

**SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL****CABINET MEMBER FOR SCHOOLS AND LEARNING****DATE: 13 MARCH 2014****LEAD OFFICER: NICK WILSON, STRATEGIC DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES****SUBJECT: TO DETERMINE A PROPOSAL TO EXPAND ST ALBAN'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL, EAST MOLESEY****SUMMARY OF ISSUE:**

Primary school places are in high demand in the Moleseys as a result of the birthrate increasing across Elmbridge Borough by 21.6% in the last decade. Other demographics, such as new housing and inward migration, are also adding to the demand and there is an increasing need for more denominational places in catholic primary schools across the borough and the wider deanery. Working in partnership with the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton, Surrey County Council is proposing to expand St Alban's Catholic Primary School by one form of entry with effect from 1 September 2015.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

It is recommended that:

1. The school is permanently enlarged by 1 form of entry (from 1 FE to 2 FE)
2. This expansion would be effective from 1 September 2015
3. The expansion is managed incrementally, starting with an additional Reception class in 2015 and building up a year at a time until the school is 2FE in every year group by 2020
4. That an associated building programme is commissioned to provide additional accommodation to meet the basic need for more classrooms to support the expansion. This will be funded by a Department for Education grant for the project awarded to the County Council as a result of its Targeted Basic Need bid in 2013.

**REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Additional school places are required in the Moleseys and there is an associated project to expand Hurst Park Primary School in the same timeframe. This expansion, together with St Alban's, would add another two forms of entry, equivalent to 420 primary school places into the planning area. Our analysis of the forecast data indicates that this is the right amount of expansion required to meet the demand for places for the foreseeable future.

There is also a wider need for Catholic school places in Elmbridge, which is served currently by St Alban's (Molesey), St Paul's (Thames Ditton), Cardinal Newman (Hersham) and St Charles Borromeo (Weybridge). All these schools are

oversubscribed, and all but St Alban's have 'space-restricted' sites. The current combined published admission number of the three schools in the eastern side of the Weybridge Deanery (St Alban's, St Paul's, Cardinal Newman) is 150 – a shortfall against the number of baptisms, which has averaged 185 annually.

St Alban's RC Primary is a popular and successful school which serves this area and delivers a high quality education. It was rated good (Grade 2) by OFSTED, at its last full inspection (December 2012). The provision of additional places at St Alban's therefore meets the Government's policy position to expand successful schools in order to meet parental preferences.

#### **DETAILS:**

##### **Business Case**

1. There is a clear need for additional primary school places in Elmbridge Borough and specifically in the Moleseys Planning Area. This is demonstrated by the Pupil Forecast data which is derived using methodology that takes into account live births in the borough, housing trajectories and recent trends in admissions and parental preferences. When analysing this forecast data the county council is also mindful of the mix of schools and, in this particular planning area, the number of catholic places available. The council works with the appropriate diocese to enhance its analysis using data obtained from baptismal records in the relevant parishes and the deanery as a whole.
2. The Local Authority has a statutory duty to provide sufficient school places and to work with the dioceses to ensure that sufficient faith places are provided across a deanery and wider planning area. Local authorities are encouraged by the Government to be mindful of the mix of schools on offer to parents so that there is a genuine diversity and choice of education wherever possible.
3. There are five primary schools serving the Moleseys: Chandlers Field Primary, Hurst Park Primary, St Lawrence Junior, The Orchard Infants and St Alban's Primary. Not all of the schools are suitable for expansion; some are on very small sites, others have already been expanded. Only St Alban's can provide the catholic places required to satisfy parental preferences for a denominational primary education.

#### **CONSULTATION:**

4. Public consultation was carried out between 25 November and 23 December 2013. A consultation document was produced and circulated to all parents, other stakeholders and interested parties. In addition two meetings were held at the school on 26 and 28 November 2013; these were attended by approximately 36 parents and residents. The consultation document was also published on the school's website and the local Borough and County councillors received copies of this.
5. The Council and Governing Body received 14 written consultation responses. An analysis of the consultation response forms is given in the table below:

Respondent	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
Parent of a child attending the school	2	(2*)	0
Potential future parent/child in an Early Years setting	0	0	0

Parent of child at another school	0	0	0
Employee of the school	0	0	0
School governor	0	0	0
Local resident	0	8 (2 of which also parents)	5

