

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee - 5 September 2017

Subject: New Central / East Secondary School

Report of: Interim Director of Education

Summary

This report provides an update on the proposed establishment of a new secondary school in central / east Manchester to meet a growing need for secondary school places. It includes specific detail on the approach to site selection, site investigations and surveys, stakeholder engagement and initial design. It also sets out the proposed timescale for completing the school and the challenges facing the city if this timescale is not achieved.

Recommendations

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee are asked to:

1. Note the identified need for additional secondary places in central/east Manchester and the approach to identifying the proposed site.
 2. Note the issues concerning the site, the site investigations undertaken to date and an additional commissioned compliance review.
 3. Note the consultation undertaken to date with stakeholders.
 4. Note the initial school designs.
 5. Note next steps.
-

Wards Affected: primarily Gorton South and Longsight

Contact Officers:

Name: Amanda Corcoran
Position: Interim Director of Education
Telephone: 0161 234 7484
E-mail: a.corcoran@manchester.gov.uk

Name: Sean McGonigle
Position: Director of Trading Services
Telephone: 0161 234 4821
E-mail: s.mcgonigle@manchester.gov.uk

Name: Michelle Devine
Position: Interim Head of Access
Telephone: 0161 276 2973
E-mail: m.devine@manchester.gov.uk

Background documents (available for public inspection):

The following documents disclose important facts on which the report is based and have been relied upon in preparing the report. Copies of the background documents are available up to 4 years after the date of the meeting. If you would like a copy please contact one of the contact officers above.

1. Report to Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee – 6 September 2016
2. Report to Executive Committee – 14 December 2016

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1. This report provides an update on progress to establish a new secondary school in central / east Manchester which was approved by Executive in December 2016. The proposed location for development of the new school is part of Nutsford Vale, Matthews Lane in Gorton South. This report will outline;
- The continuing pressure across the city, put particularly in central and east Manchester on school places, notably secondary places;
 - The process undertaken to identify a preferred site;
 - The process of, and feedback from, consultation undertaken;
 - Site investigations which have taken place and their findings;
 - Progress on design of the school;
 - Proposed next steps.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 In the report to Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee and Executive in December 2016, the Council outlined the future need for additional secondary school places and the approach to securing sufficient places to meet need.
- 2.2 Manchester's population has continued to grow to well over 550,000 people and is expected to continue, making Manchester the fastest growing city in the UK. If the city's economic growth is to be sustained over the next ten to fifteen years then new employment opportunities will need to be balanced with the provision of more new homes in the city to support this population growth. Ensuring a sufficient supply of high quality school places is a critical component of the Council's work in delivering Our Manchester and in particular, improving outcomes for Manchester residents.
- 2.3 The range of factors which have given rise to the recent increased demand for school places is extensive and complex. It includes increased birth rate, migration to and movement around the city, the impact of welfare reforms, new housing developments, tenure change, changing patterns of parental preference for schools, restrictions on the supply of school places outside the city, changing economic circumstances and successful regeneration.
- 2.4 There is a clear need for significant expansion of secondary provision in the city to meet increased demand in 2018 and beyond. A significant proportion of established secondary schools have already been expanded through investment of Basic Need capital and opportunities to include further additional schools, in this approach, are limited. This limitation is due to a number of reasons including the size of the existing site, PFI arrangements and/or the performance of the school, which could result in refusal of the expansion by the Department for Education (DfE). In addition, the Council has used Basic Need funding to build two new secondary schools in the city and providers for these have been identified through the Academy/Free School Presumption process. These are Dean Trust Ardwick, which opened in September 2015 and MEA Central, which will open this September. Dean Trust Ardwick has

filled the available places in its first three years and MEA Central will have a full year 7 intake in September 2017.

- 2.5 Furthermore, a number of Multi Academy Trusts have applied to open new secondary schools in the city through the government's free school process. Two new secondary schools were approved in wave 10, which will open in September 2017 in temporary accommodation in the north of the city, and one free school was approved in wave 12, opening in September 2019. A further two new free schools were approved in spring this year and both are currently in the process of identifying sites. Even with these approved new free schools, there will still be unmet demand in the city, particularly in central and east Manchester and subsequently, a further new secondary school is needed to meet this demand.

3.0 Site Identification

- 3.1 In recognition of the growing demand on secondary school places, future projections of pupil numbers and the cohorts of children in the primary school system, the process for developing a third new secondary school through the Free School Presumption process was initiated in December 2016. This process commits the Council to providing a site and funding the building for a new school from the Basic Need allocation.
- 3.2 The city is facing a significant challenge concerning developable land for residential and commercial development, as well as providing ancillary services such as schools. Large sites suitable for a secondary school are not readily available, particularly in the south and central part of the city and sites that are available, are often significantly contaminated or require complex site assembly from multiple ownership. As a result of land scarcity, values are also inflated.
- 3.3 Three sites in central/east Manchester were identified as potentially being suitable for a new secondary school and were shortlisted for appraisal to identify the most suitable location. An initial 26 different factors were considered in identifying a suitable site with the following table demonstrating the scope of criteria:

Unweighted Criteria	
1	Site size (min 103110m ² required)
2	Site arrangement – suitable for development? e.g. shape, configuration
3	Accessibility to main highway
4	Accessibility to public transport
5	Traffic management required (e.g. traffic lights, crossings etc.)
6	Existing road capacity to take new traffic load (road width)
7	Proximity of utilities
8	Within MCC ownership?
9	Restrictive covenants or easements affecting the site
10	Footpaths crossing the development zone requiring closure / diversion

