

BUILDING SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE

PROGRAMME AREA RESPONSIBILITY: EDUCATION

CABINET

23RD OCTOBER, 2003

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

To approve the bid to the DfES for inclusion in the first phase of the Government's initiative, '*Building Schools for the Future*'.

Key Decision

This is a Key Decision because it is significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in Herefordshire in an area comprising one or more wards. It was included in the Forward Plan.

Recommendation

THAT submission of the bid be approved.

Reasons

Under the national initiative, all LEAs are expected to make bids for new building/refurbishment of all their secondary schools. Bids for an early phase of the national programme need to be made by the end of October 2003, on which decisions will be announced in December so that work could begin in 2005/06.

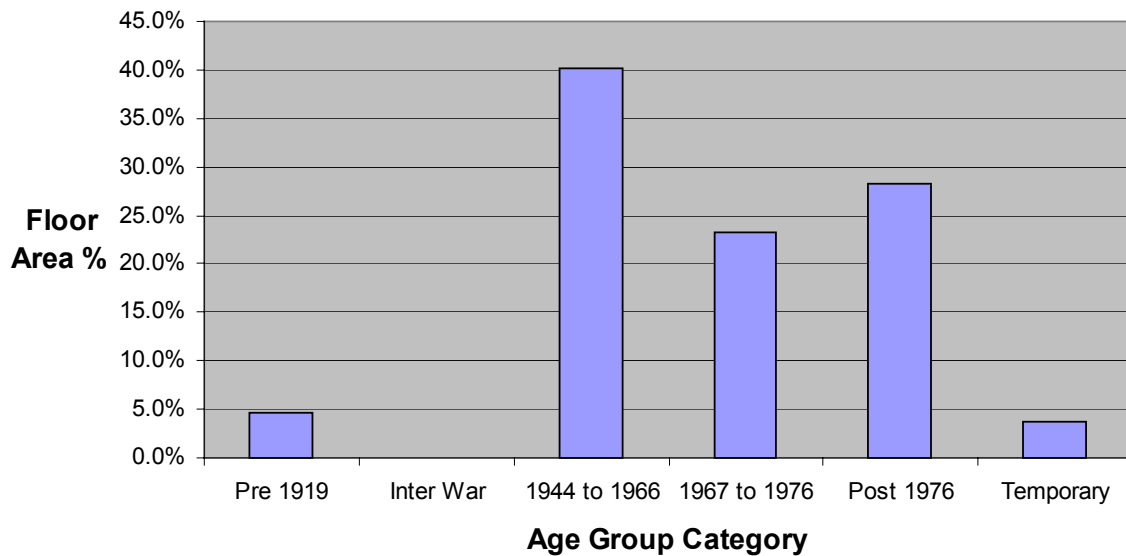
Considerations

1. The DfES have invited all LEAs to submit bids by the end of October or expressions of interest by December 2003 in response to the initiative, *Building Schools for the Future*, which aims to replace or refurbish all secondary schools in the country by 2020. The DfES are seeking 'packages' of work with a minimum value of £50 million and a maximum value of £150 million.
2. In response, it is proposed that Herefordshire should include all 14 of its high schools in the bid. The bid would acknowledge that Whitecross High School will require no further expenditure beyond the PFI scheme, and that the strategy for the two aided high schools (St Mary's RC, Lugwardine and Bishop of Hereford CE) may be implemented through national arrangements for Aided Schools.
3. The DfES have indicated that they are seeking to support one rural pilot in the first phase of the programme, bids for which have to be made by the end of October. Priority will otherwise have to be accorded to authorities serving areas with high levels of deprivation and in which schools have low levels of performance.

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
George Salmon, Head of Policy and Resources on 01432 260802

4. The last newly built high school in Herefordshire was completed in 1962. Despite some investment in the intervening years there are significant parts of each of the County's high schools that are in poor condition and poorly equipped to meet the needs of the 21st Century. It is estimated that the outstanding maintenance required within a five-year period amounts to at least £7 million.