6. Two parent respondents are in full agreement with the proposal but do not give reasons why. Five respondents state that they do not know whether or not they are in favour and four of them raise concerns which are summarised below. Eight respondents, all local residents, stated they were opposed to the proposal. A number of them gave detailed reasons why as summarised.
7. The main concerns raised by respondents were parking and traffic considerations. In summary, these are that the speed and volume of traffic on Beauchamp Road already presents a hazard to pedestrians and therefore increasing the size of St Alban's will only exacerbate this situation. One person noted that as more Catholics will be travelling to the school from other areas this would increase car journeys to school. It was noted by a resident that there is no convenient marked crossing point on the road and respondents state that some parents of pupils currently on roll at St Alban's drive or park in a discourteous manner.
8. There is a suggestion that a more robust Travel Plan, following a traffic survey, should be developed and shared with residents. Also, one person feels that on-site parking is a priority if the scheme is to go ahead. A number of concerns were raised regarding unanswered questions relating to operational aspects of the proposal. This is unfortunately inevitable at this stage of the process.
9. One respondent feels that the case has yet to be made that there is a need for additional RC places. One respondent, a governor at Chandlers Field, gave detailed reasons why he opposed the proposal; these were primarily because he believed the impact on his school would be a negative one. He does not believe the forecast data, that there will be sufficient pupils to fill all the Molesey schools. This is not the council's analysis of the forecast data.
10. Permission was given by the Governing Body in January 2014 for Statutory Notices to be published and these appeared on the school's main gate and website on 26 January 2014; on the Surrey County Council website and in the local press the week beginning 27 January 2014. The Notice outlined the details of the proposal to expand the school and responses were invited from the public via the county council's website.
11. The Council received no responses to the Statutory Notice.

<b>RISK MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:</b>
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12. The key risk to this proposal is the dependency on a successful planning application to develop the site. Traffic considerations are the most stated reason for opposition to the scheme. The scheme has been discussed informally with planners throughout the design and development process. A planning application will be ready for submission in the spring of 2014.

### **Financial and Value for Money Implications**

13. This scheme is included within the 2014/19 Medium Term Financial Plan and is supported by a Targeted Basic Need grant from the Department for Education. A more detailed business case will be developed prior to contract tender.

### **Section 151 Commentary**

14. The section 151 officer confirms that the high level financial implications have been considered as part of this report and confirms that funding is available for this scheme. The detailed financial and business implications will be considered as part of the next stage.

### **Legal Implications – Monitoring Officer**

15. The *School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2007* contain the regulations that apply to prescribed alterations. The DCSF has published two pieces of Guidance relating to prescribed alterations: *Expanding a Maintained Mainstream School or Adding a Sixth Form* and *Making Changes to a Maintained Mainstream School (Other than Expansion)*. These contain both statutory guidance (i.e. guidance to which proposers and decision makers have a statutory duty to have regard) and non-statutory guidance on the process for making changes to school provision.
16. Section 13 of the Education Act 1996 places a general duty on local education authorities to secure that efficient primary education is available to meet the needs of the population of their area. Section 5 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 places a duty to promote high standards. Therefore, there is a duty to provide efficient education and sufficient schools to do so.

### **Equalities and Diversity**

17. There are no direct equalities implications arising out of the proposal. However, the increase in provision will be open to all applicants with the highest priority given to Looked After Children and pupils on the SEN register and/or those who would benefit from a statement of educational need, thus supporting provision for our most vulnerable children.

### **Safeguarding responsibilities for vulnerable children and adults implications**

18. The school has a robust Safeguarding Policy which is monitored by the designated Child Protection Lead Officer, is regularly reviewed by the governing body and is subject to OFSTED inspection. Site access and security, both during the proposed building programme and afterwards, have been considered and addressed in the planning and design of this building project.

### **Climate change/carbon emissions implications**

19. The County Council attaches great importance to being environmentally aware and wishes to show leadership in cutting carbon emissions and tackling climate change. A safe walking route to the school has been identified for use by residents and facilities will be provided on campus for children cycling or using scooters to come to school.
20. The additional school provision is centred close to the demographic demand and as a result will enable parents and children to attend a local school and thus reduce either the need for or length of school journeys.

### **WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:**

21. It is recommended that the Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning, after due consideration, decides whether or not to agree to the expansion of St Alban's Catholic Primary School with effect from September 2015.

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**Contact Officer:**

Melanie Harris

School Commissioning Officer NE Surrey tel. 020 8541 9556

**Consulted:**

Parents of pupils and prospective pupils of St Alban's Catholic Primary School

Local County Councillors

Local residents via the consultation document published on the school website

**Annexes:** None

**Sources/background papers:**

School Organisation Consultation Proposal

Report to The Governing Body 17 January 2014

Consultation responses

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