

## BSF ON THE STARTING BLOCK

Nottingham's ambitious plan to transform secondary education takes a step closer to becoming reality this month with seven major consortia lining up to compete for the city's biggest building project – the rebuilding or remodelling of all the city's secondary schools.

Radical proposals to change the education landscape across the city through the Government's multi-billion-pound 'Building Schools for the Future' initiative were first circulated to all parents of pupils in Nottingham schools in 2005. The city expects to receive £150m to carry out its ground-breaking programme.

This latest phase in the project follows confirmation that Nottingham's BFS proposals have been scrutinised and formally approved by the Treasury and the Department for Education and Skills. A Europe-wide advertisement in the Official Journal of the European Union has sparked keen interest from a number of would-be bidders. The Council has now selected seven companies/consortia from which its strategic partner will eventually be chosen.

The seven-strong long list comprises Inspired Spaces; Investors in the Community; Learning21; Miller; Skanska; Transform Schools and Vinci Investments. All have experience in this type of project and several have been involved in BSF projects in other parts of the country.

Rigorous EU regulations govern each stage of the procurement process. The longlisted candidates will now be invited to submit outline proposals before a short list is drawn up. At this stage schools will have their chance to talk to the shortlisted bidders and make their contribution to the eventual design of the new buildings.

"The degree of interest shown by these major players demonstrates just how successful our bid has been so far, " says Councillor Graham Chapman, City Council spokesman for children's services. "It has been accepted at national level as one of the best prepared and thought-through programmes.

"Competition of this calibre can only benefit this excellent initiative."

Tim Byles, chief executive of Partnerships for Schools, the government agency responsible for delivering the national BSF programme, comments: "It is great news that Nottingham, one of our wave 2 local authorities, has reached the longlist stage of BSF. We look forward to working with them during the forthcoming bid evaluation process, and once their chosen preferred bidder has been appointed."

