

Open Report on behalf of Debbie Barnes, Executive Director of Children's Services

Report to:	Councillor Mrs P A Bradwell, Executive Councillor for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning
Date:	25 January 2013
Subject:	Proposal to expand Sutton Bridge Westmere Community Primary School (Final decision)
Decision Reference:	02087
Key decision?	Yes

Summary:

The proposal under consideration is to expand Sutton Bridge Westmere Community Primary School to ensure that there are enough primary school places to accommodate the increasing pupil numbers in Sutton Bridge. This report seeks to advise the Executive Councillor on making the final decision regarding the proposed expansion at Sutton Bridge Westmere Community Primary School.

It is the Local Authority's (LA) statutory duty to ensure that there are sufficient school places to accommodate all pupils of statutory school age in Lincolnshire. The LA believes that this proposal is the best available option to address the increasing pressure on primary school places in Sutton Bridge.

The LA has co-ordinated the consultation process following statutory guidelines [see the Department for Education (DfE) guide "Expanding a Mainstream School by Enlargement or Adding a Sixth Form" in Appendix A] and under the terms of the Education and Inspections Act (EIA) 2006 as updated by the Education Act 2011. The first stage of the consultation process ended on 8 October 2012 after which the decision was taken on 30 October 2012 to publish a Statutory Notice on 15 November 2012. This initiated a four week Representation Period up to 13 December 2012 when written objections and comments may be submitted. The process is now entering the final stage when the LA, as decision maker, must take the final decision regarding the proposal.

Recommendation(s):

That following the completion of the statutory process, in accordance with current legislation, the Executive Councillor for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning is recommended to take the final decision to approve the expansion of the capacity at Sutton Bridge Westmere Community Primary School with effect from 1 September 2013 as detailed in this report.

Alternatives Considered:

1. That the proposal to expand Sutton Bridge Westmere Community Primary School is rejected and the council retains the school as it currently is with consequently no increase in the number of school places in the area.

However, the above alternative would have the following disadvantages:

There would be insufficient primary school places available in Sutton Bridge and the LA would be unable to comply with its statutory duty within Sutton Bridge to ensure that there are sufficient school places for children of a statutory school age.

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

It could lead to either overcrowded schools and/or additional mobile classrooms (subject to planning approval) with insufficient infrastructure for the number of pupils being accommodated.

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

2. That the proposal to expand Sutton Bridge Westmere Community Primary School is rejected and the council retains the school as it currently is but looks to increase capacity at other primary schools in the surrounding area.

Other options in this area have been explored to increase capacity. All primary schools have been considered for potential expansion but none have been found to be as suitable due to reasons such as undersized sites, distance that pupils would have to travel, parental preference, impact on standards and the fact that other schools are of suitable sizes for the areas they serve.

LA officers, therefore, consider that Sutton Bridge Westmere Community Primary School is the most appropriate primary school in the area for expansion and this has the full support of the headteacher and governing body.

Reasons for Recommendation:

- To enable the LA to meet its statutory obligation to ensure that there are sufficient school places in the area for all children of statutory school age.
- 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 County

Council believes that this proposal reinforces the priorities in the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) and provides the best solution to meeting the long term educational and social needs of the children in the area to ensure that children have the best possible chance of fulfilling their potential. This proposal will both enhance the quality of local provision and sustain local provision.

- The proposal will assist in meeting parental preference. The Government has made it clear that the wishes of parents should be taken into account in planning and managing school estates. DfE guidance states that places should be allocated where parents want them and that successful and popular schools be allowed to grow.
- To avoid overcrowding and placing increased pressure on all primary schools in the area as this would likely lead to a negative impact on the quality of education provided.
- To avoid increased transport costs, the negative impact of extra travelling time on children and extra car usage which would be likely to follow if it were necessary for children to take up school places in the villages outside of Sutton Bridge.
- Officers have already investigated the potential alternatives. Following consideration of the area, the existing schools and the increasing pressure on primary school places the LA considers the proposal to expand Sutton Bridge Westmere Community Primary School to be the best available solution to meet the needs of the children and parents of Sutton Bridge with the resources available and to address the expected shortage of primary school places in the area.

1. Background

National birth rates, mostly concentrated in more urban areas, have been steadily rising in recent years. This increased birth rate, combined in some areas with inward migration and housing development, is now starting to have an impact at primary school age putting significant pressure on primary schools across the country where there is a shortage of Reception places. The Sutton Bridge community will experience a shortage of available places if capacity at the local school is not increased.

