

NOTES ON A MEETING BETWEEN SADDLEWORTH COUNCILLORS AND THE EFA HELD IN MANCHESTER ON THE 7TH JULY 2014

Present

Rachel Stephenson, EFA, Deputy Director and Programme Director PSBP
Katrina Hall, EFA, Head of Operations North
Tony Brumfield, EFA, Project Director

Cllr Mike Buckley, Saddleworth Parish Council
Cllr Nikki Kirkham, Oldham M. B. Council
John Barnes, Architect

Timescales and Project Plan

1. Feasibility studies into options for building the new school at either Uppermill or Diggle are underway and it is hoped to complete these by September. E.C.Harris are advising the EFA on the costs and technical issues associated with the various options.
2. Based on these studies a recommendation on which site to build the school will be put forward by the project team. This recommendation and the work supporting it will be examined by an independent team within the EFA before a final decision is made.

Uppermill

3. Two options to build on the Uppermill site are being considered, the John Barnes proposal and an alternative based on a phased building plan.
4. The phased building proposal is regarded as offering the best value for money of the two. This plan involves building the school in a central position on the site, a preferred option of the school management, and relocation of some of the school activities for significant periods while building work is underway. Investigations on this plan are still underway, for example, where contractors vehicles could be located off site during the construction phase and where the facilities provided by the sports hall could be temporarily relocated.
5. The feasibility work on the John Barnes proposal is complete. The EFA expressed concerns at the difficulty of building a new access road to the rear of the site because of the steep bank down to the river.
6. The option of refurbishing the existing school has been ruled out because of the poor condition of some of the existing buildings.

Diggle

7. Two options are being examined, the first to build on the southernmost of the two fields at the front of the site, and the second the build at the rear of the site on the footprint of the existing Pallet Works buildings. In both cases the playing fields would be located on the Green Belt land adjoining.
8. There is no plan to use the northernmost of the two fields at the front of the site in either option.
9. The EFA will fund all work within the curtilage of the site, that outside will be the responsibility of OMBC.
10. The EFA will fund playing field but not an all weather pitch.

Contractor

11. Interserve are presently involved in a trial project and if this is successful will probably be responsible for the Saddleworth School build. They are presently involved in discussion on other projects in the programme.

Planning

12. Part of the feasibility studies will involve contact with statutory consultees.

13. The appointed contractor will be responsible for submitting a planning application on the EFAs behalf.

14. Initial studies that will form part of an Environmental Impact Assessment will be part of the EFA feasibility studies, however, the final and detailed studies will be the responsibility of the appointed contractor.

15. The Planning Authority (OMBC) will specify what is required for the planning application. Initial discussions have taken place with the Authority but, as yet, there is no written agreement on planning requirements.

Design

16. The final design will be the responsibility of the Contractor, and will take into account the school and OMBC requirements.

Budget

17. The budget available for the school building will be fixed irrespective of the design chosen.

18. Additional funds will be provided by the EFA to cover abnormalities (e.g. ground preparation, levelling and demolition). These will vary depending on the site issues involved.

Public Consultation

19. There are no plans to share information with the public other than as part of the statutory planning process. It was pointed out by John Barnes that it is good practice according to the NPPF that there should be prior consultation with the public above and beyond the statutory 21 day notification. The EFA were not clear why they felt these guidelines did not apply in this case.

Information Provided by Councillors

20. Issues raised by local councillors to the EFA have been passed to the project team and will be considered as part of the feasibility study. The EFA gave no feedback on the points raised.

Cllr Mike Buckley
8th July 2014