

REPORT OF LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

ACQUISITION OF LAND FOR A REPLACEMENT PRIMARY AND NURSERY SCHOOL IN BESTWOOD

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek approval to the acquisition of land on terms outlined in the exempt appendix.

Information and Advice

2. Some information relating to this report is not for publication by virtue of paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. Having regard to the circumstances, on balance the public interest in disclosing the information does not outweigh the reason for exemption because divulging the information would significantly damage the Council's commercial position. The exempt information is set out in the exempt appendix.
3. Bestwood Village is within Gedling District but borders Ashfield District with the main road into the village forming the boundary between the two Nottinghamshire districts. In the last 10 years Bestwood Village has experienced a significant amount of new housing which has attracted young families and more recently Gedling Borough Council's Local Plan has identified land for a further 500 more new houses in the Village. These two instances have resulted in an increased demand for school places at the village primary school.
4. The main school was built in 1878 and additions were made in 1955 and 1956 with an additional area of land being acquired to expand the school in 2007 and 2014.
5. Acute pressure for first admission places in 2013 resulted in the County Council agreeing admissions to the school over Planned Admission Numbers (PAN) for catchment children. A project to increase the capacity to a 210 primary was undertaken in 2014 at a cost of £440,000 which was primarily funded through S106 contributions. In 2015 there was a further increase in first admissions which put pressure on the school for places in excess of 210.
6. The school is now at capacity and is situated on various levels; it also has a churchyard in the middle, separating the KS1 and KS2 blocks which means that the school is effectively delivering education from two sites which creates ongoing problems for both the school's management and families. It is therefore the view of officers that the school is at its optimum and cannot be developed further.

7. Due to new legislation regarding the 30 hour free nursery provision there is also an additional requirement to expand the existing nursery to 39.
8. The County Council has carried out an assessment of all potential sites in and around Bestwood Village which could accommodate a replacement school and it is concluded that land to the north of the existing settlement at Westhouse Farm offers the best opportunity to ensure that a school can be built and operational by 2019. At which point the current sites will be vacated and considered for appropriate alternative uses.
9. Gedling Borough Council have prepared a Local Plan which allocates land at Westhouse Farm (presently identified as Green Belt) for residential development and a new school. Part of this site which is not allocated as Green Belt is the subject of a planning application for housing by Langridge Homes for 101 homes which is due for determination shortly.
10. Langridge Homes Ltd is the owner of the whole Westhouse Farm site. It is presently arable land in agricultural use forming part of a larger landholding which extends to 75 ha.
11. The Gedling Local Plan policy for the Westhouse Farm site (Housing site H12, Policy LPD65) for 210 homes says that 'A new primary school facility of a 1.5ha plot is required on this site which should be located in a central position and adjoin the existing settlement of Bestwood. Financial contributions towards primary and secondary school places are also required based on the pupil numbers generated by the development'.
12. In association with their current planning application to support their development of 101 new homes on the land at Westhouse Farm, Langridge Homes submitted an outline planning application (2014/1343) for a new primary school to be provided on an adjoining 1.5 ha site. In their Planning Statement, Langridge Homes also confirmed that it will be prepared to transfer the primary school land and to make appropriate financial contributions under a S106 Agreement towards the construction of this new school.
13. Negotiations have taken place with Langridge Homes for the purchase of the primary school site and the Heads of Terms have been provisionally agreed as set out in the exempt appendix.

Delivery and Funding of the School

- The proposed project for a replacement school is identified within the current Capital Programme with a budget of £5m to include these proposed acquisition costs.
- A Latest Estimated Cost Report for the proposed replacement school project is scheduled to be presented to December Policy Committee.
- ARC Partnership has been commissioned to deliver the school and have engaged the contractor Kier to develop a detailed feasibility plan for it's delivery. The detailed planning application is anticipated to be submitted in October.

Other Options Considered

14. Consideration has been given to: -

- Do nothing – this would result in the school not being able to provide places for children in the catchment.
- Expand the existing school – there is insufficient space to expand on the existing school
- Expand the school on a third site – this is not acceptable in terms of the school's management and families of the children attending the school
- Build a replacement school on Bestwood Country Park – this site is encumbered with constraints such as its designation as a conservation area; its location in the green belt; poor ground conditions as a result of its previous use as a colliery, including a mine shaft, contamination and its potential stability. The detailed investigation and subsequent work on this site would not meet the timescale of January 2019 when the replacement school is required.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

15. The additional school places are required for January 2019 and cannot be provided other than by a new build replacement school.

16. The existing school site does not have sufficient space to expand and there are no other sites in Bestwood Village other than the proposed site which would meet the timescale of providing the replacement school by the required date of January 2019.

Statutory and Policy Implications

17. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (Public Health only), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

RECOMMENDATION/S

1) That approval is given to the acquisition of land on terms outlined in the exempt appendix.

Councillor Mrs Kay Cutts MBE
Leader of the County Council

For any enquiries about this report please contact: Andrew Stevens 0115 9772085

Constitutional Comments (CEH 21.09.17)

18. The recommendation falls within the remit of Policy Committee under its terms of reference. The report says that the proposed project for a replacement school is identified within the current Capital Programme.

Financial Comments (GB 20/9/2017)

19. The financial implications are set out in the report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

20. None.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

21. Ward(s): Newstead

Member(s): Councillor Chris Barnfather