

Service and Community Impact Assessment (SCIA)

Front Sheet:

Directorate and Service Area:

People

Sufficiency & Access

What is being assessed (e.g. name of policy, procedure, project, service or proposed service change):

Expansion of St Edburg's CoE (VA) School

Responsible owner / senior officer:

Barbara Chillman

Date of assessment:

October 2020

Summary of judgement:

Oxfordshire County Council, working with the leadership team of the school, proposes to expand St Edburg's CoE (VA) School to 3 forms of entry, which would involve increasing its admission number from 60 to 90 from September 2023 onward. Expansion of St Edburg's CoE (VA) School is necessary to ensure the provision of sufficient school places across the SW Bicester area, to accommodate increased demand for school places as a result of planned and permitted housing growth.

The proposed expansion would improve access to education for the local community, and would therefore have a positive impact for the local community.

Detail of Assessment:

Purpose of assessment:

Due to population growth and an increase in demand for school places across the SW Bicester area, expansion of St Edburg's CoE (VA) School to 3 forms of entry is proposed. This SCIA is intended to provide an assessment to guide the process of expanding the school.

You should also include the following statement to clearly set out the reasons and context for undertaking the assessment:

Section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010 ("the 2010 Act") imposes a duty on the Council to give due regard to three needs in exercising its functions. This proposal is such a function. The three needs are:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic, and those who do not.

Complying with section 149 may involve treating some people more favourably than others, but only to the extent that that does not amount to conduct which is otherwise unlawful under the new Act.

The need to advance equality of opportunity involves having due regard to the need to:

- remove or minimise disadvantages which are connected to a relevant protected characteristic and which are suffered by persons who share that characteristic,
- take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and which are different from the needs other people, and
- encourage those who share a relevant characteristic to take part in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such people is disproportionately low.
- take steps to meet the needs of disabled people which are different from the needs of people who are not disabled and include steps to take account of a person's disabilities.

The need to foster good relations between different groups involves having due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

These protected characteristics are:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment

- pregnancy and maternity
- race – this includes ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality
- religion or belief – this includes lack of belief
- sex
- sexual orientation
- marriage and civil partnership

Social Value

Under the Public Services (Social Value Act) 2012 the Council also has an obligation to consider how the procurement of services contracts with a life value of more than £173,934¹ might improve the economic, social, and environmental well-being of the area affected by the proposed contract, and how it might act to secure this improvement. However, it is best practice to consider social value for all types of contracts, service delivery decisions and new/updated policies. In this context, 'policy' is a general term that could include a strategy, project or contract.

Context / Background:

St Edburg's CoE (VA) School is currently a 2-form entry primary school, admitting up to 60 pupils per year group, with a total capacity for the Reception – Year 6 age range of 420 places. It also includes a one-room nursery for 3/4-year-olds.

The school is located within the Kingsmere housing development, in south-west Bicester. It was relocated to its current site, and expanded, in 2016 to meet the need for primary school places from the initial phases of the housing development.

Bicester is one of the biggest growth areas within Oxfordshire. The Cherwell Local Plan includes over 10,000 new homes due to be built in the town by 2031. This scale of growth requires significant investment in additional school capacity. This will include new primary schools within the Kingsmere, Graven Hill, SE Bicester and NW Bicester developments, and new secondary schools within the Kingsmere and NW Bicester.

The first phases of this additional capacity are already complete or underway. Firstly, St Edburg's CE School relocated to Kingsmere and expanded in 2016, and Longfields Primary School expanded in 2017. The first new school – Gagle Brook Primary School in NW Bicester - opened in 2018, and a new secondary school opened in Kingsmere in 2020. A new primary school is due to open in Graven Hill in 2022. In addition, new or expanded capacity at schools surrounding Bicester provide more options for families in the area. The next step in ensuring sufficient school places in Bicester is to complete the planned school provision for the Kingsmere development in SW Bicester.

