

The LEICESTER SCHOOL BUILDING PROJECT

Frequently Asked Questions

March 13, 2020



<https://leicester.projects.nv5.com/>

Q1: When and where can I vote for the new Leicester Middle School project?

A1: There are some **very important upcoming milestones**, which are critical for the project to stay on track and continue to develop:

Saturday, May 9, 2020 at 10:00AM

Special Town Meeting (Town Funding Approval)

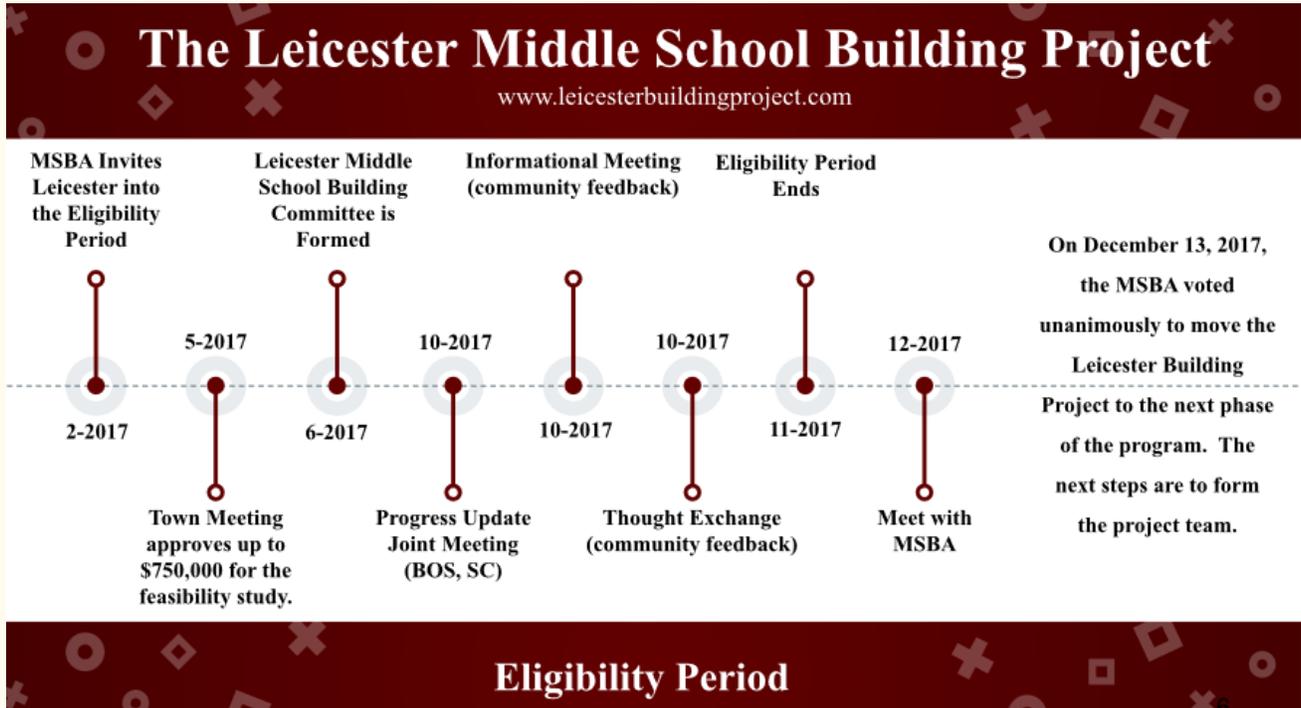
Tuesday, June 9, 2020

Annual Town Election (Ballot Question)

An **approved vote** in June 2020 will allow the project momentum to continue to next steps towards a **NEW SCHOOL OPENING IN SEPTEMBER 2023!**