11	Allocation for education development within UDP
12	Site condition – topography
13	Site condition – contamination issues
14	Archaeological features impacted?
15	Ecological issues – protected species present?
16	Ecological issues – invasive species present?
17	Ecological issues – removal of trees?
18	Site of Special Scientific Interest? (SSSI)
19	Flood risk
20	Proximity to nuisance (e.g. factories, industrial processes)
21	Demolition of existing buildings / structures required?
22	Impact on adjoining landowners (e.g. noise)
23	Impact on adjoining landowners – privacy/overlooking
24	Impact on existing sports or community facilities
25	Unexploded ordnance (UXO) risk
26	Impact of any third party income generation (e.g. leisure)
Strategic drivers – Weighted Criteria	
27	Location in relation to central/east catchment area
28	Site availability / readiness to deliver (speed to site)

* From Site Options – Feasibility Report Appendix B

- 3.4 In the unweighted scores' totals, all three sites received almost identical scores, with sites A and B gaining a score of 164 and site C a lower score of 162. The next stage of the process was to add two additional factors which were weighted to reflect the criticality of the Council's key strategic drivers: Proximity to central / east area and site availability / readiness to deliver.
- 3.5 Site A, Nutsford Vale, attained a considerably higher weighted score than sites B & C, due primarily to the fact the land was owned by Manchester City Council, and so could meet the strategic needs of the Council and was available, whereas B & C were not able to deliver this key element. The ability to commence development immediately, as opposed to the certainty of time delay in acquiring private land, is an important consideration. In the case of the two alternative sites, one has been in receivership and attempts to acquire it have failed, whilst the other site has two issue; it requires a Compulsory Purchase Order to clean up the title of a number of parcels of land and is further constrained by the adjacency of a chemical works. For these reasons Nutsford Vale was identified as the only appropriate site in central/east Manchester for developing a new secondary school within the timescales required.
- 3.6 Nutsford Vale is located in the ward of Gorton South and is accessed predominantly from Matthews Lane which joins Mount Road and Stockport Road. The site was a former clay quarry, known as 'Jackson's Clay Pit', which ceased to operate in the 1970s and subsequently became Matthews Lane Tip, before being capped and made accessible as open space. Over time, the site became neglected and underused with no formal identity, acting as a cut-through to local schools and shops. Local residents felt the site was unsafe due to unsecured boundaries and a history of anti-social behaviour.

- 3.7 Funding from the Newlands programme, a Forestry Commission / NW Development Agency regeneration programme, to reclaim large areas of neglected land across the North West and The City of Trees (formerly Red Rose Forest), was secured to develop the site into its current form. The area now provides a natural open space for local activities and has access points, secure boundaries and a network of paths, plus seating and bins.
- 3.8 In addition to the investment from Newlands and City of Trees, the local community have been involved in fundraising, cleaning, clearing and planting of the site. The local residents group, Friends of Nutsford Vale (FONV), continue to work together to preserve and improve the natural benefits of the site.
- 3.9 The total area of land known as Nutsford Vale measures 19.11 hectares and includes 13.4 hectares of council owned land, with the remaining space under the ownership of Landcare Ltd. It is anticipated that development of the school will require 5.47 hectares of the Council owned land located in the south west corner of the site. The site for the school was identified as having minimal impact on previous formal planting on Nutsford Vale.

4.0 Site Investigations

- 4.1 The Council commissioned Laing O'Rourke to undertake a range of detailed site investigation surveys to understand its suitability for the development of a secondary school. The survey works that were carried out between November 2016 and January 2017 included:

Phase	Scope of Work
One	Machine-excavated trial pits Windowless sampler boreholes Installation of combined ground gas/ groundwater monitoring standpipes Soil samples taken at regular intervals for suite of environmental laboratory testing A series of in situ geotechnical testing including plate bearing and permeability testing
Two	Deep cable percussive boreholes including aquifer protection measures where required Installation of combined ground gas/ groundwater monitoring standpipes Suite of environmental and geotechnical laboratory testing Programme of ground gas and groundwater monitoring Topographical survey of all exploratory positions Factual Reporting

- 4.2 The initial feedback provided by the site survey works regarding matters such as materials found, landfill depth and capping depth, were fed into the site appraisal process outlined in section 3.2.

- 4.3 Indicative drawings showing the proposed location of the school building based on desktop surveys and the location of the tip, were prepared during this period to inform the location of boreholes and other investigations.
- 4.4 The planning application process requires details of site investigation findings (desktop and intrusive), to be submitted as part of the planning application review process. On a suspected contamination site, a remediation strategy is also required to ensure the design solutions proposed in response to site investigation findings are assessed and accepted by relevant statutory consultees (including the MCC Environmental Health team and the Environment Agency).
- 4.5 On this site, extensive engagement has taken place, with the Environmental Health team and the Environment Agency, to validate the nature and extent of site investigation work undertaken and to validate design proposals.
- 4.6 The approach in assessing contaminated sites is complex and due to the reiterative nature of the process, is time consuming. Risk assessment is central to the investigation of land contamination and involves gathering information about a site; through desktop studies, surveys, intrusive investigations and, dependent upon the environmental setting and current or proposed use, making an informed judgement on the risk or liability associated with the contamination present and the requirement for measures to mitigate the risks identified.
- 4.7 The significance of the potential risk, to human health or the environment, is determined through a combination of the probability of occurrence and the potential severity of the consequence. On Matthews Lane the process of risk assessment has been undertaken in accordance with Model Procedures for the Management of Land Contamination (Environment Agency 2004). The process is designed so that the outcome of each phase will determine the scope of, or in fact need for, the next phase of assessment.
- 4.8 In the case of Matthews Lane, the Council has sought assurance from both the Council's Environmental Health Office and Environment Agency about the adequacy and sequence of investigations and reporting. The Council is currently progressing designs to mitigate identified risks relevant to locating a school on the site, including a foundation solution that protects "controlled waters".
- 4.9 The Council and its partners have undertaken extensive work to assess the ground conditions on the site and the associated risks a site such as this may pose for future development of a school. This assessment has identified measures that have/are being designed and managed as part of the development proposals (Remedial Strategy) to ensure a school can be safely built on the site and to safeguard members of the public, adjacent properties, future users and the construction team.
- 4.10 As part of site investigation works, the soil and groundwater samples were tested for a comprehensive suite of over 50 types of environmental

