

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**CABINET MEMBER FOR SCHOOLS AND LEARNING****DATE: 24 APRIL 2014****LEAD OFFICER: NICK WILSON, STRATEGIC DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES****SUBJECT: TO DETERMINE WHETHER TO PROCEED WITH THE PROPOSED EXPANSION OF ASHFORD PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL****SUMMARY OF ISSUE:**

Following a public consultation and statutory period for representations, the Cabinet Member is asked to approve the proposal to expand Ashford Park Primary School from 2 to 3 forms of entry. This will increase the total capacity of the school from 420 to 630 pupils. The school will continue to admit 18 pupils into its specialist Centre for Moderate Learning Difficulties. The decision will be subject to planning permission.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that:

1. The Cabinet Member approve the proposal that:
 - Ashford Park Primary School is enlarged by 1 form of entry (from 2 FE to 3 FE) on 1 September 2015
 - The school roll is increased by one form each year until September 2021 when its capacity will be 630 pupils
2. An associated building programme goes ahead in a single phase to provide appropriate new classrooms and some improvements to ancillary accommodation.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

Surrey County Council is putting plans in place to ensure that its popular schools meet the increased demand for places.

Primary school places in Surrey are in high demand and Spelthorne Borough is an area that has experienced a significant increase in pupil numbers, particularly in the Ashford and Staines conurbations. This demand is initially in the primary sector but will follow into the secondary sector in due course. This scheme is part of Surrey County Council's wider planning for the borough in order to meet the demand for additional capacity.

During the last decade the birth rate has been rising steadily in Spelthorne. It has risen by 24.9% since 2002 which is the fourth highest borough rate in the county. This has affected school rolls and there is an immediate requirement for one additional form of entry (1 FE) in Ashford town. To ensure sufficient provision of primary school places in the area, Surrey County Council is proposing the expansion

of Ashford Park Primary School with effect from 1 September 2015.

The Governing Body of the school supports this proposal and in partnership with Surrey County Council held a public consultation from 4 September-16 October 2013, outlining the reasons for the proposal and inviting responses from stakeholders. Statutory Notices were published and a six-week public consultation was held, ending on 10 March 2014.

As the representative of the responsible body for the planning of school places and the funding body for this scheme, the Cabinet Member is asked to give final approval for the proposal to proceed. This proposal is subject to a planning application which will be submitted in due course.

DETAILS:

Business Case

1. Based on the most recent forecast of pupil numbers, which projects the requirement for school places up to 2020 and beyond, one additional form of entry in this planning area would meet the basic need. Expansion of an existing school is the logical and most financially prudent response to this issue.
2. Ashford Park Primary is fully subscribed with first preferences up to its Planned Admission Number (PAN). It is an improving 2 FE school with a roll of approximately 420 pupils in total. At its last Ofsted inspection (December 2012) it received a Grade 3 judgement in terms of the learning outcomes of pupils, although inspectors noted that the quality of teaching, behaviour and safeguarding was good. Since then it has received targeted support from the local authority. At its most recent monitoring visit by Her Majesty's Inspectorate it was noted that senior leaders had a clear vision of what needed to be done to improve pupil outcomes and HMI saw evidence that the leadership had secured improvements in both the quality of teaching and learning. The school continues on this upward trajectory and will be re-inspected in due course, certainly before the proposed expansion takes place. By this time it is anticipated that Ashford Park's performance will be judged by Ofsted as good or better.
3. Also on the same campus are a private pre-school and a Surrey County Council maintained specialist centre for primary age pupils with moderate learning difficulties. This proposal does not include the expansion of either of these facilities, both of which will be retained.
4. Ashford Park is currently the most suitable primary school for expansion in the area for a number of reasons:
 - 4.1 This planning area contains seven primary schools:
 - Ashford C of E Primary, which is a 2 FE school on a small site with no room to expand further; this school was also judged by Ofsted as requiring improvement in January 2013.
 - Clarendon Primary: this is currently a very popular 1 FE school which received a Grade 2 interim judgement by Ofsted in 2012, but is unable to expand further due to site capacity restrictions.

- Kenyngton Manor Primary: inspected in September 2012, placed in the 'special measures' category and subsequently converted to a sponsored academy within The Howard of Effingham Learning Partnership. The school is 2 FE and has no room to expand on its present site.
 - Spelthorne School: inspected in November 2012 and judged as 'good' Grade 2. This is a 2 FE primary that has taken an additional Reception ('bulge') class in both 2011 and 2013 and is due to permanently expand to 3 FE in 2014. This school has the site capacity to take more children as it was formerly a middle school and has a lot of land. However it has already planned to expand to 3 FE.
 - St Michael's RC Primary: a 2FE school that serves the local deanery and fills up to its Published Admission Number with catholic children who meet its admissions criteria. The school's last full inspection was in 2008 when it was judged as 'outstanding' and this standard was maintained at its last interim judgement in 2011.
5. The local authority has a statutory duty to provide sufficient school places and it is not currently possible to expand one of the other local schools in the immediate planning area; consequently Ashford Park is the most suitable school to increase by a single form of entry as it has the space, is popular and is improving standards.
 6. This proposal forms one part of a wider area strategy for the whole of the Spelthorne borough which will provide three additional forms (630 primary places overall) by 2021. The area strategy includes expansion of other schools; some of these are agreed and others are still at the proposal stage.

