

Annex 2 – Proposal to enlarge St. Joseph’s Catholic Primary School

Summary of Consultation

The consultation process ran from 1 June 2015 to 29 June 2015. On 23 June 2015, a consultation meeting was held with interested parties. At this meeting, the following issues were raised and discussed:

- Calculation of demand – it was explained that the pupil forecast figures are based on a combination of birth data (pertaining to families that live in the area), migration factors and pupil yield from housing development. Concern was expressed over the reliability of the figures and whether there was the possibility that the school may be left with empty places, if the expansion were to proceed. It was explained that there was a sufficiently high level of projected demand for this not to be a concern. The figures showed a need for an additional 2 Forms of Entry in the Redhill area and, as there was presently only this scheme proceeding for 2016, there should be no concern about an over-supply of places.
- Catholic demand – it was explained that, in line with the wider increase in demand, there was also a localised increase in baptisms, which (coupled with the historic over-subscription of the school) supported the rationale for expanding St. Joseph’s to meet the Catholic element of parental demand.
- Selection of St. Joseph’s – it was asked why St. Joseph’s had been chosen for expansion, in preference to other school in the area. It was explained that Surrey County Council (SCC) aims to ensure that a diversity of provision is expanded, so as to meet parental preference. In the Redhill and wider Reigate area, there was an evident demand for Catholic places. Other schools are also being considered for expansion, to meet the outstanding projected pupil place requirements. This also includes consideration of sites within the SCC portfolio that may be utilised for new school provision.
- Consultation – there was a general concern that the consultation process was being undertaken at too late a stage and should have been undertaken earlier, in order that interested parties could have had an input into the building design process. It was explained that, although the education consultation would generally be undertaken slightly earlier in the process (i.e. prior to the planning application submission), it was certainly not uncommon for these two processes to overlap. As these two processes are legislatively distinct, there is also no procedural issue with the consultation process(es) being conducted in this manner. As the delivery programme stands, it is now too late to fundamentally alter the plans that have been submitted to the Planning Authority. However, there is the chance for greater parental engagement by contacting the Governors on the website.
- Process to date – there was an allied concern that the process and decisions to date had occurred “behind closed doors”. It was stated that this was not so. The

Governing Body had been in extensive negotiations with the Council during the preceding period, with a view to securing certain additional commitments, prior to confirming agreement to proceed to formal consultation.

- School Hall – there was also a shared concern about the fact that the hall wasn't being expanded, especially in light of the fact that it was being expanded at some other schools in the wider expansion programme. It was explained that the Council receives Basic Need funding from Government to support the delivery of expansions and that this is limited in its extent to providing the basics of expansion (such as the additional classrooms and toilet provision). The Council does, however, undertake a review of all schools at which expansion is proposed, with a view to ensuring that ancillary facilities (such as halls) are broadly in line with Guideline amounts (as set out in Building Bulletin 103). Where other schools have received/are receiving investment in expanding hall facilities, this has been because their existing provision is significantly lower than this Guideline amount. In St. Joseph's case, adding the two hall provisions together gives an amount that is in excess of the Guidelines, even at the expanded pupil numbers. As such, investment in the hall could not be justified, whilst ensuring a parity of approach across all schools.
- Traffic and Transport – concern was raised with respect to pupil safety at school drop-off/pick-up times and it was suggested that additional highway safety measures (such as a Council-funded crossing point) should be thought about, as part of the wider scheme. It was explained that the school is already considering how they can mitigate the impact on highway safety, through such possible measures as staggered pick-up times, which are already in place. Additionally, those present were assured that the Highways matters would be properly considered at the Planning Panel Meeting. Suitable measures would be introduced to the scheme as conditions of planning, if it was deemed appropriate. This matter was for the Planning Panel's determination and wasn't something that the Council's Education Department could implement by itself. Attendees were assured that the Planning Panel would have a report made to it by a dedicated Highways professional, who would consider highway safety as part of their recommendations to the Panel.
- Advantages of Expansion – it was asked what the Governing Body considered to be the key advantages to the expansion, should it be approved. It was confirmed that the Governing Body saw potential advantages in, amongst other things:
 - Offering a Catholic Education to a greater number of Catholic children;
 - Improvements to the Year R facilities that enable free-flow to the outdoor curriculum, in line with Ofsted suggestions;
 - A greater breadth of subject-specialism and expertise, as a consequence of the wider teacher-base;
 - An increased ratio of adults to children, enabled through greater revenue funding; and

