



Ground breaking ceremony at Challney High School for Girls

**partnerships for schools**  
building schools for the future

This case study looks at the impact of Luton Borough Council's (LBC) extended local education partnership (LEP) on the authority's Building Schools for the Future (BSF) project and how its scope will deliver positive change, not just to the school estate but local communities as well.

It looks at the range of non-educational facilities to be delivered as part of the project, and work/training opportunities.

### Key project information

**Local authority:** Luton Borough Council

**Type of schools and services:** Secondary schools, academies, Children's Development Centre, Aquatic Centre, community theatre, libraries, adventure playground and social housing

**No. of students:** 12,548 (projection for 2009/10)

**BSF Waves:** 3 and 6

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### Project description

Luton Learning and Community Partnership (LLCP, Luton's LEP) is a joint venture limited company formed between Luton Borough Council, Building Schools for the Future Investments, and the private sector company QED Education Environments. LLCP is responsible for delivering the entire council Building Schools for the Future project together with all the additional community improvements contained within a £0.5 billion package.

The 13 secondary schools being delivered as part of Luton's BSF scheme are at various stages of project approval, with four already in the first phase of construction: Barnfield West Academy (formerly Halyard High School) and Barnfield South Academy (formerly South Luton High School), Lea Manor High School and Challney High School for Girls.

Reaching financial close of the first phase two months early, the BSF project has gone from the start of procurement to financial close in just 18 months – one of the quickest in the national programme – and is testament to the collaboration of LBC and the private sector consortium, led by QED Wates.

But this is only half the story. A council business case had initially outlined the way in which a £280 million investment could transform not only local education but the amenities for surrounding communities too. The vision was clear: the considerable benefit of new or refurbished schools need not stop at the school gate.

Some areas of the town in particular faced significant challenges, with an associated impact upon pupils. Better life chances and a continuing rise in Luton's educational attainment could not come from first-class schools alone; improvements to the surrounding environment were equally vital. By extending their scope at project planning stage and increasing their ability to work at the heart of the community, the new school buildings could offer much more to local residents.

There were other capital projects at various stages of the planning pipeline and further funding streams to exploit. Weaving them together with the schools project in one carefully co-ordinated, extended programme could have a huge positive impact on everyone in the town. A far-reaching and encompassing approach would deliver not only

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enhanced schools and revitalised local communities, it would also bring about wholesale transformational change.

Crucially, extending the scope of the project delivered economies of scale vital to getting the utmost from available resources. Overseen by one, lean but highly motivated partnership management team, more work could be done, much faster and far more effectively. Nor were the benefits confined to efficiencies alone; an extended programme offered real potential for significant added value.

The Luton Learning & Community Partnership (LLCP) is delivering a range of ambitious projects that sit outside a typical BSF framework. These include a £25 million aquatic centre, with a 50 metre pool, diving area and state-of-the-art fitness centre. There is also a £5m integrated children's

development centre, funded by NHS Luton and the government's Co-location Fund, to provide specialised care for youngsters with disabilities. There will be new libraries and even a 250+ seat community theatre. In another capital project valued at around £75 million, LLCP are building 450 affordable homes through Wates Living Space, the affordable housing division of the Wates Group. Catalyst Housing Group is the registered social landlord who will own and manage the social housing element.

The total capital programme spend by 2013 is now projected at £516 million, a substantial extension of the original BSF-only budget. In terms of economics, half a billion is serious money: the partnership's policy of 'keeping it local' will support the town's business community and job creation prospects will benefit greatly.

## Extended services: current projects under development or delivery

Project	Capital Value £m	Funder	National programme	Stage
Lea Manor High School Including: community theatre, community library, youth and adult education facilities and multi-agency space	18.1	D&B Refurb DCSF and LBC	BSF	On site. Phase 1 handed over.  FM operational ICT operational
Challney High School for Girls including youth facilities and multi agency space	20	PFI	BSF	On site
Barnfield West	30	Academy	Academies	On site
Barnfield South	30	Academy	Academies	On site
Primary ICT	5.5	LBC	Basic Need	On site
Social Housing Programme	75	RSL and HCA		Contract signed
Olympic sized Aquatic Centre	25	LBC		Stage 2
Integrated Centre for Excellence (Integrated children's development centre)	5.5	Co-location fund, Luton PCT, LBC and Lea Manor High School Trust	Co-Location fund	Stage 2
Adventure playground	0.8	DCSF	Play fund	Stage 2

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Downside Primary School	8	Basic Need, Expansion	Primary Capital	Stage 2
Ashcroft High School Including youth facilities and multi-agency space	17.6	DCSF and LBC	BSF	Stage 1
Lealands High School including youth facilities and multi agency space, community library, community access point and creche	15.5	DCSF and LBC	BSF	Stage 1
Stopsley High School including youth facilities & multi-agency space	26	DCSF and LBC	BSF	Stage 1
Cardinal Newman High School including youth facilities and multi agency space	20.4	DCSF and LBC	BSF	Stage 1
Icknield High School and Woodlands special school co-location, plus extensive community facilities	56	DCSF and LBC	BSF	Stage 0

## Adding value

One word sums up Luton's extended programme: ambition. Throughout, there has been a palpable desire to do it bigger, better and faster than anyone else in the country. And to deliver far more for less. But the focus is not just on good buildings and efficiency, it's also about delivering holistic regeneration of the town.