CONSULTATION:

7. A public consultation was carried out between 4 September and 16 October 2013. 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 9 and 10 September 2013, which were attended by approximately 40 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.
8. The council received 22 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 e.g. there are two parents who are also local residents, so the numbers may not always add up to 22.)

Respondent	Number of forms received	Respondents For proposal	Respondents Against proposal	Respondents who Don't Know
Total response forms received	22	3	15	3
Employee of the school	0	0	0	0
School governor	1	0	1	0
Parent of child at Riverview	11	1	9	1
Resident	14	2	9	2

9. The governing body plus three respondents are in agreement with the proposal. Three people state that they do not know whether or not they are in favour or they have submitted a qualified or unclearly expressed view; 15 respondents who sent in individual forms are against the proposal. This is a very low number of responses received, given the potential for many more parents, residents and staff to have expressed an opinion.
10. The main concern raised by respondents opposed to this proposal is the volume of additional traffic that an expansion would generate. The school is 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. Residents note the dangerous parking and discourtesy of drivers currently parking outside the school and they highlight their fears of accidents involving children if the situation is exacerbated by more traffic. One respondent has suggested that an alternative entrance to the school is considered.
11. Other respondents noted the perceived effect on the pupils' emotional and educational needs if the school were to expand. There was a feeling expressed by a number of people that a larger school would affect individual children's potential to do well; and the Head and staff's ability to forge meaningful relationships with a greater number of pupils was brought into question.
12. There were concerns expressed about the size of the school hall and the requirement to share other facilities between more pupils. Some parents say they chose Ashford Park because it was a smaller primary school and they felt that this is what their child needed. Some people also highlighted the disruption a building project would cause. One person put forward an alternative suggestion to expand another school in the area but the specific suggestion would have prohibitive costs attached to it and would involve purchasing another building and relocating the private pre-school and the Specialist Centre for Moderate Learning Difficulties to other sites.
13. Officers are aware of the strength of feeling in this respect and a traffic survey has been undertaken with a view to reviewing traffic management issues at the school. This aspect of the proposal is being reviewed and will be fully addressed in the planning stages with pupil safety considerations being of paramount importance. The council's policies on safeguarding, site security and environmental issues are being factored into the final design for the new building and remodelling works.

14. Statutory Notices were published and a six week public consultation was held, ending on 10 March 2014. No further responses were received.
15. Those people in support of the proposal, including the Governing Body, recognise the need for more places and welcome the opportunity to provide these at Ashford Park Primary in order to benefit the immediate local community and potentially cut down on the number of people having to drive their children to school. Some qualified their support for expansion on the understanding that adequate resourcing of the project and traffic management measures would be assured.

RISK MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:

16. 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 additional school traffic as far as possible.
17. If permission to expand the school is denied then there will be insufficient school places in Ashford and some parents living in relatively close proximity to Ashford Park will have to travel further to obtain a school place for their primary age children. This is likely to cause the satisfaction rating based on first preferences to fall.
18. There is currently only one other school in the area capable of expansion (Spelthorne School) and this has already undertaken to expand to 3FE. Our only option would be to make this even larger.

Financial and Value for Money Implications

19. This scheme is included within the 2014/19 Medium Term Financial Plan. A detailed business case will be developed for each construction phase prior to tendering for works.

Section 151 Commentary

20. There is approved funding for this scheme in the current 2014/19 Medium Term Financial Plan. Detailed costings will be developed for the business case and each case will be subject to Investment Panel approval.

Legal Implications – Monitoring Officer

21. The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2007 contain the regulations that apply to prescribed alterations. The Department for Education 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.
22. This Guidance has been followed by the School Commissioning Officer in the development of this proposal.

Equalities and Diversity

23. There are no direct equalities implications arising out of the proposal. The increased provision will be open to all applicants irrespective of race, gender, faith, ethnicity or ability. The admissions arrangements will 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 receive the next priority, followed by those children living closest to the school. There is no proposal to amend the admissions criteria.

Safeguarding responsibilities for vulnerable children and adults implications

24. 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

25. 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 children and families and a rear pedestrian entrance to the campus may be re-opened as part of this scheme. A traffic survey will be 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.
26. The location of additional school provision at Ashford Park 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:

- Subject to Cabinet Member approval and planning approval the building programme will commence.
- The Cabinet Member's decision 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 Ashford Park Primary School

Local Councillors

Local residents

Annexes: None

Sources/background papers:

School Organisation Consultation Proposal

Consultation responses

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