

PETITIONS OBJECTING TO THE PROPOSED ENLARGEMENT OF WHITEHALL INFANT AND JUNIOR SCHOOLS

Cabinet Member	Councillor David Simmonds
Cabinet Portfolio	Education & Children's Services
Officer Contact	Terry Brennan
Papers with report	Appendix 1 - Reference to research on school size & standards Appendix 2 - Hillingdon births (with Uxbridge area highlighted)

HEADLINE INFORMATION

Purpose of report	<p>To inform the Cabinet Member that 3 petitions have been received objecting to the linked proposals to enlarge and expand Whitehall Infant and Junior Schools.</p> <p>a) A petition with 250 signatures objecting to proposals to expand Whitehall Infant school. The organiser is Mr. Peter James (Chair of the school Governing Body), 22 The Greenway, Uxbridge, Middlesex, UB8 2PH.</p> <p>b) A petition with 357 signatures objecting to proposals to expand Whitehall Junior School. The organiser is Ms. Beverley Parmar, 4 Wellington Road, Uxbridge, Middlesex, UB8 2AP.</p> <p>c) A petition with 24 signatures objecting to proposals to expand Whitehall Infant School. The organisers are Mr. and Mrs. J. Pontey, 45 Yew Avenue, West Drayton, Middlesex, UB7 8PB.</p>
Contribution to our plans and strategies	Development and improvement of education in our schools (Council Plan 2007/10)
Financial Cost	Indicative costs included in the report
Relevant Policy Overview Committee	Education & Children's Services Policy Overview Committee
Ward(s) affected	Uxbridge South and Yiewsley

RECOMMENDATION

That the Cabinet Member:

1. Notes the views of the petitioners.

2. Advises the petitioners that:

Petition Hearing with Cabinet Member for Education & Children's Services

MEMBERS, PUBLIC AND PRESS

(a) the council has a statutory duty to provide sufficient school places;

(b) before a final decision is taken, the Council will have regard to statutory guidance on school expansions, and that full consideration will be given to all concerns;

(c) if proposals are progressed, any issues raised with regard to the local environment, school amenities, and parking will be considered and addressed by planning officers at the planning application stage.

INFORMATION

Reasons for recommendation

The council has consulted stakeholders on proposals to enlarge the premises of Whitehall Infant and Junior Schools. Petitions were received in response to that initial consultation, which also attracted several individual objections with specific points.

The petitions organised by Mr. James and Ms. Parmar raise general objections without being specific, but issues of concern can be inferred from the tone of other individual objections that were received. The petition organised by Mr. and Mrs. Pontey contains specific points which are addressed in this report.

The Local Authority considers that all concerns can be addressed. So far, no new options have emerged during the consultation that had not been considered before drawing up the proposals. The proposals as put forward therefore remain the best solution for the Local Authority to provide sufficient primary school places in time to meet growing demand.

Further consultation through the publication of Statutory Notices was authorised by the Cabinet Member in August. Final decisions on the proposals are expected to be taken in November and all specific points expressed throughout the whole consultation process will be presented to members to make fully informed decisions.

The alternative options are to undertake no school expansions. However it is already apparent from the high demand for Reception places that pressure in the Uxbridge area is real and growing. The numbers of births in Uxbridge confirmed by the PCT and ONS are the strongest and most reliable indicator that there will be a sustained increase in demand for school places.

Comments of Policy Overview Committee(s)

None at this stage.

Supporting Information

1. Reasons for proposals

1.1 The reasons for proposing the permanent expansion of Whitehall Infant and Junior Schools were set out in a report to Cabinet in May 2010. The proposals form part of the Phase 1 school expansions to address pressure for primary school places beginning from September 2010. Statutory consultation with all key stakeholders is necessary before providing permanent additional school buildings to accommodate children beyond 2011.

2. Consultation

2.1 The Local Authority conducted the first phase of statutory consultation between June 11th 2010 and July 12th 2010. This included a meeting held between council officers and the joint Governing Bodies of Whitehall Infant and Junior Schools on June 22nd 2010. The response to the consultation on the Whitehall Infant and Junior School proposals was as follows:

- 42 individual responses, plus a series of questions posed by the Joint Governing Bodies.
- 3 petitions received containing a total of 631 signatories. (This report considers those petitions).

2.2 Most responses made several specific points on similar topics and can therefore be grouped into related themes. **Table 1** below provides the Local Authority's response to each general theme of objection for the Whitehall Infant and Junior School proposals.

