

# **CABINET MEMBER DECISION**

## **1 March 2022**

### **Worcester City Secondary School Academy Sponsor Competition Specification Approval**

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**Relevant Cabinet Member**

Councillor M J Hart, Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education

**Relevant Officer**

Tina Russell, Director of Children's Services

**Local Member(s)**

N/A

**Recommendation**

1. **The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education is recommended to:**
  - (a) **note the outcome of the Public Consultation on the proposal for a new secondary school in Worcester including the draft Academy Sponsor Competition Specification during the period 29 November 2021 to 23 January 2022.**
  - (b) **approve the presumption Academy Sponsor Competition Specification as attached in Appendix A.**

**Background**

2. In November 2021, Worcestershire County Council Cabinet authorised the publication of the Proposal and draft Specification for a new secondary school for Worcester. This included authorising the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education to approve the final specification ensuring consideration of any representations made during the Public Consultation. In accordance with this decision, an 8-week consultation period commenced on 29 November 2021 and ran until 23 January 2022.
3. The Consultation was published on the Worcestershire County Council website and advertised in CrownGate Shopping Centre and the Hive in Worcester. The Consultation questions were also shared across social media; emailed to local schools, organisations, and representative bodies; shared with the Worcestershire Viewpoint Panel; and published in local media. The Consultation was also adapted into three schools' workshops suitable for primary age pupils.
4. In total 238 responses were received to the online Consultation: 71% were residents of Worcester City and surrounding area; 36% of respondents were parents/carers of current school or pre-school age children; and 19% were current

school staff members or members of Governing Bodies. In addition, a total of 55 year six pupils took part in the Workshop to provide feedback on the proposals.

## **Key Outcomes**

5. Most respondents agreed that a new Secondary School is needed in Worcester. 90% of respondents to the online survey either agreed or strongly agreed, just 4% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, 5% neither agreed nor disagreed and 1% were unsure. This is an improvement from the Engagement Results which saw 83% agree or strongly agree.

### Age Range

6. The majority of respondents to the online Consultation supported the proposed age range of the school of 11-16. Those that were unresponsive wished to see a Sixth Form included at the school and therefore wanted the proposed age range to be 11-18. We also received notable feedback for this change from the Primary School Workshops where 80% of participants wished for the school to have a Sixth Form.

7. No amendment to the proposed Specification for a 600-place Secondary School is recommended in response to this feedback due to the feasibility issues of delivering post-16 provision at a Secondary School of this size. However, the option to create a Sixth Form at the school alongside potential future expansions will remain open. The land to be purchased has sufficient space to enable this if considered appropriate in the future.

### School Size

8. 80% of respondents to the online Consultation supported the proposed size of the school for 600 pupils, with the school population growing yearly with each new year 7 intake. Many of those that disagreed with this approach wished to see the school open in all year groups initially to enable children in upper year groups who live close to the proposed site to transfer to the school. It is not possible to open all year groups in the first year as the minimum number of pupils required to operate a Key Stage 3 or Key Stage 4 curriculum would not be reached. Moreover, this could disrupt existing schools and year groups.

9. Respondents also wanted to ensure the school could grow with new future housing and many of the children in the year 6 Primary Workshop were concerned about having a 'small' school and asked to ensure the school would feel 'big' and 'bright'. The school will be designed with a total net capacity for 600 pupils, though core facilities will be large enough for a total of 1,200 pupils to enable expansion in the future without the need to amend core facilities such as halls and dining space. The site will also have ample outdoor facilities to enable such future expansion.

### Location of the School

10. The majority of respondents to the online survey supported the location of the site, along with most of the pupils in the Primary School Workshop. 31% of respondents to the online survey did not agree with the proposed location of the new Secondary School. Key concerns in relation to the location are outlined below:

- a) Proximity to the hospital and concern for future expansion requirements of the NHS Trust

- b) Distance from the proposed new housing to the South of the City
- c) Traffic congestion on the Newtown Road and the A4440

11. It is not advised that any amendments are made to the Academy Sponsor Specification as a result of this feedback, however the following actions will be taken:

- a) Sufficient land outside of the site purchase area may enable hospital expansion in the future if this is required. The land to be purchased is to run up to the hedgerow running North/South on the site.
- b) Officers will support a coordinated approach to admissions in the city with the aim of ensuring the new school serves the immediate surrounding communities of the site and enables families on the new housing developments in the south of the City to attend existing Secondary Schools following the release of pressure for places from the East. This will increase the number of pupils able to access a Secondary School in their local area. The specification already outlines that “The school will need to cater to local demand, and therefore admissions arrangements will be expected to align with that goal.”
- c) A full traffic impact assessment will be undertaken and Highways Works to relieve any impact to congestion on the Newtown Road has been costed into the project budget and will be proposed as part of the planning application for the new School.

### Values

12. 83% of respondents to the online survey agreed with the proposed values of the Secondary School as outlined in the Consultation. A further 11% were unsure, with just 6% disagreeing. Feedback suggested a greater emphasis on academic achievement should be ensured. No amendments are proposed to the Specification as a result of this feedback. The Specification provides detail of the expectation for high education standards for all children and young people to make progress and achieve. Officers are satisfied that there is a clear expectation in the Specification for the Academy Trust to meet high educational standards.

13. The majority of pupils taking part in the Primary School Workshop supported the proposed principles, with 100% of attendees agreeing that the school should “include everyone with all their difference” and have a “focus on wellbeing and mental health”. 58% of pupils supported the importance of a behaviour policy.

### Build Principles

14. 88% of respondents to the online survey agreed with the proposed Build Principles of the School to aim towards sustainability and Net Zero Carbon by 2050 and to prioritise the use of local materials and procurement where possible. Additional comments requested that the build aim towards full Net Zero Carbon earlier, and that carbon neutrality should be incorporated into the build wherever possible. Concern was also raised about the over-use of ‘green’ building methods and that practicality must also be considered at every stage.

15. No amendments are recommended to the Academy Specification based on this feedback, however the Specification for the build project will consider this feedback further particularly in respect to the most efficient and practical approach towards sustainable building practices.

16. Primary School pupils were particularly keen to see green spaces at the school, and ensure the construction uses sustainable materials.

### Other Comments

17. A notable number of comments were received from the online survey about the importance to ensure pupils can travel to the school via active travel routes and that clear and practical options should be provided to encourage this. This will be fed into the design of the build and included in the expectations of the Academy Trust operations.

18. Feedback was provided that the expectations of the Academy Trust as an employer should be more descriptive of best practice of a Worcestershire School as an employer. This is outside of the remit of this exercise and therefore no changes to the Specification are recommended.

19. A number of changes have been made to the wording of the document in order to clarify the existing position or for ease of reading. These do not change the material of the specification and therefore have not been outlined above.

### **Legal, Financial and HR Implications**

20. There are no changes to the Legal and HR implications from those outlined in the Cabinet report.

### **Joint Equality, Public Health, Data Protection and Sustainability Impact Assessments**

21. A full Equality and Public Health, Data Protection, and Sustainability Impact Assessment has been carried out in respect of the recommendations. This report results in no changes to the existing assessments considered by Cabinet in November 2021.

### **Supporting Information**

- Appendix A – Academy Sponsor Specification

### **Contact Points**

#### Specific Contact Points for this report

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### **Background Papers**

[Agenda for Cabinet on Thursday, 18th November, 2021, 10.00 am - Worcestershire County Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)