

Division(s): **Summertown & Wolvercote**

Also affecting: **Headington & Marston**

CABINET – 16 APRIL 2013

PROPOSAL TO EXPAND WOLVERCOTE PRIMARY SCHOOL TO 1.5 FORM ENTRY

Report by Director for Children's Services

Introduction

1. Wolvercote Primary School is a community school in Wolvercote, north Oxford, and is a member of the Cherwell partnership of schools. The school is graded Good (Grade 2) by Ofsted.
2. The school is consistently oversubscribed, and for the September 2012 intake, the 30 available places in the Reception class were allocated as shown below:
 - 52 first preference applications received
 - 30 places allocated
 - 36 applicants refused of which 22 were first preferencesThe applicant living furthest from the school to be offered a place lived 0.7 miles away (in lower Wolvercote, which has priority for places at this school). The first applicant refused a place lived 0.5 miles away.
3. In September 2010, at the request of the county council, Wolvercote Primary admitted an additional "bulge" class into Reception, due to exceptional Basic Need demand from within Wolvercote itself. This additional class is in the current Year 2.
4. Oxford City Council's Core Strategy for Growth to 2026 was approved by the Secretary of State in autumn 2010, and sets out the intention to provide at least 8,000 additional dwellings in Oxford city between 2006 and 2026, including 579 dwellings allocated to the Wolvercote ward by 2019. More school places will be needed in the Wolvercote area to meet the local population growth expected as a result of this housing. Expanding Wolvercote Primary School will also ensure more parents can send their children to their first preference school
5. The current forecast for primary age pupils in Oxford city as a whole is as follows:

Year	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
2012-13	1424	1286	1329	1273	1224	1207	1038	8782
2013-14	1459	1412	1269	1324	1271	1273	1204	9213
2014-15	1522	1453	1402	1271	1329	1331	1281	9588
2015-16	1560	1512	1438	1397	1269	1382	1331	9889
2016-17	1581	1548	1495	1433	1394	1324	1380	10154

6. There are five statutory stages for a proposal to expand a school:
 - i. Consultation;
 - ii. publication of a statutory notice;
 - iii. representation;
 - iv. decision;
 - v. implementation.

This proposal has completed the first consultation stage. A decision is now sought as to whether to proceed to publication of a statutory notice and representation.

The Proposal

7. The proposal is to increase the formal published admission number from 30 to 45 on a permanent basis from September 2014 (the admission number for 2013 is already published at 30 and there is currently insufficient accommodation to support an increased admission number). This would bring the eventual number of children on roll at the school up to a maximum of 315 children in F1 to Year 6.
8. To accommodate this growth in pupil numbers, there would need to be some extension of the school's buildings, and a feasibility study is already underway to investigate options for how the required accommodation can best be provided. The study is being undertaken in full partnership with the Governing Body.

Representations

9. During the Stage 1 consultation phase (16 January 2013 – 6 March 2013) a public meeting was held at the school for parents and interested parties to raise any queries about the proposal with a county council officer, the Headteacher and school governors. A consultation leaflet (Annex 1) was sent to parents of children at the school, staff and governors, local residents' associations and local community hubs such as the village hall and the local shop and pubs. Local councillors, both County and District, were contacted about the proposal, as were partnership schools and childcare providers in the area, libraries and others. The leaflet was also available on the OCC public website, together with full details of the various ways of responding. A link was also set up on the school's website to the consultation.
10. 27 responses to the consultation were received. 19 respondents supported the proposal in principle. Four opposed the proposal in principle, while four were neutral or undecided.
11. The reasons given for supporting the proposal were:

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- Need for additional pupil places at the school for the growing local community.
- Perceived benefits to the school of resourcing if it were to expand.
- Opinion that Wolvercote Primary is a good school and therefore more children should have the opportunity to attend it.

12. The concerns raised by respondents who objected to the proposal were:
- Concern about traffic and parking at the school by parents of children attending.
 - Concern about the playing field space and sufficient play area being provided in future.
 - Concern that expansion to 1.5fe would be insufficient and that it should be 2fe instead.
 - Concern about the Headteacher's inexperience of managing a larger school, as she is relatively "new" to Wolvercote.
 - Belief that a new school should be built in Lower Wolvercote instead of expanding the existing school. This is related to a concern that children who were "not local" would be allocated places at the school.
 - One respondent was concerned about noise and pollution from the nearby railway line.

