

Open Report on behalf of Peter Duxbury, Executive Director Adults and Children's

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| Report to: | Councillor Mrs P A Bradwell, Executive Councillor for Children's Services and Adult Learning |
| Date: | 16 January 2012 |
| Subject: | Proposal to expand Spalding Primary School |
| Decision Reference: | 01970 |
| Key decision? | No |

Summary:

It is the Local Authority's (LA) statutory duty to ensure that there is sufficient capacity in schools to offer places to all children of a statutory school age within Lincolnshire. This report seeks to advise the Executive Councillor on making a decision regarding proceeding to the next stage of the proposed expansion of Spalding Primary School to provide a solution to the pressure on primary school places in Spalding town and accommodate the increased intake of pupils expected from September 2012 onwards.

If the Executive Councillor gives approval to the publication of a Statutory Notice there will follow a four week Representation period giving a further opportunity for people and organisations to express their views and ensure that they are taken into account when the final decision is taken by the Executive Councillor in March 2012.

Recommendation(s):

That following the completion of the consultation period, the first stage of the statutory process, the Executive Councillor for Children's Services is recommended to take the next step of publishing a Statutory Notice confirming the proposal to expand Spalding Primary School and continuing the statutory process to the next stage.

Alternatives Considered:

1. That the Statutory Notice is not published, the consultation process is stopped and the council retains the school as it currently is and does not continue to consult on expansion.

The above alternative would have the following disadvantages:

It would lead to the LA being unable to comply with its statutory duty to ensure that there are sufficient school places in the area.

There would be insufficient available primary school places in Spalding town.

It would place increasing pressure on all primary schools in Spalding, where the numbers on roll are already at capacity, leading to concerns over the consequent impact on the quality of education provided.

It would lead to either overcrowded schools and/or additional mobile classrooms with insufficient infrastructure for the additional pupils.

It would likely lead to children being offered places at villages outside of Spalding, with increasing transport costs and car usage and also concerns over the impact of this additional travelling time on learners.

2. The Statutory Notice is not published, the consultation is stopped and the council retains the school as it currently is and does not continue the consultation process, but looks to increase capacity at other primary schools in Spalding.

Other options in Spalding have been considered and this is the most suitable primary school for expansion. Other primary school's either have undersized sites and/or are too far from the Wygate Park housing development that this additional capacity is intended to serve.

3. The Statutory Notice is not published, the consultation is stopped and the council retains the school as it currently is and does not continue the consultation process, but looks to build a new school to increase primary capacity in Spalding.

Officers have already investigated the feasibility of a new school and, following analysis of the area and the existing schools, consider the current proposal to be the best available to meet the needs of children and parents in Spalding.

Reasons for Recommendation:

To enable the LA to meet its statutory obligation to ensure that there are sufficient school places in the area.

To ensure that the provision of school places is planned so as to promote high educational standards, enable fair access to educational opportunity for every child and promote the fulfilment of each child's potential.

The LA considers the proposal to be the best available solution to the expected shortage of primary school places in Spalding town.

