

Proposal to enlarge Oakwood School

Summary of Consultation

The consultation process ran from 24 April 2017 to 22 May 2017. The consultation was advertised in the local press and the associated documentation was published on the SCC 'Surrey Says' website. Interested parties were invited to return responses to the consultation via a formal Consultation Response Form, included at the end of the Consultation Document, as well as in an online form. In total, 90 such formal responses were received. The breakdown of category of respondents is provided below¹:

Respondent Category	No.
Parent of child attending Oakwood	29
Parent of a child that may attend the school in future	44
Parent of a child attending another school	9
Member of staff at the school	7
Governor at the school	0
Local resident	26
Other	11

Of the responses received, 39 agreed with the proposal, 41 disagreed with the proposal and 10 classified themselves as "don't know" in this respect. There were no discernible patterns in terms of the category of respondents that typically agreed/disagreed with the proposal, with agreement and disagreement being broadly divided amongst the available categories. The notable exception was the fact that all members of the school staff that responded to the consultation agreed with the proposal.

Among the responses that agreed with the proposal, there was a general consensus that the provision of additional places in Horley was necessary and that the expansion of Oakwood represented the logical choice in this respect. One respondent noted that the school had previously taken this number of pupils and that it had worked in the past. Another respondent noted that the school would benefit from the economies of scale associated with any such expansion, thereby increasing the capacity for direct investment in teaching and learning. A significant number of those who agreed with the proposal also questioned whether sixth form provision at Oakwood would be considered as part of this. The Council's current position is that additional sixth form provision is not required, as existing provision within this area of the County is sufficient to meet demand. The Council will keep this situation under

¹ It should be noted that a number of respondents fitted more than one category, making the overall number greater than the 90 distinct respondents.

review, particularly in the period closely preceding the transition of this augmented cohort into the post-16 sector.

Those who agreed with the proposal also expressed the following concerns:

- **School Building Condition** – a number of respondents felt that the school's facilities were in need of upgrade/refurbishment/rebuild, especially if the decision were taken to expand the school. The particular areas that were highlighted as requiring focus were the Science Block and the Sports Hall. One respondent, in particular, was keen to stress the poor condition of the facilities in the Science Block, inclusive of the perceived need to increase ventilation levels therein. The Council is aware of the current condition of the buildings and of the need to undertake works to facilitate the expansion. The Council is actively engaging with the school, with a view to formulating a proposal for the precise package of works that will be taken forward in this respect. It should be noted that the grant funding received by the Council to meet the needs of the rising pupil population across the county is only designed to meet the costs of expansion, rather than that of retroactive maintenance. This fact notwithstanding, the Council will ensure that the best possible solution is delivered within the available funding envelope, agreed and delivered in partnership with the school. With respect to the particular issue of ventilation in the Science classrooms, in bringing any spaces back into use, the Council will ensure that, at a minimum all applicable regulations are adhered to (bearing in mind that this is an existing building).
- **School Building Capacity** – allied with the above, a number of respondents felt that the current facilities were of insufficient capacity to accommodate the proposed increase in pupil numbers. The areas highlighted in this respect included the Sports Hall; common spaces (inclusive of hall space); the canteen; and the perceived narrowness of the corridors. In line with the above response, the package of capital works that is currently being formulated will seek to address capacity issues. Building Bulletin 103 guidance for school buildings will be used to inform design and scaling matters in this respect.
- **Educational Capacity** – one respondent queried whether there was the potential for a larger school to anonymise the pupil experience and for pupils to obtain less tailored learning and support. Both the Council and the school are aware that this can be a concern in school expansion situations. The Council's position is that, if managed correctly, the economies of scale provided by this expansion will, ultimately, enable more of the schools finances to be directed towards teaching and learning, providing greater educational capacity on the whole.

As might be expected, the concerns detailed above were echoed in the responses that disagreed with the proposal. In addition, among those who disagreed with the proposal, the following distinct concerns were raised:

- **New School** – a number of respondents felt that a new secondary school should be built in Horley, rather than simply expanding Oakwood. It was felt that the

large extent of current and proposed house building in the area meant that the 300-place expansion of Oakwood would be insufficient to meet overall demand and that parental choice would also be better served through the creation of a new school. The Council's current forecasts for secondary demand (as included in the consultation document) indicate that a 2FE expansion will be sufficient to meet demand. On these forecasts, to provide a new school would result in a significant oversupply of places in the area, which would have a detrimental impact on the associated educational institutions. The Council continually monitors the accuracy of its forecasts, as well as updating them on a regular basis. If actual applications/intakes do significantly outstrip those forecast, the Council will review options in relation to meeting demand in Horley.

