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School's £4.4m project

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An artist's impression of the Cooper School scheme

First published Thursday 25 March 2010 in [News](#)

by [Sam McGregor](#)

PLANS to build a £4.4m sixth form at Cooper School, Bicester, are likely to be rubber stamped before Easter.

Oxfordshire County Council's cabinet approved a scheme to build the building at the school site, off Churchill Road, after no objections from consultation.

A planning officer will make the final decision and is expected to give the green light in the next few weeks.

It is hoped work on the new building will start soon after and the sixth form is due to open in September 2011.

The new sixth form will cater for 185 students and the building will include classrooms, ICT facilities, a common room, study areas and café.

Currently 16-year-olds can either carry on their education at Bicester Community College, in Queens Avenue, or they are forced to travel outside the town.

The county council is funding the majority of the project but a Government grant of £600,000 has been awarded to make the building environmentally friendly as part of the eco-town scheme.

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Headteacher Ben Baxter said: "The creation of post-16 provision at Cooper School is a fantastic opportunity for young people in the town now and into the future.

"It addresses an historical anomaly, whereby students have had to travel on a daily basis to sixth form providers across Oxfordshire and surrounding authorities.

"The new sixth form building will provide a 21st century design, which will enhance the learning opportunities for students across a diverse range of post-16 courses. It is exciting to be a part of a quite radical and unique change process."

The new building will use new eco-building technologies, have significantly improved insulation and low-energy fittings and equipment.

It will also include other energy-saving measures such as solar-type panels, to generate electricity on site and any excess power will be sold to the National Grid.

Cooper School has been working closely with BCC, Bardwell School, a special needs school, and Oxford and Cherwell Valley College to jointly offer a wide variety of academic and vocational courses for pupils aged 16 plus.

Michael Waine, council chief for schools improvement, said: "I am delighted that the county cabinet has now agreed the project for this new sixth form at Cooper School.

"This multi-million pound project represents the most significant improvement in post-sixteen education in Bicester for generations.

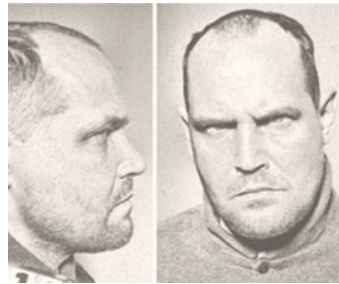
"It is at the forefront of our ambition to enable young people to stay in the town, rather than go elsewhere."

Building work is due to start this summer on two more science labs and an engineering workshop in the existing design and technology area.

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