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Consultation on proposals to provide additional primary school places for Whiteley

Summary

As many of you will know, Whiteley primary school is oversubscribed from within the Whiteley community and a significant number of local children travel to schools outside the immediate area. This consultation seeks your views on proposals for additional primary places for Whiteley.

The Portsmouth and Winchester Dioceses and Hampshire County Council would like to hear your views on proposals to provide a new Voluntary Aided (VA) primary school in Whiteley from September 2013.

This document gives you the opportunity to engage in a debate about the best way to provide educational opportunities for the children of Whiteley. The decision that the County Council makes will be guided by what is best overall for the children and for education in Whiteley. It is likely that the new provision will be provided only if sufficient interest is shown by the community.

For many years, the demand for primary places in Whiteley has outstripped supply and some pupils living in Whiteley have attended schools within the Western Wards. An increase in demand for primary school places, particularly at Year R (age 4+) has exacerbated the position with additional housing being built in the Western Wards area. The County Council recognised the need for additional primary places and in 2007 sought to purchase a suitable site for a new school. Unfortunately the new site could not be secured and additional primary places were made available within the Sarisbury area.

In 2011 the Diocese of Portsmouth, in partnership with Emmaus Learning, applied to set up a Church of England Free School; this was turned down by the Department for Education. Whilst we have looked at progressing the application again, this would mean delaying the opening of a much needed school. Together with Emmaus Learning and the Local Authority the Diocese of Portsmouth believes the best option for opening a school in September 2013 is to propose a Voluntary Aided School.

This is a far simpler process with a more certain outcome.

The proposed residential development at North Whiteley is being discussed by developers with Winchester City Council and will generate the need for two new primary schools. The proposal for a new voluntary aided primary school is being brought forward on the back of this proposed development. It is intended that the new primary school be set up as a permanent school with a capacity of 210 places, initially in temporary accommodation. The school will admit 30 pupils into Year R in September 2013 with some places available for Year 1 pupils if there is a demand. In the longer term the school will be moved to a permanent site within the North Whiteley development, in purpose-built accommodation. At that stage it would be expanded to meet some of the need for additional school places to serve that development.

If the proposal to establish a new VA primary school in Whiteley is not forthcoming there will be a need to expand one or more schools within the Western Wards to cater for the additional pupils and a continued need to transport Whiteley pupils to these schools until the building of the permanent schools in North Whiteley.

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Discussions have already taken place with Fareham primary schools and two have expressed an interest in expanding.

What is the process of consultation?

This initial consultation will run until Tuesday 23 October 2012. The Diocese will then decide, taking into consideration all the views expressed, whether to publish a public notice setting out its intention to establish a new 210 place VA primary school. The public notice would run for six weeks from 1 November 2012 until 14 December 2012 during which time representations can be made.

If no significant objections are raised to the public notice a report will be presented to the Director of Children's Services in December 2013 recommending the school be established with effect from September 2013.

If significant objections are raised to the public notice a report will be produced setting out the issues and making a recommendation to the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services at his decision day in January 2013. Depending on the outcome the school will either be approved or not by the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services. If the school is approved in January 2013 the new school will be established with effect from September 2013.

Will I have the opportunity to discuss the proposal and ask questions?

Yes. Consultation meetings are planned for all interested members of the community (see below).

At the meetings you will have the opportunity to hear Diocesan and County Council officers explain the reasons for the proposals and the process and timescales to be followed but, most importantly, they will want to hear your views.

How can my views be heard?

Consultation meetings will be held and dates are given in section 4. The consultation response document is available online at

www.portsmouth.anglican.org

or as a hard copy from:

Tony Blackshaw, Diocesan Director of Education, Diocese of Portsmouth

First Floor, Peninsular House, Wharf Road, Portsmouth, PO2 8HB

Email: tony.blackshaw@portsmouth.anglican.org

Telephone: 02392 899 658

We will listen to views at the consultation events. We will also consider all electronic or hard copy returns. We urge you to use the response form and complete it in detail. A response using the electronic survey form would be the most efficient for our analysis www.portsmouth.anglican.org. Alternatively a hard copy is available from Tony Blackshaw (contact details above).

