

**Cabinet**  
**5 February 2015****7. INCREASING THE NUMBER OF SCHOOL PLACES  
AVAILABLE IN MALVERN****Relevant Cabinet  
Member**

Mrs E A Eyre

**Relevant Officer**

Director of Children's Services

**Local Members**

Prof J R Raine, Mr P A Tuthill, Mr T A L Wells

**Recommendation**

1. **The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families recommends that:**
  - (a) **the results of the consultation held between 3 November 2014 and 12 December 2014 be noted;**
  - (b) **the increase in Published Admission Number for Callow End CE Primary School from 12 to 15 is approved subject to the necessary capital funding being approved under the 2015/16 Capital Programme;**
  - (c) **the option to increase the Published Admission Number for Leigh and Bransford Primary School from 15 to 30 is approved subject to notice, planning and to the necessary capital funding being approved under the 2015/16 Capital Programme;**
  - (d) **the option to expand Northleigh CE Primary School on its existing site is not pursued; and**
  - (e) **further discussions take place with both Northleigh CE Primary and Somers Park schools, local County Councillors and Malvern Hills District Council to identify whether the option on Malvern Vale is progressed as set out in paragraph 57, and without prejudice to the future, request the Directors of Somers Park take a 'bulge' year for the academic year September 2016 should the Director of Children's Services believe this is required as indicated in paragraph 49.**

**Background Information**

2. **The County Council has a statutory duty to provide sufficient school places for all children resident in the county**

who want one. As part of the annual school place planning and monitoring exercise, officers identified a need to provide additional primary school places in Malvern to cover the 2015 and 2016 Reception intakes. Latest data from the Health Authority on known pre-school numbers suggests that the pressure on places is short-term, with numbers declining slightly after the September 2016 cohort.

3. The emerging South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP) allocates a number of sites for housing development in and around Malvern over the next 10-15 years. Timelines on the occupation of the proposed developments are only generally known and are subject to fluctuations in the housing market and future shifts in Government policy.

4. In 2006 the County Council entered into a Section 106 Agreement with Persimmon Homes to set aside a piece of land as part of the redevelopment of the ex-M.O.D. North Site off Leigh Sinton Road, now known as Malvern Vale. The agreement stated that the land would be reserved for the County Council to construct a new school, if needed, within a set period of time from commencement of the development. The County Council has 3 years remaining in which to gain planning permission for a school on the site.

5. As more schools convert to academies and move outside of County Council control the way in which additional school places are delivered has changed to reflect this new relationship. The County Council is now the commissioner of school places; setting out the scope of the need and evaluating proposals put forward to meet that need.

6. Pupil number forecasts were shared at a meeting with head teachers and governors of Malvern schools in September 2014. Schools were asked to consider the information and make a written expression of interest to the County Council if the governing body of any of the schools was interested in offering additional places. In light of the expected housing growth, the Council let it be known that it was prepared to consider proposals for permanent expansions which might provide additional capacity to manage any future growth in numbers as well as meet the immediate need.

7. Four schools expressed an interest in expanding to meet this demand. All of the options require additional accommodation for the proposed increase.

8. The Director of Children's Services, following discussion with the Cabinet Member with Responsibility, approved consultation on the following expansion options:

- Callow End CE Primary - increase Published Admission Number (PAN) from 12 to 15
- Leigh and Bransford Primary - increase PAN from 15 to 20 or 30
- Northleigh CE Primary - increase PAN from 45 to 60
- Somers Park - increase PAN from 58 to 90. (This option included the use of land available to the County Council on the Malvern Vale development.)

## **Current Malvern Primary Schools**

9. There are currently 16 primary schools in the Malvern area. This includes 8 schools associated with the town itself and a further 8 village schools in the surrounding rural area. The table at Appendix 1 summarises their current size and status.

10. The majority of primary schools in Malvern are graded 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted. Where expansions are being considered, the Council looks to provide places in schools that are delivering good quality education as this will enable more children to benefit and indicates the capacity of the school leadership team to manage the expansion.

