

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Oak Tree SEND School, Winnersh</b>
<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	Schools Forum on 17 March 2021
<b>WARD</b>	Winnersh
<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	Deputy Chief Executive - Graham Ebers; Director, Children's Services – Carol Cammiss

## **OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY**

The provision of a new SEND school within the Borough will help the Council meet its statutory duty to Children and Young People with Special Education Needs and Disabilities. It will provide high quality, local special school places at a lower cost than alternative out of borough schools and with reduced transport costs.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Schools Forum note this update on the current progress and future planning and delivery programme for the new SEND school at Winnersh.

## **SUMMARY OF REPORT**

This report gives an update on the proposals for a new SEND school at Winnersh Farm, Winnersh.

Design work on the site and SEND School is progressing in conjunction with the Department for Education and other partners and a planning application is expected to be submitted in May 2021.

Subject to planning consent, construction on the school will start in September 2021, with the school planned for opening in 2022.

Wokingham Borough Council and Brighter Futures for Children are working on an agreement with the school about how the allocations to the school will be made and how parents will be engaged in discussions about the new provision.

## **Background**

The provision of a new SEND school is a joint project between the Department for Education, Wokingham Borough Council, Reading Borough Council, Brighter Futures for Children and the Maiden Erlegh Trust.

The school will be a special free school, for 150 pupils (all ages), designated for children with autism (ASD) and Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) difficulties. The primary focus will be on higher achieving/more complex needs children (so not duplicating Addington with its Learning Disability focus or Chiltern Way Academy with its ASD plus challenging behaviour focus).

Provision of a new SEND school is intended to meet the increasing needs to children and young people with EHCPS, within both Wokingham and Reading boroughs. It will also provide more local provision, reducing the negative impact on children attending out of borough provision.

The Maiden Erlegh Trust has been appointed by the DfE to run the school. The Oak Tree School is the working name that the Maiden Erlegh Trust have given to the school.

## **Analysis of Issues**

### **Site**

A site for school has been identified at Winnersh Farm to the east of Winnersh, adjacent to the M4 motorway. The site is owned by Wokingham Borough Council. In September 2020 Wokingham Borough Council Executive approved the lease of the school site to the Department for Education for 125 years at nil rent (see Appendix 1 for a copy of the September 2020 Executive Report).

Over the past twelve months Wokingham Borough Council has been working with the Department for Education and partners for masterplan the site for the school, and adjacent housing development. The school will be sited at the western end of the site, adjacent to Wheatfield Primary School. The SEND school will be accessed from a new access road coming off Woodward Close. A site plan and masterplan layout are attached in Appendix 2.

Public engagement on the overall masterplan for the site, including both the school and housing development will take place during March 2021 (expected to have started week commencing 8<sup>th</sup> March). This engagement will help inform the subsequent planning applications on the site.

The DfE will conduct further public consultation on the more detailed design of the school, once their design is finalised. This is expected to take place in April 2021.

Following public engagement, planning applications for the school (detailed planning application by the DfE) and the housing development (outline planning application by WBC) will be submitted in May 2021.

## **Delivery Programme**

May 2021 – Submission of detailed planning application for the school is expected to be submitted by the Department for Education

September 2021 – Subject to planning consent, construction of school starts on site

September 2022 – Opening of SEND School

### Admissions

Wokingham Borough Council and Brighter Futures for Children are working on an agreement with the school about how the allocations to the school will be made and how parents will be engaged in discussions about the new provision.

### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

***The Council faces severe funding pressures, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.***

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)			
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£650,000 for construction of highway access  £100,000 risk pot for abnormal costs	Yes, identified within Medium-Term Financial Plan.	Capital
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	£220k to £320k saving for the HNB	Yes	Revenue – High Needs Block

#### Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

The school will be built, and capital costs funded by the Department for Education. The access road will be funded by Wokingham Borough Council and Wokingham Borough Council have a contingency pot for abnormal land condition costs (both are subject to confirmation of any contribution from Reading Borough Council).

#### Cross-Council Implications (how does this decision impact on other Council services, including properties and priorities?)

This project is being managed jointly within Wokingham Borough Council through Children's Services (education provision) and Commercial Property (use of the Council's property assets).

#### Public Sector Equality Duty

An Initial Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken of the Winnersh Farm development proposal. This identified no low or high negative impacts on any groups.

#### Reasons for considering the report in Part 2

n/a
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<b>List of Background Papers</b>
Appendix 1 – Wokingham Special Educational Needs School – Report to Wokingham Borough Council Executive 24 September 2020
Appendix 2 – Briefing note on Oak Tree School Briefing Note March 2021

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