

## Saddleworth School, Oldham

<b>Title:</b>	Frequently Asked Questions
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### 1. Background

Saddleworth School is an 11 – 16 age range 1,350 place secondary school in the borough of Oldham currently located in Uppermill village.

The school is to be rebuilt under the Government's Priority School Building Programme (PSBP) which was established to address the needs of those schools in the worst condition across the country. The existing school is made up of 11 blocks of accommodation, most of which are in a poor state of repair.

The new school will have capacity for 1,500 pupils.

The PSBP is being delivered by the Education Funding Agency (EFA), an executive agency of the Department for Education.

The school was originally earmarked to be replaced under the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme. The current site is very constrained, with limited land upon which to build new school facilities. As part of the BSF programme, Oldham Council procured the services of Halliday Meecham who carried out an options appraisal and concluded that redeveloping the school on the existing site would be expensive and disruptive. It identified a new site at Diggle, approximately 2km away, upon which to locate the new school but the BSF programme was then terminated in 2010.

After it was confirmed that Saddleworth School would be part of the PSBP, all parties looked at viable site options with the aim of delivering a new, fit for purpose school and a facility the whole community could use.

In April 2014, Oldham Council completed legal agreements in principle to potentially buy land at the former WH Shaw Pallet Works in Diggle if it was confirmed as the preferred site. This option proposed to site the new school on land at the front of this site, adjacent to Huddersfield Road.

In July 2014, the Council's Cabinet then approved a new option at Diggle. This was to complete legal negotiations to purchase a different plot at the rear of the site.

Further to the feasibility study to identify and review the options available to address the significant need at Saddleworth School, the option identified as offering the best value was rebuilding the school on the area to the rear of the former WH Shaw Pallet Works in Diggle.

This scheme will see the industrial buildings cleared to make way for the new school building, sports hall and ancillary buildings, and be more sympathetic to the local environment. Green Belt land at the site would be used for sports pitch provision only.

Oldham Council has already concluded the necessary legal agreements to enable it to complete the purchase at any time in the forthcoming months but this will only be done if and when Interserve – the construction partner selected by the EFA for this project – obtains planning permission for the proposed development.

The next steps will now see detailed design meetings taking place between Oldham Council, Saddleworth School, the EFA and Interserve. These will take at least eight weeks. The plans that are currently available in the EFA Feasibility Study confirm that it is possible to build and develop a school on the former WH Shaw Pallet Works in Diggle. During these design meetings Interserve will develop the actual design for the new school. This may differ from the plans presented in the Feasibility Study but will be contained within the identified site area. These designs will then be consulted upon with the local community prior to any planning application being submitted. This will be submitted via the normal planning process and there will be a formal, statutory consultation period prior to the Local Planning Authority making its decision.

Oldham Council has committed to carrying out the necessary highways improvements needed to make this site work for a new school. Officers will draw up a series of vital and detailed works that would be needed in the Diggle area including;

- carriageway and footpath widening works;
- the introduction of a School Safety Zone;
- the potential development of a residents' car park; and
- fencing work and widening of the access road down to the pallet works.

Oldham Council will submit a planning application for this ahead of the planning application to be made by Interserve for the new school development. This will again be fully consulted on to ensure that the proposed scheme addresses public concerns, especially those regarding highways pressures.

If planning approval is obtained, Saddleworth School, Oldham Council, the EFA and Interserve will develop the details of the project and enter into building contracts to enable the school to be constructed. It is currently envisaged that the new school could open in Easter 2017.

## 2. Frequently Asked Questions

### 2.1. Funding

#### How is the school being funded?

The new school will be delivered as part of the Government's Priority School Building Programme (PSBP) which was established to address the needs of the schools in worst condition across the country.

#### Is the project at risk if the Government changes in May?

The present Government has demonstrated its priorities and shown it is committed to the PSBP. However, we cannot predict the priorities that a different future Government may have for the use of available capital resources.

#### How is the construction of the building being managed?

The construction of the new school buildings is being managed by the Education Funding Agency (EFA), an executive agency of the Department for Education. A project team has been appointed by the EFA and this team will manage the design and build processes.

The EFA has selected a contractor from their Contractors Framework. On this project Interserve is the contractor that will design and construct the new school.

