

Press Release

Two make the shortlist to shape the future of Sandwell's schools

The radical transformation of secondary education in Sandwell has moved a step closer with the announcement of a shortlist of two bidders to undertake the ambitious Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme.

Sandwell Council has been working with consortia who wished to bid for the contract which will bring the borough's vision of schools fit for 21st century learning to life. The council has now announced its shortlist of bidders, namely Environments for Learning and Transform Schools.

Both will be involved in the coming months in preparing detailed plans for the work, and will have until 18 November to bring back their designs and ideas for the Final Tenders. A detailed evaluation of the two tenders will then be conducted, with one consortium selected in January 2009 to bring the plans to fruition.

The selected bidder will form a partnership with the council and the government's Partnerships for Schools organisation to work on the £260 million programme to rebuild or refurbish all of the borough's secondary schools. However, BSF is more than just a building programme, with the schools becoming the hub of local life for many of Sandwell's residents, providing not only purpose-built learning environments for school children, but also housing other important community facilities.

It is anticipated that work will begin at the first two sites, Rowley Regis Learning Campus and Smethwick's Holly Lodge High School College of Science, by Spring 2009, with the buildings open and fully operational by early 2011.

Councillor Ian Jones, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, said: "We are now confident that we have two strong contenders, either of which will be the ideal partner to work with us in delivering our vision for state of the art schools.

"The selection of the shortlist of the two bidders is an important step forward for everyone with an interest in education in Sandwell, both now and in generations to come. BSF will transform the way we educate our young people, whilst at the same time becoming a focal point for the community as a whole."

Melanie Dudley, the Director of Transformation who is sponsoring the BSF project, said: "This is our chance to create modern facilities for all of our secondary schools.

"We need well-designed buildings, at the very heart of the community, that will stand the test of time and can be adapted to the changes in teaching and curriculum that will come along over the next 30 years."