1.0 Background and supplementary detail

The pressures on Whiteley school places

For many years the demand for primary places in the Whiteley area has outstripped the capacity at Whiteley Primary School and additional primary school places have been provided in primary schools in the Western Wards.

Two factors have now come together to make consideration of another primary school in Whiteley, on a temporary site, a sensible option.

1. There is a projected growth in the number of pupils within the Western Wards area of Fareham Borough Council owing to new housing development which means that additional primary places to accommodate the Whiteley pupils will need to be provided in the Western Wards schools if the current pattern of schooling is maintained.
2. The North Whiteley development (which includes the provision of two new primary schools) can now reasonably be expected to progress within the next five years, providing a permanent site for the proposed new school as the development takes shape.

The Dioceses of Portsmouth and Winchester are therefore proposing that a one-form entry (210 place) voluntary aided primary school be set up in temporary accommodation within Whiteley. This school would eventually move to permanent accommodation on the North Whiteley development and increase in size to accommodate some of the predicted growth.

The school will provide 30 additional places for each year group with the intention that the school fills from the bottom up, i.e. 30 pupils will be admitted into Year R (reception) each year until the school is full. Initially some further capacity may be available for pupils in Key Stage 1.

Whiteley is served by one primary school with an admission number of 90. This is against projected year R figures of 141 for the 2013 admissions round, 138 in 2014, 127 in 2015 and 122 in 2016. Whilst it is the case that not all Whiteley children apply for a place in a local Hampshire school should a new 1 form entry primary school be established, there may still be some Whiteley children who need to access school places in the Western Wards schools. There will be sufficient places in these schools for those children.

New housing in Whiteley

Within Whiteley Parish (which sits within the geographical boundaries of Winchester City Council), development on sites with planning permission is expected to add about 130 additional dwellings by 2018. There will be a similar number of new dwellings in that part of Whiteley located within Fareham Borough.

For the longer term, Winchester City Council's *Winchester District Local Plan Core Strategy*, which can be found at <http://www.winchester.gov.uk/planning-policy/local-plan-part-1/submission/>, has been submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination later this year. That strategy proposes development at North Whiteley, comprising 3,000 dwellings with supporting infrastructure, including two primary schools and the opportunity to provide a new secondary school. Development is expected to start in 2014.

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The County Council uses a standard formula to give a pupil 'yield' per dwelling in order to determine the "need" for school places. That formula is that for every 100 new houses there will be 30 school aged children entering the primary system as a whole.

Forecasting pupil numbers in Whiteley

The proposed North Whiteley development will include the provision of two new three-form entry (630 place) primary schools, one of which has always been anticipated to be a voluntary aided school. In current projections of pupil numbers (including those that will be generated from within the North Whiteley Development) these two new schools, together with the existing Whiteley Primary School, will be able to accommodate all primary aged pupils living in Whiteley.

Capital funding

The national and local government funding position continues to present considerable challenges when considering the required capital investment commitment and priorities; however the provision of the new school in temporary accommodation will be funded through the Children's Services Capital Programme. It is anticipated that, in the longer term, the building of the new permanent school will be funded through contributions from the developers of North Whiteley.

Initial feasibility work has been undertaken by the County Council's Property Services design team to assess the costs of providing the additional places in temporary accommodation and they are confident that this proposal is financially workable. At this stage, the County Council have undertaken high level costings based on the cost of similar provision elsewhere in Hampshire.

Among the sites being considered are:

- Land off Rookery Avenue
- Land off Lady Betty's Drive.
- Other sites arising from this consultation

2.0 The options and issues to consider

The options and alternative proposals

Option A: Create a 210 place primary school in temporary accommodation pending a move to a permanent site within the North Whiteley development.

Option B: Leave the existing provision in Whiteley as it is and provide additional primary age places elsewhere within the Western Wards.

Option C: We would welcome proposals for viable alternative options

Option A

Under this option a permanent voluntary aided school would be set up in temporary accommodation at a site to be agreed. Admission to the school would be at 4+ (Reception year/Year R) and possibly for other Key Stage 1 children in September 2013. Initial feasibility studies indicate that it would be possible to provide a temporary school on either of the sites under consideration.

Should the option of a Voluntary Aided School be taken forward the Portsmouth and Winchester Dioceses and the County Council would be minded to work to a “phased opening” of the new provision where the intake gradually grew by adding successive year groups.

