

**WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL
PUBLIC QUESTION TIME
EXECUTIVE MEETING**

ON 26 JANUARY 2017

Jason Sutton has asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:

Question

There is a proposal to expand Aldryngton Primary School. Aldryngton is the smallest Primary School site in Earley. Spatial availability is a key consideration when determining which schools to expand. WBC commissioned a spatial study by ERMC Architecture dated 7/9/2015 to compare Loddon, Radstock and Aldryngton Primary. The study's conclusions were very clear: "Aldryngton's Primary Campus is the least attractive campus for investment - there is a substantial deficit in campus area." With a recommendation Loddon and Radstock be taken forwards to a "Stage 1 Feasibility".

On 28 January 2016, the WBC Executive met and one of the items discussed was which Primary Schools to expand. This 'Spatial Study' was not provided to the Executive. Rather 'spatial analysis' was a category presented in Annex 2 of the document "Primary Strategy Implementation Plan Phase 1" contained on page 142 of the Report to the Executive. The stated conclusion in relation to Aldryngton was however described to the Executive as, "Sufficiency of space - space for 0.5FE expansion which would be relatively straightforward." The strategy also suggested that an activity of consultation had been performed with "parents, residents, schools and other stakeholders" with the next step being a detailed feasibility study on the selected schools. Why was the information supplied to the Council within the report not reflective of the findings of the original spatial report commissioned, was this information provided in error?

Answer

The ERMC report conclusions were on the basis of the size of the site alone, while the "Primary Strategy Implementation Plan Phase 1" recommendations were informed by a number of factors. The most important factor was the assessment of the number of places required to meet the need in Earley. The best fit with projected need was the expansion of Loddon and Aldryngton Primary Schools to provide 45 additional places per year.

The ERMC conclusions were made against the Department for Education recommended space standard for school premises (known as Building Bulletin number 103), a space standard that is not met at many outstanding and good schools, or in many new and expanded school projects in towns and cities across the country.

The Executive report noted "the site is one of the more constrained" and this was why the recommendation was "that further work should be carried out with the school to determine the feasibility of expansion with a target of September 2017". All work to date indicates that the challenges presented by the constraints identified in the ERMC report can be addressed and that expansion is feasible.

Supplementary Question

When a decision is made by the Executive based on information presented, which can be shown to be inaccurate, erroneous, misleading and not supportable through evidence, will such a decision approval made by the Executive remain valid or be re-examined?

Supplementary Answer

Evidence was produced in order to make that decision and, as I said in my first answer, the recommendation was to do some further analysis and that was done, and therefore the recommendation that went to the Executive therefore stands. So it does not change the recommendation which subsequently went forward. If, subsequently, information then changed what the original recommendation should be, ie it showed that it was completely impossible to build an extra number of classrooms etc because spatially it was completely impossible, for example, in this situation, then another recommendation could, in fact, be effective. But in this case it did not say that, it said completely the contrary. So, therefore, it showed that the expansion was feasible, so, therefore, the recommendation still stands.