#### How was the contractor chosen for this scheme?

The PSBP is being delivered using the EFA Contractors Framework. This framework was established in line with EU Procurement Regulations.

Contractors on the Framework were invited to tender for the design and construction of the North West 3 PSBP batch of schools. This batch of schools contains Saddleworth School. Through that process, Interserve was appointed as the preferred contractor for this batch.

#### What is being funded by the Education Funding Agency and how much funding is available?

The EFA is funding the building of the new school and all the associated costs relating to the ICT network, fixed furniture and equipment, general sports facilities and landscaping.

Oldham Council is funding works associated with the highways and access requirements and artificial sports pitch provision as identified in the Feasibility Study. The Council will also purchase/assemble the site for the school.

## **2.2. Site location**

### **Was a replacement school on the Saddleworth School site considered?**

The construction of a replacement Saddleworth School on the existing Uppermill site has always been an option and has been fully considered.

A Feasibility Study was undertaken which looked at four delivery options: an option to replace the building in its current location at Uppermill; an option to replace the building on its current sporting facilities; an option to site it on the frontage plots at the former WH Shaw Pallet Works off Huddersfield Road; and the option eventually chosen, to construct the school on land to the rear of that Diggle site, replacing dilapidated industrial buildings.

### **Would a replacement school fit on the Saddleworth School site?**

A new 1,500 place school would fit on the existing school site, however it would not meet current guidelines for the size of site for a secondary school.

Rebuilding the school on its current site would also mean extensive disruption to the school during a phased construction programme and it would mean access to teaching facilities would be disrupted.

The existing Saddleworth School site measures 11 acres although this includes several areas that would be unusable due to site levels and topography, particularly towards Pickhill Brook.

The chosen site at the former WH Shaw site would provide up to 18.11 acres of usable space.

### **Why were the public not consulted about the choice of the Diggle site?**

The identification of sites available for the provision of a new Saddleworth school is the responsibility of the Local Authority. These choices are then offered to the EFA to undertake its detailed Feasibility Study.

Formal public consultation for the construction of the school on the preferred site will be undertaken by Interserve, the contractor, prior to it submitting a planning application. Oldham Council must also undertake a statutory public consultation – as the local planning authority – once that is submitted.

### **Are buildings being developed in the Green Belt?**

The EFA Feasibility Study preferred option for the provision of the new school is at the rear of the WH Shaw Pallet Works site in Diggle.

In the control option that the EFA has developed for this site, the school buildings, parking and bus turning are all within the curtilage of the Pallet Works site. However grass sports pitches and artificial sports pitch provision for the school may be provided by the use of

Green Belt land. This will be developed further during the design of the scheme by the contractor and consulted on as outlined above.

## **What Highways and Access Works will be undertaken as part of the construction of the new school?**

It is well recognised that there is a need to improve accessibility at the preferred site in Diggle.

Meetings have taken place with representatives from the Highways Authority and a series of works have been suggested that will help mitigate the impact of the school and improve traffic flow for all Diggle residents.

Details of these works will be shared and could include:

- introducing parking restrictions,
- the expansion of existing parking laybys on Standedge Road to provide an early drop off,
- widening the carriageway along parts of Huddersfield Road,
- widening pedestrian footpaths along parts of Huddersfield Road to ensure that pupils can continue to walk safely from the neighboring villages and early drop off points
- the introduction of a School Zone to ensure that the carriageway widening does not result in traffic increasing their speed,
- Widening and provision of footpaths on the access road to the Pallet Works site,
- This would be in addition to the parent drop off, bus turnaround etc., which would be included within the site curtilage.

Oldham Council will submit a Planning Application for the highway works associated with the project and will deliver these works. The contractor's application for Planning Permission for the new school will include a Green Travel Plan which will be prepared in co-ordination with the School and Oldham Council.

## **If the Council can fund the cost of the highway works for the Diggle site, why can't it fund the additional costs of the school remaining on the existing Saddleworth School?**

The cost of funding the works required for the school to stay on the existing site is likely to be significant. It will include the need for extensive temporary accommodation and funding a longer construction programme as the works will need to be phased to keep the current school operational.

