

**HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**CABINET  
MONDAY 12 JULY 2004 AT 2.00 P.M.**

**Agenda Item  
No.**

**6**

**REVIEW OF CAPITAL PROJECTS: NORTH EAST WATFORD PRIMARY  
RE-ORGANISATION (PHASES 1 AND 2) AND SOUTH HATFIELD**

Report of the Director of Children, Schools and Families

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Executive Member - Robert Gordon

**1. Purpose of report**

1.1 To seek Cabinet's agreement to allocate additional funds of £1,165,000 (exclusive of Leavesden Green see Sec 2.3 below) to the capital building projects in north east Watford and south Hatfield primary re-organisations.

**2. Summary**

2.1 As agreed by Cabinet on 15 March 2004, the four building projects (three in Watford and one in Hatfield) within these re-organisations will be forward funded from DfES capital. Cabinet agreed that "once the surplus sites are sold (subject to the necessary planning consents and DfES S77 consent for disposal of playing fields) fullest consideration will be given to reimbursing the CSF capital programme for the forward funded sums". Appendix 1 shows an overview of the £40,998,000 DfES Capital Funding and Developers Contributions available.

2.2 As designs for all four schemes have developed as a result of more detailed work, including end user contributions, the initial estimate outlined in the Cabinet paper of 15 March has been exceeded by £1,165,000.

2.3 Additionally, there is now a need to consider postponing the planned timetable relating to the Leavesden Green School building project, in order to establish the legal position in respect of a third party occupation of part of the school's premises and an outstanding "business" rate charge on that part of the school building.

**3. Conclusion**

3.1 The Cabinet is therefore asked to consider approving:

- the delay in implementation of the Leavesden Green School building project, due to the aforementioned exceptional circumstances. This would not affect the LEA's ability to reduce the school to a one form of entry primary school with effect from September 2005
- that the second of the three alternative schemes at Alban Wood proceed at an additional cost of £238,000
- the revised additional costs of the new Watford Primary School and the new south Hatfield Primary School of £327,000 and £600,000 respectively

the above represents an overall increase in the allocation of funding from the DfES funding of £1,165,000. The result of this will be a consequential review of other schemes previously approved and detailed at Sec 9.4.

#### **4. Background**

4.1 The consultation process relating to Phases 1 and 2 of the North East Watford review focused on the need to reduce the high level of forecast surplus primary school places. This review comprised the following three building projects:

- i) Reducing the size of the Leavesden Green School building, to provide sufficient capacity for a one form of entry primary school, including maintaining the occupancy of a third party in part of the school building. This would have been achieved by demolishing the infant part of the existing building and disposing of this part of the site, and by extending and adapting the existing junior part of the building to achieve the necessary capacity.
- ii) Extending and adapting the existing Alban Wood Infant School buildings to provide for a one form of entry primary school, and initially to accommodate approximately 313 pupils which includes the transfer of those pupils currently on roll at Alban Wood Junior School.
- iii) To construct a new build classroom extension to the existing Garston/Lea Farm buildings for a new three form entry primary school, and conduct the necessary amount of alterations within the existing buildings to meet the forecast demand for places, ie 19 classrooms, an ICT suite and a primary support base, and a nursery to accommodate 40 children.

4.2 The disposal part of the strategy, managed by Hertfordshire Property Service (HPS), relates to the disposal of the infant part of the Leavesden Green site, the disposal of Alban Wood Junior School and Meriden Primary School sites.

- 4.3 The re-organisation in South Hatfield resulted from Five Oaks School going into special measures in the context of an area with large numbers of surplus places. The decision to close two primary schools, Hazelgrove and Five Oaks and open a new school on the site of the latter, resulted in a building project to bring Five Oaks up to the standard required. HPS is progressing the disposal of the Hazelgrove site.
- 4.4 During the last few months each individual building project has been progressed by the designers, including the desire to gain input, feedback and acceptance from the schools, as the end users, and below is a summary of the current situation.
- 5.0 Leavesden Green School Scheme:** the original design costed by Mace at the beginning of the year assumed (a) it would be feasible to demolish the stage area of the hall, and reuse this area as an ICT room and (b) it would be feasible to negotiate regaining space from the third party occupier (an independent day nursery) within the required timescales. The cost estimate based on this brief amounted to £1,395,000 with a cost range of £1,300,000 to £1,550,000.

Following more detailed design work by Mace it has been advised that it would not be feasible to demolish the stage area because the upper floor area is constructed of concrete (rather than a timber floor) and it would not be sensible to consider demolition of this.