¹¹ [EC Procurement Threshold for Services](#)

Proposals:

Oxfordshire County Council, working with the Oxford Diocesan Board of Education and the Governing Body of St Edburg's CE School, proposes to further expand the school by one form of entry, so that it would admit up to 90 pupils per primary year group, with a total capacity of 630 places for the Reception – Year 6 age range. The school's nursery would also expand from one room to three rooms, and the age range of the school would be extended downwards to include a small number of 2-year-olds. The actual number and age balance of nursery pupils would vary across the year.

To accommodate this expansion, the school would be reorganised onto two sites. The current site would be the base for older pupils, in Years 3-6; the Nursery, Reception and Key Stage 1 (Years 1-2) base would move to purpose-built accommodation on a new site within Phase 2 of the Kingsmere development. The Oxford Diocesan Board of Education would commission the design of the new building, which would be funded from developer funding ("Section 106") contributions secured by Oxfordshire County Council from the surrounding housing developments.

Evidence / Intelligence:

St Edburg's CoE (VA) School is the only primary school within the Kingsmere development, which comprises over 2,400 new homes, approximately 1,000 of which are not yet completed. The school's designated area is the Kingsmere development. Pupil numbers at the school are rising rapidly, and the school's Reception places have been over-subscribed from within its designated area for the last two years. Pupil numbers within Kingsmere are expected to rise further as the remaining houses are occupied.

For the 2020 admission intake, 20 pupils living within the designated area of St Edburg's were refused places at the school, meaning they had to travel to other schools. Seven of these families were not allocated places at any of their preferred schools. Only 64.1% of first preference applicants were offered a place at the school, compared to a county average of 90.6%. Families living in SW Bicester are therefore less likely than families elsewhere to secure a place at the school of their choice. Admissions data for 2020 show that the Bicester South and Ambrosden Ward (where Kingsmere is located) has the lowest level of successful first preference applications (87.6%) within the Cherwell District, and the highest level of families being offered a school which was not one of their preferences (4.9%, compared to 1.9% of families in Oxfordshire as a whole).

In order to meet the growing population living in SW Bicester, and increase the percentage of families living in this area who are able to secure a place at the school of their choice, additional primary school capacity within the SW Bicester development is needed. A site for this additional primary school provision has been secured through a Section 106 agreement, and is located within Phase 2 of the Kingsmere development.

Population forecasts for the Bicester South MSOA show that the 0-4 population is forecast to rise by 251 children between 2019 and 2025. There is, therefore, forecast to be strong growth in this age range of population, which is unsurprising given the concentration of housing development.

A sufficiency forecast for funded early education places in Bicester South has been calculated, based on current take up and availability of places projected up to summer 2022. (Projections past that date are increasingly difficult due to other market factors and policy or funding decisions, but the population data suggests demand will continue to grow beyond that.) This shows that there is already projected to be a small shortfall of places for 2-year-olds by 2022 and a significant shortfall for 3/4-year-old places.

To address this shortfall, as part of expanding St Edburg's CE School, additional nursery capacity would be provided, and the age range of the school lowered to include 2-year-olds. (In addition, there will be increased demand for early education and childcare which does not qualify for funding, and this need would have to be met by the private, voluntary and independent sector.)

To inform this proposal, an open consultation was carried out by the county council between 15 June and 13 July 2020. 71 responses were received.

Alternatives considered / rejected:

The county council has a statutory duty to ensure sufficient school places. Given the current and expected growth in the school age population in this area, doing nothing would have led to failure to meet this statutory duty.

The alternative to expanding St Edburg's CoE (VA) School would be to establish a separate new 1 form entry primary school.

Ahead of this proposal, consultation invited comments on two options: a separate new 1 form entry primary school, or the expansion of St Edburg's CE School from 2 form entry to 3 form entry, through the mechanism of splitting it across two sites. The consultation received 71 responses. Of these responses:

- 39% expressed support for expanding St Edburg's CE School and 49% expressed opposition;
- 59% expressed support for a separate new primary school and 13% expressed opposition.

