



# **WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL**

An Extraordinary Meeting of the **EXECUTIVE** will be held at the Civic Offices, Shute End, Wokingham on **WEDNESDAY 15 MARCH 2017 AT 7.00 PM**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andy Couldrick', written in a cursive style.

Andy Couldrick  
Chief Executive  
Published on 7 March 2017

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# **WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## **Our Vision**

A great place to live, an even better place to do business

## **Our Priorities**

Improve educational attainment and focus on every child achieving their potential

Invest in regenerating towns and villages, support social and economic prosperity, whilst encouraging business growth

Ensure strong sustainable communities that are vibrant and supported by well designed development

Tackle traffic congestion in specific areas of the Borough

Improve the customer experience when accessing Council services

## **The Underpinning Principles**

Offer excellent value for your Council Tax

Provide affordable homes

Look after the vulnerable

Improve health, wellbeing and quality of life

Maintain and improve the waste collection, recycling and fuel efficiency

Deliver quality in all that we do

## MEMBERSHIP OF THE EXECUTIVE

Keith Baker	Leader of the Council
Julian McGhee-Sumner	Deputy Leader and Health and Wellbeing
Mark Ashwell	Planning and Regeneration
Charlotte Haitham Taylor	Children's Services
Pauline Jorgensen	Resident Services
Anthony Pollock	Economic Development and Finance
Malcolm Richards	Highways and Transport
Angus Ross	Environment

ITEM NO.	WARD	SUBJECT	PAGE NO.
120.		<p><b>APOLOGIES</b> To receive any apologies for absence</p>	
121.		<p><b>DECLARATION OF INTEREST</b> To receive any declarations of interest</p>	
122.		<p><b>PUBLIC QUESTION TIME</b> To answer any public questions</p> <p>A period of 30 minutes will be allowed for members of the public to ask questions submitted under notice.</p> <p>The Council welcomes questions from members of the public about the item included within the agenda.</p> <p>Subject to meeting certain timescales, questions can relate to the item which is on the Agenda for this meeting. For full details of the procedure for submitting questions please contact the Democratic Services Section on the numbers given below or go to <a href="http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/publicquestions">www.wokingham.gov.uk/publicquestions</a></p>	
123.		<p><b>MEMBER QUESTION TIME</b> To answer any member questions relating to the item included within the agenda.</p> <p>A period of 20 minutes will be allowed for Members to ask questions submitted under Notice.</p> <p>Any questions not dealt with within the allotted time will be dealt with in a written reply.</p>	
<b>Matters for Consideration</b>			
124.	None Specific	<b>PRIMARY STRATEGY SCHOOL ORGANISATION APPROVALS</b>	5 - 40

A decision sheet will be available for inspection at the Council's offices (in Democratic Services and the General Office) and on the web site no later than two working days after the meeting.

#### **CONTACT OFFICER**

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<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Primary Strategy School Organisation Approvals</b>
<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	The Executive on 15 March 2017
<b>WARD</b>	Maiden Erlegh, South Lake, Bulmershe and Whitegates,
<b>DIRECTOR</b>	Judith Ramsden, Director of People Services
<b>LEAD MEMBER</b>	Charlotte Haitham Taylor, Executive Member for Children's Services

## **OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY**

The proposals in this report help to ensure that there are sufficient school places to meet the Council's statutory duty under the Education Act 1996.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That, to ensure are sufficient primary school places in Wokingham, Executive agrees:

- 1) to the permanent expansion of Loddon Primary School from September 2018 to offer 90 places per year and for the school to grow annually to offer 630 places, this agreement being conditional on the grant of planning consent for the scheme by 01/09/17;
- 2) to the permanent expansion of Beechwood Primary School from September 2018 to offer 60 places per year and for the school to grow annually to offer 420 places;
- 3) to the permanent expansion of Highwood Primary School from September 2018 to offer 60 places per year and for the school to grow annually to offer 420 places, this agreement being conditional on the grant of planning consent for the scheme by 01/09/17;
- 4) to not progress with the expansion of Aldryngton Primary School for 2017 as the number of applications for Reception places in Earley has not increased as projected, and agree that the proposal will be:
  - Subject to further consultation including the consideration of alternative options for growth;
  - Returned for further consideration by Executive in the event of an increase in demand for school places in the period 2018 to 2020.

## **SUMMARY OF REPORT**

On 28 January 2016 Executive approved the Primary Strategy Implementation Plan Phase 1. This included the proposed expansion of Aldryngton, Loddon, Beechwood and Highwood primary schools. Under the School Organisation Regulations these expansions are prescribed alterations that must be formally determined by the Council or the Schools Adjudicator after a formal consultation process where they are promoted

by the Council.

This report sets out progress to date with the expansion schemes and the associated consultation and sets out the future timetable necessary to deliver school places in 2017.

One of the four schemes included in this report, relating to Aldryngton School, has elicited a significant volume of responses. The proposal is not recommended for progressing during 2017 due to the number of applications for reception places being lower than projected in Earley.

The other three schemes are recommended for progression. While there have been some concerns raised with regard to these proposals, relating to traffic and the impact on visual amenity, these are planning issues that will be dealt addressed via the planning process.

The decision on the number of places to be offered must be taken by mid-March to comply with the statutory school admissions offer timetable. The expansion proposals will ideally therefore be determined by this time to ensure places are available for the 2017/18 academic year admissions round and that officer decisions can be made taking account of the number and pattern of expressed preferences for school places.

This report takes account of the statutory guidance in “Statutory guidance for decision-makers deciding prescribed alteration and establishment and discontinuance proposals, April 2016”

## **Background**

On 28 January 2016 Executive approved the Primary Strategy 2016 - 2019 and the Primary Strategy Implementation Plan Phase 1. This authorised the development of schemes for the expansion of Aldryngton, Loddon, Beechwood and Highwood primary schools and for the opening of a new school in Shinfield.

The Loddon and Beechwood expansions were agreed (subject to statutory process) for September 2016 and the Aldryngton and Highwood Primary School expansions from September 2017. In the case of Aldryngton Primary School the expansion was subject to a requirement “that further work should be carried out with the school to determine the feasibility of expansion with a target of September 2017”.

The timing of this report is intended to ensure that the decisions can be informed by the number and pattern of applications for Reception places for September 2017 entry.

Earley has been an area of high demand for school admissions. In 2015, 30 Earley children who formed part of the normal admissions round for Reception places had to be offered places outside the Earley area, despite the projection for that year indicating there would be sufficient capacity. In 2016, 30 additional places were provided at Loddon School and all places in Earley were fully allocated. Families moving into the area after the initial admissions round have found that no Reception places are available in Earley.

The Primary Strategy 2016-19 considered the pressure on places in Earley. It was apparent that pressures arose from children moving into the area, rather than a rising birth rate or migration due to local housebuilding. Evidence was presented from a number of sources that indicated there was a pressure in Wokingham resulting from older households moving out and being replaced by younger households (often with children) and that this was a particular issue in Earley. As these arrivals are less predictable than birth data, it was intended to ensure that the decision for the expansion of Aldryngton was made close to the point at which final allocations of Reception places must be made.

Forecasting future demand is unfortunately not a precise science. Evidence used in the preparation of the strategy and implementation plan included Wokingham’s school roll projection model (driven by birth numbers), Office of National Statistics migration data, council tax registrations, and planning records of planned new homes and home extensions. Although all of this information is relevant, it does not produce an unequivocal figure for the number of school places required to assist the council in planning to meet statutory requirements. However, the evidence indicated a clear need for 30 additional places per year in Earley and a likely need, for at least 3 years, of an additional 15 places per year. Beyond the three year period, the need for reception places will depend on the future number of births (which dipped towards the end of the projection period) and the impact of housing churn (which may potentially accelerate as older residents vacate family homes).