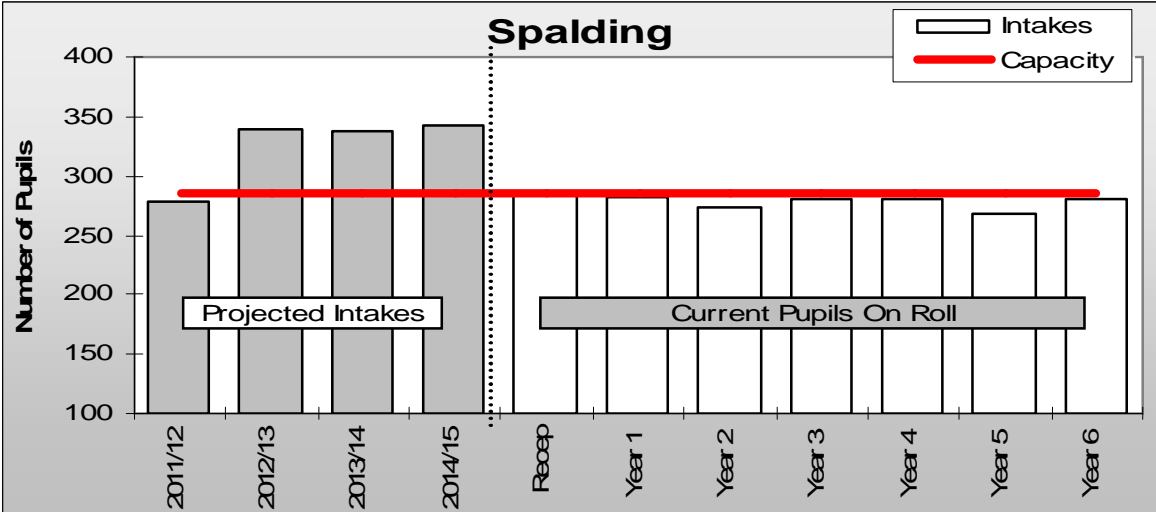
To enable the process to continue to the next stage and allow a further opportunity for people and organisations to express their views about the

proposal and ensure that they will be taken into account by the Executive Councillor prior to a final decision being taken in March 2012.

1. Background

National birth rates, mostly concentrated in towns and cities (urban areas) have been steadily rising in recent years. These increased births, combined with a rise in population of families from EU countries in some areas, are now starting to reach primary school age and are putting significant pressure on schools across the country where there is a shortage of Reception places.

Spalding is one of the urban pressure points in Lincolnshire where there will be a shortage of available places if capacity in the town is not increased. The graph below shows the known pupil numbers (NHS GP Registrations) across all Spalding Primary Schools of children aged 0-3 that will be needing primary places in the years ahead (shaded columns) compared to existing pupil numbers aged 4+ already in Spalding schools (non-shaded columns).



(excludes new housing)

Based on information from the Office of National Statistics, combined with the local NHS birth data, there is expected to be a long term requirement of at least 30 additional places per year group in Spalding. A permanent sustainable solution is to expand Spalding Primary School from its existing capacity of 420 to 630. This will increase their intake (Published Admission Number - PAN) from 60 per year group to 90 enabling the school to have three single year groups per year. Ninety Reception places will be available at the school from September 2012. Building work to add additional accommodation will begin in 2012 (subject to this statutory process) and will be managed to cause minimal disruption, making the best use of the school holidays. Temporary accommodation at the school will provide additional space in the short term while building work takes place. The project will have the appropriate capital funding to allow the expansion project to take place and will also result in the removal of two existing mobiles which will be replaced with more suitable permanent accommodation.

The proposal is to phase in the increased intake of 90 for each Reception intake over a number of years to help maintain pupil numbers at other local schools preventing any imbalance across Spalding schools and allowing careful management of surplus capacity. It will also allow the schools to effectively manage their staffing and teaching structures in a timely manner.

The proposed increase to the PAN must also be processed in accordance with the School Admissions Code with a separate consultation commencing in January 2012 to determine admission arrangements for the academic year commencing September 2013. If necessary, permission to exceed the current PAN by 30 will be sought for September 2012.

2. Conclusion

A decision is required from the Executive Councillor to determine whether to proceed with the next stage of the statutory process of the proposal to expand Spalding Primary School with the increased capacity to be available commencing with the intake in September 2013. The factors to consider when making this decision are within this report and all responses received during the consultation must be considered. The LA believes this proposal to be in the interests of local children and educational provision in the area and supports the council's aim of ensuring that as many children as possible can reach their full potential.

3. Legal Comments:

The legal issues and considerations in relation to this decision are set out fully in this report, which is within the remit of the Executive Councillor.

4. Resource Comments:

There are no significant or immediate financial implications arising from the recommendation in this report, i.e. to publish a statutory notice. Should a decision be made at the end of this process to expand Spalding Primary school, then the building costs would be met from Children's Services capital programme, with additional revenue costs funded from the Dedicated Schools Grant.

