

CABINET
4 FEBRUARY 2016**2017-18 SCHOOL PLACE PLANNING**

Relevant Cabinet Member

Mr J P Campion

Relevant Officer

Interim Director of Children, Families and Communities

Local Members

Mr M L Bayliss, Mr M H Broomfield, Mr P Grove

Recommendation

1. **The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families recommends that Cabinet:**
 - (a) **notes the results of the consultations held between 2 November 2015 and 11 December 2015;**
 - (b) **approves publication of statutory notices to expand the following schools with associated increases in Published Admission Number to be implemented by September 2017:**
 - **Red Hill CE Primary School, Worcester from 30 to 60 pupils per year**
 - **Rushwick CE Primary School, Malvern from 20 to 30 pupils per year**
 - **Wychbold First School, Droitwich from 20 to 30 pupils per year;**
 - (c) **authorises:**
 - (i) **the Director of Children, Families and Communities to approve those proposals in respect of which no objections to the Public Notices are received; and**
 - (ii) **the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families to decide those proposals in respect of which objections to the Public Notices are received;**
 - (d) **to the extent that proposed expansions are agreed in accordance with (c) above, recommends Council to approve the addition of the necessary building works associated with these expansions to the 2016/17 Children's Services Capital Investment Programme within the Capital Programme; and**
 - (e) **authorises the Director of Children, Families and Communities to take all necessary steps to finalise and implement the decisions made in (c) above.**

Background

2. The County Council has a statutory duty to provide sufficient school places for all children resident in the county who wish to attend a state funded school. As part of the annual school place planning and monitoring exercise, officers identified a need to provide additional permanent places in three areas of the county from September 2017.
3. The need for additional places is driven by a combination of underlying demographic changes and additional children arising from housing growth. Three schools were identified as candidates for expansion based on their location in relation to the areas of growth and their status as popular and successful schools.
4. Expanding these schools should not have a detrimental impact on other schools in the areas as we are forecasting increased local need. In the short-term the likely impact of these proposals is to increase parental choice and allow more families to access the school of their choice. Longer-term, it is possible, as numbers fluctuate, that there could be over provision in any area but these places are needed in the short to medium term and Government policy is supportive of expanding good and popular schools.
5. The Director of Children's Services approved public consultation on the draft proposals in July 2015. Consultation took place between 2 November and 11 December 2015 and included publication of written consultation documents (see background papers) and a consultation event for stakeholders at each school.

Red Hill CE Primary School, Worcester

6. Red Hill CE Primary School is currently a 1 Form Entry primary school offering 30 places per year group. The proposal is to expand the school by 1 Form of Entry to offer 60 places per year group.
7. The proposed expansion would require construction of 6 additional classbases and associated support space. A feasibility study has been completed which identifies two locations on the site where the new block could be constructed. Should the proposal be approved, further work will take place to determine which location provides the best solution. The estimated build cost is £1,838,500. This would be funded from the 2016/17 Basic Need capital allocation and from Section 106 contributions from housing developments.
8. Red Hill CE Primary School is considered to be a popular and successful school. The school is graded 'Good' by Ofsted and is regularly oversubscribed. The school is located in an area of Worcester City which has seen rising pupil numbers in recent years. The Council has expanded neighbouring schools at Nunnery Wood Primary and Stanley Road Primary in recent years.
9. In 2011 the Council consulted on an option to increase Red Hill CE Primary School from 30 to 45 pupils per year group. The results of the consultation were reported to Cabinet in March 2012. Responses to the consultation were generally against an increase at that time and it was decided to progress expansions at other

schools instead. However, it was suggested that an increase from 30 to 60 pupils per year might be considered more favourably at a future date.

10. There have been times in recent years when Red Hill CE Primary School was unable to offer a place to all the children resident in its catchment area who had included Red Hill as a preferred school. A move to 2 Form Entry would give greater surety for families living in the catchment area that they could access places at their local school. It would also provide opportunities for families living outside the catchment area to express a preference for Red Hill CE Primary, increasing parental choice.