11. Twelve of the sixteen primary schools in Malvern are 1 Form Entry (FE) or smaller; taking in no more than 30 children each year. Although smaller schools are often popular with parents there can be issues with financial viability and the range of opportunities smaller schools can offer for pupils and staff. Options to expand successful small schools are therefore considered positively as this can improve the long-term viability of the school.

12. The table at Appendix 1 also gives the number of first preference applications and total applications for each school. These figures give a snapshot of the current level of parental demand for each of the schools.

## **Identified Need for Places**

13. The latest data on numbers of pre-school children shows an increase in the number of children living in the Malvern area due to be admitted to primary school in September 2015 and 2016. The Council recognises that not all children living in the area will attend state-funded schools and some children will attend schools outside the Malvern area due to parental preference. The term state-funded schools covers all schools funded through central Government including academies and free schools.

14. By monitoring the number of known children due to start school year on year it is possible to understand the general trend in intake rates and project this forward as an indicator for future years. This is referred to as the cohort progression rate.

15. Taking all these factors into account we can produce an estimate of the demand for school places. To allow a

degree of flexibility for parental preference and for children seeking school places outside the usual admission round it is desirable to maintain a 5% surplus above this level.

16. The projected number of places required is set out in the table below showing the minimum number needed to deliver sufficient places and the desirable number with 5% surplus.

	<b>Admission to school September</b>			
	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>
<b>Places currently available</b>	438	438	438	438
<b>Forecast pupil numbers</b>	439	452	405	416
<b>Additional places needed against forecast</b>	1	14	0	0
<b>Additional places needed to deliver 5% buffer</b>	23	37	0	0

17. Based on this information the identified need is for between 14 and 37 additional places by September 2016.

18. Primary school catchment areas in Malvern are complex, with many parts of the town falling in the catchment area for more than one school. Whilst this allows flexibility for parents when deciding which schools to apply for, it makes analysis of pressure points difficult. The table at Appendix 2 shows the flows of pupils on roll in the 2013/14 academic year based on the catchment area they were living in and the school they were actually attending. The numbers of pupils attending a school for which they are not in the catchment area indicate a high degree of mobility within sections of the population in Malvern.

19. Analysis of pre-school numbers shows that the growth is spread across the town but particularly in the north, including the Malvern Vale development, and in some of the villages to the north of Malvern. Expansion options in these areas are therefore of particular interest.

20. Data from the Council's Corporate Research Team projects that following a number of years of increases, the birth rate will stabilise and the number of children being born in Malvern Hills District Council area will decline slightly. These projections are based upon existing population figures modified with births data, deaths data and net migration, and do not account fully for the potential impact of future housing developments.

## **Longer Term Trends and Housing Growth**

## **Key Parameters and Criteria for Assessing Options**

21. Data also shows that over the last decade the proportion of the pre-school population of Malvern Hills District resident within the town of Malvern itself has increased. Projecting this trend forwards suggests there will be a rise of pre-school age children in the Malvern town area, despite the reduction in the district overall. There would appear therefore to be a distinct urban/rural split which would support the provision of additional primary school places in or near to the town of Malvern.

22. The emerging South Worcestershire Development Plan allocates land at Newland, north-east of Malvern for an urban extension of around 800 dwellings. This is the largest single allocation for Malvern. The Council has indicated that it may seek provision of a new primary school on this site but detailed discussions are yet to take place.

23. Land at the Qinetiq site in the south of Malvern is allocated to deliver a mixed use development including approximately 300 dwellings.

24. The remainder of development in Malvern is proposed to comprise approximately 500 dwellings spread across the town in some 15 or more allocated sites.

25. Taken together these 1600 homes would be expected to generate around 46 additional pupils per year group when fully occupied. As the South Worcestershire Development Plan covers the period to 2030, delivery of the sites allocated in the Plan will take time and the rate of occupation will be influenced by any changes in the housing market, wider economy and Government policy.

26. Due to the combination of short-term pressure and potential longer term growth resulting from planned housing, permanent increases in school capacity are being considered providing these demonstrate good value for money.

