

BRIEFING NOTE

TO: Children's Services Scrutiny Panel

DATE: 17 December 2009

RE: Building Schools for the Future – Transforming Learning in Walsall

Purpose

Scrutiny Panel has requested a regular update on the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme.

General Update

The BSF team is delighted to report that since our last report to Children's Services Scrutiny Panel, we have achieved our Remit Meeting for the Programme.

The purpose of the Remit Meeting is:

- The main high level meeting that we have with Partnerships for Schools (PfS), Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) and Office of the Schools Commissioner (OSC).
- To establish the BSF remit and bring PfS and DCSF (BSF Team and OSC) together with the local authority.
- To focus on setting strategic objectives and targets as informed by Readiness to Deliver (RtD) assessment and pre engagement process.
- Kicks off local authority within expected delivery timeframe providing RtD has been evidenced. Sets dates to OBC.

Sample Schemes Decision

Further to additional technical analysis of the sites in Wave 6a, a decision has been made on which two schools will be taken forward as Sample Schemes in the Building Schools for the Future Programme.

We engaged the Headteachers on this at in July at our first headteachers' breakfast meeting. At that time there had been a provisional selection of Sample Schemes had been made on the basis of desktop studies (reported to Scrutiny Panel in April 2009). On appointment of our Technical Advisers (Mace), we took the opportunity to validate this provisional selection by carrying out site visits and reviewing existing survey data with Mace. On completion of this exercise, two things emerged:

1. Change in build type requirements for Joseph Leckie and Alumwell

2. Change in selection of Sample Schemes based on technical analysis – from Pool Hayes and Joseph Leckie to Frank F Harrison and Alumwell

I have expanded on these areas below.

1. Build Type Analysis

The build type analysis for Joseph Leckie has been changed to include less new build and more major refurbishment. This has been changed to reflect the recent new build which has occurred on site and the opinion that the original Joseph Leckie buildings (1939 blocks) allow greater opportunities for major refurbishment).

The build type analysis for Alumwell has been changed as the buildings appear to have been generally well maintained and structural elements have a good remaining design life. On this basis, Alumwell now contains proposals for less new build and more major refurbishment.

Original Build Type Analysis:

School	New Build	Major Refurbishment	Minor Refurbishment
Pool Hayes	100%	0%	0%
Joseph Leckie	65%	20%	15%
Alumwell	40%	50%	10%
Shire Oak	25%	50%	25%
Streetly	25%	45%	30%
Frank F Harrison	100%	0%	0%

Revised Build Type Analysis Following Technical Analysis:

School	New Build	Major Refurbishment	Minor Refurbishment
Pool Hayes	100%	0%	0%
Joseph Leckie	45%	45%	15%
Alumwell	30%	60%	10%
Shire Oak	25%	50%	25%
Streetly	25%	45%	30%
Frank F Harrison	100%	0%	0%

2. Sample Scheme Selection

A small number of schools are chosen by the local authority as part of the procurement process and as a cross-section of the type of schools the LEP will aim to deliver. Designs for these schools, known as sample schemes, are developed during the procurement process and form a significant part of the evaluation process to select the private sector partner.

Sample schemes are normally limited to two - one new build / PFI school and one remodelled/refurbished school (sometimes with one SEN as well). Subsequent schools will be designed and delivered by the LEP after the award of the contract.

Key qualities required by Sample Schemes are:

- Minimal risk in delivery (eg logical and coherent phasing, minimised site conditions).
- Good example of early delivery of borough wide education vision (eg addressing schools in need and fitting into wider initiatives).
- Tests the bidders for quality in design, robustness of partnership working and overall approach to delivery.
- Above qualities make schemes attractive to market based on exciting links to wider regeneration and minimised risk.
- Design and Build Samples:
 - Ideally, not more than 40% new build content (to truly test the major refurbishment angle)
 - Good blend of scope between major and minor refurbishment
 - Logical phasing approach achievable
- New Build:
 - More than 75% new build content
 - Logical phasing approach achievable
 - Minimal site conditions / delivery risk

In revisiting the selection of the Samples Schemes the decision is as follows.

New Build (PFI) Sample Scheme:

Pool Hayes was originally chosen as the provisional New Build Sample Scheme. As the only new build option in the original Wave 6a line up, this was a natural choice. With the inclusion of another 100% new build option earlier this year in Frank F Harrison, additional analysis showed that this presented a more suitable sample scheme for new build.

