

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES, EDUCATION AND EARLY HELP SERVICES

TO:	POLICY COMMITTEE		
DATE:	9 APRIL 2018	AGENDA ITEM:	8
TITLE:	THE HEIGHTS SCHOOL TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR JONES	PORTFOLIO:	EDUCATION
SERVICE:	EDUCATION	WARDS:	CAVERSHAM, MAPLEDURHAM
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The report outlines the proposal, and seeks authority to enter into a contract with REDS10 (UK) Ltd to purchase additional temporary accommodation for The Heights School, currently based at Gosbrook Road, Reading.

2.0 RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the proposal to work with the Education Skills Funding Authority (ESFA) to deliver additional temporary accommodation for The Heights School be approved.
- 2.2 That the proposal to enter a contract with REDS10 (UK) Ltd to carry out the design, build, and supply of temporary modular accommodation for The Heights School be approved in the estimated sum of £1.266 million including fees, abnormal costs, in accordance with contract procedure rule 4 (2) (a). The development is subject to gaining planning permission.
- 2.3 That the proposal for the Council to enter into a lease agreement with the ESFA to occupy the modular accommodation be approved.
- 2.4 That approval be given to making an application to the Secretary of State for Education for a General Consent to temporary change of use for part of the Playing Field at St Anne's to accommodate the new building.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 The Council has a statutory obligation to provide school places for pupils presenting and requiring a school place. The criteria for drawing up the Education Capital Programme were established in 2009, of which the top two priorities are:

(a) Create sufficient school places

(b) Meet essential (including statutory) health and safety requirements.

- 3.2 The Council has a statutory duty for place planning and to ensure that there are sufficient places within the Borough, and that these are accommodated across

maintained, academy and free schools. The Council does not have sufficient surplus accommodation local to The Heights to help provide these additional places. Meanwhile the ESFA had conducted its own trawl of available buildings and sites and were unable to secure a private site or building available for the two years involved.

- 3.3 The Heights development is an important provider of school places, with a capacity of up to 350 when full. Without this school, the Council would have to fund further expansion of existing schools, at its own expense; i.e. without ESFA or other grant support. Supporting the temporary extension at The Heights allows us to meet our statutory obligations with regard to the provision of sufficient school places, with the cost to the Council being reduced due to the ability to secure a financial grant towards the cost.

4. THE PROPOSAL

- 4.1 The Heights temporary school buildings, located at Gosbrook Rd, Reading, is able to accommodate the 225 pupils currently on roll along with supporting staff. The current age range is Rec to Year 4. As the school grows to incorporate Years 5 and 6, the current accommodation is insufficient to manage the planned increased roll. The school facility is currently at full capacity and, unless further accommodation is provided, the school will be unable to accept a planned intake of 50 Reception pupils in September 2018. The need for extending temporary accommodation at the school has arisen as a consequence of the time taken to establish a permanent home for The Heights School.

- 4.2 The ESFA continue to seek to develop a new school at Mapledurham Playing Fields. However, the process to secure a suitable agreement and planning permission has been protracted. A permanent school is unlikely to be available within the next two years. As a consequence discussions have been held with the ESFA about developing the additional temporary accommodation on part of the St Anne's playing field and the ESFA have agreed to part fund the cost of the new building, estimated at £1.266m, with a capital grant from the ESFA of £450,000. The estimated fees, charges, and abnormal costs are included within the estimate. The playing fields are owned by the Council and officers have been working with the Birmingham Catholic Diocese and the governors at St Anne's Primary School and have agreement that the local authority can use part of these school playing fields to site the temporary accommodation for The Heights school.

4.3 Option Proposed

- 4.31 In order to meet the required timescale to provide additional temporary accommodation at The Heights by the end of August 2018, it will be necessary for the Council to:
- A. Provide new 2 storey accommodation for 100 primary aged pupils, together with associated administrative and specialist small teaching (breakout) spaces and toilets. This will allow a further two years of pupil intake (50 per annum). The building will be the subject of a lease to the ESFA for the sum of £450k, payable on the signing of the lease at the point of the building being completed in August 2018.
 - B. Ensure that detailed proposals to develop the temporary accommodation at The Heights restricts the impact on neighbouring St Anne's school by ensuring the footprint of the new building, and land taken for circulation and informal play, are kept to the minimum required.
 - C. Gain planning permission in respect of both the continued siting of the existing temporary accommodation, and for the additional new temporary building. A site plan of the proposed development is provided in this report at Annex 1.