### **Loddon and Beechwood Primary Schools**

It is proposed that Loddon Primary School is enlarged by 210 places to accommodate a roll of 630 statutory school age children (Reception to Year 6), retaining existing Early

Years provision from 01/09/2017.

It is proposed that Loddon is permanently expanded in two phases. Firstly, additional Key Stage One accommodation has been provided by conversion of the former Riverdale Neighbourhood Office back into school accommodation. This building already accommodated the school's Foundation Stage teaching areas. Secondly, new accommodation will be added to the existing main teaching block including a new larger hall and additional classroom areas. External works to play spaces will provide enhanced capacity.

It is proposed that Beechwood Primary School is enlarged by 105 places to accommodate a roll of 420 statutory school age children (Reception to Year 6), retaining existing Early Years provision from 01/09/2017.

It is proposed that Beechwood is enlarged by infilling spaces between existing classrooms. This will result in a building with a more regular form. All classrooms will have external windows, with two teaching areas (a library and an IT room) having top-light only. The existing hall space is deemed sufficient reflecting the school's history (i.e. it was previously a larger school).

### Supporting Information

Additional children were admitted to both Loddon and Beechwood in September 2016 with the agreement of the schools, in advance of the permanent expansion decision. This was permissible as a single year increase in the number of children admitted to a school does not necessarily require permanent expansion of the school.

These schemes have been developed over the course of 2016 and were shared with the school and local community in December 2016. Responses were generally favourable for both schools.

Formal consultation for these two schemes occurred in February and March 2017. This entailed a public notice in a newspaper and full information published on the council's website with a formal representation period of 2/02/17 to 02/03/17, with letters to schools and other interested parties.

Meetings with parents and other interested parties were held at Loddon Primary School on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2016 and at Beechwood Primary School on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2016.

There is a high degree of confidence in the need for the places at Loddon and Beechwood. The schools are in Woodley where close to 1,000 homes are in the process of being delivered across the area so the additional school places are required whatever short term fluctuation may occur.

In Earley, there was a clear need for at least 30 places in both 2015 and 2016 (in 2016 met by additional places offered at Loddon Primary School) so the case for the Loddon places is made on the basis of recent history as well as future projected need.

Appendix B sets out responses to date on the Beechwood and Loddon schemes.

The Loddon and Beechwood expansion schemes have led to very few adverse comments. Any concerns raised have related to planning issues such as additional

traffic, which will be addressed via the planning applications. If planning consent is not granted, the expansions cannot proceed.

### **Highwood Primary School**

The proposal is that Highwood expands permanently by 210 places to accommodate 420 pupils from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2017.

The expansion entails a new build extension to the school and conversion of existing office accommodation currently occupied by a Childrens Services team.

#### Supporting Information

The Highwood scheme has been developed over the course of 2016 and initial consultation was completed in January 2017. Formal consultation for the schemes occurred in February and March 2017. This entailed a public notice in a newspaper and full information published on the council's website with a formal representation period of 2/02/17 to 02/03/17, with letters to schools and other interested parties. A public meeting took place on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2017.

There is a high degree of confidence in the need for the places at Highwood. The school is in Woodley where close to 1,000 homes are in the process of being delivered across the area so the additional school places are required whatever short term fluctuation may occur.

The Highwood scheme has led to very few adverse comments. Any concerns raised have related to planning issues such as additional traffic, which will be addressed via the planning applications. If planning consent is not granted, the expansions cannot proceed.

Appendix B sets out responses to date on the Highwood proposal.

### **Aldryngton Primary School**

The proposal being developed by officers, in line with the Executive decision of January 2016, was to expand Aldryngton by 105 places to accommodate a roll of 420 statutory school age children (Reception to Year 6) from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2017.

Expansion would entail the construction of a new two storey teaching block with classrooms, an IT rooms and a new school hall, constructed on the site of a small outdoor swimming pool. External playing space would be augmented through the provision of a new all-weather playing surface to complement existing hard surfaced play areas and grass sports pitches. The new two storey block would replace part of the existing permanent school structure and 3 mobile classrooms. The site of the 3 mobile classrooms would provide additional staff car parking.

This proposal is now not recommended for progression in 2017 based on the information included within the Supporting Information below.

## Supporting Information

The Council's Primary Strategy identified Earley as a priority area for expansion because there were too few school places to meet needs locally and this shortfall was expected to continue if additional capacity was not provided.

As an illustration of this in 2015, 30 children were allocated Reception places in schools outside Earley because there was insufficient capacity in local schools.

In 2016, despite 30 additional places having been offered at Loddon Primary School, all Earley Reception places were allocated, leaving no capacity for incoming families. In the Aldryngton designated area, 13 children could not be offered a Reception place at the school, although the expansion of Loddon School meant that a local school was available. Families have continued to move to Earley and have been compelled to accept primary school places in neighbouring communities.

The availability of a local and accessible school, where children are able to walk from their homes, has been a common issue raised by parents to local members.

A brief account of the project's development stages is set out below.

In the second half of 2015, a "task and finish group" (comprised of officers, local members and interested parents and chaired by the then Deputy Executive member for Children's Services) was closely involved in the development of the primary strategy implementation plan proposals. Three sites were considered in Earley (Aldryngton, Loddon and Radstock Schools), based on location, popularity and viability.

To assist in the process, architects ERM Ltd was commissioned (reporting in September 2015) to undertake a spatial study. It is important to note that (a) the architects were focused on the single issue of evaluating site areas against DfE guidance and (b) that the requirement at the time was to locate a suitable site for a full form of entry (30 places per year). The architects recommended Loddon as the preferred site for a full form of entry with Radstock as a secondary preference, noting that all sites were deficient to some extent. The expansion of Loddon was progressed as the focus for the delivery of 30 additional places per year.

For the delivery of the remaining 15 places – part of the recommended 45 additional places required, adopted by the Executive in January 2016 - Radstock was not recommended for expansion primarily because this would have provided a further 30 additional places per year rather than the required number. A smaller expansion of the required 15 places per year (half a form of entry) would have led to the necessity to adopt mixed age teaching and (because the maximum average class size would be less than 30) this would lead to a financially less efficient form of classroom organisation. The larger expansion would have been more expensive than the alternative and would have risked being to the detriment of other local schools by taking children from their roll.

Aldryngton was selected for expansion after a range of issues had been considered including the specific number of places required and the particular nature of the sites, premises, local demand and highways issues.

Other Earley schools were considered as being "out of scope":

- Hillside, Whiteknights and Earley St Peters – no evidence of sufficient demand originating in Earley to make expansion successful.

- Hillside and Hawkedon - both schools had been subject to expansion in recent years, with Hawkedon already a large school and further expansion of Hillside considered too challenging given the site constraints.
- In addition, these schools would require expansions of 210 places (rather than 105) to maintain single age teaching and efficient class sizes.

On 28 January 2016, the Primary Strategy Phase 1 Implementation Plan was agreed by Wokingham's Executive. The challenges of developing the Aldryngton site were acknowledged and the expansion was conditional on further feasibility work.

During Spring 2016, four separate formal studies were carried out on the Aldryngton school project. Two studies were prepared as architectural and transport feasibility studies, intended to give confidence that a scheme (if acceptable on planning grounds) was achievable. These were carried out by architects ERMC Ltd and WSP Transport consultants respectively. They confirmed there were no fundamental barriers to a satisfactory scheme, but were not in themselves fully developed proposals, suitable for submission as part of a planning application.