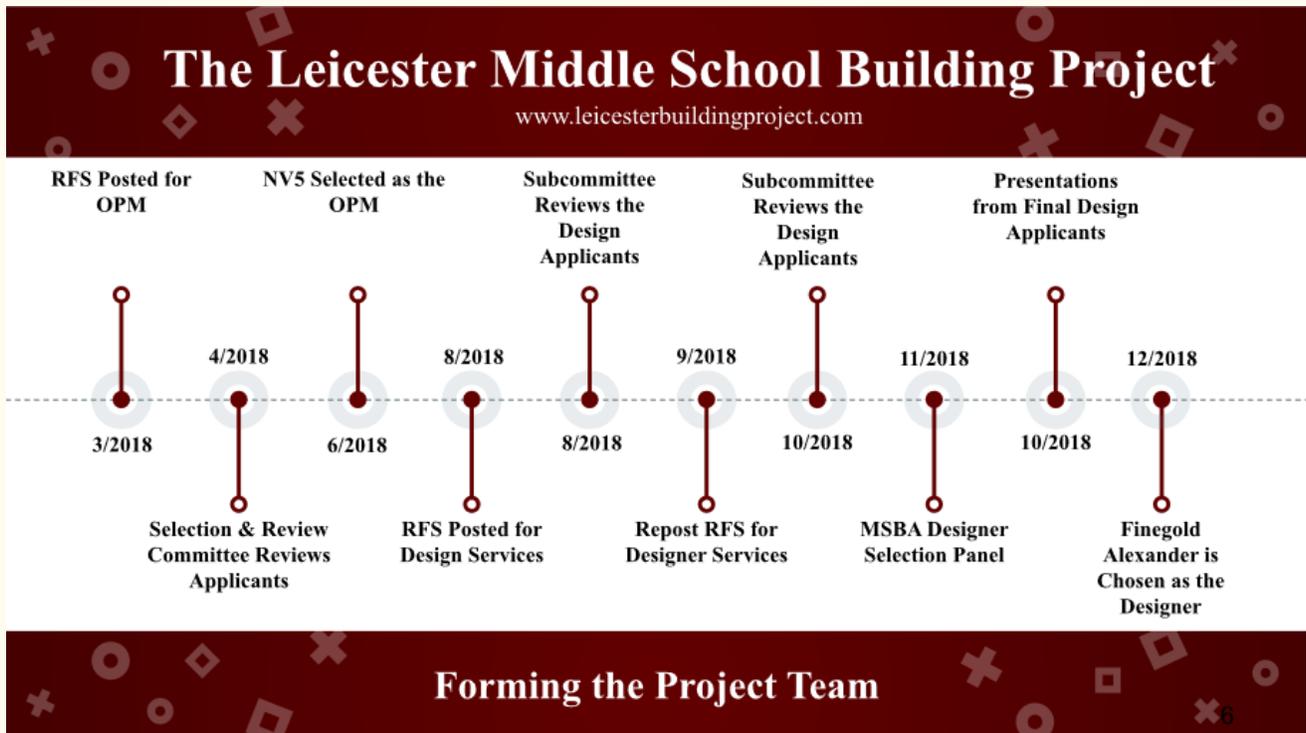
Q2: Can you provide an overview of the project and its timeline?

A2: See progress timeline below:



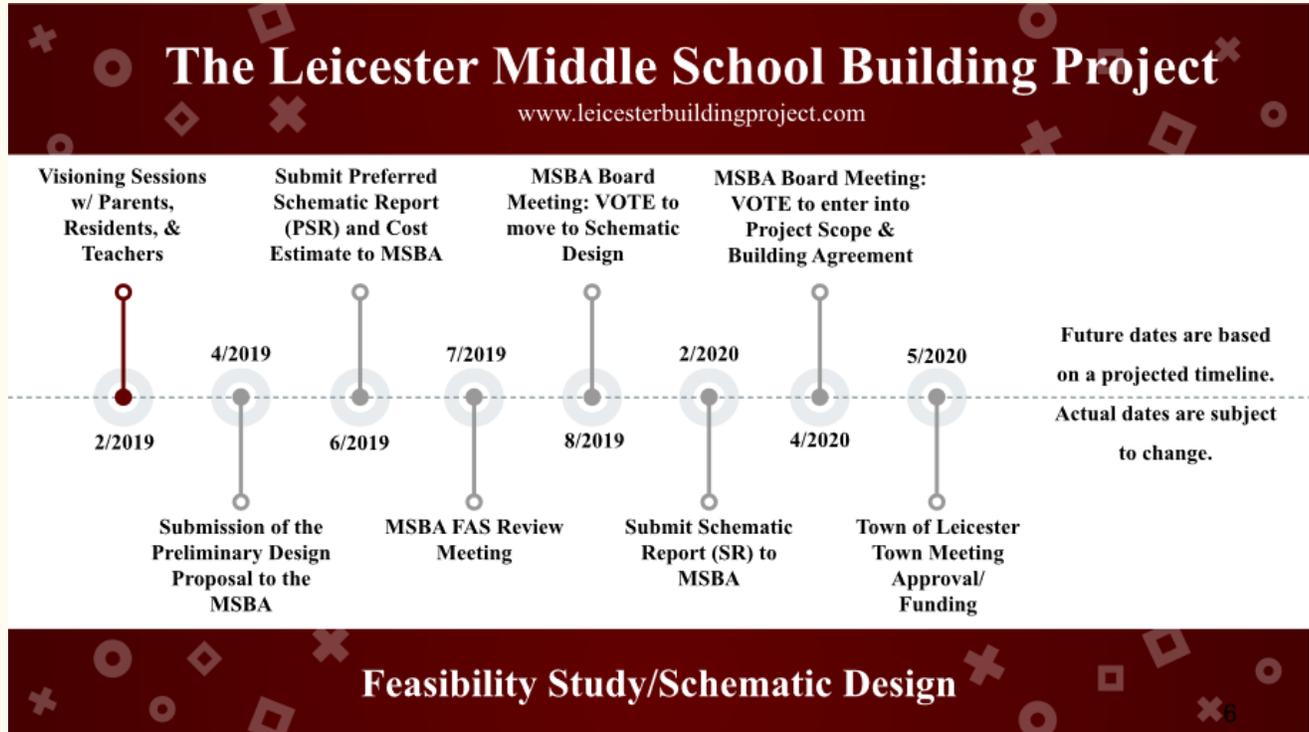
Back in March 2016, the Town of Leicester submitted a Statement of Interest for the Leicester Middle School. The MSBA visited the school and **immediately saw the urgency to rebuild/renovate**. Subsequently, in February 2017, the MSBA invited the Town of Leicester into the Eligibility period. What came next was community involvement through Thoughts Exchange and the Future Search Committee. At the end of the year 2017 the MSBA unanimously voted to move the Leicester School Building Project to the next phase, which was to form the project team.

