

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 PUBLISH NOTICES TO CLOSE THE STANWELL NEW ROAD BASE OF RIVERBRIDGE PRIMARY SCHOOL IN STAINES****SUMMARY OF ISSUE:**

Riverbridge Primary School was formed two years ago with the amalgamation of three schools. It has operated on the three existing sites as a split site school. This has become very difficult to manage and resource, and the Stanwell New Road site is less popular with parents. The Governing Body is therefore requesting we consolidate the school onto the two sites at Knowle Green.

This proposal fits with the overall strategy for education provision as the Stanwell New Road site will be used for alternative education provision, yet to be determined.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that the Cabinet Member should consider whether to publish Statutory Notices to the effect that:

- Stanwell New Road Base ceases to operate as part of the Riverbridge Primary School with effect from the end of the present academic year – July 2014. Other educational uses for this site are being considered as part of the overall strategy for education provision.
- An associated building programme goes ahead in a single phase to provide three new classrooms and some improvements to outdoor play space on the Park Avenue Base.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

This proposal affords the school the opportunity to consolidate its operations on two adjacent sites thus giving the feel of a fully integrated primary school. The proposal also offers the County Council the opportunity to consider other educational uses for the site.

The school reports as having had many parents who have not wanted a Reception place for their child at the Stanwell New Road Base, but would prefer a place at Knowle Green base from the start of their child's schooling. The Headteacher has confirmed that they currently have a large waiting list of parents wishing to transfer to the Knowle Green Base.

There are sound educational and operational benefits to the proposal: first, the consolidation on two adjacent sites will enable the school to have one base dedicated to Early Years education and the other set up for Year 2 leading into Key

Stage 2 junior classrooms. Teachers will be able to meet and plan together more easily. It will also give the Senior Leadership Team more time to spend with staff and pupils and cut down on travelling time between bases. This will be a much more productive use of their time and expertise.

DETAILS:

Business Case

1. Riverbridge Primary School was formed in September 2011 by the amalgamation of three smaller schools: Knowle Green Infant, Shortwood Infant and Kingscroft Junior Schools. Riverbridge Primary school is now a three form entry school (630 pupils plus a 78 place nursery at the Knowle Green base).
2. The Stanwell New Road premises (the former Shortwood Infant School) is a small Victorian school building which has had some refurbishment to make it suitable for twenty-first century education. However due to the nature of the buildings, it is impossible to provide an equivalent level of provision, in particular in Early Years and extended school facilities. It is situated in a residential area which also has some light industrial buildings adjacent to the site.
3. There are currently 88 pupils on roll at this base, comprising 30 Reception, 29 Year 1 and 29 Year 2 children. There is also a private nursery (Playbox) operating on the site but this is shortly due to close. All Riverbridge pupils currently transfer to the Park Avenue base at Year 3.
4. It is proposed that from September 2014 all Nursery, Reception and Year 1 pupils would be taught at the Knowle Green base. All Year 2 to Year 6 classes would be taught at the Park Avenue base which will have a new block of three classrooms and some additional playground space created. This will enable the Early Years children to play safely and separately from the older pupils.
5. This proposal affords the school the opportunity to consolidate its operations on two adjacent sites, thus giving the feel of a fully integrated primary school.
6. In order to provide an equivalent education staff at both infant bases have had to travel at least once a week between bases in order to plan together. Staff meetings cannot be held at Stanwell New Road Base because it is too small.
7. Although there is no plan to reduce staffing in this proposal, it would mean that all staff will be available to support the children and each other in two co-located buildings, and all will be familiar to pupils from the time they begin school through to Year 6 as in most primary schools. The proposal has the added advantage of having the school Site Manager living on the base at Knowle Green which gives him instant oversight of all the school buildings in terms of safety and security when it is not in session.
8. Resources such as curriculum materials and photocopiers will only have to be purchased for the two remaining bases, and there will be no need for duplication of infant resources (e.g. library books or outdoor play equipment) as all the Early Years children will be together at the Knowle Green base. Similarly the school budget will incur energy savings and other financial benefits from this proposal. This would mean that more of the budget could be

spent on teaching and learning, rather than running costs and building maintenance.

9. The proposed new classrooms will be light and modern and far more energy efficient than those at Stanwell New Road.
10. The Governing Body and staff have given a lot of thought to this proposal, and as a result of their experience of running a school on three different bases they have come to the conclusion that this could be done more effectively and efficiently if the school could consolidate onto the two main bases at Knowle Green and Park Avenue.

CONSULTATION:

11. Public consultation was carried out between 27 January and 26 February 2014. A consultation document setting out the facts and the proposal was produced and circulated to all parents and other stakeholders and interested parties. In addition two meetings were held at the school on 3 and 6 February; these were attended by approximately 60 parents and residents. The consultation document was also published on the Surrey County Council website and the local Borough and County councillors were sent copies of this.
12. The Council has received 69 written consultation responses. An analysis of the consultation response forms is given in the table below. (Please note that some respondents fit more than one category eg they are many parents who are also local residents. Also we have received responses from residents of both Stanwell New Road and Park Avenue bases, so the numbers may not always add up to 69.)