During Summer 2016, design and transport statements were commissioned with a view to submitting a planning application and letting contracts for expansion. These were let to two new practises, WS Atkins Ltd (architects) and Robert West Ltd (transport consultants). It is quite common place for architectural work to be commissioned in phases from separate consultants. Having a second transport consultant meant that Wokingham could have greater confidence that successful mitigation was possible. It also meant there was a second professional view on required mitigation in view of concerns that had been expressed over the park and stride locations that had been put forward as possible mitigation in the initial study.

The proposals for the development of the site have been through a number of iterations. The final proposal included the following key components:

- An existing 3 class mobile block to be removed from the site to enable the creation of additional car parking space to serve the additional staff required
- A two storey teaching block to be built on the site of the current school swimming pool which achieved a number of objectives including (a) integrating new accommodation into the current buildings (b) minimising the loss of play area by building upwards (c) protecting the existing grass team game area
- An new all-weather play surface which has advantages on the basis that such surfaces (a) double up as sports pitches and areas for informal (lunch/break-time) play and (b) are considered to be worth double the area of a grass pitch due to their greater resilience.

On 16 January 2017, officers held a meeting with parents and the local community as part of the non-statutory consultation. This was followed by publication of proposals in a local newspaper and on the Council's website. The initial consultation exercise is a recommended component (by the DfE) of the consultation process, but is not a statutory requirement. The statutory requirement is for a notice published in a local newspaper and on the Council's website.

The statutory School Organisation consultation was from 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2016 to 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2017, conducted through a notice in the Reading Chronicle, publication on the Council's website and through letters to schools and other partners.

The Aldryngton proposal has led to a significant volume of correspondence, almost all of which has been sent by people opposed to the expansion including the school itself.

During the consultation, the case for the Aldryngton expansion has been less demonstrable, based on the expectation of continued demographic change led by the replacement of older households with younger families. It was acknowledged throughout the consultation and in correspondence with parents that the final decision would be taken in light of actual admissions data for 2017/18 and that the proposal would not progress in 2017 unless supported by increased demand.

The admissions data for 2017 shows that:

- There are 16 fewer first preference applications for *Earley* resident children for Reception places at the school in 2017 compared to 2016 (78 for 2017, compared to 94 for 2016)
- There are 43 first preference applications for Aldryngton Primary school from within the school's Designated Area (compared to 59 in 2016 and 54 in 2015).
- The overall level of demand for Reception places in Earley for *Wokingham* resident children is comparable to that seen in 2016 with 411 Wokingham resident first preference applications for the 7 Earley Primary Schools (compared to 416 in 2016 and 433 in 2015).

This indicates that:

- Aldryngton Primary School continues to be oversubscribed with a level of demand closely comparable to that of 2016.
- The number of applicants within the Designated Area is a very close match to the school's capacity (43 for 45 places). It is likely therefore that there is a much reduced risk of being unable to place all Aldryngton DA children in either Aldryngton or another local school. Most, if not all, Earley children (for whom an on-time application for a Reception place was made) are likely to receive an offer of a place in Earley without additional capacity at Aldryngton Primary Schools.
- Offers made to schools outside of Earley are likely to simply reflect the pattern of preferences expressed (for example, by not expressing a preference for the designated area school, or not using all four preferences).
- However, it is likely that there will be no surplus places or insufficient surplus places to meet the needs of children in this age group arriving in Earley in future.

The council will continue to seek planning consent (if this has not been granted by the 15<sup>th</sup> March 2017) so that the scheme can be brought forward to Executive for approval in the next three years if demand does rise.

Appendix A sets out the issues raised in more detail and Appendix C (a letter sent to parents) sets out issues raised and the officer response before the informal consultation meeting took place in January 2017.

Where consultees have commented on the proposals the response has generally been negative. The Aldryngton school governing body have formally objected to the proposal and their letter is appended as Appendix D.

### **Exploration of alternative options in Earley**

In view of the concerns that have been raised with the expansion proposal the

examination of alternative opportunities for increasing capacity locally has commenced, including alternative sites as well as other schools.

## **Executive Decision**

The Executive is asked to consider the strength of the case for the expansions, the views of stakeholders and the impact on the Council's resources (and in particular the authority's ability to fund the scheme).

The decision can be a conditional one – subject to a number of prescribed events as set out in paragraph 8 of Schedule 3 to the Prescribed Alterations Regulations. These include the granting of planning consent. .

The *“Statutory Guidance for decision makers deciding prescribed alterations and establishment and discontinuance proposals April 2016”* has a number of specific requirements. These are summarised below, with an account of how the recommendation complies with the requirements.

*“That the appropriate fair and open local consultation and/or representation period has been carried out and that the proposer has given full consideration to all the responses received.”*

Consultation events with parents and other interested parties have been held for all schemes. Public notices have been published in a local paper and on the Council's website as required. Key partners have been informed. A full account of all representations and comments received has been reported in the body of the report and in relevant appendices.

*“Decision-makers should consider the quality and diversity of schools in the relevant area and whether the proposal will meet or affect the needs of parents; raise local standards and narrow attainment gaps.”*

The schools proposed for expansion are Good or Outstanding schools serving a local community. They are therefore expected to meet the needs of parents and contribute to raising local standards and narrowing attainment gaps.

*“A school-led system with every school an academy”*

The proposals do not impact on the individual schools ability to become Academies so this has no adverse impacts on the intentions of “Education Excellence Everywhere”, a government 2016 White Paper.

*“Conditional Approval”*

Where proposals are conditional, the dates by which the conditions must be fulfilled is stated.

*“Proposed admission arrangements”*

No change to current admissions arrangements is proposed as part of these proposals. The current arrangements are compliant with the statutory School Admissions Code.

*“Community cohesion”*

The schools are all community schools serving a local population. They are expected to have a neutral or small positive impact on community cohesion by providing schools in which all members of the local community can mix.

### *“Travel and accessibility”*

The schools are all well served by roads with pavements and footpaths. They are of a size and in locations where the additional children are, disability aside, expected to be able to walk to school.

### *“Funding”*

Funding for the schemes will come from the Council’s capital programme.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION**

***The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.***

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	Nil	Yes	N/A
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£11,995K	Yes	Capital
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	£6,397K	Yes	Capital

### **Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision**

All revenue costs will be met from Dedicated Schools Grant.  
Initial capital costs (including spend in 2016/17) has been met through funds allocated in the 2016/17 Capital Programme. The above figures relate to the proposed Capital Programme for the 2017/20 period.  
There will be a positive impact on the general fund through reduced home to school transport spend.  
Capital costs would be met from the Capital Programme and are subject to agreement to the proposed 2017/20 Capital Programme by Council.

### **Cross-Council Implications**

N/A

### **List of Background Papers**

N/A

<b>Contact</b> Paul Feven	<b>Service</b> Children’s Services
<b>Telephone No</b>	<b>Email</b> paul.feven@wokingham.gov.uk
<b>Date</b> 6 March 2017	<b>Version No.</b> 3

## **Appendices**

Appendix A - Aldryngton Consultation responses

Appendix B – Other schools

Appendix C – Letter to parents at Aldryngton School

Appendix D – Objection from the Aldryngton School Governing Body

# Appendix A

## Aldryngton Primary School expansion consultation and responses

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### Summary

The views of parents and other stakeholders have been expressed through three categories of activity:

1. Parent and school led activity – including a petition, letters (including a stage 2 complaint that was not upheld) and emails
2. A pre-statutory consultation meeting organised by WBC
3. Statutory consultation as required by the “School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013”

### 1. Parent and School led activity

The information below show the number of complaints received and the key concerns that were raised (with officer commentary) before the statutory consultation phase.