- 5.1 In the light of these two changes, the design was reviewed and two junior classrooms added to the brief. The cost estimate was adjusted to £1,625,000 (net of £25,000 to be funded from Seed Challenge Fund) with a cost range of £1,550,000 to £1,800,000 and Gateway 1 of the project process was approved.
- 5.2 Additionally, recent developments have raised the possibility of recovering space occupied by a third party. Confirmation of the legal position and the preparation of a cost analysis consequent to this is currently underway.
- 5.3 Therefore to postpone the building programme activity on this site would allow for:
- determination of the third party occupancy and, in the light of this
  - the preparation of a detailed cost analysis relating to the overall site and
  - greater clarity regarding the future of the surplus part of the Leavesden Green School site.

The Head and Governing Body of the School are supportive of this approach.

**6.0 Alban Wood Primary Scheme:** this scheme provides for a one form of entry primary school, whilst addressing the need to accommodate up to approximately one and a half forms of entry reducing down to 210 during the period from 1 September 2005 to 2011.

6.1 The initial scheme (**Scheme 1**), with a current cost estimate of £1,553,000 and a cost range of £1,450,000 to £1,700,000 comprised an extension to the existing building, whilst maintaining the nursery accommodation within the existing nursery building. This scheme included the provision of 500 sq m additional hardplay area.

In addition two double mobiles would be placed on the site (these to be funded from a separate budget) to accommodate the higher numbers of pupils during the transitional years. Three of these spaces would be class bases and the fourth area would provide a studio space which is required under the standards for a one and a half form entry primary school.

6.2 **Scheme 2:** following an initial meeting with a group comprising headteachers, teachers and governor representatives from the Alban Wood Infant and Junior schools, the initial scheme was modified to address end user comments and requirements. The scheme was adapted and principally involved:

- converting the existing detached nursery block to ICT suite, technology room and small group room
- new detached building to provide 2 no 60 sqm classrooms with associated stores and WCs
- adding a nurture room extension adjacent to the repositioned nursery
- an increased area of new hard play of 740 sqm because of the need to provide for a temporarily larger number of pupils on the site.

6.3 In order to allow for the above, this scheme has increased in cost to £1,735,000 with a cost range of between £1,650,000 to £1,900,000.

6.4 **Scheme 3:** the above still does not meet all the aspirations of the end users and in particular they have requested the following:

- a new nursery to be provided so that access to the nurture group room would not be through the nursery
- an enclosed link to the new junior classrooms and converted nursery building rather than a simple covered way
- relocation of the secretary's office so that it would have an external aspect rather than the current internal location.

6.5 If Cabinet wishes to meet certain of the schools' aspirations relating to this scheme, which go beyond the technical requirements for a school of this size, the following would have to be provided:

- a new extension to provide nursery with associated store and WCs.

- converting an existing Infants classroom to become the nurture room, thereby providing suitable access
- a new extension for Head's office and Parents Room, with the remainder of the administration area remodelled for food technology and staff WCs. The secretary's office would be formed from the existing waiting area and the existing library would become the staff room.
- enclosed walkways between permanent buildings
- the two 60 sqm classrooms including stores and WC's to be added as an extension to the converted nursery block (which would provide library and ICT suite).

6.6 The cost estimate, to meet the above would be £1,890,000 with a suggested range of costs of between £1,800,000 to £2,050,000.

6.7 **Conclusion to Alban Wood:** the attached spreadsheet, Appendix 2, provides a reconciliation sheet of the three Alban Wood schemes referred to above.

Officers' recommendation is scheme 2 because this comes closest to compliance with the County standard for a school of this size while meeting some of the school representatives' aspirations.

7.0 **New Watford Primary School:** in February 2004 the cost estimate for this scheme amounted to £3,858,000, with a cost range of £3,700,000 to £4,000,000. Detailed design work has included extensive revisions to the design as the result of very detailed negotiations with school representatives to try to gain a degree of acceptance from them. However, it has not been possible to accommodate all their requests, for example, for one large group room circa 82.5 sqm, or to exceed the standard size for a primary support base. The scheme includes the provision of 19 classrooms, an ICT suite, nurture room, nursery for 40 pupils, and a primary support base. The cost estimate is now £4,185,000 with a cost range of £4,000,000 to £4,300,000, which includes the refurbishment of the existing toilet blocks. This represents a 8.5% increase.

7.1 Representatives from the schools are proposing that the scheme be reduced to 18 classrooms to allow more space for other facilities. The schools have continued concerns and these are being addressed. The officers view is that given the official prediction of pupil numbers it would be imprudent to reduce the scheme to 18 classrooms and therefore the extra facilities for the school would be at an additional cost.