contaminants. Following assessment, the majority of the contaminants were found to be below the accepted threshold levels and therefore present no significant risk to the development proposals (i.e. for a new school). However, some contaminants required further sampling and testing to quantify the risks and the outcomes of this further risk analysis are being fed into ground engineering proposals. What has been found is fairly typical of brownfield sites that are commonly used for this type of development.

- 4.11 The following table identifies those contaminants that required further sampling:

Identified Hazard	Potential impact on human health	Action Required
Asbestos	From soil	Risks will be managed through development proposals, remedial strategy and construction environmental management plan
Benzo(a)pyrene	From soil	Additional sampling and detailed risk assessment have been completed and proven risks to be low. No further action required.
Naphthalene		
Ammoniacal Nitrogen	From groundwater	Additional ground investigation is required: Surveys have been scoped and agreed with the Environment Agency
Hydrocarbons		
Cyanide		
Mercury		
Carbon Dioxide	From ground gas	The Council is working with specialists to develop the required gas mitigation strategy for the site. The solution is likely to be designed to a higher specification than that which is recommended by the site findings. Monitoring is ongoing to fully determine the design requirements for this.
Methane		

- 4.12 Where additional investigation was identified, this was scoped and agreed with the Council's Environmental Health/Contaminated Land Officers and the Environment Agency. As further soil, groundwater and ground gas monitoring results have come through, these solutions have been fed into the Remedial Strategy, enabling this document to become more refined and robust.
- 4.13 The proposed ground stabilisation solution detailed within this strategy focuses on retaining the existing capping layer to minimise the exposure of the existing landfill and to then enhance the upper portion of the capping layer in order to mitigate the risk of long term settlement and instability of the site, once the works are complete. The stabilised ground, with a clean capping layer and surface finishes, will sit directly under the new school development. The proposed works will be undertaken under controlled conditions.

- 4.14 In addition to the work undertaken by the Council and its partners, an independent review has also been commissioned from a consultant group (Arup) with the following scope:-

Compliance review	A detailed review of the methodology undertaken to date, to determine whether it is in compliance with the relevant best practice standards. This will compare best practice requirements with the approach taken for each element of the ground investigation, risk assessment and remediation design process.
Documentation review	A review of the Ramboll reports to enable Arup to undertake their own independent review of the reports that will be submitted with a planning application, including those listed below, and communicate the outcome of this review prior to a planning submission. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Geoenvironmental Desk Study ii. Contaminated Land Factual Report iii. Contaminated Land Interpretative Report iv. Remediation Strategy v. Development Area Human Health Risk assessment
Additional Stakeholder Engagement	Prior to the review, a stakeholder meeting has been held, to ensure the scope of the review reflects particular areas of concern with proposals and process. A further engagement session is planned around mid-September to present the findings of the technical review of the contamination-related planning submission information, to help put the findings in context for the key stakeholders.

5.0 Consultation

- 5.1 Where a Local Authority believes there is a need for a new school in its area it must go through the DfE Free School Presumption process to identify a provider for the school. Stage one of the process requires that the Council undertakes consultation. However, it is not prescribed and it is up to the Local Authority to decide how to consult on the proposed new school and with whom. It was recognised that the identification of Nutsford Vale as the only viable site for a new secondary school would raise concerns, particularly for those residents using the site and involved in its improvement and maintenance, and that as a result, a thorough consultation process was essential.
- 5.2 The council has carried out a comprehensive programme of stakeholder consultation and responded to significant feedback in terms of the need for a

new school; type of school; design and development of the proposed school, issues around contamination etc.

- 5.3 Three public consultation events were held between February and July 2017, as detailed in the table below. In response to comments regarding the number and distribution of invite leaflets for the consultation events, we consistently increased the invite numbers from 1000 at the first event, to 4800 at the final event. Despite the increase in the number of invites, the number of attendees remained fairly static. In terms of an attendee percentage against the number of invites, this dropped from 9% at the first consultation, down to a 1.3% representation from the public at the last one.