NHS birth data for the Sutton Bridge area shows that on average over the next 4 years the number of children that will be requiring a primary school place is up to 15 more each year than it has been for the last 7 years. There is expected to be a long term requirement for more places. A permanent sustainable solution is needed to accommodate these extra children to avoid overcrowding and/or transporting 4 year old children to alternative schools outside of their local community.

Having additional classes and more children on roll at the school will also have financial benefits for the school. This may potentially provide the opportunity to

enhance teaching provision and career opportunities for staff which in turn will benefit the learning experience of the children.

The current Published Admission Number (PAN) for each year group is 30. The school have admitted above the usual intake of 30 to provide 45 Reception places for September 2012 by bringing a former classroom back into use within their existing accommodation. This proposal being consulted on is to permanently expand the capacity based on PAN at the school from 210 to 315 and so be able to take up to 45 children for all future intakes by building additional classrooms and facilities. This will increase the PAN from 30 to 45 initially only for the Reception intake in 2013 with the PAN for all other years remaining at 30. The increased intake to 45 will then be phased in with each subsequent intake up to 2018 to help ensure that pupil numbers at other local schools are maintained. It will also allow the school to effectively manage staffing and teaching structures.

Following statutory consultation, if the expansion proposal is approved, it is proposed that building work to add necessary additional accommodation will begin during the academic year 2012/13 (subject to planning permission being granted) and will be completed in readiness for the start of term in September 2013. This would be managed to cause minimal disruption to the school during term time making the best use of school holidays where possible.

The necessary planning application process is dealt with and consulted on separately.

Reaching the decision – Preliminary Considerations

The requirements for decision making relating to the expansion of maintained mainstream schools are set out in the guide “Expanding a Maintained Mainstream School by Enlargement or Adding a Sixth Form” published by the DfE. A copy is attached as Appendix A.

The guide sets out certain checks that the decision maker should follow before proceeding to take a decision. These are addressed below:

- (i) Is any information missing? It is considered that there is no information missing and that the Executive Councillor has before her the information that is required to enable a decision to be reached.
- (ii) Is the proposal related to other published proposals? The answer to this is no.
- (iii) Do the published notices comply with statutory requirements and has the statutory consultation been carried out prior to the publication of the notices? The statutory notice was published in accordance with section 19(1) of the EIA 2006. Consultation must, and has, included all parties specified within the relevant sections of the EIA 2006 including children, staff, parents/carers, the Diocese and other interested parties listed in Appendix B.

Factors to be considered by Decision Makers

In reaching a decision the Executive Councillor must have regard to statutory guidance issued by the Secretary of State as detailed in the attached guide in Appendix A and referred to in the following paragraphs. The Complete Proposal (attached as Appendix C) also includes information which must be considered together with feedback from consultees received throughout the entire process.

A System Shaped by Parents

The Government's aim is to create a schools system shaped by parents which delivers excellence and equity by implementing a dynamic system in which weak schools that need to be closed are closed quickly and replaced by new ones where necessary and the best schools are able to expand and spread their ethos and success.

The Executive Councillor must take into account the extent to which the proposal is consistent with the LA's duty to respond to representations from parents about the provision of schools. There were no submissions received from parents in the Representation Period. Of the total of 5 written valid responses received in the consultation period, 4 were from parents with 3 in favour and 1 neither for nor against.

Sutton Bridge Westmere Community Primary School is a popular school which is consistently oversubscribed as indicated by the numbers of first preference applications received (32 in 2010, 34 in 2011 and 47 in 2012) for the 30 places available in the Reception class.

The LA has, therefore, put forward the current proposal as the best and preferred option to meet these criteria.

Standards

The Executive Councillor should be satisfied that the proposal will contribute to raising local standards of provision and will lead to improved attainment for children and young people paying particular attention to the effect on groups that under-perform with the aim of narrowing attainment gaps.

The latest Ofsted report, following an inspection in January 2010, rated the school's overall effectiveness as "satisfactory". However, the report stated that *"under the ambitious leadership of the new headteacher, the school has found a clear way forward. The current priorities are strongly focused on securing improvement in pupils' academic skills as well as their personal development and in the quality of teaching. As a result, the school is beginning to show steady gains"*.

The LA believes that this proposal is the best option to maintain and improve standards of attainment and promote the fulfilment of each child's potential. It will also alleviate pressures on teaching staff which may otherwise be caused by

increasing numbers on roll and overcrowded classrooms so avoiding any consequent negative impact on the quality of teaching.

Diversity

The Government's aim is to create a more diverse school system offering excellence and choice so that every child receives an excellent education whatever their background and wherever they live. The Executive Councillor should consider how the proposal will affect local diversity taking account of the range of schools in the area and the impact on the aspirations of parents, and whether the proposal will help raise local standards and narrow attainment gaps. The LA believes that this proposal will maintain and also be likely lead to both improved standards and an enhanced quality of education for current and future children in the area whilst maintaining diversity.