- D. Commission and engage REDS10 (UK) Ltd, who built the initial temporary building, to design and build an additional temporary classroom block representing a flexible present and future resource for the Council. The company has the advantage of having detailed knowledge of the site, including relevant surveys and has agreed to provide the new building at costs equivalent to those originally charged to the Education Skills and Funding Agency.
- E. In order to ensure that The Heights has sufficient outdoor space for their pupils, agreement is in place with the adjacent St Anne's to provide playing field requirements of The Heights key stage 1 pupils. Key stage 2 pupils will be able to use the neighbouring Christchurch Playing Fields for sports and play. It is proposed that The Heights use a fenced area of approximately 2150m² at the adjacent Westfield Road recreation ground for informal play during school hours. It would remain fully open to the public outside of this time. The plan at Annex 1 denotes the area involved.
- 4.32 The overall order of cost of this proposal is likely to be in the region of £1.266million when abnormal costs such as the provision of a new power supply, planning conditions and playing field enclosure are included within the overall project scope. The cost to the Council is offset by the agreed capital grant from the ESFA of £450k, payable on completion of the lease agreement. The lease agreement will not restrain the Council in re-using the accommodation elsewhere after the expiry of the lease period.
- 4.33 On completion of use of the building by The Heights School, it is envisaged that the building will be used for further temporary usage, relocated or sold on, depending on the Council's need for temporary accommodation at that time. Likely uses for the building would include the provision of temporary secondary school capacity ahead of the completion of a new permanent secondary school, or additional SEND or primary school capacity.
- 4.4 Other Options Considered
- 4.41 Co-Location Option
- The Council, the ESFA and another local school, Thameside, have examined providing temporary accommodation to allow The Heights to co-locate a year group at Thameside School rather than at the proposed St Anne's site. However, this was acknowledged by both schools to be unworkable.
- 4.42 Do Nothing Option
- To do nothing and adopt a wait and see approach would effectively leave the future intake of 50 children per annum in doubt. Without additional accommodation the school cannot effectively continue to admit pupils in year R from September 2018 onwards. The Heights is a Free School, established through parental request by the Government, and whilst the Council would want to place 50 children per annum at the school, the Government is not obliged to provide those places if it does not have the means to do so. Not to provide the additional spaces will also leave the local authority vulnerable in being able to offer sufficient primary school places to parents requesting them.
- 4.43 The financial implications section of this report refers to proposed purchase of the new temporary school buildings. The recommendation set out in this report seeks to secure approval to purchase the buildings (through capital expenditure) on the basis that there is a reasonable likelihood that the units will find alternative use when no longer required for The Heights temporary School.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 5.1 This proposal will ensure that The Heights temporary school can continue to provide 50 Year R pupil places in the short term. In doing so, this helps deliver the Council's statutory obligation to provide sufficient Primary pupil places within the borough.
- 5.2 It is intended that all Reading Children are educated within buildings that are fit for purpose within settings fit for learning.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 6.1 The planning application will trigger the formal planning consultation open to all interested parties.
- 6.2 On the 28th March when the policy papers are open to the public, the Council will provide a press release to explain the position, the need, and also the next steps. The school will release a letter to parents on the same day signed by the headteachers of The Heights and St Anne's schools confirming the points raised in the press release. Ward councillors will be given a brief update prior to the public release.
- 6.3 Matters of public interest and concern will be addressed, particularly those relating to vehicle access and movements, public access to the green spaces outside of school hours and general amenity.

7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 Admissions to The Heights School are governed through the statutory published admission criteria for the school.
- 7.2 The design and build of the new temporary block will be undertaken observing current legislation to ensure compliance where required.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The Council has a statutory duty to provide a school place for every child of statutory school age, resident in the borough who seeks one. The admissions code suggests that the maximum time a child should be out of school is limited to 20 school days.
- 8.2 It is proposed that the Council enter into a contract for the design, build and supply provision of temporary classroom and administrative accommodation' in accordance with contract procedure rule 4 (2) (a) whereby the contract is required as a matter of urgency given the time constraints required in this case, where in this case it is intended to enter into contract with REDS10 (UK) Ltd, who were responsible for provision of the existing temporary school building at The Heights and this will bring demonstrable benefits in programme, and value for money. REDS10 are aware of the site, ground conditions and environment and would be able to supply the accommodation to an appropriate specification in the time available.
- 8.3 It is proposed that the planning application and contract administration is undertaken in conjunction with the Reading Hampshire Property Partnership.
- 8.4 As the building is to be built on school playing field, and then leased to the ESFA this requires formal approval from the Secretary of State for Education under Section 77 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, via a general consent for the temporary arrangement.