No	Date & Location	Invite flyers distributed	Other forms of invites	Recorded Attendees	Feedback Forms
1.	28 th Feb 2017: Crowcroft Park Primary School Longsight	1000	Social Media – MCC and local	91	66
2.	16 th March 2017: Chapel St Primary School Levenshulme	2500	Social Media – MCC and local	36 <i>(not all attendees signed in)</i>	52
3.	19 th July 2017: Grange School Gorton South	4800	Social Media – MCC and local	63	45

- 5.4 Additional meetings were held with key stakeholders as detailed in the table below:

Stakeholder Group	Date	Location	Meeting Purpose
Friends of Nutsford Vale	2 nd February 2017	Nutsford Vale site	Solely to discuss ground reinstatement works to take place on site following the impact from the initial site investigation works (investigation works were still ongoing at this point on site).
Friends of Nutsford Vale	21 st Feb 2017	Blue Bell Inn, Levenshulme	This was the first meeting held with members of the public about the scheme once the site was approved. This was a closed meeting to the wider public; the invite was solely sent to the FONV group, as one of the key stakeholders, because of their connection to and interest in the site. The consultation boards which were to be tabled at the first public consultation event were talked through by members of the project team with the attendees.
Friends of Nutsford Vale	16 th March 2017	Blue Bell Inn, Levenshulme	Arranged to allow the FONV to see the latest presentation boards in advance of

			the 2 nd public consultation meeting being held later that day.
Friends of Nutsford Vale	31 st May 2017	Nutsford Vale site	To seek input from FONV into potential opportunity for improvements to the wider Nutsford Vale.
City of Trees	9 th March 2017	City of Trees Office, Salford	This meeting was arranged to confirm to the City of Trees that the site had been identified as the preferred site for a new school and to discuss initial scheme proposals with them.
Grange School	20 th March 2017	Grange School, Gorton	To gather further understanding to the needs of pupils who attend the Grange and to communicate and discuss initial proposals with key members of staff. This took the format of a mini presentation of the consultation board content from the second public consultation meeting, to staff, governor and parents.
City of Trees	5 th June 2017	City of Trees Office, Salford	To seek input from City of Trees into potential opportunity for improvements to the wider Nutsford Vale site and to review design developments.
Grange School	23 rd May 2017	Grange School, Gorton	To seek input from Grange School into potential opportunity for improvements to the wider Nutsford Vale site and to review design developments.
Grange School	5 th July 2017	Grange School, Gorton	To discuss opportunity to hold an autism familiarisation workshop for project team and contractors. Grange School can provide this from their Outreach Team and it was provisionally agreed to arrange for 2017 autumn term.

- 5.5 The format of all three consultations was the same. Local residents were invited to attend an early evening presentation of the school proposal. This was delivered with the use of large A1 colourful display boards, initially setting out details of the proposed school location and design concepts. As the consultation meetings progressed more detailed information was displayed, including the Masterplan and setting out themes such as the education strategy, transport assessments, ground conditions, ground engineering proposals and environmental matters.
- 5.6 Display boards were presented by MCC officers and project team specialists who were on hand to answer a range of visitor questions. Visitors were encouraged to sign in and were provided with feedback forms to relay their comments and views.

- 5.7 Positive feedback was provided about the need for a new school within the area, in favour of the school design and about the potential for the wider community making use of the school facilities.
- 5.8 The main areas of concern across the events were related the size of the school, the impact on traffic in the area, the loss of amenity space, the impact on Red Rose Forest tree investment and the environmental impact. More detailed analysis of the Public Consultation Feedback is available in appendix A together with mitigation of the issues raised.

6.0 School Design

- 6.1 The Council are utilising a tried and tested modular build solution that has been delivered successfully previously across the city, for example Dean Trust Ardwick and MEA Central. The Council has adopted a similar design philosophy (utilising the city's standard school model), building on lessons learnt and developed relationships, with the use of the same design and construction team from the MEA Central project.
- 6.2 The design has been developed for a new 1200, 11-16 place high school; this is a three storey building with separate sports hall, two pitches, multi-use games area and two car parks (one for staff and one for visitors) with a total GIFA of 8,997sqm. We have restricted the size of the site and the layout for each of the buildings to minimise the impact the development will have on Nutsford Vale, and the Red Rose Forest area in particular, while ensuring the school functions efficiently and offers an appropriate environment to deliver the required curriculum. The aim has been to develop a design that complements the wider Nutsford Vale and the project will include investing in the remaining part of Nutsford Vale.
- 6.3 Accommodation has been separated into a sports hall building and a main school building to minimise the impact of the size and scale of the buildings on the site. This has given the opportunity to choose envelope materials that complement each other but also have a wider purpose. The material colour palette has been chosen to complement the natural environment through vertical panels of different natural colours and through a reflective material to allow the building to recede into the background.
- 6.4 A key element of the new school will be providing access to school facilities to the wider community and similar programmes to those developed at Dean Trust Ardwick and MEA Central, will be put in place.

7.0 Conclusion

- 7.1 There is projected demand for additional secondary school places in the city due to the sustained growth of population and significantly increased cohorts of children currently in the city's primary schools. The significant increase in demand for school places has also been recognised by the DFE in Manchester's allocation of Basic Need capital funding for the last 3 years, which has been the highest nationally. Using this capital funding, there has

been a programme of secondary and primary school expansions and the Council will continue to explore opportunities to do this. However, in order to meet demand for secondary school places, particularly in the central/east area of the city, there is the need for a new secondary school. There are a limited number of sites available in the city which are of a sufficient size for a secondary school. Amongst the available land sites in Manchester the majority of these are brownfield sites, such is the legacy of Manchester's industrial heritage.