The current site does not meet existing guidelines on the size of site appropriate for a secondary school.

Oldham Council is looking to acquire part of the former WH Shaw Pallet site by way of a land swap using the existing Saddleworth School site to ensure best value for money. Given current valuations this would provide a capital receipt which would then be used to fund highways improvement works in Diggle.

## **What is proposed for the existing school site in Uppermill if the replacement school is built in Diggle?**

The existing owner of the former WH Shaw site would acquire the existing Saddleworth School site once it is vacated.

The developer would be responsible for demolishing the existing buildings and any development on this site would require planning approval in the normal way.

## **Which options were considered by the Education Funding Agency?**

Four options were considered as part of the EFA's Feasibility Study:

- Option 1 – Diggle green field site. This option locates a new school building on Greenfield land at the frontage land of the former WH Shaw Pallet Works site adjacent to Huddersfield Road and to the west of Diggle Brook.
- Option 2 – Diggle pallet works site. This option locates a new school building on land east of Diggle Brook and remote from Huddersfield Road.
- Option 3 – Uppermill existing location. This option locates a new building on the existing site in Uppermill, utilising an area near to the entrance currently occupied by existing school buildings.
- Option 4 – Uppermill playing field. This option locates a new building on the existing site in Uppermill, utilising the existing playing fields, which are at the north east of the site on a plateau and remote from the entrance to the site.

## **Why have you chosen the Diggle Pallet Works site?**

The EFA undertook an options appraisal which reviewed the advantages and disadvantages of four sites. The criteria considered included:

- Estimated Cost
- Buildability / Construction
- Teaching / Learning
- Programme
- Statutory Issues
- Ecology
- Operational issues
- Public Perception and Opinion

This appraisal resulted in Option 2 – the provision of a new school on the rear of the WH Shaw Pallet Works site in Diggle – being identified as the preferred option to take forward.

The advantages of this option may be summarised as follows:

- It has significant benefits during construction with no disruption to education for the period of the build.
- it keeps construction work at a clear distance from staff and students.
- It reuses the former WH Shaw site and enables the replacement of a dilapidated site with a new educational facility.
- Although not included within the proposal the option supports the redevelopment and setting of the Grade II Listed building.

- It has a setting which is screened by established trees and is respectful of the Diggle Valley and brook, while also providing much needed educational infrastructure.
- It is a larger more accessible site, with more sports facilities that are largely adjacent to each other, and teaching facilities located in one main block.
- Associated highway improvements to be implemented by Oldham Council will benefit the rural community and residents near to the school in Diggle.

### **What are the issues that make the existing school site not possible?**

Whilst the replacement school could be rebuilt on the existing site it should be noted that, due to the phasing required, the provision of temporary accommodation and a requirement for several decants, the construction period for this option will be extended.

Maintaining an operational school within and around a construction site would provide a challenge in terms of noise, dust and loss of facilities resulting in significant disruption to the school and consequential detrimental effect on the education of the students for a substantial period of time.

The EFA also has concerns regarding the safety of staff and students during construction of a new building on the existing school site.

Surveys have indicated that there may be poor ground conditions in some areas of the existing school site which will increase the complexity of the build and the costs are projected to be significantly higher for both options reviewed for this location.

## **2.3. Design**

### **Who is responsible for the design of the building?**

The EFA has prepared a 'control option' which demonstrates that a new school building could be accommodated on the preferred site.

Interserve, the construction partner, will prepare a detailed design and make a planning application.

### **Can Oldham Council, Saddleworth School and the public influence the design?**

Interserve has not yet commenced the detailed design for the new school.

Oldham Council and Saddleworth School will have design meetings with Interserve and the EFA. The School's Technical Group will also be able to input into the design and once all parties are happy with them, these will be shared with the public over the course of a number of weeks as part of a consultation exercise. This will be prior to any planning application being made.

Statutory consultation would also be carried out by the Planning Authority once the planning application has been submitted.

### **How many storeys will the new school building be?**

The final design solution is not known.

The 'control option' in the Feasibility Study suggest a building which takes account of the topography of the site, that being a part two and part three storey building.