Specific - and challenging - key performance indicators are in place to measure success and additional value in terms of partnering services, quality, timeliness, cost, stakeholder engagement and customer satisfaction. Many are linked to the council's strategic objectives and targets (including national priorities) for educational attainment, social inclusion, health and economic regeneration. These will be reviewed regularly to ensure they maintain consistency with the strategic business case for the area, along with the project's continuous improvement plan.

A new theatre, Luton's largest, will provide a huge boost to school and community arts. An Olympic sized pool, incorporating a world-class diving training centre, will provide state-of-the-art facilities to nurture future champions. The centre for children with disabilities will put the town on the national map of childcare excellence. The enhanced schools,

some with new public libraries, will, as 'community hubs', offer the community some badly-needed facilities for adult education, recreation and sport and completely change the way that people think about "school".

Importantly in these challenging economic times, the partnership has a strong desire to ensure that Luton's economy enjoys maximum benefit from the project's £0.5 billion investment. Local suppliers and contractors will be used whenever possible, helping to sustain and create jobs.

There are specific targets for increasing the proportion of local labour, skills, contractors and material suppliers throughout the life of the project. As much as 80 per cent of the materials used could be sourced from the town and surrounding area. And at least 60 per cent of labourers employed by the project's construction and operation live within 15 miles of Luton. A significant proportion – between at least 65 and 75 per cent - of skilled staff required for construction, refurbishment and IT will also be local.

Such policies are crucial, given that Luton has some areas of high deprivation and the town's unemployment levels remain above the regional and national average. It is one of the council's avowed objectives to redress this.

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Directly linked to investment levels, and yet further evidence of the excellent match between the project and its LEP delivery partner, QED Wates, are also striving to achieve as many as 295 apprenticeships for local young people, along with 750 work experience placements. They will set up a construction skills academy and run two Prince's Trust 'Get into Construction' programmes. In addition, there is a management trainee programme, a Work Ready award scheme and a variety of mentoring initiatives for young people. Similar examples abound with architectural, construction, heating, plumbing and fabrication and IT delivery partners.

In addition, there is a vast array of other value-added projects and sponsorship to boost literacy, learning and e-learning initiatives, local arts, sport, careers advice and enterprise and business in the community.

Environmentally, the entire project will ensure high standards of insulation and waste recycling, together with a low carbon footprint. Wates work to strict key performance indicator targets that often exceed standard requirements. The project will also be exploiting brown field sites and using imaginative land swap arrangements to conserve green space. Again, there are specific targets in place for environmental improvements and energy reduction throughout the supply chain.

None of this could have been achieved as quickly or as cost-effectively by a fragmented series of unrelated projects. Luton's extended LEP model has stripped out expensive duplication at all stages and allowed the partnership's resources to be focused on where they can deliver maximum benefit and added value. One team, with its own design, construction and legal specialists in spite of its leanness, has minimised overheads and consultants' fees and maximised the money spent on actual deliverables.

## New technology, new thinking and great design

All schools will benefit from an imaginative information communication technology (ICT) infrastructure that will enable pupils to work from a number of sites in the town. A central data centre will provide an integrated managed learning environment which can be accessed anytime, anywhere.

The school developments will have good wi-fi networking capability inside and outside all buildings – the network even extends to the playing fields – to

ensure maximum flexible, and future-proofed, IM connectivity. Pupils, students, service users and staff will all enjoy easy, convenient access.

In a further example of the project's beneficial economies of scale, Luton's primary schools with the help of a £5.5 million grant from the Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), are having their communications infrastructure upgraded alongside their senior counterparts. By autumn 2010, all will have state-of-the-art wi-fi, broadband connectivity and IP telephony to make computer-based learning an exciting reality for young children. Many will get new laptops, netbooks or hand-held computer devices and all will have the instant, reliable and 'always on' connectivity that pupils need to benefit fully from information technology.



Great design and construction are evident throughout. In the new and refurbished schools, for example, the impact will be one of light, space and welcome - a modern, dramatic statement to leave pupils, staff and visitors in no doubt that they are in a first class learning organisation. There is a strong emphasis on ambience, professionalism and high quality materials to create a comfortable environment, with wide, unrestricted circulation areas – many with good space for displays and presentations - light, airy stairwells, well styled eating places and informal, covered areas outdoors. 'Old-school' problems – the claustrophobic aspects that add to feelings of stress, intimidation or oppression - have been designed out. Instead, the new buildings will reassure students that they are valued, respected and responsible.



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## Lea Manor: how an integrated approach benefits communities

Developed from a shared vision with local people, this project will revitalise Lea Manor school and, by providing the high-value facilities that residents want, will ensure it becomes that all-important "community hub". Work started in June and will finish in less than two years' time.

By September 2011, a greatly enhanced school will offer a new library, excellent facilities for adult education, a health centre specialising in the needs of disabled children, along with flexible, well-equipped office space for support agency staff working with the school and its pupils.

