

Cabinet – 22 October 2008

Outcome of consultation on proposal to significantly enlarge Birchills CE Primary School

Portfolio: Councillor Zahid Ali, Children's Services

Service: Walsall Children's Services - Serco

Wards: Birchills Leamore

Key decision: Yes

Forward plan: Yes

1. Summary of report

At the meeting on 16 July 2008, Cabinet approved consultation on a proposal to significantly enlarge Birchills CE Primary School in order to meet an increased demand for primary school places as a result of housing developments in the area. This report provides details of the outcome of consultation on this proposal.

2. Recommendations

That Cabinet approve the publication of a statutory proposal to significantly enlarge Birchills CE Primary School from 1.5 FE (Forms of Entry) to 2 FE by increasing the intake from 45 to 60 places from 1 September 2011.

3. Background information

- 3.1 Birchills CE Primary School is a controlled school with 45 places in each year group and places for a total of 315 pupils excluding the nursery class.
- 3.2 Additional primary school places are needed in order to meet an increasing demand for primary school places in the local area as a result of recent and planned residential developments. Some smaller developments have already received planning approval and major developments which are planned along the A34 corridor (including the Reedswood, Caparo and Birch Street sites) would, based on the standard method of estimating pupil yield, result in further increased demand. In order to meet this and increased pupil numbers associated with other residential developments on the northern side of the town centre, it is proposed to significantly enlarge Birchills CE Primary School and increase the intake with effect from 1 September 2011.

- 3.3 The proposal to increase the admission number from 45 to 60 from September 2011 would enable the school to operate with two classes in each year group, commencing with the reception admissions in the 2011/2012 school year and then progressing up through the school.
- 3.4 There are 52 part-time places in the nursery class and as this is the usual number of nursery places in a 2 FE primary school, it is not proposed to increase this.

4. Resource considerations

4.1 Financial:

- 4.1.1 If the proposal goes ahead, there would be a requirement for significant capital investment at the school in order to provide additional teaching accommodation. At the same time, it is proposed to undertake other improvements including reorganisation of the existing accommodation to create infant and junior areas and circulation, accessibility and staff accommodation would also be improved. Significant investment is planned to address structural problems with the building and there would be cost efficiencies from undertaking some of this work as part of a larger scheme. However, the feasibility of undertaking some of this structural work in the shorter term is being explored.
- 4.1.2 The cost of the works which would be required should the proposed enlargement be agreed would be met by funding from section 106 developer contributions, formulaic allocations (Basic Need) from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and from the funding to be made available to Walsall through the Primary Capital Programme.

4.2 Legal:

The significant enlargement of Birchills CE Primary School is subject to statutory procedures. Consultation on the proposal has now taken place and it is now for Cabinet to decide whether it wishes to proceed with the proposal. Details of the consultation process are provided in section 10 of this report. If Cabinet decides to proceed, it is intended to publish a statutory proposal on 7 November 2008, following which there would be a representation period of six weeks during which objections could be made. A further report would be brought to Cabinet so that the final decision could be made in the light of any responses received during the representation period and the proposal be 'determined'. It is expected that the final decision would be taken in January 2009.

- 4.2.2 Subject to completion of the statutory processes detailed above, the admission number for the school would be increased to 60 from 1 September 2011.

4.3 Staffing:

- 4.3.1 There are no direct implications as a result of this report. If the school is enlarged as proposed, the school would require additional teachers and other staff on a phased basis and these would be funded through the school's revenue budget.

5. Citizen impact

Local residents would have improved access to a place at a local primary school for their child.

6. Community safety

There are no direct implications as a result of this report.

7. Environmental impact

7.1 Should the proposal be implemented, the associated scheme would incorporate the use of sustainable resources wherever possible and the design would incorporate developments to reduce the impact on the environment.

7.2 The proposed provision of additional primary school places in this area would contribute to reducing car journeys to school in future years.

8. Performance and risk management issues

8.1 **Risk:** If the proposed additional primary school places are not provided, there is a risk that parents will not be able to secure a place for their child at a local primary school.

8.2 **Performance management:** The adequacy of the supply of school places is assessed by the DCSF through an annual return.

9. Equality implications

If the proposal is implemented, the accessibility of the school building would be improved as part of the alterations to the school building.

10. Consultation

10.1 Consultation on the proposal to significantly enlarge Birchills CE Primary School from 1.5 FE (Forms of Entry) to 2 FE by increasing the intake from 45 to 60 places from 1 September 2011 commenced on 5 September 2008 and ended on 10 October 2008.

10.2 A consultation document which included information regarding the proposed enlargement of Birchills CE Primary School was issued to parents, staff, governors and members of the student council. It was also sent to all Walsall schools, other stakeholders and statutory consultees and was made available to the public through local libraries and Birchills CE Primary School; it was also posted on the Walsall Children's Services – Serco website.

- 10.3 Consultation meetings were held on 22 September 2008 and attendance is detailed in the table below. A representative of the Lichfield CE diocese was present at all meetings.

Birchills CE Primary School	School Council	Parents	Staff	Governors
22 September 2008	1. 30 pm	2. 30 pm	3. 45 pm	6.00 pm
Attendees	12 pupils	1* parent	19 staff	7 governors, head teacher and deputy

* the parent who attended was also a governor and, in the absence of other parents, she decided that she would return later for the governors' meeting.

- 10.4 The meetings took the form of a presentation by Walsall Children's Services – Serco, followed by a question and answer session. Matters raised by attendees included additional accommodation requirements, teaching arrangements, classroom, library and other resources, and the arrangements for the proposed scheme. Comments were generally very supportive of the proposal and the governors passed a unanimous resolution supporting the proposed enlargement.
- 10.5 Fifteen consultation response forms have been received; eleven from parents, one from a governor, one from a pupil, one from a member of staff and one 'other'. Of these, thirteen supported the proposal and two were unsure. Comments were generally supportive of the proposal and included observations about the need to address existing premises issues as part of any associated works, and also staffing implications for lunchtime supervision if pupil numbers are increased. Concerns raised by those who were unsure about the proposal were that the school would be overcrowded and that there would be 60 pupils in a class. It was made clear in the consultation document that the school could operate with two classes in each year group and that the accommodation would be enlarged in line with pupil numbers.
- 10.6 The Lichfield CE Diocesan Board of Education has considered the proposal to significantly enlarge Birchills CE Primary School and have sent a letter "to convey their explicit support to the proposal".

Background papers

Cabinet report 16 July 2008: Proposal to significantly enlarge Birchills CE Primary School.

Letter from Lichfield Diocesan Board of Education dated 1 October 2008

Author

Susan Lupton
Head of Planning and Development Services
☎ 01922 686231
✉ susan.lupton@walsallcs.serco.com

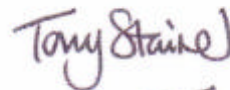
Signed:



Executive Director: David Brown

Date: 13 October 2008

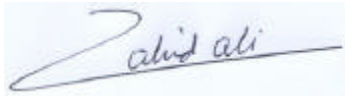
Signed:



Managing Director, Walsall Children's
Services - Serco

Date: 13 October 2008

Signed:



Portfolio Holder: Councillor Zahid Ali

Date: 13 October 2008