

PROPOSED EXPANSION OF ST MARY AND ST GILES CHURCH OF ENGLAND SCHOOL, STONY STRATFORD

Responsible Cabinet Member: Councillor Nolan (Cabinet Member for Children and Families)

Report Sponsor: Marie Denny (Head of Delivery, Sufficiency and Access)

Author and contact: Simon Sims (Programme Lead, Sufficiency and Access) Tel 01908 253919

Executive Summary:

In order to make significant changes to a maintained school the Council must follow a process prescribed by law. This process is in four stages:

1. Publish a statutory proposal
2. Formal consultation (four weeks)
3. Decision
4. Implementation (if appropriate)

Before commencing this statutory process the law provides that there is a strong expectation on schools and the Council to carry out an early consultation exercise with interested parties about the principle of the proposal.

Between 9 January 2017 and 10 March 2017 the Council carried out an early consultation in relation to the proposed expansion of St Mary and St Giles CofE School.

This paper reports the results of the early consultation process and recommends that the Council proceeds to the first stage of the statutory process.

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 That a statutory proposal be published and a consultation undertaken on the possible expansion of the provision at St Mary and St Giles CofE School by one form of entry at Year 3.

2. Issues

- 2.1 In September 2015 Russell Street School, an infant school in Stony Stratford, was expanded by 30 places per year group to cater for a projected increase in demand in the local area. The increase was incrementally phased over a 3 year period, starting with the reception year group. As anticipated, the number of pupils on roll at Russell Street School has increased and this means that up to 90 pupils will leave Russell Street School at the end of Year 2 in 2018.

- 2.2 The typical transition route for these pupils is to move up to St Mary and St Giles CofE School; however the school currently has an intake at Year 3 of only 60 places. There are also a number of children that apply for a place at St Mary & St Giles CofE School that live in the catchment area, but attend other schools in Milton Keynes or attend schools just across the border in Northamptonshire. The school is a popular choice for local parents and is regularly over-subscribed. In 2016, the school received 115 applications for the 60 places available.
- 2.3 St Mary and St Giles is a Church of England School which is judged 'Outstanding' by Ofsted. Following the recent merger with Queen Eleanor Primary School, it currently caters for 30 pupils in Year R to Year 2 and 90 pupils in Year 3 to Year 6. The South site, located in Galley Hill, caters for 30 children per year group from Year R to Year 6, whereas the North site, which is located in the centre of Stony Stratford, caters for 60 children per year group from Year 3 to Year 6. Children transitioning to the school at Year 3 would therefore usually attend the North site. Both Russell Street School and St Mary and St Giles CofE School work closely together to ensure a smooth transition for children.
- 2.4 Because St Mary and St Giles CofE School is a long-established and successful school situated in the area of demand, the Council approached the Governing Body and Trustees regarding their appetite, and viability of expanding, so that the number of places in the local junior provision would match the number of places available at Russell Street School.
- 2.5 It is envisaged that the additional children will be accommodated at the North site, which would reflect the current arrangements for children joining the school at this time. This would help to provide continuity of friendship groups and support the schools to maintain the existing transition process. Initial viability studies have identified that the accommodation at the North site would need to be expanded to support this increase in pupil numbers. The school could temporarily accommodate the additional class required from September 2018, with a project to expand the school building to take place in time for September 2019. The building extension would be subject to planning permission from the council, for which there would be a separate consultation with local residents at that stage.
- 2.6 An informal consultation was carried out between 9 January 2017 and 10 March 2017, a period of nine weeks including the February half term break, to consider the need for additional school places and whether a proposal to expand the number of places available at St Mary and St Giles CofE School should be formally explored. Notification of the consultation was sent to a range of stakeholders associated with the school and the consultation was available on line, alongside an electronic response form in order to give stakeholders the opportunity to submit views and discuss the proposed expansion plans in principle. Paper copies of the consultation document were available from the school reception. Three drop-in sessions were also held during the consultation period.

2.7 There were 186 responses to the consultation. 98 were from parents, staff, governors and trustees of St Mary and St Giles and 88 from other interested parties including 66 from parents of children attending other schools. A total of 15 people attended the drop-in sessions. Annex B provides a summary of the responses and the main themes of support and concerns. 96.8% of respondents were in support of the proposal and 2.7% did not support the proposal. 0.5% did not state an opinion. Those who were not in support of the proposal were 1 local resident, 1 parent governor and 3 parents of St Mary and St Giles CofE School. The suggested alternatives are noted in the Options section below.