Table 1

THEME	POINT OF OBJECTION / CONCERN	LOCAL AUTHORITY RESPONSE
GENERAL	Not in favour of proposal	The Local Authority has a statutory duty to provide sufficient school places for its residents, and a robust detailed analysis has identified a need for more primary school places in the vicinity of the chosen schools. The chosen schools offer the best solution available to the Local Authority to provide sufficient school places in the required timescale.
	Adverse effects on centenary celebrations	The Local Authority will work closely with the schools to ensure that, if the proposals are approved, any necessary building works are scheduled to cause the minimum possible amount of disruption to the school's celebrations.
SCHOOL STANDARDS	Reputation & standards are already good / or would be put at risk	There is no conclusive evidence, nationally or internationally, that firmly supports the view that school standards are affected by school size. Additional information on this is contained in Appendix 1 .
	Reduced level of one to one time with educator / supervision / quality of support to SEN children would diminish	With an increased number of pupils the schools would receive extra budget provision and therefore the quality of provision of support services should not diminish.

	Create imbalance / increased number of children with English as a second language / quality of support to children with English as a second language would diminish	There is no conclusive indication as to whether children attending the Whitehall schools in future would require additional language support, although the trend within the borough and in London as a whole would suggest that it is a possibility. Nevertheless with an increased number of pupils, the schools would receive extra budget provision and therefore the quality of provision of support services should not diminish.
	Increase cost of educating each child e.g., teaching staff / teaching assistants / support staff	There is no conclusive evidence that larger schools generate increased costs per pupil, and the accepted wisdom is that larger facilities tend to generate better economies of scale. This is often a factor determined by how individual schools are managed. An increased pupil intake will attract more funding on a per pupil basis and it is therefore envisaged that a school expansion would not be detrimental in terms of costs per pupil.
	Contradicts LBH Amalgamation Policy / OFSTED inspection findings e.g. 4FE primary rate lower	The Local Authority's Amalgamation Policy does not recommend against 4FE schools. It is not clear which OFSTED findings are referred to but Hillingdon does already have several viable 4FE schools, whilst research indicates no clear link between school size and standards. Additional information on this is contained in Appendix 1 .
	Would result in a larger & more impersonal school, thus affect children / school and wider community adversely	The Local Authority acknowledges that in this set of circumstances, a larger school may present more potential for impersonal relationships. However, the Local Authority also believes that such an environment can be avoided through the continuance of good relationships, excellent teaching, and involvement with parents and the local community.
DEMAND ANALYSIS AND CHOSEN SCHOOL	Demand analysis is incorrect or misleading / disagree that places are needed in Uxbridge or in the Uxbridge-West Drayton corridor / presumption that RAF Uxbridge is the cause of demand.	A detailed analysis by the Local Authority in summer and autumn 2009 concluded that a significant number of primary school places would be required due to a sudden shift in migration patterns and a substantial increase in births. The evidence that has emerged since then strongly supports the Local Authority's conclusions that at least 19 forms of entry are required in school year 2012/13, and that several forms of entry will be required before then.

		<p>Applications for September 2010 Reception places now confirm the forecast pressure for school year 2010/11. Demographic data released by the GLA and ONS in spring 2010 now confirms the Local Authority's earlier indication of long-term sustained pressure for school places. In fact, since the 2009 analysis evidence is now emerging that migration pressure continues to worsen and births continue to rise, which could mean that future school place requirements may rise further.</p>
		<p>With regard to the previous number of primary school places along the Uxbridge-West Drayton corridor, the decline in available places from 2005 to 2009 reflected the removal of surplus capacity at several primary schools (including the Whitehall schools) in order to make more efficient use of resources. As demand has turned upwards, these places now need to be re-instated subject to appropriate consultations. Places previously removed at Longmead Primary School have already been re-instated. The Local Authority is now proposing the re-instatement of places at Colham Manor Primary School and the Whitehall schools. Additionally, previously removed places at Ryefield Primary School are being re-instated on a temporary basis subject to further review.</p>
		<p>With regard to the predicted demand for Reception places within the Uxbridge-West Drayton corridor (School Planning Areas 6,7,10,13 and 14) the Local Authority's 2009 analysis predicted 1,034 Reception children for September 2010. By July 8th 2010 the total Reception offers for all schools within these areas totalled 1,032 - therefore achieving 99.8% of the predicted figure so far. Future demand predictions are supported by births data released by the ONS and population projections supplied by both the GLA and ONS.</p>
		<p>With regard to whether the expected demand for places around Uxbridge by school year 2012/2013 is related to the RAF Uxbridge development, the Local Authority can confirm that this is not the case. The expected demand by school year 2012/13 reflects the substantial increase in local births in calendar year 2008, plus the impact of some new housing developments already constructed.</p>

