

## **DETAILED PROJECT APPRAISAL**

**APPRAISAL NO. ED 700**

**NAME OF SCHEME:** Wallingford Young People's Centre and Children's Centre

**START YEAR:** 2009/10

**BASIS OF ESTIMATE:** Mouchel estimate based on agreed scheme

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

This project will provide a new purpose designed building which will house a range of support services for children, young people and families in Wallingford and the surrounding area. The new building will include space for:

- Wallingford Young Peoples Centre
- Wallingford Children's Centre
- Office accommodation for support staff working with children, young people and families

Wallingford Young Persons Centre is currently housed in a 1940's building originally constructed as temporary World War II women's land army kitchen. The building is considered unsuitable for its current use and is in need of considerable investment to address repair and maintenance issues.

Children's Centres are "one stop shops" for all parents of young children under five years of age. They provide a range of services and/or information including health, early education, childcare, links to Jobcentre Plus, advice on access to work and training and family support. They are a key link in tackling child poverty and improving outcomes for the youngest children. In the third phase (2008-11), the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) have set Oxfordshire a target of developing a further 16 centres. At the end of phase 3 all areas of the county will be reached by a Children's Centre providing a range of integrated services for children under 5 and their families, to include:

- Early years services
- Family support and parental outreach
- Child and family health services
- Links with Jobcentre Plus

The Children's Centre "hub" will include office space to support the delivery of services across the whole Children's Centre catchment area. Other service providers e.g. maternity services, working with the Children's Centre will be able to hot desk using office space at the centre. The County Council are contracting with Parents And Children Together (PACT) to manage the Children's Centre.

In addition to the above the County Council is undertaking the Better Offices Programme (BOP) which is looking at how to make best use of office

accommodation throughout the County. As part of the BOP initiative staff previously based at 61a High Street Wallingford will also be co-located alongside the Young Persons Centre and Children's Centre.

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

A review of Youth Service Accommodation was carried out during 2005/6. A Youth Service Accommodation Strategy was produced and the results were reported to the Capital Working and Steering Groups in November 2006. The current building is considered to be life expired and 'Unfit for Purpose'. The Corporate Asset Management Plan (CAMP) 2007 – 2010 identifies the *"improvements in the condition and suitability of youth centres"* as a key property objective.

The current building requires substantial repair and maintenance investment to keep it operational. The 'Assessed Need' for the building is approx £110,000, with at least £60,000 being priority repairs. It would not be good use of resources to invest in these repairs in a life expired building.

There are 4196 young people in the age range 13-19 in the Wallingford locality. There are also 2638 young people in the age range 8-12. This project will provide an opportunity for these young people to be actively engaged leading to better outcomes for this cohort.

The Childcare Act (2006) gave a statutory basis for the national Children's Centre programme. Original approval for the development of Children's Centres in Oxfordshire was given at Cabinet meetings on 18 October 2005 and 7 March 2006. The arrangements for Phase 3 Children's Centres were endorsed by the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families 19 February and 7 October 2008.

This new children's centre facility has the potential to benefit 1428 children under 5 and their families. The catchment area covers the towns and rural areas around Wallingford, Crowmarsh, Cholsey and Benson, including Benson RAF base where services will be delivered to support RAF families.

Apart from the current needs identified above, it should be noted that the South Oxfordshire District Council Core Development Strategy is proposing major residential development in Wallingford as well as Crowmarsh and Cholsey. With current submitted and potential planning applications, almost 1,500 extra dwellings could be provided in this area. Such development will add significantly to the local requirements for services.

The new building will provide operational offices for a number of staff relocating through the Better Offices Programme, which facilitated the sale of 61a High Street, Wallingford. These staff are currently located in rented accommodation in Market place Wallingford.

### **3. OTHER OPTIONS**

An initial feasibility study/option appraisal to consider how best to replace the Young Persons Centre was carried out by Property Services/Mouchel in 2006. This established the principle that a new centre could be constructed on the existing site and part of the site could be sold for residential development to generate a 'capital receipt'. Further detailed feasibility work was carried out in August 2007 and a planning application submitted in June 2008. Following this a number of planning concerns were identified which prevented the project moving forward.