Every Child Achieving their Potential

The Executive Councillor should consider how the proposal will help every child and young person achieve their potential. The LA believes that the proposal will meet this criterion by not only maintaining the range of extended services, the opportunities for personal development, access to academic and applied learning training, measures to address barriers to participation and support for children and young people with particular needs (eg looked after children or children with special educational needs and disabilities) but also by providing the platform for these to improve.

Equal Opportunity Issues

The Executive Councillor should consider whether there are any sex, race or disability discrimination issues that arise out of the proposed expansion. There needs to be a commitment to provide access to a range of opportunities which reflect the ethnic and cultural mix of the area while ensuring that such opportunities are open to all. There are no sex, race or disability discrimination issues arising from this proposal. The LA will continue to be committed to provide access to a range of opportunities which reflect the ethnic and cultural mix of the area while ensuring that such opportunities are open to all.

Need for Places – Creating Additional Places and the Expansion of Successful and Popular Schools

When considering a proposal to expand an existing school the Executive Councillor should consider whether there is a need for expansion and take care not to create unnecessary surplus capacity. As detailed above Sutton Bridge is one of the urban pressure points in Lincolnshire where there will be a shortage of available places if capacity is not increased. Based on information from the Office of National Statistics, combined with local NHS birth data there is expected to be a requirement of up to 15 additional places per year group in the area with a long term requirement for yet further additional places.

The Government is committed to ensuring that every parent can choose an excellent school for their child and therefore the wishes of parents should be taken into account in the planning and management of school estates. There is a presumption that proposals to expand successful and popular schools should be approved and only be turned down if there is compelling objective evidence that such expansion would have a damaging effect on standards overall in the area. The LA believes that not only will there be no damaging effect on standards but that this proposal will provide the platform for standards to improve.

The majority of parents, who completed a questionnaire or spoke with inspectors during the last Ofsted inspection, have a positive view of the school and are happy with their child's experience at the school. Sutton Bridge Westmere Community Primary School is popular with parents and is consistently oversubscribed as confirmed earlier in this report.

Before approving the proposal the LA must ensure that the admission arrangements of the schools will fully meet the provisions of the School Admissions Code. The proposed increase to the PAN at the school will be processed in accordance with the School Admissions Code to determine admission arrangements for the academic year commencing September 2013.

Travel and Accessibility for All

The Executive Councillor should be satisfied that facilities are accessible by being located close to those who will use them and that proposed changes do not adversely impact on disadvantaged groups. Proposals should not have the effect of unreasonably extending journey times or increasing transport costs or result in too many children being prevented from travelling sustainably due to unsuitable routes. The proposal should be considered on the basis of how it will support and contribute to the Council's duty to promote the use of sustainable travel and transport to school.

Concerns have been raised regarding potential access and traffic issues that could be caused by this expansion proposal. The LA understands that an increase in the number of pupils attending a school may have an impact on the local road network and access. However, the majority of additional pupils are likely to come from within a suitable walking or cycling distance from the school. Also the LA would look to mitigate any negative impact by considering improvement to the infrastructure together with the implementation of a travel plan and would have to meet stringent requirements at the planning application stage. Any planning queries will be dealt with through a separate planning consultation as part of the planning application process. The LA is committed to promoting the use of sustainable travel and transport to school.

The County Council home-to-school transport policy will continue to apply – this provides free home-to-school transport for pupils to their nearest designated school (if it is more than 2 miles away for primary aged pupils) but it is expected that most pupils will live within a two mile radius of the school.

Funding and Land

For any expansion proposals the Executive Councillor should be satisfied that any land, premises or capital required to implement the proposals will be available. The expansion proposal will not require the use of any new or additional site. The project is included in the 2012/2013 Capital Programme therefore, should this proposal to expand be approved, capital investment will be provided and any revenue implications will be financed by the Dedicated Schools Grant.

Following an expansion proposal school premises must continue to meet the requirements of The Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 including minimum areas of team playing fields to which the school should have access. Under the current proposal for expansion at Sutton Bridge Westmere Community Primary School these requirements will be met. Both the site size and the outdoor hard play area required to provide sufficient suitable play space are well above the minimum required for a 315 place primary school.

Special Educational Needs (SEN) Provision

The Executive Councillor should consider the impact of the proposal on the Special Educational Needs provision taking into consideration statutory guidance and be assured that the proposal is designed to improve on existing arrangements and enable all children to fulfil their potential.

