

Oxfordshire County Council

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To: Councillor M. Waine
Cc: Councillor K. Mitchell
Councillor D. Nimmo-Smith
Councillor P. Skolar
Allyson Milward
Barbara Chillman
Roy Leach

Dear Councillor Waine

Re: Expansion of Primary School Provision in Henley

I understand that the decision concerning the proposed expansion of primary school places in Henley has been deferred in order for alternative suggestions to be explored. I am writing in support of the proposals for Badgemore Primary School.

As Chair of Governors at Badgemore, I would like to say how much we have appreciated the way the County team have worked closely with the school during the consultation period. Badgemore prides itself on having small class sizes which are accommodated in bright, spacious rooms, set in beautiful surroundings. The team has listened to the views of the whole school and has ensured, through a due diligence exercise, that the plan being put forward is feasible, sustainable and robust, providing permanent buildings that do not compromise the quality of education delivered. The feeling of spaciousness is retained yet there is little impact on the surrounding playgrounds and field space enabling our diverse play and outside learning area to be retained.

Badgemore is not the first school of choice in Henley. For many years it has struggled to overcome a perceived poor reputation in the town. Our recent successful Ofsted inspection was to provide a springboard to future development and the school vision is now centred on aiming for excellence. The report commented on the outstanding behaviour of pupils, care, guidance and support for the children and safeguarding procedures. In particular it spoke about the great improvements, especially in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where provision and children's achievement are outstanding. "The school has good capacity to maintain its brisk pace of improvement."



CMDSI4

You will be aware of the financial constraints which have always been faced by small schools and Badgemore is no exception. In 2007 we took the brave step to separate our Foundation Stage from a mixed FS/Year 1/Year 2 class. This had an immediate positive impact, and is now paying dividends educationally as those children progress through the school. We feel that, should we not be successful in securing the proposed expansion, we will have to make some extremely difficult decisions about future staffing levels which will undoubtedly have a negative impact on the education of our children. Should the school then become unsustainable, there would need to be further provision made within Henley to absorb surplus children from Badgemore.

Badgemore is the closest primary school to the areas within Henley identified for housing and mixed use development in the South Oxfordshire District Councils local development plan (Townlands Hospital and Market Place Mews). This crucially places the school the “right” side of Gravel Hill and Greys Road, roads which Better Ways to School have already identified as problems due to the lack of crossings. Expansion of Badgemore would help alleviate some of the issues encountered with crossing these main roads, whilst at the same time retaining a balance of the overall landscape of educational provision within Henley.

We feel strongly that the expansion of our school will, at last, give us the opportunity to bat on a level playing field with the other schools in Henley. With such small and fluctuating cohorts, at present each child could be worth anything from 6 to 14% in the school league tables, which bears no comparison to the 3% in a class of 30 – the case for other single form entry schools. We find it extremely difficult to compete in sporting activities, and end up taking whole classes regardless of ability, to make up the numbers. Nevertheless, we hold our heads up high and have been praised for our sportsmanship and perseverance.

As stated in the papers presented to cabinet on 25th January, “the impact of an expansion of (Trinity) will need to be balanced with the likely detrimental impact on Badgemore and its long term sustainability”. “Expansion of this school (Badgemore) to the standard one form entry model would support educational delivery, attainment and school improvement in a school which has clearly already raised its standards”.

We are very happy to continue to work alongside the consultation team, and have already submitted some suggestions that might further reduce the cost of our proposed expansion, but we do not wish to compromise the standard of our buildings in doing so, nor the educational impact on our children.

Yours sincerely,



Simon Smith
Chair of Governors
Badgemore Primary School