In addition, there will be an attractive and highly usable 'youth space' and youth club, along with the TLC holistic health centre for teenagers. Extensive refurbishment of the adjacent leisure centre and sports hall is also part of the project package. Careful planning and design will ensure all these community assets are accessible and welcoming to everyone.

Lea Manor's children's development centre is a particularly innovative feature. With £1 million capital from NHS Luton Primary Care Trust and £4.5m co-location funding, a brand new building adjacent to the school will house healthcare, therapy, development and respite facilities for disabled children and young people from right across the town. There will also be a nursery and early years service for 'under fives' and their families, along with adjacent childcare and crèche facilities. A 'sensory garden' will blend the centre with adjacent school buildings and provide pleasant respite areas for all pupils and parents.

A further jewel in Lea Manor's crown will be its new 250+ seat theatre. A much loved and well-used school theatre will be transformed into a true community asset, a showpiece befitting of the school's status as a specialist in the teaching of performing arts. It will be the largest public theatre in the town, enjoying all the facilities found in regional commercial establishments. By day, it will be used for performing arts lessons and by night it will host school and community productions. Adjacent to Lea Manor, with its own frontage, it will be a potent statement of school and community in close harmony.

Lea Manor pupils will also get an enhanced school library with the added benefit of easy access to a smart new public library. Residents will enjoy highly attractive surroundings with access to extra meeting space and a café. As with the theatre, the public library has its own entrance so that weekend and evening opening can be maintained.



The council's adult education service will also get a 'front of house' position, with meeting areas and café in close proximity, all easily accessible from the street. Such a highly visible presence will help boost course take-up and further promote Lea Manor as an attractive destination venue for local people. Enhanced administrative facilities will enable the service to develop and market its range of courses in a community trust venue nearby.

Refurbishment of the adjoining sports centre will benefit pupils and residents alike and, all in all, the entire project will encourage local people to see Lea Manor as much, much more than a school. Lea Manor will become an attractive destination venue for adults, going a long way towards demystifying "school". This in turn will encourage greater interest and support from parents and local people in general. Schoolchildren will enjoy and benefit from a positive interaction with community life, enhancing their life and social skills. In short, the project will improve perceptions and relationships between a wide range of different age groups, encouraging a virtuous circle of interaction and co-operation that will benefit everyone.

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## Setting up the partnership

A rigorous selection process chose QED Wates as the preferred bidder and, with LBC, formed the Luton Learning and Community Partnership (LLCP). It is an excellent match and a true partnership: aims and objectives are driven by a shared vision and a clear set of values, both internal and external. Its success has led to Partnerships for Schools adopting the Luton LEP approvals process as a national exemplar for other authorities to use as standard methodology.

Good working relationships throughout the project have been vital. Bid directors at Wates said neither side - public nor private - had been adversarial at any stage of negotiations. The approach had been to find the best fit for both and not to use brinkmanship or trading points. To maintain momentum of the project, there was an agreement never to reopen discussion of a particular point after it had been agreed and to keep moving forward to the next point instead.

In moving through the transition from pre-financial close to operational, the LLCP was aided by retaining the same 'pre-bid' staff on both public and private sector sides. There are currently around eight Wates staff seconded to the LEP, working with 16 from Luton council. All are co-located in the same office, ensuring maximum integration and cohesion and the maximum chance to 'over-deliver' at every opportunity.

The breadth of partnership extends beyond this however, involving as it does NHS Luton, the Active Luton sports trust, the council's adult education and library services, plus of course teachers, governors, schoolchildren and local residents.

## Conclusion

Luton's extended LEP model will contribute to the town's ongoing regeneration for many years to come and provide the basis for future sustainable development. The entire project is designed to revitalise communities, excite and inspire local residents and increase educational attainment. It will bring about a major positive shift in the way people of all ages regard school, a catalyst for heightened awareness and appreciation of what schools, as 'community hubs', can offer everyone. It will also provide some high value facilities that people want and additional, much-needed, social housing and affordable homes.

Underlying this project are four key strategic drivers: maximising the utility of the new, improved schools, delivering sustainable community benefits, maximising the huge potential of scale economies and maximising benefits to the local economy.

In short, it is a vivid demonstration of the major added value that an integrated, well-organised partnership approach can deliver.

## Top tips

- **Stick to agreed timescales and try to over-deliver. By reaching financial close two months early in May 2009, Luton was able to use the summer period to start construction during the summer holidays and ensure minimal disruption to school pupils and teachers.**
- **Build confidence in the LEP early on by being constantly focused on delivery. Where are the quick wins that will get stakeholders on board?**
- **Champion local people. Luton has a strong team who genuinely care about the town as well as the BSF project; there is a palpable underlying desire to deliver the very best schools and community facilities.**
- **Work closely with end users from start to finish. Effective consultation is key.**
- **A great partnership team, with a clear vision and the will to get things done, is essential.**

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## Key contact

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## Further information

Luton's BSF project  
[www.learning.luton.gov.uk/index.cfm?s=1&m=649&p=238,index](http://www.learning.luton.gov.uk/index.cfm?s=1&m=649&p=238,index)