- 7.2 Nutsford Vale was identified from a shortlist of sites through a scoring process as the most suitable site for the next new school. There has been significant consultation about the proposal and in response to feedback through consultation, the proposal has been changed where possible, including where the school is sited and the size of the school. The school has been designed to be sympathetic to its potential surroundings and been located in a way to try to preserve as much of Nutsford Vale as possible. The school will also provide facilities which will be available to the local community and complement those available at Nutsford Vale.
- 7.3 The proposal for the new school will include investment to improve the remaining area of Nutsford Vale, to continue its use as a valued local amenity, thereby both protecting the remaining open space whilst ensuring a much needed local facility is located where it is required.
- 7.4 Even with the welcome announcement of additional secondary schools through the government's free school process, there is still a need for this proposed school. The proposed date for its opening is September 2019 and there will be pressures on school places in this area if this date is not achieved.

8.0 Next Steps

- Consider any outcomes or implications following the independent review;
- Submit a planning application;
- Begin the Free School Academy presumption process to identify the Council's preferred provider for the proposed new school.

Recommendations

- 8.1 The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee are asked to:
1. Note the identified need for additional secondary places in central/east Manchester and the approach to identifying the proposed site.
 2. Note the issues concerning the site, the site investigations undertaken to date and an additional commissioned compliance review.
 3. Note the consultation undertaken to date with stakeholders.
 4. Note the initial school designs.
 5. Note the next steps.

Appendix A

Public Consultation Feedback Analysis for all 3 consultations:

Loss of green space and environmental impact to the portion of Nutsford Vale occupied by the school: This featured in all of the consultation feedback. The Council is mindful of this and have developed a programme of improvements to the wider Nutsford Vale area to support a richer and more diverse natural habitat. This has been developed in consultation with the Friends of Nutsford Vale, The City of Trees, and the Grange School, which is on the opposite perimeter of the Nutsford Vale site, and then reviewed by the Council's ecological Planning Policy Officer:

The site boundary running through the Red Rose Forest: After feedback from previous consultation events, the boundary line for the school has been curved to maintain the integrity of the collective of trees that form the Red Rose Forest.

School size: Feedback from the consultation events raised concerns around the original proposed size of school on the site which was 1800, massing of the main school block and the number of pupils likely to be picked up / dropped off on Matthews Lane. The design was subsequently reduced in capacity from 1800 to 1200 pupils and in consequence the parking and external provision reduced accordingly.

Traffic: With regard to parental drop off and pick up the design recognises that residents have concerns with traffic generated by this activity blocking Matthews Lane. By providing means to bring these vehicles within the proposed complex via a drop off driveway within the visitor car park the design aims to bring said vehicles off the main highway. In addition, pupils using this facility will not have to cross in front of traffic when alighting as a pedestrian pathway from the rear play area links to the drop off area and will be opened by the school operator at peak periods. Service vehicles to the kitchens and bin stores will also use the drop off road to gain access to an enclosed service yard so that vehicles delivering goods do not block the main highway.

Resident Privacy: Concerns were raised by residents regarding overlooking into adjacent residential properties. The main complex was re-sited so that the west facing windows now overlook the industrial units on Hemmons Road and as part of the reduction in size, the number of storeys has been changed from four to three thus further reducing opportunities for overlooking. All windows from the sports hall activity studio have been repositioned onto the north elevation so that residential privacy can be maintained.

Boundary tree maintenance: Following resident feedback, trees that lie along the western boundary of the proposed school and residential properties will be trimmed back, thinned or pruned to prevent any opportunity of breach of secure line of fencing from overhanging foliage and branches. This same principle will be adopted for any trees on the Nutsford Vale boundary line where branches overhang the proposed fence line.

Negative impact on natural habitat and growth: An updated habitat survey was undertaken on 13 July 2017, which identified no protected species on the site, however other species present have been identified (for example birds and invertebrates) and we have minimised our impact and enhanced opportunities for habitat growth through our proposed school landscaping design and suggested improvements to the wider Nutsford Vale.

Reducing biodiversity across the site: The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act compels local planning authorities to actively enhance the biodiversity of the natural environment in developments of this kind. This duty is passed onto developers as part of the planning process, and the measures implemented will enhance the ecological features of the wider site which comply with this (and other relevant) legislation in full, such features will include:

- New native-species planting to provide opportunities for local wildlife
- Coppicing small areas of existing trees and shrubs to provide new wildlife habitats
- Appropriate tree thinning to improve ecology and habitat creation
- Creation of a new wetland to enhance biodiversity
- A new area of wildflower meadow with alternative species



Site Options Appraisal for New Central / East Secondary School

Tim Laycock
Capital Programmes & Procurement
6 February 2017

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Site Options Appraisal for New Central / East Secondary School

Summary

This report summarises the potential sites considered for a new secondary school in the Central / East area and provides recommendations as to the preferred site based on the outcome of a detailed site options appraisal.

Background

A report submitted to the Council's Executive on 14th December 2016 identified a statutory requirement for the City Council to establish a new secondary school in the Central/East area of the City. Through the Free School Presumption Process the City Council is committed to providing a site and funding the building of the new school from its Basic Need allocation. Consultation regarding the principle of opening a new school in the area is taking place until Friday 10th February, 2017.

After considering the report, the Executive has granted delegated authority to the Director for Education and Skills in consultation with the Executive Member for Children's Services to:

- Progress the publication of a specification for the new school and an invitation to sponsor based on the outcomes of the consultation;
- Make the final decision on the site for the school; and
- Identify a preferred sponsor to be recommended to the DfE.