Subsequent to the above feasibility work the Phase 3 Children's Centre Programme identified Wallingford as a key location for developing Children's Centre services. An extensive search of land and buildings within the town failed to identify a suitable building or location. The existing Young Persons Centre site in Clapcott Way is considered ideal as it is located close to the area of highest need within the town.

Combining the need to replace the Young Peoples Centre and provide new Children's Centre facilities, as well as including BOP accommodation, in a single new building presents the best option to address all of these needs. Although this co-location will result in no land being disposed of to generate a capital receipt the option has a number of clear advantages:

- A new children's centre will be delivered in Wallingford. A search for sites identified that there are no other realistic options for delivering this requirement in Wallingford within the timescales required;
- It is possible to accommodate all services within one building, which brings cost savings both in terms of reduced build cost as well as ongoing running costs;
- Due to the proposed site layout, there will be savings due to reduced external site costs (no access road, reuse existing playing court, etc);
- The build cost is expected to be cheaper than earlier proposals because the new building is mainly ground floor (with some accommodation in the eaves) rather than the two floor Young Persons Centre originally proposed. This means that simpler, cheaper construction methods can be used;
- the concerns raised during the consultation on the original planning application can be addressed;
- The children's centre funding is secure, whereas given the current market conditions the original proposal to achieve a capital receipt from the disposal of land is at risk. In December 2007 the estimated receipt was reported at £325,000. This estimate was revised in October 2008 to £176,000 and even this could be at risk. This means that the loss of the capital receipt will have a reduced impact upon the viability of the revised proposals. Given that the market is still falling, the revised scheme helps to mitigate the risk of an even lower receipt or no receipt at all.

### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

(i) **Capital**

The estimated cost of scheme, inclusive of all professional fees etc is £1,207,000.

Funding for the Young Peoples Centre was originally identified as follows:

	£
Service and Resource Planning 2007/08 – 2011/12 (Feb 2007)	450,000
Service and Resource Planning 2008/09 – 2012/13 (Feb 2008)	280,000
Better Offices Programme	165,000
Capital Receipt	<u>325,000</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b><u>1,220,000</u></b>

Revised funding sources for the Young Peoples Centre and Children's Centres as follows:

	£
Capital Receipt(s) (Corporate Resources)	857,000
Children's Centre Programme 2008-2011	<u>350,000</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b><u>1,207,000</u></b>

The County Council's Developer Funding Team has been appraised of this project and is now actively seeking S106 financial contributions towards it in respect of current and forthcoming planning applications in the Wallingford catchment area. The potential significant growth in residential development in this area (highlighted in section 2 above) will create further demand on this project, and S106 financial contributions towards it are likely to be secured from any future development. These S106 contributions will be used to repay any OCC forward-funded capital expenditure.

(ii) **Revenue**

The co-location model provides cost benefit and value for money as ongoing facilities management costs will be significantly lower than the same range of services all operating in isolation. Providing a new building will remove a current repair and maintenance liability of approximately £110,000. The new building will be designed to be energy efficient.

As the new Young Persons Centre space in the new buildings is smaller in size to that of the existing building there is not expected to be any increase in revenue costs for the Youth Support Service.

The Children's Centre has a revenue budget guaranteed until 2011. This is derived from a DCSF grant for children's centres. There has been no commitment yet from the Government for continuing funding from 2011, but the national 10 year Childcare Strategy gives firm indications of continued funding.

(iii) **Risk**

An assessment of risk has been carried out by Property Services and the County Council's Property Consultant; Mouchel. A Risk Register is being maintained for the project.

(iv) **Whole Life Appraisal**

The design will make use of appropriate materials and components – balancing the requirement for a non institutional building with that of durability and low maintenance requirements.

The building will be designed to maintain a reasonable degree of adaptability to ensure that future needs can be addressed without excessive cost. Internally a number of the layouts at ground floor will be capable of reconfiguration without affecting the primary structure. The building has the scope for simple extension.

## **5. STAFFING IMPLICATIONS**

There are none for the County Council arising from this report

Staff employed to deliver Children's Centre services will be employed by PACT.

## **6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

It is recognised that the project will not necessarily match the assessment criteria of the Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM). It will however seek to meet those principles and achieve the level of 'Very Good'. The possibility of including environmentally sustainable items such as a sustainable drainage system, a green roof to a section of the building's roof area and solar panels to provide hot water for the children's centre are currently being evaluated by the design team.

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