- 2016.03 Leicester submits Statement of Interest to the MSBA
- 2017.02 MSBA Invites Leicester into the Eligibility Period
- 2017.05 Town Meeting approves up to \$750K for Feasibility Study
- 2017.06 Leicester School Building Committee is formed
- 2017 Informational meetings and community feedback
- 2017.11 Eligibility period ends
- 2017.12 MSBA voted unanimously to move the Project forward



In 2018, the Town of Leicester advertised for proposals, reviewed and interviewed applicants, and ultimately hired an Owner’s Project Manager (NV5) and a Designer (Finegold Alexander Architects) to form the Project team.

- 2018.03 Request for Services (RFS) advertised for OPM
- 2018.06 Owner’s Project Manager (NV5) selected
- 2018.09 Request for Services (RFS) advertised for Designer
- 2018.10 Designer proposals reviewed
- 2018.11 MSBA Designer Selection Panel (DSP) reviews proposals/ presentations
- 2018.12 Designer (Finegold Alexander Architects) selected



For information on each of the submissions listed below, click on the particular submission on the project website:

<https://leicester.projects.nv5.com/presentations/msba-submissions>

- 2019.02 Visioning sessions with teachers, parents, students and residents
- 2019.04 Preliminary Design Program (PDP) submitted to the MSBA
- 2019.07 Preferred Schematic Report (PSR) submitted to the MSBA
- 2020.02 Schematic Design package submitted to the MSBA
- 2020.04 MSBA shall vote to approve the project to enter into Project Scope & Budget Agreement (Board approval is required prior to local vote)
- 2020.05 Special Town Meeting (Town funding approval)
- 2020.06 Annual Town Election (ballot question)

Note: Pending Project approval at the upcoming Town Meeting, the next phase of Design Development will begin this summer, followed by construction documents, bidding and ultimately construction would begin in summer 2021. Each phase requires MSBA submissions and approvals, as well as cost estimates.



Q3: What is wrong with the current Leicester Middle School?

A3: The current Middle School has infrastructure issues, the boilers are failing and have doubled their life span, the windows are drafty and there are no screens. The education space is not current and cannot support STEM and science classrooms so students have access to the proper technology. General classrooms are very undersized, and SPED programming is severely lacking, according to State guidelines. There is no space available, other than corridor areas, for students to break out into small groups. The auditorium has many broken seats. There is no practice area for band and chorus, thus the program has to be broken into multiple sections to accommodate students. The Living and Learning program is in an old Home Economics room, which limits the number of students who can access the program.

Q4: Of the (3) schools for which Statements of Interest (SOIs) were submitted to the MSBA, why was the Leicester Middle School selected to be rebuilt?

A4: The MSBA personnel who walked through the Middle School immediately saw the need to rebuild/renovate the Middle School due to the structure and age of the building. Of the three schools, the Middle School was determined to be in the most need of repair.

