

Cabinet
16 July 2015**6. MALVERN VALE – DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW SCHOOL FACILITY****Relevant Cabinet Member**

Mr J P Campion

Relevant Officer

Director of Children's Services

Local Member(s)

Prof J R Raine, Mr P A Tuthill

Recommendation

1. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families recommends that:

- (a) Cabinet notes the progress of the review and consider the options outlined for Malvern Vale as detailed in the feasibility work undertaken;**
- (b) Cabinet supports option 2, the expansion of Somers Park Primary School as this option expands an already popular and outstanding school and potentially offers best value to the Council; and**
- (c) the Director of Children's Services be authorised to progress option 2 further and implement it as part of the approved Capital Investment programme in meeting the need for pupil places going forward, irrespective of whether a bid to the Education Funding Agency (EFA) is successful, in line with the County Council's policy position of supporting academies, but with the contingency that any successful EFA funding is used to offset the cost to the Council.**

Background Information

2. It is Worcestershire County Council's statutory responsibility, as the Local Authority responsible for education, to secure the provision of sufficient school places for children in Worcestershire.

3. Following the public consultation in November 2014, a report went to Cabinet in February 2015 with recommendations for both short and long term options to address the need for places in the Malvern Area. It was agreed that expansions were progressed for Callow End CE Primary and Leigh and Bransford Primary schools, thus providing 18 additional places from September 2016. The estimated short fall longer term was in the region of 40

Options for Malvern Vale site

places according to the latest forecast information.

4. Selection criteria for the provision of places is based on the quality of current provision (i.e. schools rated Good or Outstanding by Ofsted), evidence of parental demand, cost and feasibility of accommodation changes and responses to the public consultation.

5. Alternative ways to provide the places have also been considered, including consideration of establishing a new primary school either on land available on the Malvern Vale housing development or elsewhere.

6. Cabinet requested further work be undertaken to explore in more detail the options for the Malvern Vale site. The site is sufficient to accommodate a one form entry (1FE) primary school but there are constraints and limitations. Outline feasibility work has now been completed the detail of which is attached at Appendices 1 and 2. In summary there are 3 options:

Option 1 - Stand-alone 1 FE Primary School commissioned by the LA.

7. In principle this is the simplest option in terms of the build of an additional 1 FE. Feasibility has confirmed that a 1 FE Primary can be accommodated at an estimated build cost of £4,087,000. Added to this would be the revenue costs of establishing a new school including, as a minimum, a project manager to lead the commissioning process. These costs would fall to the County Council as the commissioner and are estimated to be around £40-50K. In addition there would be set-up costs for the new school in particular the appointment of a headteacher to prepare the opening. These are estimated to be in the region of £100K and would be funded from the Direct Schools Grant (DSG).

8. The feasibility utilises the sharing of the existing car park which was always part of the original agreement with Malvern Hills District Council, also the dedicated use of a junior football pitch and shared use of an additional pitch on site by agreement with the community.

9. Whilst this option provides an opportunity to bring a new provider to the area increasing diversity, the commissioning will take up to a year to complete. The current Section 106 agreement with the developer requires work to start on site by December 2017. The need to secure a sponsor may make this timeline more difficult so risking losing the option on the site.

10. A stand-alone 1 FE school may not be the most efficient primary model in an urban environment and the site will not

support further expansion at a later date.

Option 2 – Expansion of Somers Park Primary School to a 3 FE school.

11. In build terms the capital costs would be the same as Option 1 as the school would like to organise as a 2FE on the existing site and a 1FE on the Malvern Vale site. As this option expands an existing school it avoids the need to go through a commissioning process to establish a new provider with all the associated revenue costs and time delays. Time would be required in terms of contracting out the build work which is in line with the council's responsibility on other projects within its capital investment programme.

12. The key benefit of this approach would be to link with an already established and successful school.

There is also the potential for a contribution towards the capital costs of building as the school, which is an academy, has the opportunity to seek funding from the EFA, but at the time of writing this report, this is not secured funding. The need for places requires the Council to commit to the expenditure in advance of knowing the outcome of any bid that Somers Park may make. Somers Park has confirmed that any funding they receive from a bid to the EFA will reduce the capital contribution from the Council.

13. Somers Park have indicated they would consider opening an additional class on the existing site in September 2016 if the Council is supportive of this option and pupil numbers require the places.

Option 3 – Expansion of Northleigh Primary School from a 1.5 FE school to a 2FE or 3 FE school operating on a split site.

14. As with Option 2 this option has the benefit of linking with a successful and popular school and also avoids the need to go through a commissioning process.