The site at Pool Hayes presents a number of risks which precludes it from being a Sample Scheme:

- Pool Hayes is a split site – detailed feasibility has yet to be carried out as to whether Pool Hayes is a rebuild on its existing site or lower site. This creates too much uncertainty up front.
- If rebuilt on the existing site, this site is densely developed and would require complex construction, decanting and occupation phasing which would be costly and introduces too much disruption to the operation of the school.
- Based on the information to hand the Technical Adviser advised against developing on the lower site because of risks and problems associated with this including, inter alia:
 - Poor access to the site
 - Ecological issues
 - Potential ground issues
 - Relocation of allotments required
 - Potential planning issues of developing on a green space (Section 77)
- Inherent site risks and the uncertainty about both or either of the sites use would introduce too much risk into this as a sample scheme. Heightened perception or actual risk is not attractive to bidders and may provide a skewed approach between bidders making it difficult to evaluate one bid against another.

Frank F Harrison is more suitable as a New Build scheme on the basis of:

- Not originally in Wave 6a but brought in as an indicator of priority of need as a National Challenge school.
- Existing strong links to Mary Elliot School and Hatherton Primary School coupled with BSF investment will make the creation of a new learning village achievable.
- The school is in an area of high deprivation – ie in need of inward investment. Inward investment would be of a great deal of benefit here to address deprivation and educational performance early in the BSF programme.
- The site offers more suitable space to organise construction, decanting and occupation phasing than Pool Hayes. This will be more attractive to Bidders in term of transparency of approach over Pool Hayes.

Design and Build Sample Scheme:

Joseph Leckie was originally selected as the provisional Design and Build (Major and Minor Refurbishment scheme). Having carried out additional technical analysis, Alumwell has now been selected as the Design and Build Sample Scheme. This is explained in more detail below.

The site at Joseph Leckie presents a number of risks that preclude it from being a Sample Scheme:

- The original 65% new build for Joseph Leckie would not have created suitable challenge in terms of a remodelling/refurbishment project, owing to the high amount of new build. The recommended revision in new build puts this at 45% new build.
- Whilst, the accepted amount of new build has been decreased (as recommended by the report), this still only leaves a little over 50% of remodel and refurbishment scope to test the Bidders' response to this form of building type which doesn't present a true challenge of this build type.
- Joseph Leckie offers a degree of site development risk due to a densely developed site with a largely unmaintained brook running through it.

Alumwell presents a number of key features which make it attractive as a bidding opportunity:

- Less development risk attached to the Alumwell site than Joseph Leckie due to its location and space available on site to support construction phasing proposals.
- The school is in an area of high deprivation – ie in need of inward investment. Inward investment would have real impact on deprivation and educational performance early in the BSF programme.
- Alumwell is located next to Junction 10 of the M6 and adjacent to Tempus 10. This puts it in a prime position for joining up with other regeneration initiatives to lever maximum value out of the BSF investment, such as "HealthTec" development on site.
- The revised build mix which reduces the new build to 30% leaves a balance of 70% remodelling and refurbishment scope which provides a good sample design and build scope for Bidders.

3. Communication of Decision

The four headteachers affected by this decision were first telephoned on Friday 4th December by their Transforming Learning Adviser. This has been followed up with a detailed letter (outlining decision as per above) and a visit and/or telephone call to each of the school by the Project Director.

Those schools that were deselected as Sample Schemes appeared to be disappointed by this decision but they are being assured that there is still a lot of work that the BSF team will need to do with them throughout the SfC2, Outline Business Case and throughout procurement to help select the Local Education Partnership (LEP). The BSF will ensure that we maintain engagement with Headteachers throughout the development of the BSF programme.

Some additional support will be made available to those schools being taken through the Sample Scheme process. The exact nature of the support will be determined once the activities and intensity of activities around Sample Schemes and the requirements of the school have been established.

Current Work with Schools

The Wave 6a Headteachers are engaged in a number of activities which have sought to build on the BSF training they have received as part of the National College of Schools Leadership (NCSL) course. This has included:

- “Seeing is Believing” visits to examples of new schools and other design examples
- Learning spaces pilot projects to help trial ideas
- Developing their School Strategy for Change which has been peer reviewed by NCSL colleagues.
- Working with the BSF team to develop out key themes within the Strategy for Change – Part 2.
- Design Workshops with the Client Design Adviser, Technical Adviser and PfS colleagues to develop the site Control Option for each school.

Recommendations (if required)

Scrutiny Panel to note the progress made on the Building Schools for the Future project.

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