Some of the concerns relate to aspects of a previous design (prepared as an earlier feasibility study) and are no longer relevant as the final design addressed these issues.

Number of emails / letters received: 60

Number of individual correspondents: 37

#### 1a) Petition

The wording of the petition was as follows:

*We the undersigned petition Wokingham Borough Council to oppose the current proposal to expand Aldryngton Primary School and request to be consulted on a properly worked through sustainable plan supported by solid data and analysis, with the necessary due diligence carried out. Any rushed through idea that has not been properly thought through will prove to be a mistake made in haste, and a complete waste of council tax payers' money.*

*Aldryngton is the only Earley school with space constraints already, and the proposal plans to squeeze more people (115+ including pupils, staff and support) into even less space. The assessment Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) paid for concluded that Aldryngton was deemed 'the least attractive option' for expansion compared to other options that were recommended. The proposal is not supported by the school or the governing body.*

*Our objections cover a range of issues including: considerable removal of outdoor*

*space for play, development, and sports; inability to provide maths & English sets as before; taking away the hall for whole school assemblies (and lunch would have to be eaten at desks); no detail on how any 'park and walk' solution would work or how the 'walking bus' idea would be managed; increased highways congestion (analysis required), and further risk of road traffic accidents. All of the above would be detrimental to the school's success and would fundamentally change the way the school works and provides an education. An investment should improve something, not make it worse.*

*When the entire leadership and teacher body of a school disagree with something, it's usually to the detriment of the children not to listen.*

*Please sign this petition to request Wokingham Borough Council revisit the options that were originally recommended, and carry out a comprehensive due diligence, complemented by a proper business case of worked through options and proposals, in order to deliver the right long term solution for all Earley children.*

*Started by: Paul Counihan*

168 people signed this ePetition which ran from 04/10/2016 to 20/10/2016.

## **1b) Summary of issues and responses**

Concern from parents	Brief response
<p><b>Play space</b></p> <p>Loss of playing field area to the detriment of sport and PA activities.</p> <p>Too little play area for children.</p>	<p>The schools current site is significantly smaller than the DfE guidance figure for a school of its current size, albeit common place for schools in urban areas. Given this, any change to the premises will inevitably lead to significant changes to the external areas.</p> <p>The proposal will reduce the grass playing field area but in doing this we will ensure the school has sufficient hard play area. We will make up for any loss in grass through use of all-weather surfaces. The DfE consider hard weather surfaces to be twice the value of grassed areas due to their capacity for sustained use over the year.</p> <p>We expect the school to be able to successfully deliver the national curriculum. We cannot guarantee that all current activities carried out on the field will be able to continue without at least some modification. Sport England were a statutory consultee in the planning process in order to ensure that sports provision is protected (the objection leads to the committee recommendation to approve to be</p>

Concern from parents	Brief response
	<p>referred to the National Planning Policy Casework Unit, acting on behalf of the relevant Secretary of State to determine whether or not the application should be called in for further consideration).</p> <p>The school area is undersized when judged against national guidance and would almost certainly have the highest child / m2 ratio of any current WBC primary school after expansion. There are many examples of such sites in towns and cities nationally that provide good or outstanding education.</p>
<p><b>Play space – special features</b></p> <p>Loss of additional features parents have paid for / organised (e.g. story teller area)</p>	<p>WBC committed to protect or (if it is necessary to remove the feature) to replace the outdoor features (e.g. the story teller area and the long jump pit) the school community have worked so hard to provide.</p> <p>An adventure play area, that has become unsafe for use would be removed as part of the works to create the new Multi Use Games Area.</p>
<p><b>School premises</b></p> <p>School unable to deliver whole school assemblies due to hall space being inadequate</p> <p>Inadequate lunch time space</p>	<p>Although the proposal will increase the number of children, the final design will follow national space standards and will include both a larger main hall and a second activity space or small hall.</p> <p>WBC has conducted an initial feasibility study which has established that additional capacity could be delivered on the school site with the additional car parking required. More detailed design proposals are being developed now that will look carefully at the feedback from parents and the issues that are being raised so that the final scheme creates spaces that work for the school.</p>
<p><b>School standards</b></p> <p>Loss of the school's Outstanding status.</p>	<p>There is no reason to think the school would be unable to offer outstanding education, as do other schools on far more constrained sites.</p>
<p><b>Traffic</b></p>	<p>The council has completed two transport assessments conducted independently by qualified transport consultants – the first as part of the initial</p>

Concern from parents	Brief response
<p>The impact upon traffic volumes will be unacceptable locally and unsafe for children (noting too the impact of the new Tesco).</p>	<p>feasibility study; the second as part of the submission for planning consent. Both considered that the scheme was viable considering the traffic impacts associated with expansion. The most recent report found that there was adequate on-street car parking in the vicinity of the school taking account of the proposal to expand the school.</p> <p>Both staff and school run traffic impacts would need to be managed however including the desire of car driving parents to drop their children close to the entrance.</p> <p>Since staff arrive before children (and leave after them) the extra staff vehicle movements are unlikely to be a major concern locally. The staff will need additional parking which will be provided on site.</p>
<p><b>Admissions</b></p> <p>The proposals are not necessary - real demand for school places would be reduced if fraud was eliminated.</p>	<p>Our evidence indicates that increased demand in Earley is driven by high birth rates and housing churn (leading to the replacement of older households with younger families).</p> <p>The Council's school admissions team works closely with our internal audit team to root out fraudulent, inaccurate and misleading applications (including checking on the reasons for leaving the last address too). Every year a number of applications are re-prioritised and offers withdrawn as a result of this work.</p> <p>Parents are, however, able to choose where they live to gain admission to a particular school and we cannot discriminate against people who rent rather than purchase. Where parents own locally but choose to rent we require 12 months occupation of the rented property before the closing date. Whether people buy or rent they can relocate after their child has been admitted to school without losing their place.</p> <p>Once a child has started at a school there is an increased barrier to withdrawing offers and the statutory school admissions guide suggests places</p>

Concern from parents	Brief response
	should not be withdrawn if a child has been on the school roll for over a term.
<p><b>Admissions</b></p> <p>The proposals are not necessary because two schools admit children from the Reading area showing that Wokingham has sufficient capacity to meet local need.</p>	<p>Two schools have admitted a significant number of children from Reading (Earley St Peters and Whiteknights). However, the Earley children that have been allocated places outside the area did not apply to these two schools, do not in the main live in the designated areas of these schools and have in most cases used all their four preferences for other Earley schools near their homes.</p> <p>Geography is a factor that works against these two schools for WBC residents as they sit on the edge of both the borough and the area with the greatest demand pressure, but are conversely are very accessible for many Reading BC resident families. It is unlawful to reserve places for Wokingham children so this cross border movement is something we have to work with.</p>
<p><b>Alternative sites</b></p> <p>Radstock would have been a better site for these proposals</p>	<p>In many regards, Radstock is a good alternative based on the site area alone. However, development in this school would deliver 210 places (as a ½ FE / 105 place expansion would lead to a less efficient school (maximum class averages less than 30) that would have to adopt mixed age teaching) and we could not demonstrate this level of additional provision was required. This would therefore create a risk of oversupply (which could also have an adverse impact on less popular schools).</p>
<p><b>School standards</b></p> <p>It will not be possible to recruit Staff (and some could leave).</p>	<p>Other schools identified in the strategy implementation plan have successfully recruited sufficient staff for an enlarged school from September 2016, so this should not be a major obstacle.</p>
<p><b>School standards</b></p> <p>The school will lose edge by having to abandon mixed age teaching and setting.</p>	<p>There is no good reason to think this is the case. Instead of operating with 3 mixed age classes per pair of year groups the school could operate with 4 such classes and set for specific subjects within these paired year groups. While this is unusual Colleton Primary also operates with two year mixed age groups (albeit in a very different way) so this is not without precedent.</p>