- Existing Capacity – one respondent suggested that the expansion might not be necessary, owing to the recent opening of The Gatwick School, which could potentially take excess pupil numbers from Horley. The Gatwick School has principally been designed to accommodate increasing demand for places within West Sussex and the Council does not believe that its opening will have a significant demand for places within Horley itself. This has been borne out by the applications for Oakwood for the 2017/18 financial year, which closely aligned with those forecast. It is also worth noting that several of the pupils who originally applied to The Gatwick School are now returning to Oakwood.
- Disruption – one respondent was concerned about the potentially disruptive impact of any building works that may be undertaken as part of the expansion, especially during scheduled exam periods. The Council has significant experience of undertaking expansion works on school sites and will, in the first instance, seek to ensure that any such works are delivered during holiday periods, so as to minimise disruption. If the scale of the works means that this is not possible, the Council will work with the school to ensure that disruption of the school's activities is kept to a minimum and does not have an impact on educational outcomes.
- Traffic – concern was raised about traffic and parking around the school during peak pick-up and drop-off times and the potential for this situation to be exacerbated as a consequence of the proposed expansion. Allied to this, a suggestion was made that the Council commit to installing traffic calming measures and a wider footpath in the vicinity of the school. As part of the process of expansion, the School Travel Plan would be updated, so as to ensure that it reflected the growing nature of the school and the need to promote more sustainable modes of transport to and from the school site. If the package of works that is forthcoming in relation to the expansion necessitates the submission of a planning application, the Planning Authority will give consideration to whether additional highways infrastructure is required in the vicinity of the school. This matter would, therefore, be for appropriate professionals to determine at that point in the future, on the basis of relevant survey information. The current consultation is focussed purely upon the educational aspects of the expansion

and it would be inappropriate to pre-empt the outcome of any future discussions in this respect.

- Recruitment and Retention – a query was raised as to whether Oakwood was able to recruit and retain the necessary number of teachers to meet the demands of an expanded cohort. Whilst recruitment and retention is a perennial issue for many schools, the Council's experience through managing a significant number of similar experience in the recent past indicates that the schools involved have always managed to secure the requisite appointments in this respect.

Of those who classified themselves as “don't know” in respect of the proposals, the following distinct concerns were raised:

- Playing Fields – a number of respondents were keen to stress that they would not want to see a reduction in green space around the school (particularly playing fields), as a consequence of any potential building works. In undertaking any expansion, the Council would only build on green spaces / existing playing fields as a last resort, in addition to which these facilities are protected by Sport England, as part of the planning process. In the unlikely event that building on such areas was absolutely necessary, the Council would seek to reprovide green spaces, in order that there was no net loss (or that any such loss was minimised).
- Building Condition / Capacity – it is worth noting that one of the responses to the consultation was in the form of a letter submitted by Horley Headteachers, on behalf of the Horley Learning Partnership. This letter echoed the aforementioned concerns in relation to the extant condition / capacity of the school's facilities and requested that the Council give consideration to the following:
 1. That a structural survey be undertaken of the school;
 2. That a new DT/Vocational/Science Block be built to replace the existing tower block;
 3. That the sports facilities be enhanced; and
 4. That consideration be given to dedicated provision for the Speech and Language School and Learning Support Unit.

The Council undertook a dedicated structural survey of the tower block in 2016, which confirmed that the building was fundamentally sound and did not identify any structural issues with that element of the site. The Council undertakes regular condition surveys of all of its school sites. That pertaining to Oakwood does not identify any particular issues that would give rise consideration of the need for a structural survey of the remainder of the site. Points 2-4 will be considered as part of the ongoing dialogue between the Council and the school, in relation to the building project associated with the expansion. In relation to point 4, whilst this does not form part of the scope of Basic Need funding, the Council is actively investigating whether SEN capital funding may be incorporated as part of the scope of the wider project at the school. Any such works would have to be delivered within the available funding envelope, which has been formulated in line

with the universal approach applied to all schools within the wider County-wide expansion programme. The Council is engaging with the school to ascertain its priorities for investment and which of these can feasibly be delivered within the available funding.

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