

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

MONDAY, 9 JULY 2018 AT 2.00PM

Agenda Item

No:

4

ADDITIONAL SCHOOL PLACES - STATUTORY PROPOSAL TO ENLARGE ST PETER'S SCHOOL, ST ALBANS

Report of the Director of Children's Services

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Executive Member: Terry Douris, Education, Libraries & Localism

Local Members: Sandy Walkington; Chris White; Anthony Rowlands

1. Purpose of report

1.1 To update Cabinet on proposals for the enlargement of the premises of Belswains Primary School, Hemel Hempstead and St. Peter's Primary School, St. Albans.

2. Summary

2.1 On 23 April 2018 Cabinet authorised the publication of statutory proposals to enlarge the premises of two primary schools to enable additional places to meet a rising and local demand. The statutory notice period ended on 31 May 2018 after a 4 week notice period.

2.2 No objections have been received to the proposals for the enlargement of Belswains School and so the Director of Children's Services has determined that proposal using delegated authority. Four comments were received on the proposed expansion of St. Peter's Primary school, which are identified and responded to in section 4.4 of this report. It includes a response from the chair of governors of the school, concerned about the perceived reduction of facilities available to the school post implementation.

2.3 The implementation of each of the proposals is/would be conditional on the receipt of town planning permission.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 That Cabinet agrees to the proposal to enlarge the premises of St. Peter's Primary School, St. Albans, to 2 f.e. from September 2020.

4. Background

Primary Expansion Programme (PEP8)

- 4.1 On 18 February 2018, Cabinet was advised of the scale of the next primary expansion programme and that the Director of Children's Services was consulting on proposals for the permanent expansions of two schools to form the eighth primary expansion programme. [CMIS > Calendar of council meetings](#)
- 4.2 Cabinet on 23 April 2018 [Link to Report](#) considered the outcome of the consultation and approved the publication of statutory proposals for the following schools

School name	Area	Date of expansion	Expansion by form of entry (FE)	Increase in admission number
Belswains	Hemel Hempstead	01.09.2019	1.0 f.e (to 2 f.e.)	30
St Peter's	St. Albans	01.09.2020	1.0 f.e (to 2 f.e.)	30

- 4.3 The statutory notice period for those proposals ended on 31 May 2018. No objections were received to the proposals to enlarge the premises of Belswains Primary school. The Director of Children's Services has determined that proposal under delegated authority, and having considered the EQIA, referenced in section 6, which has been updated.
- 4.4 Four responses have been received to the proposal to expand St. Peter's Primary School, including the chair of governors of the school. The issues they raise, and an officer response to them, are as follows:

Concern over increased levels of traffic, road safety and congestion problems (2 respondents)

An independent highways assessment carried out at the initial feasibility stage indicates that the highways network would cope sufficiently with the additional journeys that result from this proposed expansion. It is noted that the additional pupils who would be admitted as a result of the proposed expansion would live within walking distance of the school.

The physical enlargement scheme and any associated traffic measures will be the subject of a separate town planning process. A detailed transport assessment will form part of this town planning application, and part of this process will be formal consultation with the local community and the highways authority.

The school is reviewing its school travel plan as part of the proposals. The travel plan will proactively promote safe and sustainable travel to school. Officers are working with the school to ensure that the school travel plan takes account of the additional pupils that would result from the proposed expansion. The school travel plan will include a commitment to ensuring parents are encouraged to park safely and considerately in the surrounding areas thereby minimising inconvenience to local residents and other road users.

Loss of amenity/ lack of accommodation for the school to expand to 2fe (3 respondents)

The Chair of Governors at the school has sent an email that expresses concern that the school will lose facilities that it currently has access to and therefore that they cannot support the expansion of the school. The school feel that the proposed scheme would be a step backwards for the school when considering the additional pupils that will go on roll at the school. Other responses received from local residents express their concerns with regards to the proposed expansion, the accommodation/facilities to be provided and the current accommodation at the school.

A scheme has been produced over a number of meetings that has solved many of the issues brought up by the school and provided the school with an enhanced scheme that provides all facilities necessary for an effective 2FE school. However, the school still feel they cannot support the expansion. The scheme that has been proposed, when considering the high level cost plan, seems affordable and this supplies additional space and enhanced accommodation over and above the principles and design brief applied to other primary expansions. The scheme would improve the organisation and operation of existing accommodation and meet the school's ambitions for improved facilities. Every effort will be made to continue the work with the governing body to optimise the scheme design within budget.