Option A: Issues to consider

- New primary provision for 210 pupils in Whiteley.
- Primary places in the area of greatest demand.
- A perceived disadvantage for other primary schools in the Western Wards area as parents choose to keep their children in Whiteley.
- There would be a need to set a catchment area for the new voluntary aided primary school which is likely to cover the existing Whiteley Primary School catchment and a larger area based on the parish boundary.

Option B

A meeting has been held with the Fareham Headteachers to share with them the challenges facing the County Council in terms of school place planning. They are aware that there is a need to provide additional school places in the area and two primary schools have agreed, in principle, to expand to provide the additional places required. Consequently if the proposed new voluntary aided primary in Whiteley does not receive sufficient support the County Council would proceed with the expansion of one or more schools in the Western Wards to ensure sufficient school places for children within the Western Wards and Whiteley.

There is a need to take into account the infrastructure needs of an expanding school beyond the immediate classrooms. Depending on individual schools' current facilities, increased numbers of pupils may put pressure on areas such as dining and play areas, staffrooms, circulation space and the external areas of schools.

These needs would be considered as part of the expansion but only the most essential would be able to be funded. There would have to be compromises (potentially quite significant ones) around the provision of accommodation because the cost of providing all that would be desirable in terms of additional infrastructure in permanent buildings would be prohibitively expensive or constrained by the limitations of physical space.

Discussions regarding permanent expansions would be held with individual schools' headteachers and governing bodies. Should this option be the final preferred option at the end of this consultation then feasibility studies and plans for individual schools, once drawn up, will be shared with parents and where appropriate local communities either as part of formal consultations (where that is the legal requirement) or through less formal arrangements.

Option B: Issues to consider

- There would be no change to the current pattern of primary schooling in Whiteley and the Western Wards.
- There would be no need to consider catchment areas.
- Some of the schools will welcome the additional funds and economies of scale that the increase in pupils would bring.
- There would have to be compromises (potentially quite significant ones) around the provision of accommodation because it would be too expensive to provide all that would be desirable in terms of additional infrastructure (larger halls, staff rooms, play areas etc.).
- There is some governor concern about expansion of some of these schools.
- Any permanent building work will cause local disruption, although that would be kept to the minimum through careful scheduling of the projects.
- There will be some disruption to existing staff and pupil accommodation during these building works. The extent and nature of this will vary according to the extent of works at individual schools.
- There will be additional pupil travel movements to and from these schools, proportionate to the overall number of pupils to be accommodated in the expansions.

Option C: Alternative proposals

We know there may be other options being considered by various groups and individuals across Whiteley. The Diocese is open to consideration of an alternative site or configuration of school places but any proposal must be capable of being delivered quickly. If a viable alternative option to the two set out in this consultation comes forward, then it will be considered at the end of the consultation as part of the decision making process. The County Council has considered all possible sites in its ownership and other sites in third party ownership that could, possibly, be available as a site for the school. There are various constraints around any options that proposers need to take into account.

- **Planning permission:** Any proposed site would have to be able to gain planning permission for school use.
- **Size of site:** The DfE guidelines on school building suggest a minimum site size of 1.2 hectares for a one-form entry (210 place) primary school (this includes playing fields). If a site can have easy access to playing field provision then the area needed for actual buildings and immediate play areas is considerably less.

Various proposals have already been examined and discounted because of one or more of the factors above. To inform discussions these are listed below with reasons

- The proposed final permanent school site within the North Whiteley development area. This site is not accessible until the development is underway and developers provide the road infrastructure and services to the site.
- Land adjoining the Meadowside Leisure Centre. Even with some of the adjoining land to the church site this is a very tight site.

3.0 Frequently asked questions including catchment areas and traffic

Will there be changes to primary schools' catchment areas?

It is not intended to make any changes to the catchment area for Whiteley Primary School. The catchment area for the new school would probably include, but be wider than, the catchment area for Whiteley Primary School. In general voluntary aided schools have larger catchment areas than a community school as the catchment area for a voluntary aided school covers the whole parish. It is likely that this position would remain following the building of the permanent voluntary aided school in the future although further discussions would take place with the Diocese, the school and the County Council about the catchment area covered by the school.