11. The increased pupil numbers will provide greater financial resources and consequent opportunities for the school to develop the staffing structure. There will be enhanced opportunity for staff to collaborate and to take on more responsibility.

12. There were 18 responses to the consultation with the majority in favour of the expansion. The main reason given for supporting the expansion was the local demand for additional places.

13. The main concerns raised by both those in favour of and against the expansion were the increase in traffic congestion, particularly in roads surrounding the school, and the impact of building works on pupils and neighbouring properties.

14. Most schools in Worcestershire have issues with traffic congestion to some degree. Various strategies are employed to encourage parents to use sustainable methods of travel to take their children to and from school. Where parents choose to use a car efforts are made to encourage responsible and considerate parking. A degree of inconvenience is inevitable for local residents at the start and end of the school day. However, the Council and the School's Governing Body are committed to taking reasonable steps to mitigate any increase in traffic arising from the expansion.

15. The feasibility work undertaken identifies two possible locations for the new block required to accommodate the additional pupils. Both options recommend a part two-storey build to minimise the amount of land taken up by the increased footprint of the buildings. Care will be taken in the design of the block to minimise the impact on neighbouring properties. Specific consultation on the design and exterior treatment of the new block will be undertaken as part of the planning process.

16. The scope of the additional accommodation required means that work cannot be completed in holiday time. The Council works with contractors who have experience of delivering buildings on active school sites. The area of construction will be managed to ensure the safe operation of the school for staff and pupils during the building works. The construction of a single additional block should minimise the disruption to existing pupils.

17. Having taken account of the comments raised, the Governing Body of Red Hill CE Primary School has indicated their support for the expansion. This support is based on the understanding that the increased accommodation to be provided will be suitable and reflective of the needs of the staff to enable them to operate the school in a safe, efficient and cost effective manner.

18. The Diocesan Board of Education has not raised any objections to the proposal.

Rushwick CE Primary School, Malvern

19. Rushwick CE Primary School currently offers 20 places per year group. The proposal is to expand the school up to a full 1 Form of Entry offering 30 places per year group.

20. The school currently has 5 classbases, including one in a single mobile classroom. The proposed expansion would require 7 classbases in total. It is proposed to provide a permanent replacement for the mobile along with two further classbases and supporting space. A feasibility study has been completed which identifies two options for delivering the additional accommodation. Should the proposal be approved, further work will take place to determine which option provides the best solution.

21. The estimated build cost is £910,500. This will be funded from the 2016/17 Basic Need capital allocation and by Section 106 contributions from housing development.

22. Rushwick CE Primary School is considered to be a popular and successful school. The school is graded 'Good' by Ofsted and draws pupils both from the village of Rushwick and the wider area. Recent housing development has increased the number of children resident in the catchment area of the school, with further development planned.

23. A move to 1 Form of Entry would allow the school to continue to serve its local community and still offer spaces to families in the wider area who express a preference for this setting. The school would be able to operate single age classes which would simplify the organisation of the school. The increased pupil numbers would give the school additional financial resources to invest in supporting pupils.

24. There were 18 responses to the consultation with 15 in favour of expansion and 3 against.

25. Those in favour of the expansion highlighted the need for the school to continue to serve the growing local population and the benefits of organising the school in single age classes.

26. Concerns raised during the public consultation relate to limitations in the existing school building and the impact of additional traffic at the start and end of the school day. There were also queries about the loss of external play area and the potential to lose the 'feel' of a village school.

27. The Council's capital resources are ring-fenced for the provision of additional school places and essential repairs and maintenance. The proposed additional accommodation provided to support the increase in pupil numbers would comply with current space guidelines and ensure that the school has sufficient space of the correct type to deliver the curriculum. It is seldom possible to address issues with the suitability of existing accommodation as part of Basic Need investment but the Council would consider requests from the school for improvements to take place under the same contract, with the school funding the additional cost.

28. There is likely to be some additional traffic generated at the peak periods around the start and end of the school day. Rushwick CE Primary School is reasonably well provided for in terms of areas for parents to park compared with other schools but the Council does not dismiss the impact on neighbouring properties. The school and the Council are committed to taking reasonable steps to mitigate the impact of any additional traffic and to encourage sustainable travel.