- Improved facilities, such as a new library, break out spaces, music room, larger staffroom, ICT area in the new library and laptops for classrooms.
- Implementation – it was confirmed that the school did not envisage any issues with teacher recruitment, especially considering that this was a phases, year-on-year expansion and that the school leadership was robust. Equally, pupil recruitment was not thought to be an issue, as there was clear evidence of demand. It was also undertaken to advertise any agreed expansion in the Parish Newsletter and other means, so as to ensure that the Catholic community is made aware of the new places becoming available.
- Next Steps – it was confirmed that a decision on the expansion would be taken by the Governing Body at their meeting on 29 June 2015. This decision would balance a number of factors and would certainly be made in light of the feedback from consultation. It was also confirmed that the decision would be published on the school website, alongside a summary of consultation responses received. Attendees were reminded that the consultation documentation and response form were available on the school website.

In addition, interested parties were invited to return responses to the consultation, via the Consultation Response Form, included at the end of the Consultation Document. In total, 24 such formal responses were received. All of these responses were from parents/carers of a child at the school. Of the responses received, 3 agreed with the proposal, 16 disagreed with the proposal and 5 classified themselves as “don’t know” in this respect. Many of the responses raised issues in line with those set out above. However, a number of new issues were raised, as set out below:

- Bulge Year Expansion – the question was raised as to why a “bulge year” expansion of the school couldn’t be put in place for September 2016, to allow more time for the proposals to be worked up into a “satisfactory solution”. The reason for this is that such an expansion would necessarily incur additional expense, which would likely have to be taken from the project budget and thereby diminish the amount of funds available for the main project, thereby having a deleterious impact on the eventual outcome for the school, should it decide to proceed with the expansion. It would also cause additional disruption and uncertainty, neither of which is conducive to the effective operation of the school, moving forward.
- Diocese Support – a number of responses questioned why no financial assistance was being offered by the Diocese. The core reason for this is that the funding for expansions to meet growth in pupil numbers for all schools goes directly from Government to the County Council, in the form of the Basic Need funding stream. Although the Diocese does holding other funding, this is generally intended for use on non-expansion related projects and consideration has to be given to parity in the treatment of all Catholic schools served by the Diocese.

- Health & Safety (Build) – concern was raised in relation to the Health & Safety of pupils during the build period and the potential for trespass onto the build site. There is no reason to be unduly concerned about this. The Council will ensure that a contractor with the necessary certification and a suitably robust Health & Safety record is appointed. The site compound will be secured from unauthorised access at all times. Key out-of-compound movements, such as deliveries, will be scheduled so as to not conflict with the movement of pupils around and outside the site.
- Health & Safety (Play time) – a number of respondents were also concerned about the Health & Safety implications that may be associated with having an additional 210 pupils onsite, especially in terms of the potential for overcrowding at play times. Again, this is not something to be unduly concerned about. There are a significant number of schools in the County with a smaller ratio of outdoor space per pupil that manage play times, without undue numbers of accidents. Again, phasing of break times could be considered, if this proved to be desirable, from an organisational point of view.
- Size of school – a significant number of respondents raised a concern in relation to the size of the school and the perception that smaller schools were to be preferred. A number of respondents quoted the Ofsted statement that “the quality of teaching in small schools is generally better than in larger schools.” This, of course, is a statement that is general in nature and pertains specifically to the standard of teaching, rather than the standard of learning. The standard of teaching is entirely within the power of the school leadership to influence and, where there is strong leadership, in the form of the Head teacher and governing body (as is the case at St. Joseph’s) the size of the school at the scale currently under consideration is not a real concern. There are many primary schools of 3 Forms of Entry or larger that have been rated ‘Outstanding’ by Ofsted and, as such, there is no reason that increasing the size of the school should act as a barrier to the achievement of the same by St. Joseph’s.
- General Building Matters – a number of respondents also raised matters that pertained directly and solely to the design of the new building, such as the “character” of the build and potential tree loss. These are properly matters for the Planning Panel to consider and are not expected to have a significant impact on the standard of education at the school.