Site Options Considered

As can be seen in the table below, the forecast numbers of secondary age children were set to increase considerably from 2015 and continue to grow through to 2017 and beyond. The projected increase in the secondary age children requiring a place is a result of the larger primary school cohorts moving through the system, a reduction of available neighbouring authority places and the continuing improvement in the quality of Manchester schools which has led to an increased proportion of pupils continuing in, or coming to, Manchester at secondary transition. Furthermore, the net flow of children moving in to the city continues to increase when compared with previous academic years.

Forecast	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11
Sep-16	5796	5394	5095	4831	4639
Sep-17	6403	5916	5517	5192	4872
Sep-18	6870	6520	6036	5610	5230

Site availability and suitability in Manchester, particularly for secondary schools, is limited. Where sites are available, or expansions can be put in place, opportunities will be taken to create as

many places as is practical: this will, in places, lead to larger schools. Whilst recognising that school size can play a part in the experience pupils have of school, good schools are able to create a personalised learning experience within small or large pupil cohorts; and with growing financial pressures on schools, there are efficiency benefits in operating at larger sizes to ensure that as much funding as possible is devoted to the teaching and learning experience of pupils. In general, larger projects are also more efficient in the capital spend required per place created.

Restrictions on the availability of sites for expansion and new schools will also impact on the travel to school patterns across the City. It is likely that, whilst it is always the strategic intent to provide schools in areas of the City local to their pupils, providing places for the City's growing population will see some pupils travelling further to school. The City's transport infrastructure will support this, and the Council will meet its statutory obligation to provide free travel to school in accordance with the agreed policy.

Three sites were put forward by Strategic Development as potentially suitable for the location of the proposed school. Two of the sites are not in MCC's ownership and their identity is therefore commercially sensitive. For the purposes of this report the sites are therefore referred to as Site A, Site B and Site C. The sites are located in the Central/East area of the City.

Site A – Part of Nutsford Vale, Matthews Lane, Gorton South

Site B – Location is commercially sensitive

Site C – Location is commercially sensitive

Site Evaluation

A preliminary desk top feasibility study was undertaken for each of the sites. Based on this information the sites were then evaluated against a detailed list of key criteria and scored between 0 – 10 in terms of the risk potential for each criterion. A copy of the full evaluation risk matrix is included at [Appendix 1](#).

Strategic drivers were awarded a weighted score in line with their criticality:

- 1) Proximity from the Central / East target catchment area – weighting factor 3 applied
- 2) Site availability / readiness to deliver (speed to site) – weighting factor 5 applied

The preliminary desk top information for Site A identified that this site had historically been used as a former local authority domestic tip site. The Council therefore commissioned Laing O'Rourke via the North West Construction Hub framework to undertake a range of more detailed investigatory and exploratory surveys on Site A to affirm its viability as a potential site. The survey works were carried out between November 2016 and January 2017 and included the following:

- Topographical survey
- Physical site investigation surveys, including ground investigation (comprising both trench and borehole digs), gas monitoring and flood risk assessment
- Ecological surveys, including tree, bat and bird surveys
- GPRS survey
- Archaeological surveys

The evaluation scores for Site A were then re-evaluated and adjusted (where applicable) in light of the additional information provided by the surveys.

A detailed evaluation commentary for each of the sites considered is set out in [Appendix 2](#).

Recommendation(s)

The detailed site evaluation identified Site A as the recommended site for the proposed Central / East secondary school.

Site A is recommended based on the following key factors:

- Proximity to the target catchment area
- Availability / Readiness of the site for development
- Accessibility for public transport and highways infrastructure

1. Site A
2. Site B
3. Site C

Fig. 3: Sites listed in order of detailed evaluation ranking

Risks

It is acknowledged that there are a number of key risks associated with any proposed development of Site A, principally:

- Ground conditions
- Cost
- Planning issues

We believe that all of the above risks can be successfully mitigated through the development plans and we will work in consultation with the Council's appointed contractor and stakeholders to shape and implement these. Further, although the site investigation surveys identified a requirement for specific ground treatment works and foundation design in order to address the ground conditions on site, we are satisfied that the cost of these can be accommodated within the overall budget and therefore that Site A is a feasible and viable site option.

Conclusion and Next Steps

Based on the outcomes of the site evaluation process we recommend Site A - Gorton South as the preferred location for the new Central/East secondary school. Although the site presents some challenges in terms of ground conditions and loss of open space, we believe that these are outweighed by the multiple benefits offered by the site. Based on the detailed site investigation surveys and feasibility study information we are confident that the site is feasible and viable in terms of the construction of a new upto 1800-place secondary school, with associated external areas. We further believe that any impact on the site can be mitigated and that the proposed school development will offer enhanced provision in terms of community access to car parking and new sports and community facilities.

We will work in consultation with the Council's appointed contractor and local stakeholders to shape and implement the detailed plans for the site.