Petition Hearing with Cabinet Member for Education & Children's Services

MEMBERS, PUBLIC AND PRESS

		<p>The impact of RAF Uxbridge has been phased into pupil forecasts on a gradual basis from 2013 to 2020, with few units expected to be complete by 2013. The long term need for the Uxbridge area has been identified as 4-forms of entry when the full impact of RAF Uxbridge is included, for which the Local Authority hopes to secure a 3-form entry school within the RAF Uxbridge site. To aid understanding of the underlying school places pressure around the Uxbridge area, please refer to the recorded ward births attached as Appendix 2.</p>
	<p>Put pressure on other smaller schools nearby / increase imbalance between local schools as already take pupils outside of catchment area</p>	<p>No schools have a defined catchment area. For strategic planning purposes, the Whitehall schools are expected to take most of their pupils living within Primary Planning Area 6 which consists of the Uxbridge North, Uxbridge South, and Brunel wards. However in practice, anyone can apply to attend any school, and families further afield may still want a school place if they have a sibling in attendance. There will be no imbalance because all other local schools are expected to be full, as is the case already at Hermitage Primary School, St. Mary's RC Primary School, and St. Andrews CE Primary School.</p>
	<p>Expansion of catchment area would mean less children will be able to walk to school</p>	<p>No schools have a defined catchment area and it depends on local demographics and school popularity. Rather than increased travelling, as local demand increases it is more likely that the opposite will happen, with schools filling from smaller areas. One of the main objectives of the proposals is to provide sufficient local school places in order to prevent increased travelling distances to schools further away that may have some capacity. The council runs an initiative to encourage walking (or cycling) to schools and the Whitehall schools do participate in this programme.</p>
	<p>Build a school on RAF Uxbridge or elsewhere which is central or another site / school</p>	<p>The Local Authority is undertaking a review of potential new school sites as well as negotiating a potential new school within the RAF Uxbridge site. At this stage there are no potential school sites within central Uxbridge whilst the earliest that the council can expect delivery of a new school within RAF Uxbridge is 2013 - and only then if several external factors are expediently resolved.</p>

		However the level of expected demand for school places will require both new schools and expansions, with the long term need in Uxbridge identified as 4-forms of entry and with pressure beginning from September 2011.
CONSULTATION PROCESS	Lack of consultation with the school and detailed accommodation plans	So far there has been a dialogue with the Whitehall schools since autumn 2009 in an effort to jointly prepare robust proposals for school expansion. At this stage, outline accommodation proposals have been prepared by the Local Authority although not formally approved by the Governing Bodies. The intention is for the Local Authority to work with the Governing Bodies in a constructive way to jointly formulate the specific details of accommodation required at both schools.
	Lack of consultation prior to letters with parents e.g. detail limited or misleading	The Local Authority issued consultation letters to schools on June 11th 2010 which allowed for 4 weeks of consultation. Letters addressed to parents were included and were to be circulated by the school to parents. Letters included a detailed summary of the reasons why additional school places are required.
SCHOOL FACILITIES	Classroom sizes currently insufficient and would worsen with additional pupils	Any new and additional classrooms will be designed and built with regard to the latest national school building standards and regulations.
	Hall / ICT suite / cookery suite / music & dance studio / washing & toilet facilities / would be put under pressure and pupil learning would be limited.	For the suitability and sufficiency of school facilities, the Local Authority will refer to national school building standards when formulating the specific detail of the expansion proposals.
	Disruption to learning caused by building work	If the proposals to expand the school are approved, any disruption during the building phase will be kept to a minimum. Ideally it would be preferable to undertake most building work during school breaks, but the schedule of work will depend upon other approval processes (such as planning permission) with the fundamental key milestone of delivering additional school places in time.

	Lack of sufficient dining & catering facilities, staggered lunch break	For the suitability and sufficiency of school facilities, the Local Authority will refer to national school building standards when formulating the specific detail of the expansion proposals.
	Loss of already limited outdoor play space due to new buildings & building of extended services	For outdoor play space, the Local Authority will refer to national school building standards and statutory playing field regulations when formulating the specific detail of the expansion proposals.
PLANNING	Loss of natural habitat 'The Grove' e.g. newts etc.	Any local environment issues will be addressed by the Local Planning Authority at the planning application stage, which will follow after the council has decided whether or not to proceed with the proposals.
	Insufficient parking facilities & extra congestion etc. / including pedestrian traffic and single site entrance	Any traffic and congestion issues will be addressed by the Local Planning Authority at the planning application stage, which will follow after the council has decided whether or not to proceed with the proposals.
	Upkeep of 'un-adopted' roads	Any local roads or amenity issues will be addressed by the Local Planning Authority at the planning application stage, which will follow after the council has decided whether or not to proceed with the proposals.