The following key factors must be considered in order to meet the requirement to demonstrate likely improvements in provision:

- a) improved access to education and associated services including the curriculum, wider school activities, facilities and equipment, with reference to the LA's Accessibility Strategy;
- b) improved access to specialist staff, both education and other professionals, including any external support and/or outreach services;
- c) improved access to suitable accommodation; and
- d) improved supply of suitable places.

If the expansion proposal is approved there is likely to be no impact with regard to SEN provision other than an opportunity to improve the provision within the school. The LA will continue to ensure suitable provision for all children with special educational needs and consideration of their needs will take place should there be any relocation of pupils to an alternative part of the existing site and physical access will be assured should a need be presented. The LA will continue to look to make improvements in the standard, quality and/or range of the education provision for children with SEN and so meet the Special Educational Needs Test.

Views of Interested Parties

The Executive Councillor should consider the views of all those affected by, or who have an interest in, the proposal. This includes statutory objections and comments submitted during both the consultation phase and the Representation Period. The Executive Councillor should not simply take account of the numbers of people

expressing a particular view when considering representations made but should give the greatest weight to representations from those stakeholders most likely to be directly affected by the proposal. All representations, especially from the direct stakeholders, must be considered by the Executive Councillor in relation to this proposal prior to the decision being taken. All responses to the consultation period have been received and made available to the Executive Councillor (in Appendix D) and are also referred to later in the Consultation section of this report. A petition was presented in the Representation Period against the proposal which was signed by 44 local residents. (Redacted copy in Appendix E). This expressed concerns about traffic, safety and access issues arising out of the potential increased volume of traffic caused by the expansion of the school. In addition there was a response received from the local County Councillor who also expressed similar concerns regarding access but supported the principle of expanding the school.

The Decision

In considering the proposal the Executive Councillor can

- reject the proposal
- approve the proposal
- approve the proposal with a modification (e.g. the implementation date) or
- approve the proposal subject to meeting a specific condition

It is not recommended that the Executive Councillor lays down any specific conditions and therefore the 'Alternatives Considered' section at the start of this report simply deals with the rejection or approval of the proposal.

Reasons must be given for the decision taken including the main factors and criteria whether the proposal is accepted or rejected.

2. Conclusion

The final decision is required from the Executive Councillor to determine whether to approve the expansion of Sutton Bridge Westmere Community Primary School as detailed in this report with an implementation date of 1 September 2013. The factors to consider in making this decision are within this report and all valid written responses received during consultation must be considered (summarised in Appendix D).

The LA believes this proposal to be in the best interests of local children and local parents as well as educational provision in the area and it supports the council's aim of ensuring that as many children as possible can reach their full potential. It also enables the LA to fulfil its statutory duty of ensuring that there are sufficient places to accommodate all pupils of statutory school age in Lincolnshire. The advantages of implementing this proposal are detailed earlier in this report in the "Reasons for Recommendations" section.

3. Legal Comments:

The legal issues to be taken into account in the making of this decision, which is within the remit of the Executive Councillor, are fully set out in the report.

4. Resource Comments:

A decision to expand the capacity at Sutton Bridge Westmere Community Primary School with effect from 1 September 2013 will require funding from the 'basic need' element of the capital programme. Any on-going revenue costs will be funded from the Dedicated Schools Grant.

5. Consultation

In order for the school to expand the LA must follow the necessary statutory legal processes as required by the Secretary of State in accordance with the EIA 2006, the Education Act 2011 and the guidance of the DfE regarding expansion (Appendix A)

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 documentation 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 Headteacher has consulted with the children currently attending the school through school assemblies. This has produced a very positive response and the children are generally excited about the proposal. The EIA 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. The list of interested parties was compiled according to statutory guidelines comprising as wide a range of consultees as practicable and included parents, the Chief Executive of the District Council, the Parish Clerk of the relevant Parish Councils as well as individual councillors as appropriate.

A letter, (Appendix F) incorporating relevant information and reasons for the proposal, was sent out to interested parties (listed in Appendix B) on 10 September 2012 to commence a four week period of consultation. Individual meetings were offered to parents to meet with representatives of the LA at the school to ask questions and raise any concerns. However, no appointments were taken up. There was the opportunity to provide a response to the consultation by letter, email or by returning the response form (Appendix G) attached to the consultation document by 8 October 2012. Copies of the letter commencing consultation and the response form were also published on the County Council website under the webpage Current Consultations on www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/provisionplanning

The written responses received during consultation have been provided to the Executive Councillor for consideration and further details are confirmed in this report in Appendix D. To briefly summarise, however, there were 5 valid responses in total with **none** against, 4 supporting the proposal, and 1 expressing a view neither in favour nor against the proposal. Of the total responses 4 were from parents with 3 in favour and 1 neither for nor against.