29. The feasibility study undertaken highlights two broad directions for expansion. Both require the loss of some of the current hard play space but this is offset by additional provision in both options.

30. The increase to 1 Form of Entry would still leave Rushwick CE Primary as a relatively small school. It is anticipated that with current and planned housing growth in the village the majority of children attending will still live in the local area. The school would therefore be able to retain its links to the local community and the village school ethos that is valued by parents.

31. Having taken account of the responses to the consultation, the Governing Body of Rushwick CE Primary School has indicated their full support for the expansion.

32. The Diocesan Board of Education has not raised any objections to the proposal.

Wychbold First School, Droitwich

33. Wychbold First School currently offers 20 places per year group. The proposal is to expand the school up to a full 1 Form of Entry offering 30 places per year group.

34. Wychbold First School currently has 4 classbases. As a first school the proposed expansion would require a total of 5 classbases. The proposed expansion would require the construction of one additional classbase with appropriate support space. A feasibility study has been completed which identifies 2 options on the site to deliver the required additional accommodation.

35. The estimated build cost is £378,664. This to be funded from the 2016/17 Basic Need capital allocation and by Section 106 contributions from housing development.

36. Wychbold First School is considered to be a popular and successful school. The school is graded 'Good' by Ofsted and recently increased its Published Admission Number from 15 to 20 places in response to rising demand for places. Housing development in Wychbold has increased the number of children living in the catchment area for the school, which covers the parishes of Dodderhill and Upton Warren.

37. A move to 1 Form of Entry would allow the school to continue to serve its local community, including those families living outside the village of Wychbold, as the village population grows. The school would be able to operate single age classes which would simplify the organisation of the school and the increased pupil numbers would give the school additional financial resources.

38. There were 7 responses to the consultation, of which 4 were in favour of the expansion and 3 against.

39. Those in favour of the expansion cited the organisational benefits of operating single age classes and a desire for the school to continue to serve the whole local community which is growing due to new housing development.

40. Issues raised by those against the expansion include the impact of additional traffic and parking at the school. There were also comments by parents who preferred smaller classes for their children as they felt this allowed teachers to give more individual attention to each child.

41. There is likely to be some additional traffic generated at the peak periods around the start and end of the school day. Wychbold First School is reasonably well provided for in terms of areas for parents to park compared with other schools but the Council does not dismiss the impact on neighbouring properties. The school and the Council are committed to taking reasonable steps to mitigate the impact of any additional traffic and to encourage sustainable travel.

42. It is acknowledged that some parents specifically seek a small school as they believe their child would benefit from a smaller class group. Although the current organisation does mean that some classes at Wychbold First School are operating at less than 30 pupils, there is no guarantee that this can be maintained in the future. Rising pupil numbers and higher staffing costs may drive a change in the way the school is organised.

43. Having taken account of the responses to the consultation, the Governing Body of Wychbold First School has indicated their full support for the expansion.

Legal, Financial and HR Implications

44. Capital costs of the proposed expansions would be met from Worcestershire's Basic Need capital grant for 2016/17. Contributions from housing development will also be used where available and in line with regulations governing use of such funds.

45. All schools which expand at the request of the Council are entitled to additional revenue support through the mechanism agreed with the Schools' Forum. This support will apply from the date of implementation until all year groups at the school are operating at the new capacity.

Privacy Impact Assessment

46. A Privacy Impact Assessment Screening has been completed in respect of these recommendations. The screening did not identify any potential Privacy considerations requiring further consideration during implementation.

Equality and Diversity Implications

47. An Equality Relevance Screening has been completed in respect of these recommendations. The screening did not identify any potential Equality considerations requiring further consideration during implementation.

Contact Points

County Council Contact Points

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Supporting Information

- Copies of the responses to the consultations are available for inspection in the Members' area

Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Interim Director of Children, Families and Communities) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

Public Consultation documents related to each school

Detailed responses to the consultation

Agenda and background papers for the meeting of the Cabinet held on 8 March 2012