Q5: What is being proposed for the new Leicester School building project?

A5: The new school is being designed to be three stories, at 153,069 SF, with high efficiency building systems and state of the art technology. The underlying concept of the design is two schools under one roof, with the Upper School (grades 5 – 8) in one wing and the Lower School (PreK – 4) in another wing. Shared school and community program spaces like the Gym, Media Center, and Cafetorium will be centrally located in the building for all to share.

- Fully ADA compliant
- Accommodations for Special Education programs
- Accommodations for Pre-K and Kindergarten
- Dedicated spaces for art, music, physical education, media and STEM/Maker Space
- Flexible Learning spaces outside of classrooms, located in each wing

- Separate bus and vehicular traffic
- Maximum use of technology to enhance 21st century learning
- Air conditioned spaces for summer programming
- “Green Building” features will improve overall operational efficiency
- New Gym, Media Center, Cafetorium and Health and Wellness Studio will be available for Community use
- More students can be educated in their home Town, rather than being sent out of district [I would ask the District to confirm this statement]
- A new building is an investment in the future of the children of Leicester

Q6: How many students will the new school accommodate and how many classrooms will there be?

A6: The new school is being designed for 930 students, in grades Pre-K through 8. There will be a total of 49 classrooms broken down as follows:

- 6 Kindergarten Classrooms
- 27 General Classrooms, grades 1-6
- 8 General Classrooms, grades 7-8
- 2 Science Classrooms, grades 7-8
- 2 Self-Contained SPED rooms, grades 7-8
- 5 Self-Contained SPED rooms, grades K-6

Q7: Can the current Leicester Middle School be renovated without building a new building?

A7: The current layout and physical condition, including the compromised building envelope of the existing Leicester Middle School, would make a renovation extremely challenging and would be more expensive than a building new. The overall construction schedule would need to be “phased” in order for students to remain in as many classrooms as possible during construction, and temporary trailers would most likely be required. A renovation would require a full seismic upgrade of the building, which would impact most of the building structure.

Q8: What educational opportunities will the new school provide that current facility cannot?

A8: New classrooms sized according to state standards allowing for a better teaching and learning environment; dedicated STEM and Maker Spaces; equally distributed Special Education classrooms; dedicated Flexible Learning spaces outside of the classrooms.

Q9: Could the Memorial School be renovated instead of the Middle School?

A9: The MSBA did not invite the Memorial School into the Eligibility program for an addition/renovation or rebuild. If we tried to expand the number of students with an additional three (3) classrooms in the building, the current road, which leads to and from the school, would not be able to accommodate the increased traffic volume. Therefore, additional roadways would need to be constructed. The configuration of the parcel of land where the Memorial School building is located, is not conducive to adding more students.

Q10: Were other sites considered before deciding to build at the existing Leicester Middle School site?

A10: There are not many suitable sites available to house a facility of this size. Three (3) other sites were considered: The Memorial School property, a portion of the Hillcrest Golf Course and the Leicester Drive-in property. Concerns with these sites included the demolition cost of school building and compacted lot (Memorial), lack of space for playing fields and alteration of the use of another Town property (Hillcrest), and purchase price and traffic (Leicester Drive-In).

The Middle School site offers the space that is needed for both the building and athletic fields, and offers the ability to have the schools grouped together in a campus-style atmosphere.

Q11: What will happen to the current Primary School building?

A11: There are options available for the Primary school building. The building could be leased for non-Town educational programs or the building could be sold to a third party for redevelopment (assuming the proposed use is compatible with the school property). A future option, although much less likely, would be to remove the building for additional fields or parking.

These are all options, but at this point a decision has not been made. The building will not be vacant. As an aside, there are three developers interested in the Memorial School, and it does not have an elevator, like the elementary school has. We believe this will make it much easier to find a new use for the building.

Q12: When would the new Leicester School building project open?

A12: According to the current project schedule, which factors in local approval at the May 9, 2020 Special Town Meeting, as well as funding approval at the June 9, 2020 Town Meeting, the **new Leicester School will open in September 2023.**

Q13: Will the project be done in one phase or several phases?

A13: Given that swing space will not be required, and that the current Leicester Middle School can remain in operation during construction, the intent is that the project can be completed in one phase. When the design is complete and documents go out to bid, the project team will determine whether an early site package seems reasonable.

Q14: Will the students be relocated during construction of the new school?