27. Where schools already have sufficient physical capacity to admit the increased pupil numbers there is no requirement to undertake consultation and the increase in the Published Admission Number (PAN) can simply be implemented as part of the admission arrangements for the school.

28. The Council aims to work with existing schools where scope exists for expansions. The creation of new schools will only be considered where there are no suitable expansion options, or where the total number of places required is significantly greater and cannot be accommodated cost effectively.

29. If a new school is required the Council would have to undertake a commissioning process, set out by the

## **Public Consultation Process**

Department for Education (DfE), to select a new academy or free school.

30. Each option is considered against the following criteria:
- The quality of current education provision at the school
  - How the proposed expansion might improve quality at the school
  - Demand for places at the school or in the local area
  - The cost and feasibility of required building works
  - The response to the public consultation.

31. The Public Consultation ran from 3 November 2014 to 12 December 2014. The consultation followed the relevant guidance from the DfE and met all statutory requirements. Consultation documents were made available online with hard copies available on request. Letters were sent out to parents, local residents and other interested parties advertising the consultation. A public notice was placed in the local newspaper and a press release was issued.

32. The option at Callow End CE Primary is a small expansion and can be accommodated through modification of existing internal areas. Under current regulations public consultation is not a statutory requirement for an increase of this size. The option was included in the consultation document to provide context and clarity but a consultation meeting was not held.

33. A public consultation meeting was held at each of the schools requiring significant additional accommodation with officers present to lead the meeting and answer questions. Notes of the meetings, comments and questions raised are available on the County Council's website.

34. Outline feasibility option appraisal studies were carried out to ensure that the schools included in the consultation had sufficient space to allow construction of the additional accommodation required. The results of these indicative, desk top studies were shared at the meetings. A much more detailed feasibility exercise would need to be carried out if any of the options are taken forward to the next stage.

35. An analysis of responses to the consultation is attached as Appendix 3. Copies of all responses are available on the County Council's website.

## **Consultation with Children and Young People**

36. Each school was asked to engage with its pupils through their representatives on the School Council. Leigh and Bransford Primary reported that pupils were excited about the potential growth of the school and were positive about the feasibility study which had been undertaken to illustrate potential new accommodation. Somers Park also reported that their pupils were generally positive about the

## Options Presented in Consultation Document

### Callow End CE Primary School

potential for the school to grow.

37. The paragraphs below set out the detail of each option proposed, including estimated costs, the main issues raised during the consultation and the analysis of the option against the key criteria set out in paragraph 30 above.

38. An initial feasibility option appraisal has been carried out and permits the works to be contained within the curtilage of the existing building and therefore no new build is necessary. This option has been discussed in outline with the school governors who are comfortable that this will allow them to take the additional proposed 3 children per year group if approved. The cost of the option is estimated at £94,000 including for all fees and charges. The works involved can easily be delivered with minimal disruption to the school.

39. Whilst the location of this school is considered on the border of the area of review as it is in one of the outlying villages, the places:

- will be in a good school, popular with parents
- support the Council in addressing needs within the locality
- increase the size and potentially secures the future viability of the school
- represent good value for money (£4, 500 per place).

**It is therefore recommended that this option to increase the PAN from 12 to 15 is approved.**

### Leigh and Bransford Primary School

40. Outline feasibility appraisal work has been undertaken to look at increasing this school to a PAN 20, but also to increase to a PAN 30. The school has quite recently purchased additional land which means they have more than sufficient external space to take the increase(s) proposed. Construction of an extension would have minimal disruption to the school as this is mainly contained to one area of the existing main building. The responses from the public consultation to increase the school to a PAN 30 were generally supportive. The main reservation was traffic flow with a request that an alternative access be provided off the main Bransford Road (A4103) which would in turn relieve current pressure on Hoopers Close; the only current access to the school.

41. Initial conversations with Highways officers in Business, Environment and Community suggest an option off the main road would be considered favourably. It would be restricted to the provision of some staff parking rather than a drop-off/collection zone, but would then allow modification to the arrangements at the front of the school relieving current pressure. The costs of the main accommodation works proposed have been confirmed in the region of:

- £674,000 for an increase to a PAN 20, and
- £1,085,500 for an increase to a PAN 30.

