

Skanska reaches Financial Close on Woodlands School, Basildon, Essex

Skanska, Essex County Council (ECC) and International Public Partnerships (INPP), today announce they have reached Financial Close for the financing, design, construction and operation of the new Woodlands School in Basildon, Essex.

Construction will begin immediately with the new school being ready to move into at the beginning of 2014. Skanska Infrastructure Development, as part of the Essex Local Education Partnership, is investing approximately £1.6 million, which corresponds to around a 50 percent share in the project company.

Skanska UK's construction contract is valued at around £26 million, which will be included in order bookings for the first quarter of 2012.

Skanska will also be responsible for the facilities management of the new school for a period of 23 years beginning in early 2014 and valued at around £530,000 per annum. This element of the contract will include planned and reactive aspects covering hard FM, fabric maintenance, cleaning, grounds maintenance and security.

Under the scheme, Skanska will develop, construct and maintain the new 1500 place facility for pupils aged 11-16. The total school will be fitted with the latest high-tech IT, the installation of which will be delivered by RM Education.

Key elements of the project:-

- The site for the new building is located within the existing school and will be constructed to the edge of the playing fields. Following completion, existing buildings will be demolished to allow landscaping works to be completed.
- The design of the new building has played particular attention to the school's performing arts specialism and commitment to sport.
 - the building is focused around a double height central atrium space that will have a glazed north light linked to a performance hall with a large sliding stacking partition so that the two spaces can be joined into one larger space.
 - the north block will be a two-storey element with a dropped ground level to the east to provide a 'super-storey' for the sports and performance facilities.
- To the south, two learning wings will face an external social space with views towards the sports fields.
- The main school reception will be via a new access, which will include a public space providing a civic setting for the school.
- At ground floor level, the dining hall will lead to an external dining courtyard and amphitheatre. To the north west, design and food technology will be located and to the north east, the sports hall, dance activity and drama studios will be set at a lower level, making use of the existing levels on the site, maximizing head room within these spaces and allowing for a level floor plate to be achieved at first floor.
- At first floor level there will be an art terrace, music suite and library.

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The deal is the latest phase in ECC's joint venture with the Essex Local Education Partnership, following the recent successful completion of an extension to Pioneer School, Basildon and the development of three new schools, Castle View and Cornelius Vermuyden on Canvey Island and Columbus School and College in Chelmsford.

This latest award also sees Skanska and RM Education continuing their established working relationship having recently delivered these earlier projects. Skanska is now undertaking facilities management services and maintaining the building fabric at these schools.

Lead architects for the project is Nicholas Hare Architects, who have also previously worked with the team in their role as architects on the Castle View and Cornelius Vermuyden.

Woodlands School is a successful and popular school; it is regularly over-subscribed and is committed to providing excellence by raising pupil achievement. The new school will meet the needs and aspirations of staff and pupils and be fully accessible for individuals with disabilities, whilst at the same time, providing improved access for the community to use the facilities.

Paul Heather, Managing Director of Skanska Building London & South East said: "We were set the challenge on the Woodlands School project of utilising our extensive expertise, gained from the successful delivery of five world-class education facilities in Essex and demonstrate absolute 'value for money' with no impact on quality.

"Today's announcement demonstrates that we have achieved this. Our One Skanska approach of combining the in-house skills in construction, mechanical and electrical engineering and facilities management, with that of our infrastructure development business, delivers true benefits to our clients. We value our excellent relationship with Essex and we are delighted to be continuing this by delivering Woodlands School".

Nick Doherty, Executive Vice President, Skanska Infrastructure Development said, "We are very proud of the role we are playing at Skanska in improving education facilities in Essex. The new Woodlands School will provide an excellent learning environment for its pupils and teaching staff whilst at the same time deliver additional facilities for the surrounding community".

Mike Allen Managing Director, RM Education Managed Services said: "We are very pleased to be working with Essex County Council and Skanska on the new Woodlands School. We believe the project will deliver first class facilities for teaching and learning and will be a hub for engaging the local community. We are delighted to be a partner in such an exciting scheme."

Essex County Councillor **Derrick Louis** said: "We are pleased to have reached this milestone and now look forward to the development of Woodlands School. Investment in the new build will see large flexible spaces created, new IT equipment and a design that brings the school firmly into line with modern day education needs."

Essex County Councillor **Stephen Castle** said: "It is vitally important to keep investing money in our schools and the new build at Woodlands is another way of demonstrating the commitment we have to improving education in Essex. I look forward to building work commencing and watching the school develop."

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