Difficulty for local children in obtaining places at the school and not enough local places for forthcoming housing developments (1 respondent)

The reason for the expansion of St Peter's School from 1fe to 2fe is to try and provide additional high quality school places within the local area. These places at the school will enable more children to obtain a place in the local area. Hertfordshire County Council will also be making representations in local plans with regards to potential new school sites to meet any future need for school places in the area.

No need for expansion (1 respondent)

The case for expansion has been set out in previous reports and will also form part of the town planning application. There has been significant support for the expansion from local parents and parents groups, while the need for additional places in the area has been the subject of two recent well-supported petitions presented to the Education Panel.

It is worth noting that over 78% of respondents to the earlier public consultation agreed with the proposal.

Not enough information available on the proposal (1 respondent)

One respondent expressed concerns that there was not sufficient information available on the proposal, particularly around the scheme of accommodation.

The new accommodation provided to the school will be part of a detailed planning application on which members of the public will be able to comment. Public engagements will also be held to share designs and hear feedback, before a planning application is submitted. The accommodation proposals are currently in development through engagement with the school and relevant consultees such as the Lead Local Flood Authority, Sport England and the Highway Authority.

Reduction in the quality of education (1 respondent)

There is not a direct relationship between the size of a school, the standards it achieves and its overall effectiveness. Schools of differing sizes can, and do, perform very well. The key factors which contribute to school standards and effectiveness are the quality of leadership and management, and of learning and teaching. Where these factors are equal, larger schools have some significant benefits. The larger budget provides greater flexibility in terms of staffing and resources (including SEN provision and school clubs); there is a better distribution of management responsibilities; there are improved opportunities for staff promotion within the school leading to better capacity to sustain leadership; and consequently the school is less vulnerable to turbulence.

The County Council is confident that St Peter's School will maintain its ethos and standards.

5. Financial Implications

Revenue and capital funding

- 5.1 There are no new financial implications since the last report to Cabinet on 23 April 2018, at which it approved the capital funding for the two PEP8 schemes.

6. Equalities

- 6.1 When considering proposals placed before Members it is important that they are fully aware of, and have themselves rigorously considered the Equality implications of the decision that they are making.
- 6.2 Rigorous consideration will ensure that proper appreciation of any potential impact of that decision on the County Council's statutory obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty. As a minimum this requires decision makers to read and carefully consider the content of any Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) produced by officers.
- 6.3 The Equality Act 2010 requires the County Council when exercising its functions to have due regard to the need to (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act; (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it and (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. The protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 6.4 An Equalities Impact Assessments (EqIA), attached at Appendix A, has been carried out and updated on the proposed school expansion contained within this report. It will be made available in the Members' Lounge prior to, and at the Cabinet meeting in order that Members are fully aware of any equality issues arising from the proposals. Consideration has been given to the likely impact of the proposal, and the current assessment concludes that it is not anticipated that people with protected characteristics will be affected disproportionately. The EqIA will be continued to be reviewed and updated as necessary.
- 6.5 The Local Authority is bound by the Admissions Code and Regulations and this does not allow for any discrimination in this respect.
- 6.6 The expansion of these school premises will enable additional school places to be made available as close as possible to the demand for them. In that way it will improve access to school places to all sectors of the community in which it is located, and avoid very young children having to travel longer distances to access education.
- 6.7 The expansion of existing schools provides for enhanced education opportunities and an enriched curriculum offer which has a positive impact on the whole school community.
- 6.8 School expansion schemes provide positive impacts, offering the opportunity for improved facilities for disabled access in new buildings.

7. Conclusions

- 7.1 The concerns expressed in relation to the expansion of St. Peter's Primary School, St. Albans have been addressed in section 4 above. The school will benefit from improved facilities which meet the recommended guidelines of government building bulletin guidance (BB103) and offer additional space and enhanced accommodation over and above the principles applied to other primary expansions and design brief. In those circumstances, given the clear and demonstrable support for these additional local places, officers would recommend that the proposal is approved. Every effort will be made to continue the work with the governing body to optimise the scheme design within budget.

Background Information

Hyperlinks within the report.