Concern from parents	Brief response
<p><b>Finance</b></p> <p>The school (separately) state that they are sustainable with 315 on roll and that this would be negatively impacted by school expansion.</p>	<p>Larger schools do have greater financial resilience. In this proposal, average class size would increase from 28.6 to 30 (when full). Per pupil funding covers both the classroom teacher and a proportion of costs incurred outside the classroom. Having larger average class sizes and an increased number of classes means that this “pot” for out of classroom costs is larger. Schools can spend this money for the benefit of pupils.</p> <p>While the school is indeed viable as it stands and is an outstanding provider, the school would be more resilient for the future at a larger size.</p>
<p><b>Process</b></p> <p>That the Council failed to follow proper process.</p>	<p>The key decisions were taken at a properly minuted Executive meeting on 28/01/16. The ongoing statutory process is the one through which the decision to expand the school will be taken and this follows a prescribed format.</p>
<p><b>Value for Money</b></p> <p>That the cost of the expansion is disproportionate to the value to be delivered.</p>	<p>The cost per place will be high, but this does include the replacement of a number of buildings that have a much shorter life expectancy (including 3 mobile classrooms) than the new build. Costs have also risen generally since the last round of school expansions in 2013.</p>

### 1c) Stage 2 complaint about the Council’s process

Seven issues were raised in the complaint:

- Failure to follow proper process
- Failure to apply due diligence when assessing traffic impacts
- Failure to consider more economic alternatives
- Failure to ensure a proper audit trail
- Discounting expert advice
- Failure to consult
- Failure to take proper account of the educational needs of children

This was not upheld.

### 2. Pre-statutory consultation

A meeting was held at Maiden Erlegh School on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2017. The following points were raised by parents at the meeting:

## **Transport/ Traffic**

Consideration should be given to tackle the number of children being driven to the school.

The 2012 School Travel Plan shows 25% been driven to school. However, it is unclear why so many use cars to drop children when the traffic assessment states majority of the pupils are within walking distance.

Parents suggested that the travel assessment should take into account the following factors:

- The future shared catchment of Aldryngton and Loddon Primary schools
- Footfall for both schools on site with the impact of the traffic created by the new Tesco Extra
- Increased number of children attending the school beyond 2021 and the proposed Maiden Erlegh 6th form expansion
- Narrowness of the roads around the school which has parked cars on both sides and is a bus route
- Working mothers who live within walking distance choose to drive to drop-off their children
- Traffic surveys to be done in all weather conditions
- Impact of the new increased intake and perhaps bringing in children from further afield.
- The pedestrian, parking and secondary school drop-off movements
- Parents made some suggestions to mitigate the impact of the traffic:
  - Park and stride schemes
  - Restricted parking
- The following concerns were also raised:
  - The potential air pollution caused by the increase of cars in the area
  - Accidents that may occur
  - Silverdale Road being difficult to navigate due to the narrowness of road and parked cars

## **Admissions Criteria**

Parents raised concerns about the Admissions process

- Children living in the catchment area not being able to get into the school
- Earley school places going to Reading Borough children at Whiteknights and Earley St. Peters Primary schools
- Revisit the existing catchment areas so that children from out of Borough do not attend Wokingham Schools
- The Admissions criteria for 1st preference allocations is difficult to understand.
- Additional school places would not be required if we avoided children attending from outside the catchment area

## **Need for Capacity**

Parents raised the following points relating to the need for additional capacity:

- Parents lack confidence that the Council knows whether only 15 places are required
- The Primary Strategy projections shows that with the Loddon expansion a surplus of 7.7% places will be created by 2017/2018. Difficult to understand the need to expand Aldrynton if this is the case.
- It would be better to expand Radstock thereby creating 30 school places instead of 15 places.
- A detailed proposal should be developed for Radstock Primary School (so allowing a proper comparison with the Aldrynton scheme).
- The Council need to review the projection figures.
- Some parents disagree that increased demand will be created by older families moving out of the area and younger families moving in as they believe Earley has always had an influx of young families.

## **School site/ buildings**

Parents want the following considerations to be taken into the design of the scheme

- Sports England to be consulted on the provision of the play areas
- Location of the new storage area to enable accessibility of equipment
- Design to be more creative and aspirational

## **Proposal for expansion**

Concerns were raised regarding the expansion:

- The site is too small and the Council should look for alternative school sites for expansion.
- With the school being on a shared site with a secondary school, there may be similar projects on shared sites which show a negative impact on teaching and learning
- Loss of the swimming pool will result in off-site lessons and taking time additional time from the teaching day
- Expansion will impact on the standard of education and safety of the children
- Recruitment of new staff will be difficult and the quality of this new staff may vary.
- Ratio of pupils to teacher will increase.
- Headteacher and Governors object to the expansion
- £4.8m for the scheme is not well spent
- School cannot carry out any modifications for the period of 3 years if the planning process approves but the work does not initially go ahead
- Notice should be taken to the objections made against this expansion
- EMRC architects Spatial studies report for Loddon /Radstock /Aldrynton states Aldrynton School was the least attractive option of those being considered.

- There was a plea from some parents to expand the school as they could not get their children in the school living a 1/3 mile away, being in their catchment area

### **Construction Programme**

Parents wanted to be reassured:

- That building on site during term- time would not impact on the activities of the school and impinge on the teaching of the children
- That the construction programme would not take longer due to the impact of the restrictions placed by Health & Safety on a constrained site
- Children would have access to play areas during the construction period

## **3. Statutory Consultation**

The statutory consultation commenced with a notice published in a local newspaper on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2017 (with a representation period concluding on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2017), email notifications to schools and key partners and full details on the Council's website.

### **Consultation Notice**

This is the text of the notice in the Reading Chronicle published on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2017.

#### **“WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL: ENLARGEMENT OF FOUR PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

Notice is given in accordance with section 19(1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 that Wokingham Borough Council intends to make prescribed alterations to the following four schools:

**a) Aldryngton Primary School**, Silverdale Rd, Earley, Reading RG6 7HR (Category: Community School) from 01 September 2017

It is proposed to expand the school to provide accommodation for two full forms of entry.

A programme of works is planned to enable the school to accommodate a permanent increase in pupil numbers. If approved, an additional 15 pupils would be admitted to the relevant age group (the Reception Class age group) from September 2017 onwards.

The current capacity of the school is 315 and the proposed capacity will be 420. The current number of pupils registered at the school is 316. The current admission number for the school is 45 and the proposed admission number will be 60.

**a) The Beechwood Primary School** Ambleside Close, Woodley. RG5 4JJ (Category: Community School) from 01 September 2017

It is proposed to expand the school to provide accommodation for two full forms of entry.

A programme of works is planned to enable the school to accommodate a permanent increase in pupil numbers. If approved, an additional 15 pupils would be admitted to the relevant age group (the Reception Class age group) from September 2017 onwards.