Both options therefore received both support and opposition, with the balance of support being greater for the option of a separate new school rather than an expansion of St Edburg's.

The decision to expand St Edburg's instead of establishing a new school was based largely on financial viability issues for small schools. Department for Education guidance on establishing new schools discourages opening new schools which are smaller than 2 forms of entry, due to the greater risks to financial (and therefore

educational) viability related to smaller schools. A new school would need to be approved by the Department for Education, which could refuse to sign a funding agreement if they considered a 1 form entry school would be unviable.

While Oxfordshire has many excellent schools which are smaller than 2 forms of entry, experience has shown that it is significantly more challenging for a new 1 form entry school to open and grow quickly enough to be viable.

Current data do not support the opening of more than 1 form of entry of additional primary school capacity within Kingsmere. Although primary pupil numbers are still growing in SW Bicester, growth in pupil numbers has slowed down, and there is now a risk that two separate schools in such close proximity competing for pupils would result in one or both schools having too few pupils to be financially viable in the longer term.

As a single, larger primary school, an expanded St Edburg's would benefit from economies of scale, for example only having one head teacher rather than the two headteachers needed for two separate schools. As the school budget is primarily based on pupil numbers any money saved on running costs means more money is spent on the children.

During the consultation, existing education providers in Bicester expressed concern that a separate new school in SW Bicester could be destabilising to other schools, as it would need to compete for pupils to enable it to grow rapidly enough to become financially viable. All of the local primary education providers who responded to the consultation supported expansion of St Edburg's CE School in preference to the establishment of a new school.

If a separate new school could be established within the Kingsmere development, it would increase choice and diversity, including providing a non-church school option. However, given that the currently available data on likely population growth only supports a 1 form entry school, the county council did not have confidence that such a school could be successfully established, without destabilising the local education market.

The expansion of St Edburg's was considered a more certain and sustainable approach to increasing primary school provision within the Kingsmere development.

Impact Assessment:

Impact on Individuals and Communities:

Age

The proposed expansion will help to enable pupils living in SW Bicester to attend a school close to where they live, and will therefore have a positive impact. If school places are not available within the heart of the community for children living on

new housing developments this can affect access to out of school activities, social contact with peers, travel patterns and community cohesion.

The increase in nursery provision at the school as a result of the expansion will enable more children living in the SW Bicester area to access early years education close to where they live, and will therefore also have a positive impact for pre-school age children and their families.

Disability

St Edburg’s CoE (VA) School is a mainstream school. The expansion is not expected to have an impact on provision for children with disability and Special Educational Needs attending this school, or who may attend the school in the future.

Religion/belief

Oxfordshire’s education providers include a balance of Church of England, Roman Catholic and non-faith schools. The only specific religions provided for, therefore, are CE and RC. Children of other faiths may choose a secular education or Christian education, or be educated outside the state sector. St Edburg’s is a Church of England voluntary aided school, but it considers that spiritual, not religious, development is important. The school is open to children of faith or of no faith. The school currently has children from Muslim and Hindu families as well as children from Christian families and the majority of children are from no faith families. Most schools in Bicester are non-Church schools, and places would be available for Kingsmere families at non-Church schools within a 2 mile radius.

Sex

St Edburg’s CoE (VA) School offers coeducational provision, as do all other Oxfordshire primary schools (the only single sex schools in the county are two secondary schools in Didcot), so the expansion is not expected to have an impact in this respect.

No specific impact has been identified on the following groups:

- Gender reassignment
- Race/nationality
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Areas of deprivation
- Rural communities

Risks	Mitigations
Insufficient special school places are created at the expanded school	Annual pupil forecasting and close cooperation with district councils to forecast as accurately as possible future demand. The size of the proposed school expansion has been determined based

	on analysis of current and future demand for school places in the area.
--	---

Impact on Staff:

Staff

Where schools have to turn away children due to a shortage of capacity, Admissions staff may experience stress, and negative behaviour from angry and upset parents.

