

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Executive Director of Educational Services

Educational Services Committee: 15 May 2013

Subject: Regeneration of the Schools Estate: Our Lady and St Patrick's High School

1. Purpose

- 1.1** This report asks that members approve processes required to allow the Council to proceed with a project to construct new buildings and campus to replace the existing Our Lady and St Patrick's High School (OLSP).

2. Recommendations

- 2.1** It is recommended that the Educational Services Committee:

- a) approve the construction of a new school building and campus for Our Lady and St Patrick's High School;
- b) agree that the Council will comply with Scottish Government funding conditions;
- c) note that the project will be procured through Hub West Scotland and authorise the Executive Director of Educational Services in consultation with relevant officers to progress the project to conclusion;
- d) note that Posties Park has been identified as the most appropriate site following a desk-top feasibility study;
- e) authorise that site investigations be undertaken on the Posties Park site and on other high scoring alternative sites, these investigations to be funded from the Capital Programme;
- f) note that, following completion of site investigations, and further investigation regarding the potential need for a footbridge, a further report will be tabled at a future Educational Services Committee detailing the results of the investigations and seeking authority to commence statutory consultation under terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010; and
- g) authorise the Executive Director of Educational Services, in consultation with the Executive Director of HEEDS, the Head of Finance and Resources and the Head of Legal, Democratic and Regulatory Services to procure the necessary technical, legal and financial support through the Scottish Futures Trust (SFT) Framework Agreement.

3. Background

- 3.1** The Schools Estate Management Plan submitted to Scottish Government in July 2012 stated that O.L.S.P was the number one priority project. This is the last mainstream Secondary School that remains to be rebuilt under the Secondary School Regeneration Programme and the Council recognises the long term educational benefits which would accrue from the replacement of the current building with a fit for purpose new-build.
- 3.2** A bid was submitted in July 2012 to Scottish Futures Trust (SFT) requesting 66% funding towards the project. This bid was successful and notification was received in September 2012 offering grant approval. It should be noted that whilst the Council's contribution towards lifecycle costs will be by way of revenue stream over the life of the project and will therefore require to be met through a unitary charge payment to a developer/operator in much the same way as the Council's other secondary schools. However, unlike current PPP schools, only the repair, maintenance and lifecycle of the building (known as Hard FM) will be conducted by the operator and no staff or other functions eg janitorial Functions are envisaged as transferring to the operator.
- 3.3** It is a Scottish Government funding condition that this project is procured through Hub West Scotland. As part of this procurement approach West Dunbartonshire Council is being encouraged to work collaboratively to procure the project with East Renfrewshire Council which was also successful in gaining grant funding for Barrhead High School. The benefits of such working arrangements mean that there will be a joint design team and one contractor which will deliver a single supply chain and construction teams.
- 3.4** As part of a process to identify the site for the new school, a site feasibility process began in November 2012 where an initial 4 sites were considered. In March 2013 a further 3 sites were also considered and a full desktop feasibility was carried out. The sites were:
- Existing School Site
 - Notre Dame Site
 - Carvill Site
 - Havoc Site
 - Posties Park Site
 - Argyll Park Site
 - Jamestown Site
- 3.5** Many different factors were taken into account when deciding the priorities to be assessed. These included area wide developments, ownership and local plan, legislation, additional surveys, public acceptance, location, vehicular, pedestrian, cycle network, parking, additional road works, services, construction, site boundary, sustainability, adjacencies, outdoor amenity and pitches. Appendix 1 (risk and opportunity score) details the individual section results and overall scores

3.6 In anticipation of Committee approval to proceed and because of SFT timelines, an invitation to tender was issued to 3 architectural practices with a tender return date of 19 April 2013. Interviews were held on 24 April 2013 with the appointment of the successful architectural practice on 25 April 2013. This company will be the lead designer for both OLSP and Barrhead High School. The remaining design team will be appointed over the next 4 weeks and this will include Mechanical/Electrical, Civils/Structural and Quantity Surveying.

3.7 Funding for this project was approved in February 2013 within the 10 year Capital Programme totalling £22.5 with a site start planned for financial year 2014/15.