2.3 Additionally for Whitehall Infant and Junior Schools, a series of more specific points were raised by the joint Governing Bodies at the meeting held on June 22nd. The Local Authority's response to this series of questions is presented below:

2.4 ***Reasons why Whitehall schools have been proposed for expansion***

2.4.1 A combination of rising birth rates and migration means that the council now expects to need at least 19 (and possibly up to 26) additional forms of entry in primary schools between now and 2014. Exceptional demand arising from recession factors has increased demand in 2009 and for September 2010 but the main reason for additional places is demographic change. The scale of required school places means that all primary schools need to be assessed for expansion potential. The council is also looking at alternatives (e.g. new school sites). However, the timescale by which places are needed and the availability of new sites mean that a large programme of expansion of existing schools is needed in all areas of the borough. Within this programme, expansion of more schools to four forms of entry is considered necessary. In the first phase proposals, Cranford Park and Grange Park schools are also being asked to expand to four forms of entry.

2.4.2 In planning additional places, the council has to consider meeting local needs and, in particular, the avoidance of excessive home to school journey times for young children. If the council does not have sufficient capacity in each local area, this would lead to some children having to travel a considerable distance for a school place. This may not be feasible for all parents and could have detrimental effects in relation to attendance and the ability of children and their families to access extended services. The council also has to take into account that some children will not be able to access some local schools because of the different admissions criteria applying to different types of school. Even if pupils travelled to schools further away, this would not be a sustainable solution as demand for places grows in those areas.

2.4.3 The projected long-term need for places in the school place planning area including the Whitehall schools is four forms of entry. Only approximately half of this demand relates to the development of the RAF Uxbridge site. The council is putting considerable effort into securing new provision at the RAF Uxbridge site but the maximum that the proposed school site can accommodate is three forms of entry. At present, it is not known when this provision will be available but two forms of entry will be needed locally for September 2012. Therefore at least one permanent and at least one temporary expansion will be needed by then. With regard to a suggestion about using Uxbridge High School, under current school area guidance the Uxbridge High School site is not large enough to support a primary school.

2.4.4 Of the other schools serving the Uxbridge area, two are voluntary aided schools and discussions with the diocesan authorities have indicated there is no long term potential for expansion at either St. Mary's RC Primary School or St. Andrews CE Primary School. One other school, Hermitage Primary School, is located on a small site that would not comfortably support a permanent expansion to two forms of entry. In contrast, the Whitehall schools were previously functioning as 4 forms of entry schools for a number of years until 2005.

2.5 Concerns regarding change of ethos & standards

2.5.1 Expansion is a change for any school and the council understands the concerns with regards to maintaining the ethos of the schools. However, the change would be more gradual in that one additional class would enter the school each year, and the new admission number would work through the year groups incrementally. The council also believes that it is possible to maintain a 'small school feel' within a larger school, though it may entail different ways of organising. The council would look at whether there are any ways in which the related building development can support maintaining a small school feel.

2.5.2 With regard to size and standards, there are examples of successful four forms of entry schools in Hillingdon. Additionally, all-through three forms of entry primary schools (ages 4 to 11) are already larger than either of the Whitehall schools would be following an expansion to four forms of entry. Whilst the council acknowledges the challenges and changes that expansion to four forms of entry would bring, the council does not believe that the size inherently compromises standards and safeguarding. The council would support schools that are expanding as much as possible to safeguard standards.

2.6 Accommodation Issues & Funding

2.6.1 In some cases, schools have taken the opportunity to make effective alternative use of class room accommodation (e.g. for extended service provision) if it was not currently needed for classrooms. Accommodation planning will be sensitive to schools' individual circumstances. However, it will not always be possible for such dedicated use to continue, especially where similar facilities cannot be made available to other schools.

2.6.2 At present, Primary Capital funding has been earmarked to support the first phase of expansions but this is only part of the larger programme and the council's Cabinet is aware of the financial implications. Depending on existing accommodation, some expansion projects will require more capital investment than others. Schemes will be developed in consultation with schools. Details of proposed investment would be included in the formal statutory proposals.

2.6.3 In terms of meeting accommodation needs for expanded schools, consideration has been given to capacity for essential services, such as school meals and kitchen facilities. With regard to play areas, the dynamics of the site will change as infants now require some soft play, social, informal and habitat areas (all green space). However as a confined site, the council will consider adding some form of multi use games area (MUGA, which will double-up as play areas). It is also envisaged that any existing garden spaces could be retained, or relocated if necessary.