Officer comment:

Any building scheme approved at the school would be subject to the usual Planning regulations, which includes early consultation with OCC Transport & Highways for traffic issues. As detailed in paragraph 2 above, pupils attending the school live very close to it and OCC policy is to encourage walking, cycling, scooting and bus use to get to school. If the expansion is approved the school will be required to update their Travel Plan to reflect the changed circumstances.

The installation of a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA), an all-weather sports surface, is included in the scope of the feasibility study. This would enable more use of the school's outdoor areas all year round and reduce the impact on the existing hard play areas during winter when the playing field cannot be used.

1.5fe is a sufficient expansion in the short-to-medium term and funding is identified for this. The feasibility study scope includes investigation of how the school might be expanded at a future date to 2fe, if the Basic Need demand for pupil places in Wolvercote increases long-term. However, this is not currently justified by demographic data or housing plans for the area.

The most recent Ofsted inspection (report published January 2013) rated Wolvercote as a 'Good' school with the leadership and management by the Head teacher and governors viewed as 'Outstanding' The Headteacher and Governing Body have raised no concern during the consultation process about their ability to manage the expansion or the effect it would have on standards of education.

The county council does not consider that the environmental impact of a potential increase in rail traffic on the railway line near the school should

preclude the expansion of the school. The design solution for the new accommodation will be designed to counter any significant site issues. The school is regularly oversubscribed.

13. The meeting held at the school provided an opportunity for parents to discuss these issues, as well as the details of how an expansion would be managed, with the school's Headteacher and governors and a county council officer.
14. As objections in relation to the proposal have been raised, the decision on whether to support the Governing Body's wish to proceed to publish a formal statutory proposal is referred to the Cabinet.

Making a Decision

15. Sections 18 to 24 of the Education & Inspections Act 2006 and The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended) ["the Prescribed Alterations Regulations"] establish the procedures that must be followed when enlarging school premises. Local authorities also have a duty to have regard to statutory guidance, in this particular case 'Expanding a Maintained Mainstream School by Enlargement or Adding a Sixth Form: A Guide for Local Authorities and Governing Bodies ("the Guidance")'.
16. The Prescribed Alterations Regulations require proposers to consult interested parties and the Guidance lists these at paragraph 1.3. The Cabinet must be satisfied that the statutory consultation has been properly carried out prior to the publication of the notice. Annex 2 provides details of the County Council's consultation with interested parties that are required to be consulted with under the Prescribed Alterations Regulations. The period of consultation is not prescribed by legislation, although the Guidance recommends a minimum of 4 weeks. The consultation period was in line with the Guidance having run from 16 January – 6 March 2013, thereby exceeding the four week minimum requirement. The consultation was therefore carried out in accordance with the Prescribed Alterations Regulations.
17. A decision is now required as to whether to publish formal proposals for this expansion. A statutory notice would be published, followed by a formal representation period of four weeks. The decision-making power in terms of determining the notice will lie with the Cabinet or the Cabinet Member for School Improvement, and a report will be put to Cabinet if representations are received, for a final decision in due course.

Equality and Inclusion Implications

18. Equality Impact Assessment of Oxfordshire's Pupil Place Plan (June 2011) identified that increasing school places at the heart of their communities has a positive impact on equalities through promoting social inclusion and minimising barriers to accessing education.

Financial and Staff Implications

19. The direct financial implication of this report is the cost of the statutory process recommended, which is planned for and met within the normal CE&F budget provision. There are no significant financial implications or risks at this stage. If the proposal proceeds, following statutory consultation there would be another report to Cabinet in due course seeking a final decision on whether to expand the school.
20. The financial implications of this report are linked to the capital works that will be carried out should the proposal be approved. Publication of a statutory proposal to expand the school requires confirmation from the county council that funds will be made available for the necessary capital costs. The council has approved funding for the initial feasibility work to establish the preferred option for meeting the additional accommodation needs.
21. There will also be on-costs to the school for additional staff and for increased maintenance requirements. The day to day revenue costs for repair and maintenance and staffing costs must be met through the schools delegated budget as part of the Council's Fair Funding arrangements,
22. Resources for School Budget Shares are provided by government through the Dedicated Schools Grant, which will increase proportionately to increases in overall pupil numbers in Oxfordshire. Additional pupils will be reflected in an adjustment in the school's funding formula which applies numbers of pupils on roll and their characteristics.

RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to approve the publication of a statutory notice for the expansion of Wolvercote Primary School, Oxford.

Jim Leivers
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March 2013

Annex 1 Consultation leaflet
Annex 2 List of interested parties consulted