

Wards Affected:

Newport Pagnell North and Hanslope

ITEM 8**DELEGATED DECISION****19 APRIL 2016****PROPOSED CHANGE OF AGE RANGE FOR HAVERSHAM VILLAGE 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 change of age range of Haversham Village School.

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 a statutory proposal to change the age range of Haversham Village School, to become a primary school for children aged 4 to 11, be published.

2. Background

- 2.1 Haversham Village School was judged as providing an 'Outstanding' quality of education when inspected by Ofsted in September 2010. It is a popular choice for many local parents, but priority is given to children living within Haversham Village, Haversham Estate and Little Linford (the catchment area).
- 2.2 Haversham Village School currently caters for children aged between 4 and 7 years (infant phase). It has a Published Admission Number of 25, which means the school can admit up to 25 children into each year group. At the end of the infant phase, children at Haversham Village School are required to secure a junior school place from National Curriculum Year 3. The process by which children must secure a new school place is determined by national legislation. This is complex, and whilst potentially offering a greater choice for parents, it also provides uncertainty.

- 2.3 Following requests from a number of parents, Haversham Village School carried out a survey of parents, governors and staff in 2014, to review whether the school should consider becoming an 'all through primary school'. The overwhelming majority of respondents were in favour of children staying at the school until the end of Year 6, removing the need to transfer to a junior school. Being a maintained school, Haversham Village School approached the Council to consider whether becoming a primary school is feasible, whether there is a need, and whether it should be formally considered.
- 2.4 The Council's strategic market analysis document 'The School Place Planning Framework 2015-16' projects a need to secure additional school places for children from the age of 7 in this area. Whilst there have historically been 25 fewer junior school places available, compared to the number of infant school places, this has not been an issue previously as there has been a significant surplus of school places within the local area. However, in recent years there has been a significant increase in the demand for school places across the borough (80% increase in the number of children starting in Year R between 2003 and 2015), and this is reflected within the local area, where there is now a growing pressure for school places.
- 2.5 An early consultation was carried out between 1 February 2016 and 13 March 2016, a period of six weeks, to consider the need for additional school places and whether a proposal to change the age range of Haversham Village 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 were also available from the school reception.

3. Issues

- 3.1 Of the 64 responses received to the early consultation, 62 (97%) agreed there was a need for additional junior school places within the area. 61 of these respondents also supported the proposal to consider changing the age range of Haversham school as a solution to this. 1 respondent did not agree there was a need for additional places in the area and so was also against the consideration of expanding Haversham Village School. 1 respondent agreed there was a need, but did not agree with the proposal to consider a solution at Haversham Village School. This respondent however did not suggest an alternative solution when prompted.
- 3.2 The Haversham Social and Community Centre currently has an agreement to use part of the school premises after 6pm, and was therefore contacted directly regarding this proposal. Whilst they did not provide a specific response to the questions asked, they expressed a desire to retain the current agreement. Officers are aware of this agreement, and would seek to provide assurances to Haversham Social and Community Centre if a proposal to expand the school is progressed.

- 3.3 The main benefits cited by those in support of the proposal to consider changing the age range of Haversham Village School were:
- Builds on the success of an 'outstanding' village school
 - Continuity provides a consistent and stable education for children
 - It would make school runs easier if children are all in the same school
 - Provides parental choice
 - Takes pressure away from oversubscribed middle schools
- 3.4 The concern raised against the proposal to consider changing the age range of Haversham Village School relates to the impact on access and parking for local residents. Whilst this is an important issue, the statutory process determines that any decision at this time would be considered from an education perspective and would be subject to the grant of any planning permissions. This would be considered separately by the relevant committee.
- 3.5 While a significant majority of respondents were in favour of progressing a proposal to change the age range at Haversham Village School, a number of these respondents expressed caution about the need for adequate parking, the quality of the school buildings and the desire to retain a village school atmosphere by keeping to one form entry per year group. It is important to note that this proposal is only seeking to change the age range of the school, and not to increase the number of children per year group. Officers welcome feedback regarding parking and accommodation, and will consider these matters further if the scheme progresses.

4. Options

4.1 There are 3 options:

(i) Do nothing

The School Place Planning Framework projects a need for additional junior school places within the local area, and this 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 will have to pay for children to be transported to vacant places across the borough.

(ii) Publish a statutory proposal to change the age range of Haversham Village School, to become a primary school for children aged 4 to 11.

As desired by the significant majority of respondents, the Council would explore the feasibility of expanding the accommodation and commence a wider 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.

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

The disparity of places between infant and junior schools is particularly prominent at Haversham, which prompted the initial approach by Haversham Village School. No alternative suggestions or proposals were provided through the consultation.

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

a) Capital

The total cost for providing the additional accommodation estimated to be in the region of 2.0m. This would be funded by Basic Need grant provided by the Department for Education.

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.

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 (from the DSG). 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.

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

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