

Division(s): Witney East

**CABINET– 21<sup>st</sup> July 2009**

**PROPOSAL TO EXPAND MADLEY BROOK PRIMARY SCHOOL,  
WITNEY**

**Report by Children, Young People & Families**

**Introduction**

1. Madley Brook Community School in Witney opened in 2003 to serve the new Madley Park housing development. It shares its site with Springfield Special School for children with complex learning difficulties. Madley Brook Primary School opened as a one-form entry school, and until now has been admitting 30 children into reception each year.
2. For September 2008, the school received 39 first preferences, leading to parents being refused their preferred choice of school. For September 2009 the school has received 49 first preferences. Primary Care Trust records and the annual census of children in private, voluntary and independent early years settings show that this demand, from within the catchment area, is likely to continue. Several other Witney schools are also at capacity, and numbers are rising, with more housing planned across the town.
3. The school has agreed to take 45 children in September 2009 as a temporary measure to meet this demand. To accommodate this increase, minor works will take place by September 2009 to provide sufficient space for the Foundation Stage.

**The Proposal**

4. The proposal is to increase the admission number from 30 to 45 children, on a permanent basis from September 2010. This will eventually increase the school's total roll from 180 children in Years 1-6 to a maximum of 270.
5. To accommodate this increase, two additional classrooms will be needed by September 2012. Detailed feasibility work will also consider the need to increase other spaces, including those shared with Springfield School, such as car parking and the school hall.

## Representations

6. During the informal consultation phase (27 March 2009 - 22 May 2009) two meetings were held at the school for parents to discuss their concerns with County Council officers and the headteacher. Parents at these meetings wanted more information about the impact of the expansion on teaching, specifically the move from single-age classes to mixed age classes. The headteacher explained how teaching would be structured, and there were no written concerns submitted about this aspect of the proposal.
7. A consultation document (Annex 1) was sent to parents of children at both Madley Brook Primary School and Springfield School, as well as to local councillors, other primary schools and early years providers in Witney, and the local library; it was also available on the OCC website. Fourteen responses were received.
  - Ten responses were from parents of children already at the school, or of younger children living in Madley Park. All supported the proposal, several commenting on the importance of attendance at the local school for strengthening the sense of community.
  - One of these parents, while supporting the expansion overall, expressed some concern whether the increase in the ratio of mainstream children at Madley Brook Primary School to special needs children at the collocated Springfield Special School would be overwhelming for the special needs children.
  - Two responses were from early years providers within Witney, both of whom supported the expansion.
  - One response was received from Witney Community Primary School, concerned that the expansion of Madley Brook Primary School would have a detrimental effect on their own roll. However, in the light of rising pupil numbers in the area, we believe that demand for places at this school is likely to be sustainable.
  - The Governing Body at the collocated Springfield School responded in some detail about their concerns, and their letter is attached as Annex 2. The response from the County Council is attached as Annex 3. Essentially this school wished to be reassured on the following points:
    - i. Springfield School's continued equivalent access to facilities shared with Madley Brook Primary School, such as the hall, library and ICT room.
    - ii. Provision of staff facilities such as parking.
    - iii. The effect that increased wear and tear from higher pupils numbers might have on revenue costs to be met by Springfield School.
    - iv. The need for additional storage space.
    - v. Whether the extension of Madley Brook Primary School would preclude any possible future expansion of Springfield School.The response from the County Council addressed these points, and sought to reassure Springfield School that they would have further opportunities to contribute to the design process for the extended school.

8. As representations in relation to the proposal have been received, the decision on whether to publish a formal statutory proposal is referred to the Cabinet rather than the Cabinet Member for Schools Improvement.

## **Making a Decision**

9. As this is a proposal to increase the size of the school by 50%, it is subject to statutory procedures, as established by The Education and Inspections Act 2006 (EIA 2006) and The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools)(England) Regulations 2007 (as amended by The School Organisation and Governance (Amendments)(England) Regulations 2007 which came into force on 21 January 2008).
10. A decision is now required as to whether to publish formal proposals for this expansion. If approved, a statutory notice would be published in autumn 2009, followed by a formal consultation period of four weeks. The decision-making power in terms of determining the notice will lie with the Cabinet, and a report will be put to the Cabinet Member for Schools Improvement if no representations are received, or to Cabinet if representations are received, for a final decision in due course.
11. The Cabinet must be satisfied that the statutory consultation has been carried out prior to the publication of the notice.

## **Financial and Staff Implications**

12. The financial implications of the report are linked to the capital works that will be carried out should the proposals be approved, and these will be the subject of a separate detailed project approval. Developer contributions are already held against the future expansion of the school. There will also be on-costs for the school for additional staff and increased maintenance requirements.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to approve the publications of a statutory notice for the expansion of Madley Brook Primary School, Witney.**

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Background papers: consultation document; letter from Springfield School; County Council response to Springfield School

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