4. Main Issues

4.1 The site selection process has not been straightforward in terms of availability of suitable sites within the area. The list of sites selected as part of the feasibility study included sites within WDC ownership and sites within private ownership.

4.2 Details of the various sites and the scoring for each site following a technical feasibility evaluation are provided in Appendix 1. As can be seen, Posties Park emerged as the preferred site in technical terms. The site is also attractive in educational terms and offers significant regeneration opportunities, given its proximity to Dumbarton Town Centre.

4.3 It should be noted that within the Local Plan the site is currently zoned for the retention of public open space; the development of a school project on the site would involve loss of open space and free access to the current sports pitches. The loss of general open space may be considered a significant departure from the Local Plan, and in addition to the Council having an interest in the development, the proposal would also require to be referred to Scottish Government Ministers.

4.4 As the proposal on Posties Park is a recent option, the development of the site for a school was not highlighted in the Main Issues Report for the new Local Development Plan. It is unlikely that the site could be technically proven as suitable in time for it to be included in the Proposed Local Development Plan which is at an advanced stage of preparation.

4.5 Given the tight project timescales the Proposed Local Development Plan is unlikely to be adopted before the planning application is submitted and determined and would be considered a material consideration. The new school would therefore be determined against the present adopted Local Plan.

4.6 Other planning related matters include: the potential impact on nature conservation interests and the water environment; minimal potential loss of trees; design with regard to the impact on the setting of Dumbarton Town Centre and waterfront, Dumbarton Castle and the River Clyde coast; potential

contamination of site; and impact of existing houses near the proposed development.

- 4.7** It should also be stressed that the technical site assessment was done as a desk top exercise. Detailed ground investigations will require to be conducted to establish that the site is suitable for the construction of a 1000 pupil secondary school. As Posties is only considered to be the preferred site at this stage, the intention is to instruct detailed site investigation surveys on the other high scoring sites. The results of these surveys will allow any difficulties with the Posties Park site to be identified and, if these are substantial, will provide comparative results for other possible sites.
- 4.8** The Roads Section within HEEDS has been consulted during the overall site selection process and has identified some significant issues in terms of infrastructure upgrades at Posties Park which would require to be further explored. It should be noted that the footprint of the school development is at a level that would avoid flooding. However pedestrian and vehicular access to the site would be across areas susceptible to flooding. This would be a concern to the Council as the local flood authority and to SEPA.
- 4.9** Junction, carriageway and footway improvements would be required to make the school safely accessible by road. A secondary/emergency means of escape would be required to allow the site to be accessible during a flooding event or in the event of disruptive road works on the sole means of access, with the most likely option through Levensgrove Park.
- 4.10** Scottish Planning Policy requires uses which generate significant travel to have access to be no more than 400 metres from public transport networks. Following further consultation with Roads and Planning Services it may be a requirement that a footbridge linking the school development to the Town Centre be included within the project. It should be noted that an estimated cost of such a pedestrian footbridge is £3.0M, that this has not been accounted for within the project or the capital programme to date and that the Council would require to fund the capital costs of this additional development..
- 4.11** The economic benefits to the town centre could be significant if Posties Park and the surrounding area could be connected directly to the Town Centre by means of the new footbridge. The footbridge would provide access to public transport services available in the Town Centre. Environmentally, the benefits of encouraging users of the site to walk to the Town Centre would be considerable while improving access to Levensgrove Park and the Sustrans national cycle network.
- 4.12** It should also be noted that the Posties Park site is the most attractive site in educational terms, given its town centre location and the amount of space for outdoor sports provision.
- 4.13** As previously indicated, statutory consultation for the construction of the new OLSP under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 will be required as the preferred location is not on the current school site. This consultation

would be conducted after completion of the ground condition technical surveys referred to in paragraph 4.7.