15. Feasibilities have been completed to consider both 2 FE and 3 FE options. The 2 FE option may not provide sufficient places and the 3 FE will provide more than is required. The capital costs for both are disproportionately high compared with Option 1.

16. The 2 FE provides an additional 15 places per year group and is estimated at £3.9 Million, compared with £4,087,000 for an additional 30 places for Options 1 & 2.

17. The 3 FE option is estimated to cost in the region of £5.7 million for an additional 45 places per year group. An additional £1.7 million for places which the current pupil number forecasts suggest are not required and in addition the feasibility for this option also suggests the Malvern Vale

site may not sustain the required level of development.

Consultation

18. The submission from the school suggested they would organise the school with Key Stages on different sites. This was an aspect of the original option suggested by Somers Park which was not liked by parents at the time of the consultation in late 2014.

19. Meetings have been held with the two Local Members, the two schools, and Malvern Hills District Council who are all in principle supportive of the development on the Malvern Vale site.

20. The Headteacher and Governing Body of Somers Park Primary School see the running a 1 FE school on Malvern Vale as a positive step in developing their multi-academy trust and extending their established excellence in education that has been recognised by the DfE.

21. Northleigh are confident that a split site with Malvern Vale would work as it draws from their catchment area and the school is rated 'Good' by Ofsted and valued by the local community. The school's preference was work on a split site separating Key Stages 1 and 2.

22. The parental responses to the original consultation have been shared with both schools and Somers Park has approached the EFA about the capital funding although no official response has been received.

Timetable

23. To meet the need for additional places a decision on capital investment is required. The remaining programme in order to achieve this currently is mapped out as follows:

- July 2015 – Report to Cabinet for a decision on options.
- September 2015 – August 2017, continuation of design and build of accommodation for the expansion of Somers Park and in parallel the preparation of a bid by Somers Park to the EFA.
- December 2017 – Final date for engaging contract / retaining land option. It is anticipated that the school build will be completed by this date.

Financial and budgetary implications

24. As the intention is to provide additional school places the responsibility for the capital investment is with the County Council funded from the Basic Need Capital allocation, supplemented by any available S106 funds. There is the opportunity for academies to seek capital funding to expand where the schools are successful and popular, which is the case with Somers Park. It is against this criterion that

**Procurement /
Commissioning issues**

**Legal, HR and Equality
Implications**

Recommendation

Somers Park intends to bid to the EFA and if successful this would act as a significant contribution to the new build and relax any pressure on the Council's Basic Need allocation going forward.

25. Option 1 will require additional revenue to support the commissioning process and an allocation from the DSG to cover the management costs for establishing the school in advance of the school receiving a formula allocation. The estimate is set out in paragraph 4 above.

26. Officers in Children's Services would monitor the delivery of the build project and release of capital funds. The monitoring would require less input if option 2 is approved, as the academy would take on the responsibility for the delivery of the new building whereas in options 1 and 3, there would be significantly more input in managing the process through design and delivery stages.

27. Options 2 and 3 will require additional revenue support as the schools admit additional pupils but this is already provided for in the Pupil Growth Fund element of schools' formula funding arrangements.

28. Any new school option will be subject to the Academy Presumption and the Council will have to open a competition to seek a sponsor to run the school. From the experiences of other authorities this is currently expected to take a year. Other LAs have struggled to find sponsors for small primaries and this will risk prolonging the timeline.

29. Any further statutory consultations will be in line with DfE guidance published in January 2014.

30. An equality impact assessment will be carried out on any significant changes taking place.

31. There has been regular and ongoing dialogue with both schools and they have both indicated their willingness to work with the Council. All the options have been analysed against the criteria set out in paragraph 2 and the recommendation is to proceed with the expansion of Somers Park Primary.

Quality of current provision.

Based on the current judgement of Ofsted, Northleigh is rated as 'Good' and Somers Park is 'Outstanding'.

Parental preference.

Somers Park over a number of years has seen higher levels of parental applications at the point of entry at reception; showing greater levels of parental preference.

Cost and feasibility of delivery.

Supporting Information

These are set out in paragraphs 5 and 6 and demonstrate the capital costs for the Somers Park option of 1 FE are less and there is the potential added benefit of funding.

The public consultation indicated parents were unhappy with the suggestion of splitting the Key Stages across the two sites.

Additionally the next phase of housing development is anticipated to be in the Newlands area of north Malvern. This is geographically closer to Somers Park than Northleigh.

- Appendix 1 Feasibility report for a 1 FE Primary School (Option 1 and 2)
- Appendix 2 Feasibility report for a 2 / 3 FE split site Primary School (Option 3)

The Appendices are available electronically. Hard copies will be made available at reception and the Members' area at County Hall.

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:

- 5 February 2015 Cabinet Report and Recommendations