Respondent	Number of Forms	total respondents Against	Total respondents For	Respondents who Don't Know
Total Response forms received	69	16	49	4
Employee of the school	16	0	16	0
School governor	7	0	7	0
Parents	35	2	29	3
Resident	33	11	20	2
Other schools	2	2	0	0

13. The governing body of Riverbridge Primary school plus 49 respondents are in agreement with the proposal. Four people state that they do not know whether or not they are in favour or they have submitted a qualified view; 16 respondents who sent in individual forms are against the proposal. This includes the Head teacher and Governing Body of Our Lady of The Rosary Primary School who object on the grounds of additional traffic.
14. It is clear that the majority of parents who have responded are in favour of the proposal. They give reasons of equality of opportunity, consistency, and children having a sense of being part of a primary school as the impetus for their response.
15. The main concern raised by respondents opposed to this proposal is the perceived volume of additional traffic that an expansion would generate on Park Avenue. Both Our Lady of The Rosary and Riverbridge Primary schools

are situated in a cul de sac and residents and some parents are concerned that there are inadequate parking facilities for parents to drop off and pick up their children from school. Riverbridge Primary School does have a drop off zone but the catholic school does not; consequently parents of both schools tend to use the drop off zone as well as parking on the public highway at school.

16. A traffic survey has been undertaken as part of the viability exercise when considering expansion of this site. The indications are that there would only be between 10 and 15 additional journeys made to Park Avenue per day as a number of the pupils at Stanwell New Road Base already have a sibling at one of the other two bases. Residents were unconvinced by this analysis.
17. Residents also mentioned the perceived dangerous parking and discourtesy of drivers currently outside of the two primary schools, and they highlight their fears of accidents involving children if the situation is exacerbated by more traffic. Several respondents suggested that an additional pedestrian entrance to the school is considered. This may be a possibility as there is a rear gate onto a playing field which could be accessed by children walking to school. Officers are aware of the strength of feeling in this respect and this aspect of the proposal will be addressed in the planning stages with pupil safety considerations being of paramount importance.
18. Other respondents noted the recent flooding at the Knowle Green site and a number of residents raised concerns at the public meetings about the capacity of the drains to cope with additional pupils at Riverbridge.
19. Those people in support of the proposal, including the Governing Body, recognise the educational benefits of this proposed move to two sites. Many parents have a logistic problem getting children to both sites on time and they recognise that this proposal will resolve that issue for them. A number of respondents, although in favour of the move, made helpful suggestions to help mitigate traffic concerns which they appreciated as being a key issue to parents and residents alike.

RISK MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:

20. The key risk to this proposal is the dependency on a successful planning application to develop the site, which includes mitigation of the impact of some additional school traffic.
21. If permission to unite the school on its two adjacent sites is denied then there will still be some parents who do not want their child to start school at Stanwell New Road Base. Some who have to make two journeys each day to pick up children at both sites. Staff will have to continue to travel between sites. All the benefits of consistency, which are crucial in the raising of educational standards, will be lost.

Financial and Value for Money Implications

22. By consolidating onto two sites instead of the current three, there is the potential for reducing the overall revenue and premises maintenance costs at the school.
23. The proposal frees up the Stanwell New Road site which fits with the educational requirement for a site in this area of the County for alternative education provision. As there is a mutual benefit in proceeding with this proposal, there is capital funding available in the Medium Term Financial Plan 2014/19.

Section 151 Commentary

24. The Section 151 Officer acknowledges the mutual benefit of proceeding with this proposal and as a result there is funding approved within the Medium Term Financial Plan 2014/19.

Legal Implications – Monitoring Officer

25. The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2007 contain the regulations that apply to prescribed alterations. The DforE 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.
26. The Prescribed Alterations Guidance has been followed by the School Commissioning Officer in the development of this proposal.

Equalities and Diversity

27. The equalities implications arising out of the proposal relate to the educational resources available at the three sites currently. It is the view of some parents and staff that the resources and opportunities at the Stanwell New Road base are not as favourable as those at the other two bases. Although the staff and governors take all reasonable measures to prevent this, it is probably fair to say that the age and size of the building at Stanwell New Road makes it more difficult to deliver the primary curriculum as teachers would wish.
28. There is no intention to change the admissions arrangements to the school and the new provision will simply replace the three classes at the Stanwell New Road base and be open to all applicants irrespective of race, gender, faith, ethnicity or ability. The Admissions arrangements give the highest priority 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. Children with siblings will continue to receive the next priority, followed by those children living closest to the school.

Safeguarding responsibilities for vulnerable children and adults implications

29. 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

30. The County Council attaches great importance to being environmentally aware and wishes to show leadership in cutting carbon emissions and tackling climate change. An additional safe walking route to the school has been identified for use by children and families, via a rear pedestrian entrance to the Park Avenue base and investigations are underway to ascertain if this can be opened as part of this scheme. A traffic survey has been done and the School Travel Plan will be updated prior to any planning application. Facilities are already provided on campus for children cycling or using scooters to come to school.
31. The location of replacement provision at Park Avenue is centred close to the demographic demand, and as a result will enable parents and children to attend a local school and thus should reduce either the need for, or length of school journeys.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:

32. Subject to Cabinet Member approval, Statutory Notices stating the Council's intent to consolidate the school onto two sites will be published. The Cabinet Member will then receive a further report to determine the proposed expansion within two months of the expiration of the Statutory Notices.
33. The outcome of this consultation will be published on the Surrey County Council website and parents of pupils at the school will be notified by letter from the Governing Body.

Contact Officer:

Melanie Harris
School Commissioning Officer NE Surrey tel. 020 8541 9556

Consulted:

Parents of pupils and prospective pupils of Riverbridge Primary School
Local Councillors
Local residents via the consultation document delivered by hand

Annexes: None

Sources/background papers:

School Organisation Consultation Proposal
Response forms to be tabled
Consultation responses