5. Consultation

The statutory consultation process on the expansion proposal commenced on 7th November 2011 with the approval of the Executive Councillor. The statutory guidelines for the process are detailed in the guide "Expanding a Maintained Mainstream School by Enlargement or Adding a Sixth Form. (Appendix A) published by the DfE. Under these guidelines, the LA must ensure that sufficient time and information are provided for people to understand and form a view on the proposal and make a response. The consultation document must set out the problem that is being addressed and invite comment on one or more solutions. The LA must explain the decision making process and take all reasonable steps to draw the consultation to the attention of all those who might be interested and take

into account their views. The Education Act 2002 states the requirement for current pupils to be consulted and this was further extended by subsequent legislation to also include all pre-school children over the age of 3. The Education & Inspections Act 2006 specifically includes as interested parties the registered parents of registered pupils at the school and also the appropriate District and Parish Councils for the area.

A letter incorporating relevant information and reasons for the proposal, (copy attached as Appendix B) was sent out to interested parties (Appendix C) on 7th November 2011 to commence a six week period of consultation. The list of interested parties was compiled according to statutory guidelines incorporating as wide a range of consultees as practicable and included the Parish Clerk of the relevant Parish Councils and the Chief Executive of the District Council as well as individual councillors as appropriate. There was the opportunity to provide a response to the consultation by 19th December 2011 either by letter, email or by returning the response form (Appendix D) which was also attached to the letter of 7th November. A copy of the consultation letter and response form were published on the website www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/provisionplanning.

All written responses received during the consultation have been provided to the Executive Councillor for consideration and are also listed in this report (Appendix E) A brief summary of the responses is as follows.

- There has been a total of 49 valid responses to the consultation.

| Respondent Type | Total | For | Against | Neither |
|------------------------|--------------|------------|----------------|----------------|
| Local Resident | 21 | 2 | 17 | 2 |
| Parent/Carer | 17 | 8 | 6 | 3 |
| Local Authority | 3 | 2 | 0 | 1 |
| Governor | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Other School | 3 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Teacher/School Staff | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Grandparent | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Unknown | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Totals | 49 | 18 | 23 | 8 |

- The majority of responses (21) have been received from local residents. These show a clear majority (17) against the proposal with nearly all (20) expressing concerns regarding traffic and parking. Other reasons common amongst local residents are that a new school should be built on the new development at Wygate Park (10) and that the school site is too small to develop or is already too small for the size of the school (7)
- A majority of parents and carers (8) support the proposal to expand the school. However, concerns about traffic (2) and the school site (3) were expressed.
- Two Governors of Spalding Primary School responded, both were in favour of the proposal.
- Three other schools responded, one stating that there is a clear need for spaces in West Spalding. Another that responded in favour expressed concern about traffic congestion. The other was undecided but stated that expanding

existing schools is a good idea as long as all the alternatives have been considered. (Summary attached as Appendix F)

The LA will give full consideration to all of these concerns if the proposal goes ahead and any planning and road traffic issues will be dealt with through a separate planning consultation process should the proposal go as far as a planning application.

The Headteacher at the school has consulted with their current pupils by explaining how the proposed expansion may affect them. In order that the children will have every opportunity to understand the implications of this proposal it has been discussed both in school assemblies and in smaller informal groups through the school council.

a) Has Local Member Been Consulted?

Yes

b) Has Executive Councillor Been Consulted?

n/a

c) Scrutiny Comments

n/a

d) Policy Proofing Actions Required

An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been completed and a copy is attached to this report as Appendix G.

6. Appendices

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| These are listed below and attached at the back of the report | |
| Appendix A | DfE Guidance - Expanding a Maintained Mainstream School by Enlargement or Adding a Sixth Form |
| Appendix B | Letter commencing the consultation process |
| Appendix C | List of interested parties consulted |
| Appendix D | Response form |
| Appendix E | Summary of written responses |
| Appendix F | Equality Impact Assessment |

7. Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

This report was written by Paul Holmes, who can be contacted on 01522 553366 or paul.holmes@lincolnshire.gov.uk