

Extract from ‘Report to Director of Education’

Title: Public response to informal consultations on proposals to make prescribed alterations to six community primary schools.

Date: 28 October 2016

What is the purpose of the report?

The report collates, considers and makes recommendations as to how to progress the proposals to increase the capacity through enlargement of the premises of: Tattenhall Park, Farndon Community, Winnington Park, Tarporley CE, Winsford High Street and Cuddington Primary Schools.

Background

The informal consultations were authorised by an Officer Decision Notice published by the Director of Education on 12 September 2016 and were carried out in accordance with the consultation plan set out in that document. They are consistent with the recommendations for an informal period of consultation prior to the initiation of the statutory process as set out by the Department for Education in April 2016.

All schools have been requested to consult with their pupils. Where this has taken place the feedback is reported on. Where it has yet to be received schools have been requested to submit a report as part of the Governing Body’s response to the formal consultation.

The consultation process allowed consultees and respondents to make their thoughts known through attendance at a public, in writing or through email to the or through completion of a survey which could be completed in hard copy or online and invited additional comment. It is recognised that there may be duplication in responses from individual consultees.

What decision is required?

It is for the Director to now determine whether the original proposals should be progressed through the formal processes of Notice, Representation and Decision-making, and if so whether it is proposed that they be taken forward in their original or in a modified form.

In considering feedback it should be recognised that this is an ‘educational’ consultation and that issues solely relating to development control, planning and highways should be properly addressed through the planning process and its associated public consultation unless they have a direct impact upon the following considerations specified by the DfE in its statutory guidance to decision-makers. The decision-maker should take account of:

- Whether, given the quality and diversity of schools in the relevant area, the proposal will meet or affect the needs of parents; raise local standards and narrow attainment gaps.
- Whether there is a need for a new school in which case the academy presumption applies.
- Whether there are any sex, race or disability discrimination issues that arise from the changes being proposed, and whether the proposals provide access to a range of opportunities that reflect the ethnic and cultural mix of the area, whilst ensuring such opportunities are open to all.
- Whether the proposal supports community cohesion by encouraging through teaching an understanding of, and respect for, other cultures, faiths and communities. Account should be taken of the views of different sections of the community.
- Whether account has been taken of travel and accessibility and whether the proposal adversely impacts on disadvantaged groups. It should be considered on the basis of how it will support and contribute to the LA's duty to promote the use of sustainable travel and transport to school and should not result in too many children being prevented from travelling sustainably due to unsuitable walking or cycling routes. Proposals should not unreasonably extend journey times or increase transport costs.
- Whether land, premises and necessary funding are available to implement the proposal.
- Whether the proposal will enable the school to meet the requirements of the School Premises Regulations, in particular the ability of the school to provide suitable outdoor space in order to enable physical education to be provided to pupils in accordance with the school curriculum and for pupils to play outside safely.

The Statutory Guidance also states that:

- 'Reducing surplus places is not a priority (unless running at very high levels). For parental choice to work effectively there may be surplus capacity in the system as a whole. Competition from additional schools and places in the system will lead to pressures on existing schools to improve standards'.
- 'Decision-makers should not make blanket assumptions that schools should be of a certain size to be good schools, although the viability and cost-effectiveness of a proposal is an important factor for consideration. The decision-maker should also consider the impact on the LA's budget of the need to provide additional funding to a small school to compensate for its size'.

Proposal:

- **Winnington Park Primary School.** The proposal is to increase the capacity of the current school from 210 pupils to 420 pupils enabling an intake of 60 pupils into each year group.

The consultation event was attended by 15 individuals.

8 On-line responses were made, 1 email and 9 hard copy responses were received.

Of completed survey forms 8 were in favour of the proposal and 9 were opposed to the proposal. 21 visits were made to the web-page without a comment being made.

Responses to the issues raised through the consultation may be summarised as:

The most commonly expressed concerns related to traffic congestion and parking. These issues will be more properly addressed as part of the planning process when it is anticipated that consent would be conditional on a review of the school travel plan. A number of suggestions were made that might assist in managing the issue and these will be passed on to the design team.

Several respondents are of the view that a new school should have been built as part of the development of Winnington Urban Village. Whilst the Council has sympathy with the view it was not possible to reach an agreement with the developer that would have enabled this to happen, the Council consequently consider that this proposal represents the best option for ensuring that those children living in the development have local access to primary education.

The need to increase hall capacity in an expanded school is highlighted.

A large package of responses was received from pupils of all ages. Whilst these primarily addressed design considerations and will be passed to the design team one pupil did comment that he wished his friend could also come to the school. There is a strong emphasis on aspirations that relate to physical activity with a new larger hall, ideally with a climbing wall, PE equipment, disco equipment and an integral swimming pool being the most desired feature. The importance of green space is evident in the responses of children of all ages and there appears to be a particular concern that the school's trim-trail may disappear. A school dog appears in many pupils' images of their outdoor space. Pupils clearly want improvements to their learning environments with several comments indicating the difficulties they experience with the open-plan nature and the acoustics of much of the existing school. They are also concerned that there should be enough chairs and tables (with drawers!) and carpeting. The school currently has a small first floor area and pupils appear to be aware that an extension is likely to have an element of two-storey development which they suggest provides an opportunity for a giant slide to facilitate travel between floors. Several pupils would like to see a computer room and a spacious art room. Toilets are conspicuous in a high proportion of design proposals, many of which also feature a generous office for the headteacher.

Recommendation: That the proposal be progressed unchanged to the formal process of notice and representation.

Recommendation Approved 23 November 2016