

Division(s): Wroxton & Hook Norton Also affecting: Bloxham & Easington
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## **CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, EDUCATION & FAMILIES – 9 FEBRUARY 2015**

### **FINAL REPORT ON PROPOSAL TO EXPAND HOOK NORTON CE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**Report by Director for Children's Services**

#### **Introduction**

1. Oxfordshire County Council proposes to expand Hook Norton CE Primary School. A local consultation was carried out between 6 October 2014 and 3 November 2014: the consultation leaflet is attached at Annex 1. This leaflet was distributed to all parents of children at the school, staff, governors, local councillors, childcare settings, Dioceses, School Organisation Stakeholders Group, local library, and was available to view and respond to on the Oxfordshire County Council website.
2. Following this, Oxfordshire County Council published a statutory notice (attached at Annex 2) in the Banbury Cake newspaper on 20 November 2014, relating to this proposal.
3. The notice period expired following 4 weeks of formal consultation on 18 December 2014. In accordance with legislation the notice was also posted at the school entrance and sent to the local library. A copy of the full proposal (attached at Annex 3) and the notices were sent to the governing body and made available on the Oxfordshire County Council website for public viewing.
4. The decision-making power in terms of determining the notice lies with the Cabinet or can be delegated to the Cabinet Member for Children, Education & Families. In meeting as 'decision-maker' the Cabinet or Cabinet Member must have regard to government guidance and statutory timescales otherwise a decision can be referred to the independent Schools' Adjudicator for reconsideration. The decision must be made within 2 months of the close of the notice period; as a consequence, it is necessary for the Chairman of the Council to determine that the decision cannot be subject to 'call-in' as this would, in most cases, prevent a decision being finalised within the required timescale and mean that the Decision-Maker's role would be negated by referral to the Schools' Adjudicator.

#### **The Proposal**

5. The proposal is to increase the formal published admission number for Hook Norton CE Primary School from 30 to 45, on a permanent basis starting from September 2015. This will eventually increase the school's total capacity from

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its current 210 places in year groups Reception – Year 6 to a maximum of 315. In addition to this, the school has a Nursery class which offers 30 full-time equivalent places. It is not proposed that this provision would change.

6. Additional classrooms and supporting space will be provided at the school to accommodate the increase in pupil numbers and work to deliver the accommodation needs is well advanced.
7. The objective of the proposal is to provide sufficient primary school places for Hook Norton and its surrounding area, enabling the Local Authority to meet its statutory duty in this regard. Until now, in most years the school's current admission number has been sufficient to admit all catchment children. Births data indicates that this may not be the case in all future years, unless the school expands. In addition, there has been housing development permitted in the school's catchment area, and Cherwell District Council's Local Plan indicates that more housing may be approved for Hook Norton. The school's current admission number of 30 will not provide sufficient school places for Hook Norton's growing population.
8. The pupil forecasts for Hook Norton CE Primary School were last calculated in Spring 2014:

	School Year	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total
Hook Norton Church of England Primary School	<b>2014/15</b>	30	28	30	30	30	32	30	<b>210</b>
	<b>2015/16</b>	38	31	30	31	31	30	34	<b>225</b>
	<b>2016/17</b>	35	39	31	32	32	31	32	<b>232</b>
	<b>2017/18</b>	35	35	40	32	32	32	33	<b>239</b>
	<b>2018/19</b>	34	35	36	40	32	31	33	<b>241</b>
	<b>2019/20</b>	34	34	36	36	40	31	32	<b>243</b>

The above forecasts do not include much of the housing planned or proposed for the area, and are therefore considered to be an underestimate of future demand for places.

9. The County Council's policy is, where possible, to expand primary schools by multiples of 15 or 30 (i.e. half or a full form of entry) at a time. This is to help schools organise more easily their classes across the year groups. There are many schools across the county that operate with an admission number of 45 as standard. This does not mean that there are 45 pupils in a class; class sizes remain the same, but more classes are run and some are mixed year group classes (e.g. a class of 30 might be run with 15 pupils in Year 1, and 15 pupils in Year 2). The exact organisation of the classes would be managed by the school.
10. Work has been carried out to identify how Hook Norton CE Primary School could grow in a manner which is cost-effective without compromising the high quality of education provided by this school. An expansion plan has been produced, in agreement with the school and preparations for readying the

Reception year group spaces for an increase in pupil numbers in 2015 are advanced.

## Representations

11. Three responses to the initial local consultation were received. The respondents raised concerns about the proposal as follows:
- A concern about the effect on educational standards of mixed year group teaching.
  - Concern about increased traffic and car parking.
  - Concern about sufficient accommodation being provided and its funding.

The Governing Body of the school supports the proposal, and the Headteacher made the following response to the concern about the impact on educational standards:

*We teach to the needs of individual children not their age, regardless of class make-up. We already have a lot of joint planning between classes which has increased since the new curriculum was introduced in September - Key stage 1, Lower Key Stage 2 and Upper Key Stage 2. We also already teach mixed age classes - our Foundation Stage Unit has three year groups, we teach across KS1 for phonics which has been hugely successful. Looking at Outstanding schools with 1.5FE, pupil progress is unaffected, indeed, in some instances pupil progress is enhanced because there is more differentiation by ability and need than with 1 FE. Expectation can also be higher because of the mixed year groups. There is also more flexibility in terms of class make-up to ensure a balance of pupils in each class and more expertise to draw upon with joint planning.*

12. County Council officers responded to the concern about long-term sufficiency of the planned accommodation and increase in traffic as follows:

*“At this time, expansion to 1.5 form entry more than meets the needs of the level of housing growth currently being proposed. If the school were to be 2 form entry, it would either have many unfilled places, which would destabilise their revenue budget, or attract pupils from other catchments adding to traffic at the school, and potentially destabilising surrounding schools. Expanding the school by more than is currently necessary to meet local population growth would therefore not be a good use of public funds, and would create significant financial risks to other local schools.*

*Toilet provision for any expansion of a school is to the same ratio that has been used across English schools for many years: 1:20 pupils across Year 1 – 6 and 1:10 for Reception / Early Years.*

*The school has an existing Study Centre which is a facility most 1fe primary schools do not have. In this case, it fulfils the role of a Studio, which is what would normally be incorporated into the build of an expansion of a school, when going from 1fe to 1.5fe. The Studio gives flexibility to the school for*

*many different activities, including those often carried out in the Hall, at the same time. How the spaces are used and organised is the choice of the governors and staff at the school.*

*Oxfordshire County Council, as a rule, no longer includes construction of IT rooms in its builds as this type of static facility is becoming somewhat obsolete. Many schools have now moved away from this to use laptops or tablet devices, integrating their use into the curriculum.*

*Oxfordshire County Council's policy is to encourage local, and where possible other, journeys to be sustainable. In order to minimise traffic congestion we, supported by the governors of the school, would advise that pupils, the majority of whom do live within the village, walk, cycle or scoot to school. While we recognise that this is not always possible for all pupils, the county council does not construct car park provision for parents at its schools. Therefore families travelling by car need to be aware of this, and ultimately take responsibility for parking considerately, perhaps a short distance away, and walking the final few metres."*

13. Two representations were received in response to the publication of the statutory notice. One was supportive of the proposal. The other was received from South Newington Parish Council and raised concerns about uncertainty for families in that village over which primary school their children may be offered a place in as pupil numbers rise across the area. The Parish Council had no objection to this proposal to expand Hook Norton CE Primary School itself.

### **Legal background**

14. School expansions are subject to statutory procedures as established in The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools)(England) Regulations 2013. Local Authorities also have a duty to have regard to statutory guidance, in this particular case 'School Organisation: Maintained Schools: Guidance for Proposers and Decision-Makers, ("the Guidance"). When reaching a decision, Cabinet Member must have regard to The Guidance. Cabinet Member is referred in particular to pages 5 to 8 of Annex B.
15. In terms of reaching a decision all proposals should be considered on their merits but the following factors should be borne in mind but are not considered to be exhaustive. The Decision Maker should consider the views of all those affected by the proposals. The Member for Education, as Decision Maker, must be satisfied that the statutory consultation has been carried out prior to the publication of the notice. Details of the consultation should be included in the proposals. The Decision Maker must be satisfied that the consultation meets statutory requirements. If the requirements have not been met, the Decision Maker may judge the proposals to be invalid and should consider whether they can make a decision on the proposals. Alternatively the Decision Maker may take into account the sufficiency and quality of the consultation as part of their overall judgement of the proposals as a whole.

16. **Education standards, and diversity of provision.** The government aims to create a dynamic system shaped by parents that delivers excellence and equality, closing weak schools, encouraging new providers and popular schools to expand. Decision Makers should be satisfied that the proposals will contribute to raising local standards of provision and improved attainment and consider the impact on choice and diversity. They should pay particular attention to the effect on groups that tend to under-perform including children from certain ethnic minorities and deprived backgrounds.
17. **Equal opportunity issues, Community Cohesion, Travel & Accessibility.** The Decision Maker should consider whether there are any sex, race or disability discrimination issues that arise and whether there is supporting evidence to support the extension and take into account the existence of capacity elsewhere. The Decision Maker needs to consider the accessibility of the provision for disadvantaged groups as the provision should not unduly extend journey times or cost.
18. **Demand.** The Decision Maker should consider whether there is a need for the expansion and should consider the evidence presented for the expansion. There is a strong presumption that proposals to expand popular and successful schools should be approved. At its last inspection in 2013, Ofsted graded Hook Norton CE Primary School as Good.
19. **Capital.** The Decision Maker should be satisfied that any land, premises and capital funding required to implement the proposals will be available.

### **Financial and Staff Implications**

20. The physical expansion of Hook Norton CE Primary School will be funded using money the council has secured from housing developers, to mitigate the impact of new housing in the local area (these are known as Section 106 contributions). The construction of the required new accommodation is currently estimated to cost £1.65m.
21. The accommodation requirements will be delivered by the County Council.
22. In accordance with OCC Capital Governance requirements this will be the subject to a separate Stage 2 – Full Business Case/ Project Approval in due course
23. Where possible, retrospective S106 developer contributions will also be sought from planned and future housing development in the area.
24. There will also be on-costs to the school for additional staff and for increased maintenance requirements. These will need to be funded from the school's delegated School Budget Share, which will increase in proportion to increases in pupil numbers. 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.

## **Equality and Inclusion Implications**

25. The Equality Impact Assessment of Oxfordshire's Pupil Place Plan (July 2014) 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.

## **Decision**

26. In considering the proposals for a school expansion, the Decision Maker can decide to:
- Reject the proposals;
  - Approve the proposals;
  - Approve the proposals with a modification (e.g. the implementation date); or
  - Approve the proposals subject to them meeting a specific condition (see the Guidance).

## **RECOMMENDATION**

- 27. The Cabinet Member is RECOMMENDED to approve the permanent expansion of Hook Norton CE Primary School with effect from 1 September 2015.**

### **JIM LEIVERS**

Director for Children's Services

Annexes:                              Annex 1: Consultation leaflet  
   Annex 2: Statutory proposal  
   Annex 3: Full proposal document

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