The current capacity of the school is 315 and the proposed capacity will be 420. The current number of pupils registered at the school is 319. The current admission number for the school is 45 and the proposed admission number will be 60.

**b) Loddon Primary School.** Silverdale Road, Earley RG6 7LR (Category: Community School) from 01 September 2017.

It is proposed to expand the school to provide accommodation for three full forms of entry.

A programme of works is planned to enable the school to accommodate a permanent increase in pupil numbers. If approved, an additional 30 pupils would be admitted to the relevant age group (the Reception Class age group) from September 2017 onwards.

The current capacity of the school is 420 and the proposed capacity will be 630. The current number of pupils registered at the school is 465. The current admission number for the school is 60 and the proposed admission number will be 90.

**c) Highwood Primary School,** Fairwater Drive, Woodley RG5 3JE (Category: Community School) from 01 September 2017.

It is proposed to expand the school to provide accommodation for two full forms of entry.

A programme of works is planned to enable the school to accommodate a permanent increase in pupil numbers. If approved, an additional 30 pupils would be admitted to the relevant age group (the Reception Class age group) from September 2017 onwards.

The current capacity of the school is 210 and the proposed capacity will be 420. The current number of pupils registered at the school is 213. The current admission number for the school is 30 and the proposed admission number will be 60.

This Notice is an extract from the four complete proposals. Copies of the complete proposals can be obtained from: Strategy and Partnerships, Children's Services Wokingham Borough Council Shute End Wokingham RG40 1BN and are published on line at <http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/schools-and-education/schools-information/> (heading "School Organisation").

Within four weeks from the date of publication of these proposals, any person may object to or make comments on the proposals by sending them to:

Strategy and Partnerships Team Children's Services Wokingham Borough Council Shute End Wokingham RG40 1BN

Last date for receipt of representations: 5 PM Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2017

Email:admissions.review@wokingham.gov.uk.

Publication Date: 2<sup>nd</sup>February 2017

Judith Ramsden  
Director of Peoples Services  
Wokingham Borough Council  
Civic Offices Shute End  
Wokingham  
RG40 1BN

### **Explanatory Note**

Four separate proposals are published and are summarised in this composite notice, Each proposal seeks to increase capacity in one of four local primary schools, to meet demand for additional places in that school’s local area.”

## Consultation Responses

The School have responded formally to this exercise, and their response is given separately as Appendix D.

Responses (excluding the School response)	44
<b>Issues raised</b>	
Traffic	35
Admissions / Demand	32
School Standards	22
Value for Money	22
Play Space	20
Swimming pool	19
Impact on other schools (if demand did not grow)	9
Construction phase impacts	7
Better alternatives available	5
Impact on neighbours	4
Adverse impact on PTA	4
Parking	3
Teacher recruitment	2
Process	2
Quality of proposed buildings	1

The issues are generally rehearsed in section 1b above.

Additional concerns were:

**Demand:** that the Council’s own roll projections indicated there would be a fall in demand and the expansion project would lead to a significant surplus in demand.

Some respondents noted that local ward based population statistics (from Public Health and ONS) indicated that the proportion of older people in the Maiden Erlegh ward was comparable to the borough as a whole (indicating in their view that whatever the immediate local issues there was no good reason to expect an accelerated rate of population change).

**Swimming pool:** that the loss of the swimming pool would be to the detriment of the school and the wider school community and that the school could not provide the same level of support for swimming if it had to rely on local public swimming pools.

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## Appendix B

### Beechwood, Highwood and Loddon Primary School consultation process

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These schools have generated much less interest (and no significant adverse comments) relating to these proposals in the period prior to the publication of formal proposals.

#### Loddon Primary School

8 comments received to date – the only significant concerns were about traffic management around the school.

A consultation event was held on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2016.

#### Beechwood & Highwood Primary Schools

No adverse comments received.

Beechwood Primary School consultation event was held on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2016.

Highwood Primary School consultation event was held on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2017.

#### Beechwood, High wood and Loddon Schools

In all cases no substantive objections relating to school organisation matters were received.

Local residents have some concerns over the management of school run traffic, but these are issues that will be dealt with in the planning approval process through conditions attached to the planning consent.

### Statutory Consultation Process

The statutory consultation commenced with a notice published in a local newspaper on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2017 (with a representation period concluding on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2017), email notifications to schools and key partners and full details on the Council's website.

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It is proposed to expand the school to provide accommodation for three full forms of entry.

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The current capacity of the school is 420 and the proposed capacity will be 630. The current number of pupils registered at the school is 465. The current admission number for the school is 60 and the proposed admission number will be 90.

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Judith Ramsden  
Director of Peoples Services  
Wokingham Borough Council  
Civic Offices Shute End  
Wokingham  
RG40 1BN

### **Explanatory Note**

Four separate proposals are published and are summarised in this composite notice, Each proposal seeks to increase capacity in one of four local primary schools, to meet demand for additional places in that school's local area."

### **Consultation Responses**

No objections to the expansion proposals have been received.

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**WOKINGHAM  
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Tel: 0118 974 6247  
Email: paul.feven@wokingham.gov.uk  
Fax: 0118 974 6135  
Date: 15th December 2016

Parent/carers  
Aldryngton Primary School  
Earley

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Children's Services

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P.O. Box 156

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Shute End, Wokingham

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Berkshire RG40 1WN

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Tel: (0118) 974 6105

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Fax: (0118) 974 6135

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Minicom No: (0118) 974 6991

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DX: 33506 – Wokingham

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Dear parents/carers,

### **Proposal for expansion of Aldryngton Primary School**

Wokingham Borough Council faces challenges with the number of school places available to parents in Earley. The key challenge is that there are too few primary school places to meet current and future need.

The council's strategy for primary school places projected a need for 45 additional places per year in Earley. Without this need being met, parents will have reduced chances of obtaining a local school for their children. Recent experience has been that some parents have not received any offers for their preferred schools within Earley. Thirty places are being created at Loddon Primary School leaving 15 additional primary schools places projected as required in Earley from 2017.

The council is legally required to take action in order to ensure schools are able to meet the local need for school places. This needs to be seen in the context of the impact of expansion on the school and the local area.

Aldryngton Primary School has been identified as the apparent best option for further expansion in order to provide Earley parents with needed school places. As you are aware, this is an outstanding school offering a high standard of teaching and learning. The proposal will lead to investment in the school including the development of an additional two storey teaching block with a large school hall and an ICT suite. The aging temporary classrooms at the entrance to the school will be replaced in the process.

If the council takes no action in advance to meet the demand for school places as projected next year, this could lead to short-term measures being introduced in Earley schools such as "bulge classes" and temporary facilities. Children would also be more likely to have to travel further to schools in other areas. The proposal to expand Aldryngton is a key part of the plan to avoid these problems re-occurring in 2017.

At this point no formal decisions have been made. The proposed expansion is being progressed including a planning application submitted in early December 2016 in order to be ready if demand rises as forecast. However, the final decision on whether to expand the school will be taken in the light of actual information on the demand for

school places in March 2017. If expansion is not required, the proposal will not continue for 2017. If granted, planning consent would be valid for 3 years so the scheme could be implemented in a subsequent year in the event that demand rises as projected.

We know that some Aldryngton parents are concerned about the impact of the proposal to expand the school. With these concerns in mind, I have attached a briefing on the background to these proposals and the concerns that have been raised by individual parents and as part of a petition signed by parents recently.