The cost of providing a permanent access with staff parking and alterations to the arrangements for 'drop-off' purposes as 'in and 'out' arrangements is estimated to add a further £200,000 to each of the above options.

42. The performance of the school is currently outstanding as judged by Ofsted. The growth whilst significant will move this school to a full 1 FE school, providing a more secure financial and educational basis. The school is very close to Malvern and is already very attractive to parents from the town. There is expected housing growth in the village and surrounding villages during the period of the SWDP which supports the provision of additional places. At a cost of £12,300 per place including the works for new parking this offers a value for money option in line with Government targets.

**Officers would recommend the option to expand the school to a PAN 30 as the best outcome and that this option is approved.**

## Northleigh CE Primary

43. This is a very restricted site in a busy residential area and at the public consultation there was a clear message of concern for the potential over-development of the site which would encroach on the schools available hard-play space, but also making the traffic situation worse. Some parents said the proposal would have an impact on the quality of education at the school, and loss of hard play on site would compromise the facilities available to the children.

Following the consultation meeting the governors of the school met to consider the comments and subsequently wrote to say they formally withdrew the offer to expand the school on the existing site but indicated a desire to work with the Council on an alternative option to expand using the Malvern Vale site. The suggestion is for the infant facility (Reception to Year 2) to be provided on the Malvern Vale site, with the Junior department (Years 3 to 6) using accommodation on the current school site. In addition the governors suggested increasing the PAN to 90.

44. Without the support of the governing body there is no wish on the part of the Council to continue to explore the option to expand on the current site. The cost put forward from the feasibility study at £1,396,490 inclusive of fees and charges represents a higher cost per place (£13,300) for the number of additional places than other options.

45. The new option presented by the governors of Northleigh has not been discussed in detail to understand how it could be managed effectively. Initial consideration of the land available at Malvern Vale is that it would be



insufficient to accommodate a 3 FE infant department. Also, there is no strong evidence that an additional 1.5 forms of entry are required to meet the longer term demands.

**It is not recommended to proceed with expansion of Northleigh CE Primary on the existing site.**

## Somers Park

46. Included in the public consultation was an option to expand this school by an additional one form of entry from a PAN of 58 to 90, using the site at Malvern Vale to allow a split-site arrangement whereby the Early Years was based as a satellite to the school, and the remaining pupils would be retained on the current site. This required the provision of 3 Reception classes, relocation of the Nursery and Pre-school to the new site.

47. Parents at the meeting questioned how the school would manage an option on a split site, with children in a family potentially attending both sites. Residents were very concerned about added pressure on traffic. The walking distance has been estimated at approximately 15 minutes between sites. The extra children would add to the existing congestion unless the school operate staggered start and finish times during the normal day.

48. Following the consultation meeting the Directors on the Academy Board and governors of the school met to consider the comments and subsequently wrote to say they formally withdrew the offer to expand the school by creating an Early Years and Foundation Stage on the Malvern Vale site but indicated a desire to work with the Council to consider another option for expansion using the Malvern Vale site. This would be to build a 1 FE Primary school on Malvern Vale as an all-through school, either sponsored by Somers Park or as an extension to the existing school. In effect there would be a 2 FE, as is now, on the current site but a further 1 FE managed by Somers Park on the other site.

49. This would take time to progress, and challenges the deadline for the Council in meeting the need for additional places, although the school has offered to take a 'bulge' year in September 2016 if the Council were minded to consider this option.

**In light of the withdrawal of support from the Directors of the Academy Trust the original option will no longer be pursued.**

## Alternative Options Proposed

### St Joseph's Catholic Primary

50. A number of alternative options were put forward during the consultation. These options are appraised below.

51. St Joseph's Catholic Primary School currently has some surplus capacity and expressed an interest in taking additional pupils for the 2016 academic year which would

address the initial shortfall identified. As there is surplus capacity, the school can increase their PAN without any formal consultation. The Council would not object to this initial one year, additional form of entry, but would not see this as a longer term option whilst the school is in a category of 'Requires Improvement'. It would be down to parental preference as to whether the places were filled.