Appendix 1

Site Evaluation Scoring Matrix

CENTRAL / EAST 1800-PLACE HIGH SCHOOL
SITE OPTIONS EVALUATION / RISK MATRIX

SITE A	SITE B	SITE C

RISK

1	Site area (min 103100m2 required)
2	Site arrangement - suitable for development? E.g. shape, configuration
3	Accessibility to main highway
4	Accessibility to public transport
5	Traffic management required (traffic lights / crossing etc)
6	Existing road capacity to take new traffic load (road width)
7	Proximity of utilities
8	Within MCC ownership?
9	Restrictive covenants or easements affecting the site
10	Footpaths crossing the development zone requiring closure / diversion
11	Allocation for education development within UDP
12	Site condition - topography
13	Site condition - contamination issues
14	Archaeological features impacted?
15	Ecological issues - protected species present?
16	Ecological issues - invasive species present?
17	Ecological issues - removal of trees?
18	Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
19	Flood risk
20	Proximity to nuisance (e.g. factories, industrial processes)
21	Demolition of existing buildings / structures required
22	Impact on adjoining landowners - noise
23	Impact on adjoining landowners- privacy / overlooking
24	Impact on existing sports or community facilities
25	Unexploded ordnance (UXO) risk
26	Impact on third party income generation (e.g. Leisure)
UNWEIGHTED SCORE	

6	6	6
9	8	8
9	9	9
9	7	7
5	9	9
9	9	7
6	6	8
9	1	1
9	9	1
3	5	5
1	1	1
8	8	9
1	1	5
2	4	5
4	4	5
6	2	2
3	3	8
9	9	9
5	5	8
8	9	2
9	9	6
7	9	9
7	9	9
5	8	9
6	5	5
9	9	9

Notes:

- Risks have been scored on the basis of the following scoring criteria:
0-3 Poor (High risk)
4-6 Average (Medium risk)
7-10 Good (Low risk)

- Where further surveys are required to determine the risk score for an item, a neutral score of 5 has been applied (cell highlighted blue)

164	164	162
6.3	6.3	6.2

average

Strategic drivers

Weighting
(1-5)

27	Location in relation to Central / East target catchment area
28	Site availability / readiness to deliver (speed to site)

3	9	5	7
5	7	3	1

WEIGHTED SCORE

62	30	26
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TOTAL SCORE

226	194	188
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RANKING

1 2 3

Appendix 2

Site Evaluation Commentary

SITE A

Site A scored highly (low risk) against the following evaluation criteria:

Evaluation criterion	Score (Risk rating)	Comment
2 – Site arrangement / suitability for development (shape, configuration etc)	9	The site is well proportioned and would allow development of part without prohibiting access to the remainder of the site.
3 – Accessibility to main highway 6 – Existing road capacity to take new traffic load (road width)	9	The site can be directly accessed off Matthews Lane, which is a good quality, wide public highway capable of taking the additional traffic associated with a new 1800-secondary school with relatively minor adjustments.
4 – Accessibility to public transport	9	The site is well located in terms of access to public transport.
8 – Within MCC ownership?	9	The site is 100% owned by the City Council.
9 – Restrictive covenants or easements affecting the site	9	There are no restrictive covenants or easements noted on the registered title.
12 – Site condition (topography)	8	The site is largely flat and therefore scored well in terms of its suitability for development.
18 – Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	9	The site is not identified as a SSSI.
20 – Proximity to nuisance, e.g. factories, industrial premises	8	The majority of the site is bounded by residential housing and Grange Special School. Although there is a small industrial site adjacent to the western boundary of the site this is partly used for warehousing, partly derelict and not used for heavy industry.
21 – Demolition of existing buildings / structures required	9	There are no existing buildings or structures on the site requiring demolition.
22 – Impact on adjoining	7	Although there will be some impact on adjacent residential properties it is considered

landowners – noise 23 – Impact on adjoining landowners – privacy / overlooking		that this can be mitigated through the building location within the site, use of materials and screening (trees).
26 – Impact on third party income generation (e.g. leisure facilities)	9	Development of this site would have no adverse impact on third party income generation.
27 – Proximity to pupil catchment area	9	The site is located immediately adjacent to the target pupil catchment area.
28 – Site availability / readiness to deliver	7	Site surveys have confirmed that the site is suitable for development and that the proposed scheme is viable. Ground condition issues can be addressed through appropriate construction measures.

Risks

Site A scored poorly (high risk) against the following evaluation criteria:

Evaluation criterion	Score (Risk rating)	Comment
10 – Footpaths crossing the development zone requiring closure / diversion	3	This site has benefited from over £500,000 grant funding, which was used to establish a network of footpaths across the site in 2011. Development of any part of the site will therefore require the closure or diversion of one or more of these footpaths, although pedestrians will still be able to traverse the site from Matthews Lane to Bickerdike Avenue and Longsight Road.
11 – Allocation for education development within UDP	1	The site is not identified in the UDP for education development.
13 – Site condition (contamination issues)	1	The site was purchased by the City Council in 1969 for use as a tip, and was operated as a domestic waste tip from this date up to its closure in 1978 (according to Environment Agency historic landfill records). Site investigatory surveys have confirmed the presence of domestic landfill within the site which will require an appropriate foundation

		solution. Although this will increase the overall development costs, we believe this is deliverable within the overall budget.
14 – Archaeological features impacted	2	It is believed that the Anglo Saxon Nico Ditch runs in a culvert beneath Matthews Lane. The development will not impact on the Nico Ditch directly, although it is proposed to connect into the ditch for the purpose of drainage surface water from the site subject to the approval of the Environment Agency and United Utilities. Should any archaeological features relating to the ditch be encountered during construction representatives from the GMAU will be consulted.
15 – Ecological issues – protected species present?	4	Given the nature of the site there is a high probability that protected species may be present.
17 - Ecological issues – Removal of trees?	3	There is a high risk that trees would need to be removed as part of any development works. Any proposed development of this site will need to be sensitive to the Red Rose Forest and orchard areas,

SITE B

Site B scored highly (low risk) against the following evaluation criteria:

Evaluation criterion	Score (Risk rating)	Comment
2 – Site arrangement / suitability for development (shape, configuration etc)	8	The site is well proportioned and would allow development of part without prohibiting access to the remainder of the site.
3 – Accessibility to main highway 5 – Traffic management required 6 – Existing road capacity to take new traffic load (road width)	9	The site can be directly accessed off the adjacent main road, which is a good quality, wide public highway capable of taking the additional traffic associated with a new 1800 place-secondary school with some minor adjustments.