### **Will the building be detrimental to the setting of the Grade II listed clock tower?**

The impact of the new building on the setting of the Listed Building will be a planning consideration and an issue that the applicant will need to address through effective discussions with English Heritage who are likely to be a consultee to the application.

The development of the school will arguably result in a better setting for the listed building. The likely result is that Oldham Council would retain responsibility for the building and look at various funding options and uses that could safeguard the property for future years.

### **Will the sports pitches have floodlights?**

The school is keen to allow the local community to use the facilities onsite. In order to allow this, it is likely that any artificial sports pitches would need to have floodlighting. If this is the case, it is likely that a planning condition would limit the opening hours of the pitches to protect neighboring homes against any noise and light pollution.

## **Is there a risk of flooding from either Diggle Brook or the nearby Huddersfield Canal?**

In January 2010, Oldham Council commissioned JBA Consulting to produce a Hybrid Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA).

The report advises that: “The Diggle Brook flows through the Diggle School site; however, the risk from this small watercourse is estimated to be low. The sequential approach to development layout should be applied within the site so that the most vulnerable development is located away from the watercourse. The adds that “whilst the actual risk to Diggle School from Diggle Brook is low, the residual risk from the Huddersfield Canal is more significant, as it lies on higher ground to the east of the site”.

Initial flood risk assessments have been completed as part of the Feasibility Study and costs for appropriate technical solutions included within the budget. The feasibility proposal includes the provision of gabion protection to the eastern side of Diggle Brook to alleviate issues with flooding to the playing fields. This will involve raising the bank on this side by about 1m in height, together with further regrading of the playing field area.

The exact technical solution will not be known until the contractor develops the actual design for the school and its flood mitigation measures. The approach to flood mitigation will form part of the Planning Application which would be considered by the Planning Authority and Environment Agency

## **Will the development and hardstanding result in increased risk of flooding downstream in Uppermill?**

In respect to the development and any associated new hardstanding (tarmacked and concreted areas), the impact of run off can be effectively managed through appropriate drainage systems. The Hybrid SFRA report itself acknowledged that “all development proposals should look at opportunities to incorporate SUDS to reduce the risk of surface water flooding (Sustainability Appraisal indicator). Surface water runoff from these sites should not increase as a result of development and not discharge into the combined sewer system.” This will be developed by Interserve as part of the integrated design solution they will develop for the school and form part of the Planning Application.

## **Will the present sewage and drainage system be upgraded?**

The EFA technical advisors have reviewed the potential effect of the development on sewers, surface water and flooding. Costs for appropriate measures have been provided in the budget. The contractor will undertake their own surveys and will design a solution appropriate in consultation with the utility companies and other stakeholders.

## **What will be done to protect the current habitat and ecology?**

Initial surveys have been undertaken as part of the EFA’s feasibility study including ecology, great crested newts, breeding bird and bat surveys. Funding has been allocated to address any concerns raised by the surveys and further bat surveys will be undertaken before any of the existing buildings are readied for demolition. The contractor will undertake their own surveys and will design a solution appropriate in consultation with relevant stakeholders.

## **What happens to the footpath across the site?**

It is not considered possible to divert the footpath (within the timeline for the project) so that it runs outside the school site and therefore fences will need to be installed to separate the school from users of the footpath. Gates will be added as appropriate to permit access between the school and their grassed playing field areas.

## **Will the railway have any effect on the project?**

Initial investigation of any impact by or on the construction of the new school has been undertaken with Network Rail and statutory bodies. This will continue throughout the design development stage of the project and any issues identified will be addressed.

The Feasibility Study has also undertaken an initial acoustic survey which recommends that mechanical ventilation would be required on the building elevation facing the railway line to prevent noise having an impact on the provision of education.

## **How will you ensure that there is no undermining or effects on the canal retaining walls?**

Interserve will take this into account and will consult with appropriate organisations to ensure that the design is suitable and appropriate. Engineering measures will be included, if required.

## **Will the project affect emergency access to the railway tunnel and canal?**

It is not envisaged that emergency access will change or cause a problem for the design of the project. The contractor in designing the project will take this into account and will consult with appropriate organisations to ensure that the design is suitable. Appropriate engineering measures will be included, if required.