A14: No. Building on the existing site allows the students to remain in the current Leicester Middle School. Relocation or swing space is not required. The construction area will be separate from the existing building by fencing and screening. A construction logistics plan will prevent conflicts between construction vehicles accessing the site and parent and bus drop-off and pick-up.

Q15: If the current enrollment of the Leicester Middle School is 431, why is the new school being designed for 930 students?

A15: The current Middle School houses 431 students in grades 5-8. The School Building Committee (SBC) explored several options for the Middle School configuration: Grades 5-8, grades 6-8, and grades K-8. Due to the fact that the Memorial School building and the Primary School building are failing and will likely require extensive repair work or full replacement within the next few years, the SBC recognized this as an opportunity to build a K-8 school as the most efficient and economically sound solution. According to enrollment projections, the MSBA projects that in 2023, when the new school is scheduled to open, the enrollment for grades K-8 will be 930 students.

Q16: What happens if the Project is not approved at the Special Town meeting on May 9, 2020?

A16: Consequences of the project not passing Town votes on May 9 (for ballot), and again on June 9 (for Town funding), are the following:

- If Town funding is not approved in June 2019, Leicester will **lose this opportunity for State funding**, which is currently close to 60% of the total project cost.
- **A failed vote in June 2020** will likely result in Leicester Public Schools being **required to submit a new Statement of Interest to the MSBA** and await a second invitation from the MSBA to re-enter the Feasibility Study phase. [Click here to learn about the MSBA Failed Vote Policy.](#)
- The **project will be removed** from the State pipeline.
- The **middle school could be at risk to close** due to poor building conditions.
- **Project costs will only increase** in the future.



Q17: How much will the project cost and how will it be funded?

A17: The project budget, pending approval by the MSBA, is set at \$90,675,633. This amount is the estimated cost for the new building, and all site work, as well as a synthetic turf field and new track, upgraded baseball and soccer fields, and replacement tennis courts. The project would be funded by the MSBA, with an anticipated distribution of approximately \$39.3M. The remainder of the project cost, estimated at approximately \$51.3M, would be borrowed by the Town. There will be temporary borrowing during construction, followed by permanent borrowing for 20 years after the project is complete.

Q18: How much of the Project will be funded by the State?

A18: State funding is calculated by what the MSBA determines as eligible costs, which are based on established formulas for site work, square footage reimbursement, etc. The current allocations between the State and local contributions are based on those formulas. While variations on those project costs may affect the State or the local shares, the overall project cost will be set by the MSBA and the Town vote at \$90,675,633.

Q19: Does the \$90.6 million Total Project Budget include everything?

A19: Yes. All costs will be factored in including fees for the Owner's Project Manager, the Architect, Contractor and construction contingencies. Furniture, library books, technology and maintenance equipment are also included in the Total Project Budget.

Q20: How much will the new school cost tax payers?

A20: If the anticipated local share of the project, at \$51.3M, holds, the Town would be borrowing temporarily during construction, which is estimated to add \$0.06 to \$2.60 on the tax rate during construction, increasing annually, based on estimated borrowing amounts. When the debt for the project becomes permanent, the cost on the tax rate is estimated to be \$3.64 per \$1,000 valuation. On the average single-family home, valued at \$259,606, that cost would be \$946.19.

The timing of the permanent debt is to coincide with excluded debt that is coming off the schedule, including the Police Station, Hillcrest, and the Town Equipment exclusions, which results in a savings of 42 cents on the tax rate, or \$109.58 to the average single-family home.

Q21: How does the cost of the new Leicester School compare with other similar projects in the State?

A21: As outlined in the table below, the Leicester Middle School costs are directly in line with other similar projects, even being at the lower end of the range:

School	Students	Construction	Const. \$/SF	Total \$
Coburn ES (Springfield)	585	2020	\$458/SF	\$68.3M
South MS (Braintree)	800	2020	\$474/SF	\$86.5 M
Leicester MS	930	Approvals	\$475/SF	\$90.6M
Worcester South HS	1,420	2019	\$480/SF	\$209.9M
JFK MS (Natick)	1,000	2019	\$481/SF	\$109.5M
Mattacheese MS (Dennis-Yarmouth)	940	2020	\$503/SF	\$116.9M
Hildreth ES (Harvard)	445	2019	\$505/SF	\$53.6M

Q22: Will the Community be able to use any spaces in the new school?

A22: Yes. The Community will have access to the new Gymnasium, the Media Center (Library), Computer Lab and Cafetorium (Cafeteria with a performance stage). Play fields will also be accessible, to be used by the Community.