I would also like to invite you to a meeting to discuss these issues. At the meeting we will set out the background to the proposed scheme, the details of the proposals and listen to the views of parents and carers. These views will be shared with the council's planning department in order to be considered as part of the process considering the proposed development. Views will also be considered as part of the statutory school organisation consultation which will commence later in January and, subject to planning approval, will inform the final decision on whether to proceed with this proposal.

The meeting will be in two parts with the first section focused on parents and carers. The second section will be open to other members of the local community who will be able to view plans for the proposed expansion.

I hope you will be able to attend and take part in the discussions.

**Venue: Maiden Erlegh School, Silverdale Road**

**Date: Monday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2017**

**Time: 7pm (parents meeting) followed by 8.15 (open to the local community)**

Yours sincerely



Paul Feven

Interim Head of Strategic Commissioning

Wokingham Borough Council

## BRIEFING FOR PARENTS

# Proposal to expand Aldryngton Primary School to meet the need for school places in Earley December 2016

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### **The need for school places**

*In April 2016 all Reception places were allocated across Earley, leaving no capacity for incoming families. In the Designated Area for Aldryngton, 13 children could not be offered a Reception place at the school along with a further 3 children (living outside the area) who had older siblings attending the school. Two children are now being provided with transport to schools outside the area, while the recent expansion of Loddon School meant that a local school was available.*

*A similar level of demand was seen in 2015 when 30 children across Earley were allocated places outside the area. These parents did not receive any offers within their preferred schools.*

*Currently, there are 59 Earley children (across all primary year groups) requiring special transport arrangements to attend schools outside their local area due to the lack of available school placements.*

*There are effectively no places available in any year groups in Earley aside from a few places within Year 1 in a newly opened class at Loddon Primary School.*

The council's strategy for primary school places projected a need for 45 additional places per year in Earley. The projections are based on data including ward level birth data from the Office of National Statistics (ONS), housing developments across the Earley area, and school placement data from previous years. The increase in demand for school placements is driven by a number of factors including housing "churn", where older households are being replaced by younger families and housing development. As an illustration of this, in 2014 Wokingham lost 460 people aged 50-69 years and gained 670 people aged 25-44 years old (Source: ONS).

Thirty of the 45 required places are being created at Loddon Primary School leaving 15 additional primary schools places required in Earley from 2017.

### **Options**

The council has sought to manage increases in school places through a planned programme of new school development and existing school expansion schemes on the basis of *projected* need. The alternative of waiting until actual admissions data is available has, in the past, meant that schools have had to accept bulge classes close to the start of the academic year. This approach can make teacher recruitment problematic as well as the need for temporary accommodation that too often was not completed by the required time.

Alternative options for increasing school places have been explored including rebuilding or expanding existing schools.

Loddon and Radstock Primary Schools were initially identified by the council's consultant architects as the best location in terms of *space*, with Aldryngton being a secondary option.

Other factors have since made Aldryngton the preferred option:

- The projected requirement is half a class (15 places) rather than a full class. Expanding Radstock by a full class would lead to 15 places per year above the forecast need. This would be a more expensive project and create the risk that other schools would be unable to fill classes and so see their standards and viability at risk.
- Expanding Radstock by only half a class would require the school to develop a mixed age class, which is not seen as a preferred option where a school has not chosen to organise classes in this way.
- However, mixed age classes are already a feature at Aldryngton and preferred by the school.

Aldryngton School therefore enables the right amount of expansion, without impacting on the school's preferred form of teaching.

## The proposal to expand

The proposal includes

- A new two storey block to make maximum use of existing space, replacing the temporary buildings currently used by the school but which require investment.
- A new playing area using an all-weather surface which, because of their greater resilience and potential for use throughout the year, count as double the area of grass in DfE guidance for sports pitches.
- Additional car parking for staff

The proposal also means that:

- There will be a smaller amount of grassed areas, mitigated by the increase in the all-weather surfaces that will be built. Sport England will be consulted as part of the development of this proposal.
- The swimming pool will need to be removed as this is the best location for the new two-story block. Other sites have been considered but would further reduce the amount of grassed area. The alternative of building on top of the pool has been considered but not recommended due to likely prohibitive cost and the adverse impact on surrounding homes of building a taller building on the school site.

Other external features the school has created (story teller area, long jump pit, adventure playground etc.) will be retained, replaced or re-sited as necessary. Trees are protected in the planning process although some removal and replacement may be required.

## Consultation

Aside from the forthcoming meeting for parents, parents and local people will also be formally consulted as part of the Council's planning process. This consultation will be conducted through letters, public notices and on line. In addition to the consultation under the Planning Act there will

be a formal school organisation consultation through the publication of proposals in a local paper and on the Council’s website commencing later in January.

## Issues raised by parents and the school

Concern from parents	Brief response
<p><b>Size</b></p> <p>The school site is too small to build upon and will prevent the school from being able to operate normally e.g. reduced opportunities for out of school activity including PTA fundraising events</p>	<p>Many schools are developed and expanded on constrained sites. There are examples of good and outstanding schools in towns and cities with sites that are smaller than Aldryngton’s.</p> <p>Many schools on more constrained sites do provide a range of fund raising events across the year and there is nothing to prevent this being the case with Aldryngton. The new school hall will present new opportunities because of its increased size and greater separation from other school facilities.</p>
<p><b>Traffic</b></p> <p>The expansion will generate more traffic which will be unmanageable</p>	<p>The council has completed two transport assessments conducted independently by qualified transport consultants – the first as part of the initial feasibility study; the second as part of the submission for planning consent. Both considered that the scheme was viable considering the traffic impacts associated with expansion. The most recent report found that there was adequate on-street car parking in the vicinity of the school taking account of the proposal to expand the school.</p> <p>Both staff and school run traffic impacts would need to be managed however including the desire of car driving parents to drop their children close to the entrance.</p> <p>Since staff arrive before children (and leave after them) the extra staff vehicle movements are unlikely to be a major concern locally. The staff will need additional parking which will be provided on site.</p>
<p><b>Admissions</b></p> <p><i>The proposals are not necessary - real demand for school places would be reduced if fraud was eliminated.</i></p>	<p>The council’s school admissions team works closely with our internal audit team to identify any fraudulent, inaccurate and misleading applications (including checking on the reasons for leaving the last address). Every year a number of applications are re-prioritised and offers withdrawn as a result of this work.</p> <p>Parents are, however, able to choose where they live to gain admission to a particular school and we cannot discriminate against people who rent rather than purchase. Where parents own locally but choose to rent we require 12 months occupation of the rented property before the closing date. Whether people buy or rent they can relocate after their child has been admitted to school without losing their place. The council will shortly start consultation on the 2018-19</p>