7.2 In addition the planning application has already been submitted based on the 19 classroom scheme and to alter the proposal at this stage could jeopardise the tight target completion date for the project.

8.0 **South Hatfield:** this scheme provides for the upgrading and refurbishment of what was a two form entry infant and junior school to a

two form entry primary school. This re-organisation is proceeding very quickly, the building work has to be completed by January 2005, and the estimates have been considerably refined since the costs were last reported and is now a Class B estimate. In addition, there has been extensive consultation with the existing users of the building, the head designate of the new school and the new school's temporary governing body which has resulted in a significant improvement to the design. In view of the high profile of this new school it is recommended that these improvements be accepted.

- 8.1 Both of these factors have resulted in an increase in costs which was originally £1,750,000 in a Class A estimate range of £1,700,000 to £2,100,000, and is now a Class B estimate of £2,350,000 an increase of 11.9% on the top of the range.

## 9.0 Financial Implications

- 9.1 The costings for the schemes relating to South Hatfield, Alban Wood Primary and the new Watford Primary Schools are summarised in Table 1 below. All these cost estimates are indicative and will not become final figures until tenders are accepted.

Scheme	January 2004 costings 000's	June 2004 costings 000's	Scheme Numbers	Class of Estimate	Recommended scheme 000's
South Hatfield	1,750	2,350		Cost Estimate B	2,350
Alban Wood	1,497	1,553	Scheme 1	Cost Estimate A	
		1,735	Scheme 2	Cost Estimate A	1,735
		1,890	Scheme 3	Cost Estimate A	
New Watford Primary School	3,858	4,185		Cost Estimate B	4,185
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,105</b>				<b>8,270</b>

- 9.2 Table 2 below illustrates the predicted cash flow for each of the three projects being recommended with regard to the cost of each project

Scheme	2003/ 04 000's	2004/ 05 000's	2005/ 06 000's	Total Cost of Schemes 000's
South Hatfield	40	2,260	50	2,350
Alban Wood	600	1,100	35	1,735
New primary School Watford		3,100	1,085	4,185

<b>Total</b>				8,270
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- 9.3 Once the outcome of the outstanding issues on the Leavesden Green School site is known, Table 3 below shows the best and worst case scenarios:

Option relating to Leavesden Green	Cost (net of £25,000 to be funded from Seed Challenge Fund)
Assumes third party will vacate the premises in due course and that meanwhile the project will be delayed for six months, with a target completion date of March 2006	Cost estimate £1475k With a cost range of £1425k to £1675k  Based on broad and indicative cost estimates which do not reflect a design scheme
Assumes the scheme summarised under 5.1 above on the basis that the scheme is delayed for six months, with a target completion date of March 2006	Cost estimate £1650k With a cost range of £1575k to £1825k Based on Cost Estimate A

- 9.4 The following projects which had originally been approved for funding by the March 2004 Cabinet will be delayed and officers recommend that they be a first priority for the 2005/6 Capital Programme, apart from the Wymondley project which is no longer needed.

School	Project and implication	Project value	Cumulative value
Wymondley	New Classroom no longer required	£225,000	£225,000
Tudor Primary	Remodel and extend KS1 (replace mobile) which can be delayed	£450,000	£675,000
Bengeo	Replace mobile, which can be delayed	£225,000	£900,000
Martinswood	Provide new replacement nursery classroom which can be delayed	£275,000	£1,175,000

- 9.5 In considering the above, it is important to note the need to maintain the momentum of the building projects relating to Alban Wood Primary School and the new Watford Primary School schemes if the anticipated target completion date of August 2005 is to be sustained.

## 10.0 Overall conclusion

- 10.1 Officers have worked extremely hard to negotiate these schemes with schools' representatives, some of whom have only become involved since the re-organisations were agreed, in order to attempt to balance

schools' aspirations with the funding available to CSF. Despite the fact that some increases are recommended, the schools will not be entirely satisfied, and officers regret that both additional expenditure is necessary and that schools still feel they have unmet needs.

10.2 The following measures are recommended:

- delay the implementation of the Leavesden Green School building project, due to the aforementioned exceptional circumstances. This would not affect the LEA's ability to reduce the school to a one form of entry primary school with effect from September 2005
- that the second of the three alternative schemes at Alban Wood proceeds at £1,735,000 an increase of £238,000
- that the new Watford Primary School proceeds at a cost of £4,185,000 an increase of £327,000, and
- South Hatfield Primary School proceeds at a cost of £2,350,000 an increase of £600,000
- to postpone the schemes identified under 9.4 to cover the £1,165,000 increased costs described above and to manage the expenditure cash flow within the total annual funding allocations available as at Appendix 1.