- 4.14** As there is a current proposal to upgrade the running track on the existing Posties Park funded by Sports Scotland, agreement will be required to transfer this funding to the schools project. The design of the external facilities will ensure that a like for like running track is included to satisfy funding conditions. External sports facilities at the school will be available for use by the public outwith school hours.
- 4.15** It should be noted that there is a limit on funding from the Scottish Government and that the funding matrix level must not be exceeded. It is important that the design team considers all recently completed school designs including the secondary schools reference design supported by SFT.
- 4.16** As members will be aware, the Scottish Pipe Band Championships are held at Posties Park. If Posties Park is confirmed as the school site, alternative locations will be investigated for the 2014 and 2015 Pipe Band Championships and for subsequent years if the Council is successful in retaining the championships.
- 4.17** It should also be noted that the Community Health and Care Partnership (CHCP) is considering the Posties Park site as a possible location for a new large Care Home and Day Care Centre in Dumbarton. While there would appear to be sufficient room on the site to accommodate both the CHCP facility and the school, and while such a development would further enhance the regeneration opportunities, a proposal to construct two large buildings on the site would raise significant additional ground works and planning issues.

5. People Implications

- 5.1** These are complex projects and the Council will require to employ additional human resources in the form of consultants and/or secondees to assist, for example, with architectural, planning, legal and educational issues and to deal with the large amount of paperwork likely to be generated by the two statutory consultation processes. These requirements have been factored into the capital sum allocated to the project. The SFT has established a framework of professional advisers to assist with these processes.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1** The sums identified in the Capital Programme approved by Council on 6 February are anticipated to be sufficient to cover the costs of the OLSP project.
- 6.2** The capital cost of the OLSP project is £22.5m (£14m from the Scottish Government and £8.5m from the Council's Capital Programme) with the Scottish Government element being paid by way of a revenue contribution to a unitary charge over the lifespan of the project.

- 6.3** It is anticipated that the sale of the current OLSP school site for housing could generate a capital receipt of £1.25m. This figure is not included in the capital programme agreed in February 2013, as at that point it was not clear whether the existing site would not be used for the replacement school.
- 6.4** Part of the Conditions of Grant Funding grant from Scottish Government requires the Council to ensure that life cycle costs (Hard F.M) are budgeted for. Once these costs are known they will be incorporated into the revenue budget to ensure compliance with the grant offer.
- 6.5** As indicated in paragraph 4.10, the construction of a footbridge across the Leven between Posties Park and the town centre would be estimated to cost approximately £3.0m. This sum has not been accounted for in the Capital Programme and would not be eligible for revenue support from the Scottish Government as part of this project. It is noted that the requirement for a footbridge as part of this project requires further clarification to a future Committee and until this is established there is no requirement to revise the capital plan.

7. Risk Analysis

7.1 The key risks are as follows:

- the unknown outcome of statutory consultation as required by Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act;
- the capacity of Hub West Scotland, a relatively new organisation, to deliver on multiple procurement projects;
- securing of planning permission;
- ground conditions;.
- costs of development and operation over the franchise period require to be verified; and
- funder support is uncertain in the current economic climate.

7.2 These risks will be mitigated by the following means:

- a consultation process which fully complies with the terms of the 2010 Act and which builds on the experience of Councils which have carried out similar consultations since 2010;
- effective project management and governance;
- the allocation of sufficient human and other resources to the project; and
- detailed ground conditions surveys at Posties Park, Argyll Park and the existing school site.

8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

- 8.1** An Equalities screening indicated a positive impact on the young people affected by the project.

9. Consultation

- 9.1** As detailed elsewhere in this report, statutory consultation under the terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 will require to be conducted.
- 9.2** The project has been subject to extensive discussion by the Strategic Asset Management Group and the Corporate Management Team.
- 9.4** Legal Services, the Section 95 Officer, and the Executive Director of Housing Environment and Economic Development have been consulted on the content of this report.

10. Strategic Assessment

- 10.1** The OLSP project will make a significant contribution to the delivery of the Council's strategic priorities of Economic Regeneration and Improved Outcomes for Children and Young People.

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Date: 30 April 2013

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Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Risk and Opportunity Score Summary (OLSP) Appendix 2: High level project plan
Background Papers:	Equalities Impact Screening Council Report 6 February 2013: 10 Year Capital Programme Desk top site assessments by JM Architects (copy in members' lounge)
Wards Affected:	Wards 1, 2 and 3