Concern from parents	Brief response
	<p>Admissions Arrangements and this includes proposals to strengthen arrangements to ensure that permanent addresses are used when allocating school places.</p> <p>Once a child has started at a school there is an increased barrier to withdrawing offers and the statutory school admissions guide suggests places should not be withdrawn if a child has been on the school roll for over a term.</p>
<p><b>Admissions</b></p> <p><i>The proposals are not necessary because two schools admit children from the Reading area showing that Wokingham has sufficient capacity to meet local need.</i></p>	<p>Two schools have admitted a significant number of children from Reading (Earley St Peters and Whiteknights). However, the Earley children that have been allocated places outside the area did <b>not</b> apply to these two schools, do not in the main live in the designated areas of these schools and have in most cases used all their four preferences for other Earley schools near their homes.</p> <p>These two schools sit on the edge of both the borough and the area with the greatest demand pressure, but are also very accessible for many Reading families. It is unlawful to reserve places for Wokingham children so this cross border movement is something we have to work with.</p>
<p><b>School standards</b></p> <p><i>It will not be possible to recruit Staff (and some could leave).</i></p>	<p>Other schools identified in the strategy implementation plan have successfully recruited sufficient staff for an enlarged school from September 2016.</p>
<p><b>School standards</b></p> <p><i>The school will lose edge by having to abandon mixed age teaching and setting.</i></p>	<p>The school will be able to continue with mixed age teaching. Instead of operating with 3 mixed age classes per pair of year groups the school could operate with 4 such classes and set for specific subjects across these mixed year groups.</p>
<p><b>Finance</b></p> <p><i>The school (separately) state that they are sustainable with 315 on roll and that this would be negatively impacted by school expansion.</i></p>	<p>Larger schools do have greater financial resilience. In this proposal, average class size would increase from 28.6 to 30 (when full). Per pupil funding covers both the classroom teacher and a proportion of costs incurred outside the classroom. Having larger average class sizes and an increased number of classes means that this “pot” for out of classroom costs is larger. Schools can spend this money for the benefit of pupils. So, while the school is indeed viable as it stands and is an outstanding provider, the school is likely to be more resilient for the future at a larger size.</p>

Objection in respect of the planned expansion of Aldryngton Primary School from a 1.5 entry school to a 2.0 entry school - September 2017 onwards.

**Summary of concerns detailed below:**

**Demand for places -**

Data does not demonstrate a need for additional places in the area. The expansion is likely to generate a surplus of places well in excess of the 5% government recommendation.

**Financial implications:**

The cost of the build project is excessive particularly when calculated on a per pupil place basis.

Schools left with unfilled places will suffer a financial consequence which might only be mitigated by redundancies.

**Admissions:**

The data suggests that demand for places in Earley will reduce. Increasing the PAN for Aldryngton will increase availability of places at the school by 33%. The consequence of this will be that more places will be offered to those out of the designated area which could have longer term impact and instability due to future sibling applications.

**Traffic:**

Significant concerns regarding the exiting safety levels at the exit and entrance points to the school. Without expansion, there has been a significant increase in the number of pupils travelling to school by car. With a 33% increase in pupil numbers, many of which will likely be travelling from beyond the school's designated area, this trend is likely to continue as the school expands. Whilst fewer pupils are likely to be diverted out of the area as a consequence of the expansion, over-provision within Earley would result in more local traffic and the associated risks that would create.



In 2016 the majority of children who could not be admitted to Aldryngton Primary School were admitted to Loddon Primary School. If Aldryngton Primary School is expanded this could leave a surplus of 15 places together with a further surplus created by children living in Loddon Primary School catchment area who will obtain one of the additional 15 places at Aldryngton Primary School.

### **The Effect on other Schools**

If the data is correct and there is nothing to indicate that this data is wildly inaccurate it is highly unlikely that the surplus places will be spread out across all the Earley Schools. It will probably have the biggest impact on Loddon Primary School. Is the Council setting aside funding to support redundancy of staff and funding to support schools with surplus places? The extreme pressures on school budgets means schools cannot manage surplus places. Fewer pupils, means less funding for schools. It may suit the Council to have surplus places but that does not suit the schools. The Council has a duty to ensure the expansion does not impact on other schools.

### **Objectives**

The objectives claimed by The Council is that the expansion will enable an increased number of children to attend an over-subscribed 'Outstanding' School and ensure there are sufficient primary school places in Earley to meet the needs of Earley resident children. To support these objectives the Council will need to consider the impact on families and make amendments to their Primary School Admission Policy. This suggests that the expansion of Aldryngton Primary School will make provision for children beyond the designated area in the wider Earley area. As these children will be admitted based on parental preference, then any younger siblings of these children would not have any sibling protection. Should it not be possible to offer non designated area siblings a place at any time in future admission years, parents would have children at different schools. Is it appropriate to provide additional places and actively encourages parents to apply for an outstanding school rather than their local school which will probably have places available and then give them no protection for siblings.

### **Value for Money**

The proposal for Aldryngton Primary School is expected to cost £4.8 million for 15 places a year - total of 105 places.

The expansion of Loddon Primary School for 30 places - total of 210 places is expected to cost £2.5 million. The Council are justifying this and making a case for value for money because the proposed new building will replace both temporary and 50 year old permanent buildings. The only reason that the Council have to replace the temporary buildings is because they must provide additional car parking for the extra staff and the only possible site for this is the current location of three temporary classrooms. Very expensive car parking! The plan does not include removal of any of the current 50 year old permanent building - just a change of use. An emphasis is made of the provision of a new ICT suite. The school currently has an excellent ICT suite but it has to move to another location in the school because of the need to expand the Early Years classrooms to accommodate the additional places. The school will gain a MUGA - multi use games area. This is a necessity to ensure the expansion does not reduce the amount of play area and gain planning permission. None of the proposals are necessary if the school was not expanding. Is this really a justifiable value for money for 15 extra places a year?

## Safety of Pupils - Traffic

The Council agree that the site already has congested traffic and a drop off area for parents would not be possible because of that congestion and the restricted site entrance. Their solution to the current congestion and mitigation to their proposal to allow 105 more children to enter the site, is that the school should amend their travel plan to encourage parents to reduce car drop offs and car share. The school already actively discourages parents from using cars near the site but despite this, there has been an increase in car use in the last four years by 19%, even though the children admitted to the school have come from closer to the school. The expansion will, as predicated by the Council increase the number of cars by 26 which is based on the current home addresses of children on roll. The expansion will allow children to come to the school from further away and that would suggest that there will be more than 26 additional cars near the site.

The safeguarding of our children is a prime requirement of the Governing Body. The Governors would be failing in their duty if they did not object to the expansion on the grounds that the safety of the children will be at risk. The Council have failed to find a solution to protect the children entering the school site from Silverdale Road. There has been no recognition of the traffic issues around the site. No other primary school in the Earley area and probably in Wokingham is faced with the same traffic challenges outside their site entrances. The site entrance is shared with the biggest Wokingham secondary school, a library, a community centre, a pre-school and public right of way for residents as pedestrians and on bicycles. Cars, lorries, and bicycles enter site entrance and shopping parade without any clear direction, stopping and parking randomly outside designated parking areas. Older children from Maiden Erlegh are unsupervised and gather around the shops spilling onto the parking area and roadways. There is a bus stop on Silverdale Road near the entrance to the schools which causes increases traffic congestion when there is a bus stopped. Parents bringing their children on foot have to negotiate their way through this chaotic situation.

More children and parents using this entrance can only result in a higher risk level. The latest traffic survey indicates there is sufficient parking in six surrounding roads. Parents dropping off their children are not interested in parking away from the site as that is not close enough for them. If, as the Council says, the majority of children live less than 0.5 of a kilometre away why would they park in the surrounding roads which are probably 0.3 of a kilometre away? The Council state that the traffic has no impact on the wider area. We challenge this statement - traffic is very heavy on Wilderness Road as the main through route for traffic into and out of Reading and traffic cannot easily feed into this road from the Betchworth Avenue/ Silverdale Road junction. Traffic is queuing on Betchworth Avenue and Silverdale Road from 8.00am beyond the site entrance of the schools. Silverdale Road is a main through route from Lower Earley to Wilderness Road. The expansion of Loddon Primary School will also contribute to additional traffic on the road. The expansion of two schools on an already congested road must have an impact on the wider area.

Yours sincerely



Mrs Ann Mckie

Vice - chair governing body of Aldryngton Primary School