

**HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**ENTERPRISE, EDUCATION AND SKILLS CABINET PANEL**

**FRIDAY 13 FEBRUARY 2015 AT 10.00 AM**

**IDENTIFICATION OF POTENTIAL SECONDARY SCHOOL SITE IN HARPENDEN  
SECONDARY PLANNING AREA**

Agenda Item

No.

**3**

Report of the Director of Children's Services

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Executive Member: Chris Hayward (Executive Member for Enterprise, Education and Skills)

**1. Purpose of report:**

- 1.1 To provide the Cabinet Panel with a report on the outcome of work undertaken to identify a site suitable for a new secondary school in the Harpenden Secondary Education Planning Area.

**2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 Panel is asked to note the report.

**3. Background**

- 3.1 Members of Panel will recall earlier reports setting out the steps being taken and timetable for work undertaken to identify a site suitable for a new secondary school in the Harpenden Education Planning Area.
- 3.2 As reported to the Cabinet Panel in September, it was planned that a final report would be received from the Council's advisers in January. The Council's officers have now received and considered a final report from the appointed consultants, Vincent and Gorbings. The report considers all identified possible sites which might be suitable for the provision of a new secondary school to serve the relevant area. It identifies that most of these would not be acceptable in town planning terms. Three sites are identified as sites where planning permission could potentially be obtained. These are sites A, D and F on the plan attached as Appendix 1. Of the three which are potentially acceptable with appropriate mitigation, Vincent and Gorbings identify site F as, on balance, at the present time, and in consideration of all the supporting evidence, the preferred site. A copy of the comparative town planning site assessment report prepared by Vincent and Gorbings for the Council is attached as Appendix 2. Supporting reports, including all the technical and

environmental investigations undertaken on the selected sites are available on the Council's website at [www.hertsdirect.org/newschools](http://www.hertsdirect.org/newschools), with the exclusion of those elements which remain commercially confidential.

- 3.3 Members may recall that Site F is the site previously identified as most suitable on initial analysis some years ago. The further work undertaken by Vincent and Gorbing has come to the same conclusion, having undertaken a new and detailed review process from scratch, but with considerably more extensive analysis undertaken in course of the last year than was undertaken in the past.
- 3.4 The County Council has now finished its work on site identification, and has identified the preferred site for a very special circumstances planning application. The next steps are set out below, but responsibility for them lies with the Education Funding Agency and the Department for Education.

#### Next steps

- 3.5 An application has been made by the Harpenden Secondary Free School Trust (HSFST) to the Department for Education to establish a secondary phase Free School in the Harpenden area. Officers understand that the timetable for the announcement of which bids have been approved to move to the next stage of the process is now March. If successful, this marks the point at which the DfE will require its Agency, the Education Funding Agency (EFA), to commence work on acquiring a site and building a school.
- 3.6 EFA is aware of the work that has been undertaken on behalf of the Council. The material available to them is sufficient for them to move now to start the process of making a planning application should they choose to do so. The EFA is aware that the Council would be willing to consider working positively with them to progress the acquisition of a site and the securing of planning consent, should that be helpful.
- 3.7 If the HSFST application is not successful, the Council will need to consider with it what the next steps should be, in the light of the reasons for failure and the prospects for future success, for example if a bid is resubmitted. It may well also be that the policy position of the incoming government after the General Election will influence the possibilities that are open to us. Panel may wish to receive a further report on this in due course, if the situation arises.
- 3.8 The Council will also be submitting the work undertaken on our behalf by Vincent and Gorbing to St Albans City and District Council (SACDC), to provide evidence and assist in the ongoing preparation of their Strategic Local Plan and Detailed Local Plan. The County Council will reiterate the position that SACDC must make a land allocation for a new school.

#### Legal implications

- 3.9 There are no specific legal implications relating to the report, namely to the specific location identified.

### Equalities Implications

- 3.10 There are no specific equalities implications relating to the report, namely to the specific location identified.

### **4. Financial implications**

- 4.1 There are no specific financial implications from the report, which is for noting and deals only with the issue of site location.

### **Background papers**

St Albans City and District delivering secondary school expansion: comparative town planning site assessment report (2015) Vincent and Gorbings Ltd.

<http://www.hertsdirect.org/services/edlearn/aboutstatesch/newschools/harpenden/siterepf eb15/>

### **Appendices:**

- Appendix 1: Map showing location of potential school sites in Harpenden including those rejected as unlikely to receive planning consent.  
Appendix 2: Report from Vincent and Gorbings.