2.6.4 Other specific accommodation concerns (such as dining space, ICT time, a studio for drama, and an appropriate hall size) will be given consideration if appropriate, when formulating the specific details of the proposals.

2.7 Pedestrian safety

Concerns have been raised about potential health and safety issues at the school's entry point on Cowley Road. This will be considered by the Local Planning Authority at the planning application stage, and any recommendations acted upon.

3. Conclusions

Whilst taking note of each concern made, the Local Authority considers that each point can be addressed. With regard to the analysis of pupil demand, this is considered to be as robust as possible. With regard to the main concern over the potential effect on school standards, the Local Authority is not aware of any conclusive link between school size and standards.

At this stage so far, no new options have emerged during the consultation process that had not been considered before drawing up the proposals. The proposals as put forward therefore remain the best solution for the Local Authority to provide sufficient primary school places in time to meet growing demand.

Financial Implications

Costs for the individual school projects will depend on local circumstances, and these will become apparent as specific options are firmed up for the next phase of consultations. Some schools will already have some spare spaces whilst others may require a full expansion plus significant enabling alterations.

The cost implications of the whole primary expansion programme have been reported previously and are significant. An indicative figure of £73m was worked up during the MTFF budget process and was included in the budget report to February Cabinet. This figure is highly provisional, as it had to be developed prior to the identification of sites and schemes.

The programme of work, and the funding required, will be spread over a number of years. Funding for this first Phase and subsequent Phases would need to come from several council funding streams including Basic Need (Annual formulaic capital); Section 106; Primary Capital Programme funding; Modernisation (Formulaic Capital).

At this stage, local authorities' capital allocations are not known beyond 2010/11. The Comprehensive Spending Review in the autumn will provide additional details on funding allocations for future financial years. Primary Capital Programme funding is £6.271m in 2010/11, though subsequent years are more likely to be closer to the 2009/10 figure of £3.893m. Formulaic capital for school places (Basic Need) was £2.6m in 2010/11. However, this is Supported Borrowing and is intended to support both primary and secondary place needs.

Further reports to Cabinet will be necessary in 2010 and 2011 in order to seek funding approval for specific programmes of work.

EFFECT ON RESIDENTS, SERVICE USERS & COMMUNITIES

What will be the effect of the recommendation?

The recommendations will assure the petitioners, residents, service users & communities that no final decision on expanding the Whitehall schools will be taken before carefully considering all views expressed during the consultation process.

Consultation Required

Statutory consultation is required to enlarge the premises of a maintained school by 25% or more. The first part of the statutory consultation process concluded in July 2010. In August 2010 the Cabinet Member authorised further consultation through the publication of statutory notices. The results of the whole consultation will be reported to the Cabinet in November 2010.

Additional consultation on increasing the school admission numbers is a separate process and this would be directed through the local Admissions Forum and Office for the Schools Adjudicator later this year.

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Corporate Finance

Not required.

Legal

Hillingdon Council has various duties under the Education Act 1996 to:

- Secure efficient and sufficient schools to meet the needs of the local population in view of the pupils' different ages, abilities and aptitudes.
- Promote high standards.
- Ensure fair access to opportunity for education and training.
- Promote the fulfilment of learning potential.
- Secure diversity in the provision of schools, increasing opportunities for parental choice as well as considering parental representations having regard to any guidance.

The Education and Inspection Act 2006 gives Hillingdon Council powers to alter and enlarge existing school premises which have the effect of increasing the number of pupils for which accommodation can be provided. The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended) provide that where a Local Education Authority is bringing forward statutory proposals (under s.19 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006) to expand a school then it must consult interested parties, and in so doing, must have regard to the Secretary of State's guidance on "Expanding a Maintained Mainstream School by Enlarging or adding a Sixth Form".

Once the consultation process has been completed then Cabinet has the power under the Constitution to determine school organisation proposals where objections have been received, and the Cabinet Member has the delegated power to make that determination if there are no objections.

The consultation process and subsequent decisions of the local authority must have regard to equality and anti discrimination legislation. In addition to statutory provisions the decision maker when they respond to objectors or when they come to make a final decision regarding each school should be mindful of statutory guidance relating to school expansions.

Corporate Landlord

The Interim Head of Corporate Landlord has been closely involved in early discussions on the school expansion proposals, and supports the recommendation set out in the report.

Relevant Service Groups

No other service areas should be affected by these recommendations.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix 1 - Reference to research on school size & standards

Appendix 2 - Hillingdon births (with Uxbridge area highlighted)