

Architects hail revamp of schools programme

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By [Will Hurst](#)

BSF to link with local regeneration



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Jim Knight

Architects have welcomed plans for a major overhaul of the government’s £45 billion Building Schools for the Future programme.

Last week schools minister Jim Knight announced a consultation on proposals to tie the nationwide renewal project more closely to local regeneration schemes and allow local authorities to join the scheme immediately if ready.

The move was welcomed by delivery body Partnerships for Schools and leading figures in schools design, who claimed the measures would raise quality and lead to more work for practices specialising in education.

Knight suggested the current system of “waves” — which has given priority to areas with the greatest social deprivation — could be scrapped and replaced with a more flexible arrangement taking into account criteria such as regeneration projects and poor school infrastructure.

“We now want to target children and schools with the greatest needs, wherever they live, to benefit as soon as possible,” he said.

“Instead of waiting, we want to give them more scope to target pockets of deprivation and underperforming schools now — by giving the remaining local authorities the chance of early entry as soon as they are ready.”

Martin Evans, partner at Watkins Gray International, said his practice had long called for such reform.

“It’s about time,” he said. “Tying BSF in with regeneration schemes is the big thing... and we have been putting some of these ideas into practice with the Tower Hamlets BSF programme, getting housing developers and community groups involved so you look at managing the space in the long term.”

Deborah Saunt, a director at DSDHA, agreed. “The potential now exists for the wider benefits of the BSF programme to be realised by encouraging regeneration through public infrastructure projects being developed side by side with new school infrastructure,” she said.

But Ty Goddard, director of lobby group British Council for School Environments, warned that the plans still did not tackle “fundamental” problems with the procurement process.

“This is a welcome consultation for potential changes to the BSF programme,” he said.

“But we do have to remember that any new initiative takes place within the context of a procurement process which is fundamentally flawed.”

The consultation runs until July 4 and is available at www.dcsf.uk/consultations