

**Wards Affected:**

Danesborough and Walton

**PROPOSED EXPANSION AND TRANSFER OF ST MARY'S WAVENDON CE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Responsible Cabinet Member: Councillor Miles (Cabinet member for Children and School Improvement)

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**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 1 February 2016 and 13 March 2016 the Council carried out an early consultation in relation to the proposed expansion and transfer of St Mary's Wavendon CE Primary School to a new school site at Eagle Farm South.

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

**1. Recommendation**

- 1.1 That St Mary's Wavendon CE Primary School be permanently expanded over time from 15 places in each year group to 90 places in each year group and transferred to a new site at Eagle Farm South with effect from admissions into the Reception year group in September 2018.

**2. Background**

- 2.1 St Mary's Wavendon CE Primary School is a small village school located in Wavendon currently judged by Ofsted as 'Good'. The school has a Published Admission Number of 15. This means the school can admit up to 15 children into the Reception year group and all other year groups, providing a capacity of 105 places in total. The catchment area for the school includes Wavendon Village and Woburn Sands, although many residents living in Woburn Sands choose to access provision in Central Bedfordshire.

- 2.2 Although a popular school St Mary's Wavendon CE Primary School admits only a small proportion of children from within the catchment area of the school and as such accommodates a significant number of children living outside of the catchment area, as is allowed within the law.
- 2.3 Included in the Strategic Land Allocation is a planned new development neighbouring Wavendon Village, located just over 1 mile from St Mary's Wavendon. As part of the planned provision across the Strategic Land Allocation two new primary schools will be delivered, the first of which is planned for Eagle Farm South. The new primary provision at Eagle Farm South has capacity to facilitate demand from the new development itself and local demand currently being met through St Mary's Wavendon CE Primary School.
- 2.4 Currently there is a significant financial challenge on school budgets. It is therefore necessary to take any opportunity to implement structural solutions that will enable some of the Council's smaller but high quality schools continue to be viable and sustainable in the longer term.
- 2.5 An early consultation proposing to permanently expand and transfer St Mary's Wavendon CE Primary School was carried out between 1 February 2016 and 13 March 2016, a period of six weeks. 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.

### **3. Issues**

- 3.1 There were 49 responses to the consultation, 77% of those who responded were in favour of the proposal to expand and transfer St Mary's Wavendon CE Primary School. A summary of the responses is attached at the **Annex**.
- 3.2 The main benefits cited by those in support of the proposal were that the expansion and transfer to a new site would improve the facilities for St Mary's Wavendon CE Primary School, making the school viable longer-term, responses showed that many viewed this as an opportunity to expand and build upon a good school which is already very much part of the community provide the opportunity for the wider and expanding community to benefit.
- 3.3 Overall there were 11 objections to the consultation. The themes of concern focused on:

- (i) **Loss of a small village school and links with the community**

It is important to note that this proposal is to simply transfer St Mary's Wavendon CE Primary School. In doing so the school will continue to have the same values, ethos and links with the village that currently exist, with the benefit of enabling a wider community to access the school.

(ii) **The safe access route from Wavendon Village to the new School site at Eagle Farm South**

A significant number of children attending St Mary's Wavendon CE Primary School are from outside of the catchment area and as such do not walk to school. It is envisaged that a small number of pupils who currently live within the catchment area will need to access the new school site at a distance of just over 1 mile away from the current school site. As part of the new development at the Strategic Land Allocation there will be a formal access route to the Eagle Farm school site. This however is anticipated later in the development. Therefore should this proposal proceed Milton Keynes Council will need to consider the transport options for these families. In the case that there is not an appropriate route available for these families to access the new school site then home to school transport would apply.

(iii) **Concern that the consultation does not explore further the option to open this opportunity as a national competition and as such removes the opportunity for other providers to bid**

It is important to note this stage of the process is simply an early consultation to seek local views and as such stakeholders have been provided with the opportunity to put forward alternative solutions and express a preferred option.

(iv) **Concern that the expansion of a Church of England School does not provide equality of access to children, irrespective of their social, cultural or religious background.**

This concern was raised by only a small number of those objecting. The majority of respondents viewed this proposal as an opportunity to provide further choice and diversity in the local community. Indeed over the last five years 3069 places have been created in the primary phase of which only 4.43% have been in Church of England or Voluntary Aided schools. It could therefore be argued there is a prejudice against church places which needs rebalancing to ensure choice and diversity.

## **4. Options**

### **4.1 There are 2 options:**

(i) **St Mary's Wavendon CE Primary School to remain on the existing site at Wavendon village and the Council runs a national competition to determine who will run a new school at Eagle Farm South**

This option would mean that the Council would run a national competition to determine who will run a new school at Eagle Farm South. St Mary's Wavendon CE Primary School would remain as a small village school located in Wavendon Village. The future of St Mary's Wavendon CE Primary School is likely to become unsustainable in the financial context, with potential to impact on the quality of education.

- (ii) Publish a statutory proposal to increase the admission number from 15 to 90 at St Mary's Wavendon CE Primary School and transfer the school to a new site at Eagle Farm South. This is the recommended option.

## 5. Implications

### 5.1 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.

### 5.2 Resources and Risk

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

#### a) Capital

The total cost for the new primary school at the Strategic Land Allocation is estimated to be in the region of 8.5m. This would be funded by a combination of Basic Need grant provided by the Department for Education and tariff funding provided from the development at the Strategic Land Allocation.

#### 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.

Should the proposal proceed, Milton Keynes Council will need to consider the transport options for these families. In the case that there is not an appropriate route available for these families to access the new school site while the development is growing, then home to school transport would apply and there would be a cost to the General Fund in the region on £11K per annum.

To support the proposed expansion, the Council will need to request approval from the Schools Forum to revenue fund the change through the Growth Fund. However, schools' revenue funding is currently under a Government consultation and is likely to change from the 2017/18 academic year. The Government's proposal is to allocate growth funding to local authorities based on historic spend. The Council will respond to the consultation before it closes on 17 April 2016. Without certainty of the budget that will be available to the Council, no commitment can yet be made to provide revenue growth funding.

#### c) Asset Management

If a decision is made for this proposal to proceed it would then be necessary to consider the longer term use of the existing St Mary's Wavendon CE Primary School playing field. The school is Voluntary Controlled, and as such the Council only owns the playing field land of the school site, which is 0.8 hectares. The building and the land to which the building is upon are not owned by the Council and therefore the future use of the building would not be determined by the Council.

### 5.3 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.

### 5.4 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. This will appear on the Council's website, as a notice in the press and outside the school. 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.

### 5.5 Other Implications

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

Background Papers:

Annex : Summary of the findings of the consultation period