Q23: How will Leicester community benefit from the new school?

A23: In addition to having access to the Gymnasium, Media Center (Library), Computer Lab and Cafetorium, the new state of the art facility will increase property values in Town. Also, the new school would keep SPED students in the district with appropriate spaces.

The children of the Town of Leicester will have the benefit of an education enhanced by a beautiful new school facility. After all, a new school is an investment in the future of the children and building a new school now is the financially responsible thing to do!

Q24: Will there be sustainable design features?

A24: Yes. There will be sustainable design features, including energy efficient heating, cooling and ventilation; plumbing fixtures with low flush and flow rates; high efficiency kitchen equipment; materials and finishes will be low VOC compliant to contribute to a healthy learning environment. These features will improve the overall operational efficiency and will reflect the Town's commitment to sustainability. The project is targeting LEED for Schools v4 certification.

Q25: Looking ahead to the future, will the new school be open in the summer months?

A25: Yes. Air-conditioned spaces will allow for summer school programs to take place at the new Leicester school. This will allow for other schools in Leicester to close for summer maintenance, if needed, which in turn would save the Town some money.

Q26: Is there any space allotted in the new school to introduce trade instruction, since the 7th and 8th grades will be included?

A26: (Response updated 3/13/20) The new school will have dedicated art, music, physical education, library media center, science and STEM rooms. In the STEM rooms there will be technology for engineering. Each of the classrooms will have digital technology available.

Although dedicated rooms for trades such as plumbing, electrical, construction, auto body and a metal shop, are not included in the program, there are STEM rooms, which will provide space for students to do engineering. The Town of Leicester is not a Chapter 74 school district. Therefore, vocational programs are not part of the curriculum.

Q27: What is the maximum student capacity at the Primary School, Middle school, High School and closed Memorial School? What is the current student enrollment at the Primary School, Middle school, High School? What is the annual operational cost for Middle School (Memorial School was \$210K)?

A27: Response below:

School	Year Founded	Original Capacity	Current Enrollment
High School	1995	625	534
Middle School	1961	510	469
Elementary (Primary)	1974	630	504
Memorial	1954	450	0

- FY 2019 operational costs for the Middle School were \$189,500.

- FY 2020 budget for operational costs of the Middle School is \$221,500.

Q28: There is a drain system illustrated with multiple basins and piping. Where will the end product go? Will it go into the catch basin already at the Winslow/school entrance?

A28: As part of the design, there is a connection from the onsite drainage to the existing drain main on Winslow Avenue. We are not connecting into the catch basin. We are proposing to install a new drain manhole over the existing main.

(Additional response 3/13/20) The location of connections and discharges are based upon where the existing runoff is flowing, either over land or in pipes. There is a significant area, in front of the school, that currently flows to Winslow Avenue. The proposed drainage system will collect runoff from this area, treat the quality of the runoff and provide detention/infiltration to mitigate impacts prior to discharging into the Winslow Avenue drainage system. The proposed manhole to be installed is part of the School project and is included in the Project budget.

Q29: What is the estimate of how much more it would cost to build the school heated by electricity rather than gas, both with and without an electric heat-pump system? There is concern about using natural gas for the following reasons:

(1) Electricity will become less expensive as time goes on, while gas will become more expensive in the long term

(2) Electricity is safer than gas, recalling the Merrimack Valley explosions in September 2018

(3) An electric heating system will provide the school the possibility to be heated by locally produced power, whether solar, wind or hydro-electric

A29: Note that currently there is no natural gas to the building, nor is there a gas connection planned for the design/construction of the new school project.

An all-electric building vs. the VRF based system, which is the design currently proposed, is the most cost effective and efficient system recommended, from both an installation and operations stand point as well as the anticipated life cycle cost. Only the use of gas could improve upon this.

- * VRF Heating is cheaper than oil heating.
- * VRF Cooling is cheaper than electric.

- * VRF Heating on a 15-degree day, or higher, is cheaper than gas.
- * VRF Heating on a 15-degree day, or lower, is more expensive than gas.
- * VRF Heating over the course of a year, based on temperature fluctuation, balances out and costs about the same as high efficiency gas heating and electric cooling.

Q30: How can I learn more and stay up to date on project developments?

A30: Please visit the Leicester Building Project website for general information and updates: <https://leicester.projects.nv5.com/>.

Questions or comments can be submitted via the “Contact” tab of the project website. You can also sign up to receive future correspondence about the project.

Note: This FAQ document will be updated to include new questions.