of between +3% and +9%.
15. Whilst the area standards proposed for 1FE and 1.5FE have reduced by 12% from 2007 levels they do exceed the historic Building Bulletin 99 standards. The review acknowledges that 2FE can more readily accept efficiencies as there is less likelihood of expansion. A 1FE however is less able to accommodate efficiencies, particularly when considering future needs. This policy reflects the sustained growth within Oxfordshire and therefore a need to 'future proof' against the likely need to expand smaller sized schools.
16. The space standards for 2FE and 3FE however do represent a reduction of 4.5% and 4% respectively against the historic Building Bulletin 99 standards.
17. The proposals seek to maintain the overall teaching area provisions but economies are made through
 - Removal of specialist ICT space (due to extensive use of mobile technology)
 - Removal of separate cloakroom space (due to efficiencies and space management benefits)
 - Merging of resource areas (to give greater flexibility)

- Reduction in storage space (reflecting demand to design storage facilities in a more efficient manner)
- Reduction in general office facilities (reflecting modern workstyles)
- Consequent reduction in circulation space

Community Space Provisions

18. The County Councils historic space standards included an allowance for 'extended school' provision. This space is now excluded from basic space standards for primary schools.
19. The intention of this space was to provide the opportunity of facilities for the community outside school hours that could also be utilised by schools for breakfast clubs and the like. The revised standards will allow this provision (90m²) to be included within the requirements where community facilities are not available in the local area.

Secondary School Space Standards

20. The County Councils space standards for secondary schools simply reflected compliance with Building Bulletin 98.
21. For secondary schools the EFA propose a new formula that represents an average area reduction of 15% on Building Bulletin 98 standards.
22. The detailed work assessing a 2FE Primary School supports a move toward the EFA target reduction and that approximately two thirds of the area reduction proposed is considered to be achievable. This approach can be applied to space standards for secondary schools
23. The DfE states that the new formulae represent an area reduction of 15% on BB98. If the County Council was to apply the same reduction standards for the Secondary Schools as defined for the Primary School schedule this would suggest a reduction of 9.26% on the Building Bulletin rather than the 15% reflected in the new formula.
24. It is proposed that OCC should adopt its own revision to the formula that accepts approximately 60% of the space standard reduction of the EFA guidelines.

Primary and Secondary School External Space Standards

25. The site area of 2.22ha will continue to be required for 1FE, 1.5FE and 2FE to account for future growth. Only where robust evidence is held by the authority that the likelihood of growth is slim will lower space standards of 1.34ha for 1FE and 1.81ha for 1.5FE be acceptable. The site area requirement for a 3FE will be 3.01ha.
26. Site area standards for secondary school sites will remain at the levels recommended within Building Bulletin 98

27. It is the County Council's policy that the freehold of a school site provided by a developer is passed over to the education authority (the County Council): this is to ensure that the public sector has the security required to ensure its statutory obligation in respect of pupil places is met for the longer term. The County Council will then make arrangements for an academy provider to run the new school, on the basis of a 125-year lease.
28. In special circumstances the County Council may agree that part of the school area site requirement is provided through a joint use agreement between the academy school provider and a third party. In those circumstances the County Council would have to be satisfied that the terms of the agreement are appropriate and ensures that the needs of the school are met.

Existing schools

29. The revised standards will only be formally applied to new school accommodation but the principles set by the new standards will be used as an indication of an acceptable approach.
30. Where the capacity of an existing school is being increased the new accommodation will be based on the need for additional pupil places and supporting infrastructure (where identified) but not to rectify existing shortcomings within the school through comparison with the adopted space standards.

Further Opportunities

31. The standards shall not be seen as a measure to deter further efficiencies being derived from the skills of the designers in conjunction with the education specialists, or where market opportunities arise through standardisation.
32. Where further reductions are proposed they shall only be accepted on an 'exceptions' basis with the delegated approval of Cabinet by the Director of Environment and Economy in consultation with the Director of Children Education and Families. Such consideration shall take account a robust cost benefit analysis that demonstrates educational requirements are not compromised.

Financial and staff implications

33. The effect of this proposed change, based upon the delivery of a new 2FE primary school, is an 11% reduction in the County Council's current space standards. The cost savings relate to build cost and fees but not external works together with furniture and ICT.
34. Based upon current cost data the total project costs of a 1FE primary school would reduce by approximately £400,000, a 2FE by approximately £600,000 and a 1200 place secondary school by approximately £1.4m.

35. Where a new school is being funded by a new development it is proposed that, in future, the County Council will seek a fixed sum additional element as part of the funding agreement to cover the set-up costs of that school. These costs are estimated to be in the region of £250,000 - £300,000 for a new primary school. If not funded as part of the development agreement they are costs which would be incurred by the County Council. Thus whilst there would be a saving to the developer on the capital cost of a new school, this would be offset in part by the need to cover the set-up costs. However, on balance application of the new standards would reduce the cost to a developer of providing a new school.
36. Operational premises costs, such as utilities and maintenance, faced by new schools will be reduced as a consequence of the changes in space standards.

RECOMMENDATIONS

37. **Cabinet is RECOMMENDED** to:

Approve:

- (a) Adoption of the space standards contained with Annex 2
- (b) Delegation of approval of further reductions on an exceptions basis by the Director of Environment and Economy in consultation with the Director for Children's Services
- (c) That in the case of new schools that are developer funded the County Council will seek a fixed sum to cover the set-up costs.

HUW JONES
Director for Environment & Economy

JIM LEIVERS
Director for Children's Services

September 2013

Contact: Martin Tugwell - Deputy Director (Strategy and Infrastructure Planning)
T: 01865 815113 E: Martin.Tugwell@Oxfordshire.gov.uk