

Appendix A

Aldryngton Primary School expansion consultation and responses

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>Play space</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>Play space – special features</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>School premises</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>School standards</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>Traffic</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>Admissions</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>Admissions</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>Alternative sites</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>School standards</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>School standards</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>Finance</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>Process</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>Value for Money</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 16th 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 2nd February 2017 (with a representation period concluding on 2nd 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 2nd 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 2nd March 2017

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

Publication Date: 2nd 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
Issues raised	
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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