Following the completion of the consultation period all feedback was considered with a full report (which is referred to in the Background Papers section below and will also be re-considered along with this report) by the Executive Councillor and a decision was taken on 30 October to proceed to Statutory Notice. A statutory 4 week Representation Period was entered into on 15 November 2012 commencing with the publication of the Statutory Notice (Appendix H) in the local press, at the school gates and within the local community. The Complete Proposal, available in paper and electronic format (Appendix C) to which the Statutory Notice refers, was sent to interested parties as detailed in the statutory guidance and was also published on the website www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/provisionplanning. The Representation Period provides 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. A petition was presented in the Representation Period against the proposal which was signed by 44 local residents. (Redacted copy in Appendix E). This expressed concerns about traffic, safety and access issues arising out of potential increased volume of traffic caused by the expansion of the school. In addition there was a response received from the local County Councillor who also expressed similar concerns regarding access but supported the principle of expanding the school.

Under current legislation the LA is the decision maker for the proposal and is co-ordinating the statutory process before making a decision at the end of the process in January 2013. The LA must be able to show that all relevant issues raised are taken into consideration in the decision making process. Points raised can be considered unpersuasive but must not be ignored altogether.

The last stage of the statutory process would be the implementation of the proposal with the expansion of Sutton Bridge Westmere Community Primary School with effect from 1 September 2013 if it is decided to proceed.

Information regarding this proposal has been updated and made available through the County Council website since official consultation began on 10 September 2012. The local and district councillors have been involved in the consultation on this proposal and the Executive Councillor for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning has been engaged throughout the entire process.

a) Has Local Member Been Consulted?

Yes. The local member has been made aware of the proposal to expand Sutton Bridge Westmere Community Primary School.

b) Has Executive Councillor Been Consulted?

Yes. The Executive Councillor has been involved in the discussions regarding the proposal to expand Sutton Bridge Westmere Community Primary School.

c) Scrutiny Comments

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee considered the expansion proposal at its meeting on 11 January 2013. Comments from this meeting are included below to inform the Executive Councillor when making her final decision which is due to be taken on 25 January 2013:-

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee met on 11 January 2013 and considered a report concerning The Expansion of Sutton Bridge Westmere Community Primary School. The Committee did support the recommendation contained within the report.

In addition, the Committee has made the following comment:

- The Committee raised concerns over the access to the school and the impact on the residents near the school. It was noted that the local county councillor and the Chair of Governors for the school, who were both in attendance at the meeting, supported the application to expand but were concerned about the access issues. The Committee was informed that the concerns outlined would be addressed through the planning process.

d) Policy Proofing Actions Required

An Impact Analysis has been completed and is attached in full as Appendix I. In summary the analysis undertaken indicates that there is some potential for negative impact but that this is far outweighed by the benefits of the proposal. The potential negative has been considered by the LA as follows:-

- Building work will be managed to cause minimal disruption to pupils within term time.
- The LA would look to mitigate any negative impact on the local road network and access by considering potential improvement to the infrastructure. The stringent requirements at the planning application stage would include the active involvement of the Highways Department as well as a detailed travel plan.

Apart from its obligations to consider the statutory guidance referred to the Council has obligations under the Equality Act 2010 which must be taken into account by the Executive Councillor when coming to a decision.

The Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- (1) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- (2) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;

(3) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it: Equality Act 2010 s 149(1). The relevant protected characteristics are age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy & maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation: s 149(7).

Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it.

The Council believes that this proposal will not lead to any discrimination and that in recommending the proposal the Council is having due regard to its obligations under The Equality Act.

6. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	DfE guide "Expanding a Maintained Mainstream School by Enlargement or Adding a Sixth Form"
Appendix B	List of Interested Parties
Appendix C	Complete Proposal
Appendix D	Summary of written responses in consultation period
Appendix E	Petition received in Representation Period (redacted)
Appendix F	Letter to commence consultation
Appendix G	Consultation response form
Appendix H	Statutory Notice
Appendix I	Impact analysis

7. Background Papers

The following background papers as defined in the Local Government Act 1972 were relied upon in the writing of this report.

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
Proposed expansion of Sutton Bridge Westmere Community Primary School (decision to go to Statutory Notice)	Lincolnshire County Council Committee Records Reference 02086 02 November 2012

This report was written by Michelle Andrews, who can be contacted on 01522 553269 or michelle.andrews@lincolnshire.gov.uk.