8.5 Heads of Terms for the lease of the new building to the ESFA have been agreed, and the lease agreement will not restrain the Council in utilising the accommodation for any required purpose after the expiry of the lease period.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The Council’s capital budget has provision to enable the purchase and installation of the modular building at The Heights, and it would cost, an estimated £1.266m, with the ESFA providing a grant of £450k. The net cost to the Council would be £816k, which could be met from the Council’s capital budget

9.2 The capital funding implications are provided in the attached table. At this stage it is not possible to be definitive about the project out turn cost, but the single biggest element, the cost of the temporary building is fixed at £1.216 million. Remaining costs are associated with allowance for abnormal costs to include a new power supply, planning requirements, and bringing part of the playing field at Westfield Road Recreation Ground into use for The Heights.

Capital Programme reference from budget book: page line	2017/18 £000	2018/19 £000	2019/20 £000
Proposed Capital Expenditure	25	1,241	0
Funded by Grant, ESFA Basic Need	25	1,241	0
Total Funding	25	1,241	0

9.3 There is provision in the Education Capital Programme in the 2018/19 financial year.

9.4 The cost to the Council of providing 100 pupil places through this proposal is in the order of £12,660 per pupil place. The equivalent current benchmarked cost of providing a permanent new primary school place is in the order of £19.5k per pupil place.

9.5 On the basis of an ongoing requirement for this accommodation purchase represents best value.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 Education Capital Programme 2015-2018, Policy Committee November 2015

10.2 Capital Programme 18/19, Policy Committee February 2018

11.0 RISK

11.1 This project is being set up with a Risk Register to capture and address all the risks associated with delivering the new temporary Heights School accommodation.

11.2 Headline risks to date include

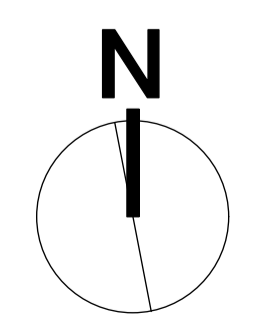
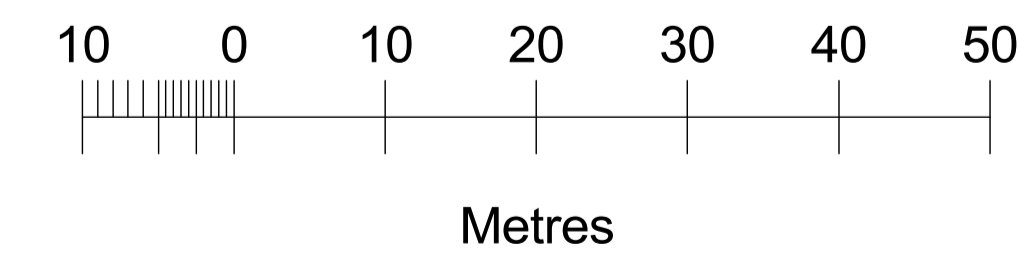
- planning permission,
- the need for full cooperation by neighbouring St Anne’s School,
- upgrading the power supply to the school,
- and the challenging programme given the need to open the extension for the beginning of the academic year



- KEY**
- ▶ Existing Vehicular Entrance
 - ▶ Existing Pedestrian Entrance
 - ▭ Site Development Boundary
 - ▭ Site Ownership Boundary
 - tree removed
 - Existing Chain link Fence
 - 1.2m timber picket fence, natural finish
 - 2.1m steel weldmesh fence, powder coated green

NOTES

- 1 Proposed 2 storey temporary classroom block
- 2 Form new opening in brick wall, steel gate and macadam path
- 3 Hardlandscaping associated with new block (macadam)
- 4 Area of park to be sectioned off for school use only (2165m2 for informal soft play)
- 5 Formation of temporary opening in chain link fence for contractors access



Notes

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Planning

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Property Services

PROJECT
The Heights Primary School Expansion on Temporary Site

SHEET CONTENTS
Proposed Site Plan

SCALE	DATE	DRAWN	CHKD.	DRAWING No.	REVISION
1000 @A3	21.03.18	MJC	RB	E03620-A-PL-1020	