Will there be changes to secondary school catchment area?

The current Whiteley Primary School is linked to Henry Cort Community College. It is proposed that the new school will also be linked to Henry Cort. The County Council anticipate that the current general patterns of movement of pupils from primary to secondary from Whiteley will remain broadly unchanged.

What about traffic?

The County Council appreciates that local residents will be concerned about the potential traffic implications around the new school and recognises that it will cause concern to residents immediately local to the site. When the new school is moved into the North Whiteley development we plan to create school places as close as possible to where children live and, therefore, create the best chances that those children will make their way to school other than by car.

Initial thoughts from the highways consultants on the proposal for the new primary school to be located immediately to the south of the existing Whiteley Primary School off of Rookery Avenue are that it would be suitable, in terms of transport, for use as one-form entry primary school site. The highway consultants have drawn attention to the traffic calming in place around the area of Lady Betty's Drive and the narrow roads leading to the site. These preliminary views will be subject to more detailed investigations and assessments should this proposal be taken forward.

A school travel plan will be produced in consultation with other interested parties. It looks at how pupils, staff and visitors travel to and from school, and sets out measures to:

- encourage and enable students, parents, guardians and staff to walk and cycle
- encourage and enable children, parents, guardians and staff to use bus and train services
- encourage and provide educational programmes relating to child travel and how this links to the environment, safety and health
- improve safety.

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Will the new school have to be an Academy?

The presumption is that all new schools will be opened either as academies or free schools unless no sponsor comes forward to run them. However, it is possible for a voluntary aided school to be proposed by a Diocese which does not have to be an academy. This brings the added advantage of a shorter set up time than the establishment of an academy.

Given the rise in primary numbers will there be sufficient secondary age places as they feed through?

There is a sufficient supply of secondary places at Henry Cort that will allow the additional primary age pupils attending the proposed new one-form entry primary school to access, certainly in the short term. As the main North Whiteley development is built it is anticipated that a new secondary school will be built, again from contributions from developers, which will be large enough to accommodate all secondary age pupils living in Whiteley.

What happens after this consultation?

This consultation will run until 23 October 2012. The Dioceses will then decide, taking into consideration all the consultation responses, whether to publish a public notice outlining the intention to establish a new primary school. The public notice will run for six weeks from 1 November 2012 until 14 December 2012.

If no objections are raised as a result of the public notice a report will be presented to the Director of Children's Services in December 2013 with a recommendation that the school be established with effect from September 2013.

If objections are raised as a result of the public notice a report will be produced setting out the issues and making a recommendation to the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services at his decision day in January 2013. Depending on the outcome the school will either be approved or declined by the Executive Member. If the school is approved by the Executive Lead Member at his decision day in January 2013 the new school will be established with effect from September 2013.

Will I have the opportunity to discuss the proposal and ask questions?

Yes. Consultation meetings are planned for governors, parents, staff and other interested members of the community (see below).

At the meetings you will have the opportunity to hear Diocesan and County Council officers explain the reasons for the proposal and the process and timescales to be followed but, most importantly, they will want to hear your views. These will be reported back to either the Director of Children's Services in December 2012 or the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services in January 2013.

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How can my views be heard?

We will listen to views at the consultation events.

We will also consider all electronic or hard copy returns. We urge you to use the response form and complete it in detail. A response using the electronic survey form would be the most efficient for our analysis.

www.portsmouth.anglican.org or www.winchester.anglican.org

Further questions

If you have further questions or would like more information which is not covered in this document please contact:

Tony Blackshaw, Diocesan Director of Education, Diocese of Portsmouth
First Floor, Peninsular House, Wharf Road, Portsmouth, PO2 8HB
Email: tony.blackshaw@portsmouth.anglican.org
Telephone: 02392 899 658

4.0 Consultation events

Public meetings

As part of the consultation, we will be holding an open meeting:

- Tuesday 25 September – 1930 - 2130 Whiteley Primary School.

Drop-in sessions

We will also be holding a drop-in session, at which officers will be present to explain the proposals and answer any questions you may have. This will take place on:

- Friday 5 October – 0930 – 1130 Drop in coffee morning – Whiteley Community Centre.

You are welcome to attend either of the above meetings.