## **What will be the future of the all-weather pitch currently located on the Uppermill site?**

The site of the all-weather pitch is included within the land swap proposals and therefore, in the event that planning permission is secured for the new school development on the land to the rear of the former WH Shaw Pallet Works site - and the Council calls upon its option to enter into the land swap - ownership of the all-weather pitch would be transferred to WRT Developments. As WRT Developments are expected to redevelop the Uppermill site on a residential basis, the all-weather facility would no longer be available on the Uppermill site.

As part of the Saddleworth School proposals in Diggle, an all-weather pitch would be constructed to a similar, if not better standard and it is envisaged that community groups would have access to this facility. As with the remainder of the education asset, nothing would be closed until a replacement facility is available.

## **2.4. Highways/Transportation**

### **How will children get to the new site from Uppermill?**

The new school site is less than 2km from the existing school site. The Planning Application will include a detailed Green Travel Plan. The school buses will have a turning point within the curtilage of the new school site.

### **Is Oldham Council taking responsibility for additional buses that may have to be laid on?**

The Council is in discussions with the School and Transport for Greater Manchester on this matter. Until such time whereby the site has been confirmed, it has been difficult to progress these matters but, as with completion of the Feasibility Study and the anticipated progress in respect to the design works, it would now be possible for a solution to be agreed during the continued planning and construction phase of the school.

## **2.5. Programme**

### **What is the programme for the project?**

A procurement and delivery timeline to deliver the new school on the land to the rear of the former WH Shaw Pallet Works site will be confirmed by Interserve as they develop the designs for the new school.

We hope to be able to submit a planning application in Spring 2015, start construction work in winter 2015 and open the new school in 2017.

The procurement and delivery of the new Saddleworth School will be the responsibility of the EFA with close support and input from Oldham Council and the Saddleworth School and working closely with Interserve. Input from the public and local interested parties will be sought through the informal processes of public consultations and the formal process of the Planning Application.

## **2.6. General Questions**

### **Who will be responsible for the demolition of the old factories on the site?**

Once the industrial buildings are vacated, it is understood that the current site owner will take steps to demolish the buildings on the site, some of which suffer from structural issues.

It is likely that, in the event that planning permission is secured and Oldham Council will call upon their option to purchase the land, a vacant site would be handed over to the EFA and Interserve prior to commencement of the school development.

### **Does this mean that there are no plans to try and develop the green fields at the frontage of the former WH Shaw Pallet Works site for a school?**

The Feasibility Study's preferred option is to develop the land to the rear of the former WH Shaw Pallet Works site with playing fields to go on part of the Green Belt site. Therefore, it is not planned to take forward the option to progress the development of the frontage fields immediately adjacent to Huddersfield Road.

### **Will Oldham Council own the frontage plots either side of the access road at the former WH Shaw Pallet Works site?**

The frontage plots immediately adjoining Huddersfield Road would be retained by the current landowner. Oldham Council will, however, acquire the Green Belt land to the rear of 20-44 (even) Huddersfield Road.

### **How will the new school site and building help the education of my child?**

The Saddleworth School Education Vision is to provide a school:

- Where each child is supported to fulfil their own potential and to follow an appropriate pathway of their choice, wherever that may take them; locally, nationally or globally.
- Where adults and children form a community in which everyone is treated with respect, given equal consideration of their interests and helped to have rich lives in mind, body and spirit.
- Which teaches students to become confident, resilient and independent so that they can be successful in their lives after school.
- That is embedded in the Saddleworth community, where children make a positive contribution to the community's life.

The provision of the new school facilities will allow the school to concentrate on the provision of education without being hampered by the condition and layout of the current school facilities which are life expired.

### **Where will the existing users of the pallet works site go?**

The main occupier of the site is Patterson and Rothwell who originally intended to occupy the former WH Shaw Pallet Works site on a short-term basis. The company has now

purchased alternative premises within the borough and is in the process of vacating the property.

### **What happens if a Judicial Review is lodged?**

This will be addressed in an appropriate manner at that time.

### **How do we get hold of a copy of the Feasibility Study and the surveys?**

Copies of the EFA's Feasibility Study will be made available on request. Please send an email to [PSBP.EFACAPITAL@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:PSBP.EFACAPITAL@education.gsi.gov.uk)