Risks	Mitigations
Insufficient school places are created at the expanded school, resulting in staff experiencing negative responses from parents.	Annual pupil forecasting and close cooperation with district councils to forecast as accurately as possible future demand. The size of the proposed school expansion has been determined based on analysis of current and future demand for school places in the area.

Impact on other Council services:

Other council services

Transport – if school places are not available close to where children live, more parents will drive their children to school, exacerbating traffic problems. If children have to be allocated schools beyond walking distance, the county council will need to fund transport.

Strategic planning – if sufficient school places cannot be agreed to meet the needs of housing growth, there will be a detrimental impact on strategic planning links with local planning authorities.

Risks	Mitigations
There is a mismatch between where school places are available and where parents live, resulting in increased traffic and transport costs.	Expansion of school capacity serving SW Bicester will enable children living in this area to attend school close to their home. The need for additional school capacity has been considered in line with housing growth across this area.
Expansion of school capacity does not meet the needs of housing growth in the area.	Close working relationships between School Organisation & Planning, the county council strategic planning team, and district council planning teams to identify the scale and timing of the new

	school provision required and secure sufficient developer contributions.
--	--

Impact on providers:

Providers: schools

Without expansion, St Edburg’s would continue to turn away children due to a shortage of capacity, and school staff may experience stress, and negative behaviour from angry and upset parents.

If surplus places are created, existing schools may see a reduction in pupil numbers, and hence budgets. Even where the creation of new places is in line with the scale of population growth, the initial impact of school expansions may have a destabilising effect on pupil numbers at other nearby schools.

Risks	Mitigations
Insufficient school places are created at the expanded school, resulting in staff experiencing negative responses from parents.	Annual pupil forecasting and close cooperation with district councils to forecast as accurately as possible future demand. The size of the proposed school expansion has been determined based on analysis of current and future demand for school places in the area.
The school expansion may lead to a reduction in pupil numbers at other nearby schools, especially in the short-term	The demand and supply for school places in the area are monitored, considering planned and permitted housing growth. Admission data on preferences for schools in the area has been analysed. The scale of expansion in this case is small, and unlikely to have a significant impact on other schools given the scale of local housing growth. Expansion of an existing school rather than creation of a new school should minimise the impact on other schools.

Social Value
If the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 applies to this proposal, please summarise here how you have considered how the contract might improve the economic, social, and environmental well-being of the relevant area.

How might the proposal improve the economic well-being of the relevant area?

The proposed expansion will require additional staff at the school, thus creating jobs in the area.

How might the proposal improve the environmental well-being of the relevant area?

Provision of additional school places within walking distance of families living in SW Bicester will reduce the need for pupils to travel to school by car or bus.

Action plan:

Summarise the actions that will be taken as a result of the assessment, including when they will be completed and who will be responsible. It is important that the officer leading on the assessment follows up to make sure the actions are completed, and updates the assessment as appropriate. Any significant risks identified should also be added to the appropriate service or directorate risk register, to ensure they are appropriately managed and reviewed.

Action	By When	Person responsible
Statutory notice on expansion consultation	25 September – 23 October 2020	Barbara Chillman
Decision on expansion consultation	11 November 2020	Cabinet Member for Education & Cultural Services
Increase in the school's admission (if approved by Cabinet Member for Education & Cultural Service)	1 September 2023	Barbara Chillman

Monitoring and review:

Try to be as specific as possible about when the assessment will be reviewed and updated, linking to key dates (for example when consultation outcomes will be available, before a Cabinet decision, at a key milestone in implementation)

Person responsible for assessment:

Version	Date	Notes (e.g. Initial draft, amended following consultation)
2020.1	September 2020	Initial draft
2020.2	October 2020	Review following statutory representation period – no

		changes made
--	--	--------------