3. Options

(a) Option 1 – Do nothing

The School Place Planning Framework, which is based on local birth data and the number of children currently accessing local infant schools, projects a need for additional junior school places within the local area, and this is reinforced through feedback from local parents and the consultation responses. If no further action is taken, the Council will either fail to meet its statutory duty to secure sufficient school places, or the Council may have to pay for children to be transported to vacant places across the borough.

(b) Option 2 - Publish a statutory proposal to expand the number of places available in Year 3 at St Mary and St Giles CofE School by 30 places in Year 3 to Year 6.

As desired by the significant majority of respondents, the Council would explore the feasibility of expanding the accommodation and commence a statutory consultation. Any decision would be subject to the grant of planning permissions which would be considered separately. If agreed, it is envisaged that this proposal could be implemented in time for children to transition into Year 3 from September 2018. **This is the recommended option.**

(c) Option 3 - Explore alternative options for securing junior school places in the local area.

Following an expansion of Russell Street School, also in Stony Stratford, there is a disparity of places between the infant and junior provision to meet demand from children in the local area. This prompted the initial approach to St Mary and St Giles CofE School to explore the possibility of expansion. Two alternative suggestions or proposals were provided through the informal consultation:

(i) Create more spaces at the schools that are to be built in the nearby western expansion area. Whitehouse Primary School and Fairfield Primary School are the first two primary schools opened of a total of four primary schools that are planned to serve the new communities of Fairfields and Whitehouse. A total of 6,600 dwellings are planned for this area and each primary school will accommodate up to 630 pupils. It is anticipated that

the four schools are only sufficiently sized to accommodate the projected pupil yield from this housing development. It will not be possible to expand these schools further due to site restrictions.

- (ii) Expand the provision at the South site of St Mary and St Giles CE School. Queen Eleanor Primary School (South site) and St Mary and St Giles CE Junior School (North site) merged on 1 January 2017 and are now known as St Mary and St Giles Ce School. At this stage the proposal is about the principle of expanding St Mary and St Giles CE School as an organisation, to accommodate the increase in pupils (Option 2). It is however envisaged at this time that the additional children would be accommodated at the north site, which would reflect the existing transition arrangements.

4. Implications

4.1 Policy

Ensuring sufficient primary school places within the education system is fundamental to delivering the council’s vision that residents have access to all the services they need and have the support to access opportunities and enjoy a healthy and good quality of life.

4.2 Resources and Risk

(a) Capital

The total cost for providing the additional accommodation is estimated to be in the region of £2.0m. This would be funded by Basic Need grant provided by the Department for Education and the proceeds received for the sale of part of the school playing field.

(b) Revenue

Schools funding is part of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and therefore the proposed expansion of the school does not directly impact on the council’s General Fund.

Y	Capital	Y	Revenue	Y	Accommodation
N	IT	N	Medium Term Plan	Y	Asset Management

4.3 Carbon and Energy Management

Capital works linked to this proposal would be delivered in line with the Council’s Carbon and Energy Management Policy and support the principles of maximising energy efficiency and carbon reduction in buildings, equipment and vehicles and would use the most sustainable or renewable energy sources.

4.4 Legal

If approved, the next step will be for the council to publish a statutory proposal under Schedule 3 of The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 and the 'Making prescribed alterations to maintained schools statutory guidance for proposers and decision makers, April 2016'. The statutory proposal will appear on the Council's website, as a notice in the press and outside the school. It will also be distributed to relevant stakeholders. The notice invites the reader to request a copy of the complete proposal which is prescribed to contain detailed information about the proposal. Following publication there is a formal consultation period of four weeks (length prescribed in law) within which comments and representations can be made to the council. Once that representation period expires, the council has two months to determine whether the change should proceed.

4.5 Other Implications

N	Equalities / Diversity	N	Sustainability	N	Human Rights
N	E-Government	Y	Stakeholders	N	Crime and Disorder

Background Papers: None

Annexes: Annex A – Informal Consultation on expansion proposal

Annex B – Summary of the findings of the informal consultation period

Annex C – Consideration of Department for Education Guidance