Buildings By Age % Group Summary



5. It is proposed in the bid that implementation be undertaken through a Local Education Partnership involving the private sector. The Herefordshire bid would include imaginative opportunities to contribute to and benefit from other initiatives, including exploring the potential of sharing with colleges and other partners development of the Herefordshire Colleges campus, a general widening of provision for community use of school premises through the Extended Schools programme, and for greater inclusion of pupils with special needs and disabilities.
6. The initiative will provide the accommodation for high school students until at least 2050. The DfES have appointed consultants to produce exemplar designs. Although it is not expected that these 4 designs will be replicated across the country, it is expected that the principles on which they are based will be. All new high schools should:
- *be safe and secure yet stimulating and inspirational.* In recently completed high schools schemes in other parts of the country, the feeling of excitement and stimulation have often been achieved through provision of high volume entrance and circulation spaces. Indeed, a Birmingham School has gone one stage further, and provides background baroque music on the basis that this stimulates mental activity.
 - *meet the needs of the evolving curriculum.* The DfES have stated that schools should have 20% more floor area than at present. Initiatives such as the 14-19 strategy suggest that there should be a greater variety of size and type of spaces. The Herefordshire bid has been costed on the basis of improved space standards.
 - *exploit the benefits of technology.* ICT is changing the way schools work internally. It also allows schools to work in partnership and will increase the possibilities of colleges and schools, and employees and schools working together. The ICT Broadband link to high schools has and will continue for some time to have far greater capacity than links through landlines.

- *meet the needs of pupils outside the curriculum, the needs of parents and the needs of the community.* This will be reflected in the facilities provided and through design to make possible greater public use of areas of the school whilst maintaining the security of pupils.
- *be fully inclusive.* All schools in Herefordshire High Schools will be fully accessible for students with disabilities (currently 20% of teaching space is not on the ground floor). It is proposed to relocate Westfield Special School and Barrs Court to allow further integrated working with neighbouring high schools and colleges.

7. The needs and proposals for each of the Herefordshire secondary schools are summarised in Table 1.

Alternative Option

The alternative to the submission of a bid by the end of October is an expression of interest to be made in December. The former is a more positive move and would allow the possibility of inclusion in the first phase of the Government programme. If, however an expression of interest is submitted in December, the DfES would allocate a place in the national programme at any time in the period between 2006 and 2020. Such delay carries the risk of planning blight on the secondary school sector until such time as a programme for Herefordshire is approved.

Risk Management

A number of risks have been identified nationally around this major initiative. They include –

1. **Raised expectations** The DfES are likely to support schemes from only 15 LEAs initially, and only 1 will be a rural pilot. At present there are doubts as to whether or not such an ambitious programme would be achieved nationally even by 2020, though local schools would be delighted if progress could be made in 2005/06.
2. **Costs** DfES have so far provided an outline of the implementation of the programme and of the level of local funding required to support it. The DfES have indicated that the detail would be clarified in discussions between January and April 2004 for those authorities given approval in December 2003.
3. **Scale of the programme** There is concern over the ability of the construction industry to deliver the size of the programme nationally. The DfES are discussing these issues with the industry at national level.
4. **Effects on high schools** The level of work could affect the operation of each high school during a two-year period. The programme has set aside a budget to cater for transition costs associated with implementation, and it is recognised that a high quality service must be maintained throughout the period.
5. **Innovative approaches not fully tested.** The bid is for a 'pilot' using 'exemplar designs' produced by DfES consultants, and will attempt to introduce innovation in facilities and management. There will be issues to address that have not been encountered before.

Although these risks exist and will need to be taken into account, they do not undermine the case for making an early bid for inclusion in the first phase of the programme. That course of action provides the best opportunity to achieve substantial improvement in the quality of buildings available to Herefordshire students.

Consultees

All high schools have been consulted as well as other key bodies such as the Diocesan Education Authorities, the Learning and Skills Council, Connexions service, Herefordshire Colleges and Rural Regeneration Zone. Within the Council, there has been widespread discussion with officers from Education, Property, Finance, Planning and Policy and Community.

Background Papers

Letter from the DfES, July 2003.