4 – Accessibility to public transport	7	The site is well located in terms of access to public transport.
9 – Restrictive covenants or easements affecting the site	9	We are not aware of any restrictive covenants or easements affecting the site.
12 – Site condition (topography)	8	The site is large and relatively flat. The site is densely overgrown scrubland with some mature trees to the centre. The boundaries are fenced along three of the four sides. The site can be accessed at a number of points by both vehicular and pedestrian gates.
18 – Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	9	The site is not identified as a SSSI.
20 – Proximity to nuisance, e.g. factories, industrial premises	9	The site is not close to any industrial areas.
21 – Demolition of existing buildings / structures required	9	There are no existing buildings or structures on the site requiring demolition.
22 – Impact on adjoining landowners – noise 23 – Impact on adjoining landowners – privacy / overlooking	9	The site is not bounded by residential development.
24 – Impact on existing sports or community facilities	8	Development would have limited impact.
26 – Impact on third party income generation (e.g. leisure facilities)	9	There are no third party income generating activities on site.

Risks

Site B scored poorly (high risk) against the following evaluation criteria:

Evaluation criterion	Score (Risk rating)	Comment
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8 – Within MCC ownership?	1	The site is owned by a third party, although we do not believe the site is affected by multiple ownership.
11 – Allocation for education development within UDP	1	The site is not identified in the UDP for education development.
13 – Site condition (contamination issues)	1	The eastern half of the site was formerly used as a refuse tip – closed in the early 1980's. The western end was formerly used for heavy industry. The industrial processes are likely to have caused ground contamination requiring remediation in this area.
14 – Archaeological features impacted	4	Potentially the heavy industry site was used from early C18 and may be of archaeological interest.
15 – Ecological issues – protected species present?	4	Given the nature of the site there is a high probability that protected species may be present.
16 - Ecological issues – invasive species present?	2	The site is affected by Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam in some areas.
17 - Ecological issues – Removal of trees?	3	There is a high risk that trees would need to be removed as part of any development works.
28 – Site availability / readiness to deliver	3	Time required to purchase land or arrange leasehold via legal teams. Need to install mains services and new access road to get to the area of proposed development.

SITE C

Site C scored highly (low risk) against the following evaluation criteria:

Evaluation criterion	Score (Risk rating)	Comment
2 – Site arrangement / suitability for development	8	Site is flat and vacant to the west with area of clearance of former terraced residential

(shape, configuration etc)		properties now demolished – streets still in place. Remainder of site occupied by light industrial unit and warehousing facility.
3 – Accessibility to main highway 5 – Traffic management required	9	The site is set back from a main trunk road and can be accessed along three sides via estate roads capable of taking some commercial traffic.
4 – Accessibility to public transport	7	The site is well located in terms of access to public transport.
7 – Proximity of utilities	8	The site has good access to adjacent utility supplies.
12 – Site condition (topography)	9	The majority of the vacant site was formerly occupied by residential properties that are likely to have contained basements which will have been infilled at the time of demolition. These will need to be removed / stabilised where built over. Currently this area of site is open scrub land with a few isolated self seeded trees. The street pattern is still extant and may possibly have live mains services under that could be used to supply the new development. The occupied part of the site is covered by building, goods yard and hard standing parking.
14 – Archaeological features impacted	5	We are not aware of any archaeological features affecting the site, however this would need to be confirmed through surveys. We do not currently have detailed site survey information for this site, therefore a neutral score of 5 has been applied.
15 – Ecological issues – protected species present?	5	We are not aware of any protected species on site, however this would need to be confirmed through surveys. We do not currently have detailed site survey information for this site, therefore a neutral score of 5 has been applied.
17 - Ecological issues – Removal of trees?	8	There is a low risk that poor quality trees would need to be removed as part of any development works.

18 – Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	9	The site is not identified as a SSSI.
19 – Flood risk	8	The site is at low risk of flooding.
22 – Impact on adjoining landowners – noise 23 – Impact on adjoining landowners – privacy / overlooking	9	The site is not bounded by residential development.
24 – Impact on existing sports or community facilities	9	Development would have no impact.
26 – Impact on third party income generation (e.g. leisure facilities)	9	There are no third party income generating activities on site.
27 – Location in relation to Central/East target catchment area	7	The site is reasonably well located in terms of the target catchment area.

Risks

Site C scored poorly (high risk) against the following evaluation criteria:

Evaluation criterion	Score (Risk rating)	Comment
8 – Within MCC ownership?	1	Part of the site is owned by a third party.
9 – Restrictive covenants or easements affecting the site	1	The existing roads and footpaths next to them will need to be formally closed. Planning restriction no development permitted at extreme western end of site.
11 – Allocation for education development within UDP	1	The site is not identified in the UDP for education development.
16 - Ecological issues – invasive species present?	2	The site is affected by Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam.

20 – Proximity to nuisance, e.g. factories, industrial premises	2	Industrial process undertaken by adjacent factories carry with them planning restriction limiting development.
28 – Site availability / readiness to deliver	1	Time required to purchase land or set up lease transfer of non MCC owned property.