## **New School Option**

52. From the public consultation a number of responses suggested that the Council should consider the option to provide a school on the Malvern Vale site. The land available is sufficient to accommodate a 1 FE Primary School. In order to deliver this option, as a stand-alone school, this would require a commissioning process and the timescales for this mean that the places could not be provided before September 2017 at the earliest. It has been estimated the school would cost in the region of £4.6 million.

## **Response of Cabinet Member**

53. There is a clear short-term demand with a longer term potential demand. The two developments at Callow End CE Primary and Leigh & Bransford Primary will go some way to meet the short-term demand and these modest expansions will meet local pressures in the future. If St Joseph's Catholic Primary also feel they wish to offer more places in 2016 that is an option for the governors to determine.

54. The Cabinet Member has sympathy with the residents of the Malvern Vale development as the Council's securing of a site for a school in 2006 would have been a strong indicator of intent. However, the Council has a responsibility to ensure the resources available are spent wisely. Over the last seven years there has been no clear indication that more places were needed and the existing schools have been sufficient for the needs of the area. With more pre-school aged children and housing developments proposed there is a need to review the new school option.

55. Developing a new school on Malvern Vale would provide more places than the Council currently needs for September 2016, but provides longer term security for the Malvern area with the pending housing development in the Newland area.

56. The Council would not be looking to build two, 1 FE primary schools at Malvern Vale and Newland given the forecast pupil numbers even taking into account the housing. The Council has the option on the piece of land at Malvern Vale following the Section 106 agreement signed in connection with the development of the ex- M.O.D. North Site for housing. The Council has recently secured the option to develop education provision on the site and has 3 years to progress to construction otherwise the land will revert back to Persimmon Homes for alternative usage. Any housing development at Newland will be subject to

## Legal, Financial, HR and Equality Implications

discussion and agreement with the County Council on the educational impact.

57. Both Northleigh CE Primary and Somers Park have indicated their willingness to support the County Council in developing the Malvern Vale site. Further discussions are needed to explore the viability and costs of the options. These can be compared with the latest pupil number forecasts and final decisions on the South Worcestershire Development Plan. As an academy, Somers Park may have access to capital resources from the Government as a good and successful school reducing the financial burden on the County Council whilst still providing more places.

58. New Regulations governing School Organisation were introduced in January 2014, accompanied by statutory guidance. The changes brought in by these Regulations have been taken into account when undertaking consultation on this issue.

59. Capital investment will be required to deliver the additional accommodation needed. Funds to meet these costs would be met from the Basic Need allocation for 2015/16 and are being included in the draft Capital Programme.

60. Temporary revenue support will be required for the schools during the transition to higher numbers, following which permanent funding will be allocated based on the actual numbers on roll each year via the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). There are no revenue implications for the Council as the temporary revenue costs are expected to be met from the annual DSG set aside by the Local Authority (Pupil Growth Fund) and will be administered through the specific allocation mechanism which is annually agreed by the Schools' Forum. This follows the DfE's guidance, which states that Local Authorities should "...topslice the DSG in order to create a Growth Fund to support schools which are required to provide extra places in order to meet basic need within the authority, including pre-opening and reorganisation costs" (DfE 2013).

61. Expanding schools should bring new job and career development opportunities. There are no HR implications.

62. An Equality Impact screening exercise has determined that there are no equality implications relating to these proposals.

## Supporting Information

- Appendix 1 - Current Malvern primary schools
- Appendix 2 - Pupil flows 2013/14
- Appendix 3 - General Analysis of Consultation Responses
- Copies of all consultation responses, feasibility studies and notes of public consultation meetings are available

on the County Council website at  
[www.worcestershire.gov.uk/schoolconsultations](http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/schoolconsultations)

## Contact Points

### County Council Contact Points

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## Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Director of Children's Services) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:-

Officer Executive Decision ref 11/2014

Consultation documents of Autumn 2014

Equality Relevance Screening