

Forward Plan reference number: FP/158/09/21

Report title: An expansion to Hillhouse Church of England Primary School to take additional pupils from September 2023	
Report to: Councillor Tony Ball - Cabinet Member for Education Excellence, Skills and Training	
Report author: Clare Kershaw – Director for Education	
Date: 12 May 2022	For: Decision
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County Divisions affected: Waltham Abbey, Epping Forest	

Confidential Appendix

This report has a confidential appendix which is not for publication as it includes exempt information falling within paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended.

1 Everyone's Essex

- 1.1 Investment in the academy, Hillhouse Church of England Primary School (the School), delivers on all four strategic aims identified in *Everyone's Essex – Our plan for levelling up the county: 2021-2025*.
- 1.2 This proposal would contribute to the strategic aims of creating a good place for children and families to grow, promoting health and wellbeing for all ages, a high-quality environment and creating a strong, inclusive and sustainable economy.
- 1.3 Delivery of key commitments include delivering infrastructure to support new homes and communities; achieving net-zero, through buildings that will have a net-zero carbon operational design; supporting active travel as part of the built environment of a sustainable, healthy neighbourhood; enabling healthy lifestyles by providing facilities that give focus for the community; supporting high quality education outcomes with facilities that ensure children are able to learn and teachers able to teach in the most conducive environment.
- 1.4 If the recommended option is approved to agree the expansion of the School, Essex residents in Waltham Abbey will benefit from additional, high quality primary provision becoming available in their town from September 2023, increasing their chances of gaining local places for their children in preferred schools. The expansion promotes engagement during those vital early years of schooling and thus increasing the likelihood of future prosperity

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Agree that the School should increase its Published Admission Number ("PAN") from 45 to 60 to enable it to better serve the demand for primary school places in its local area from September 2023.
- 2.2 Approve the capital budget for construction and associated project fees as profiled in the Confidential Appendix.
- 2.3 Agree to the procurement of the associated building works through a two-stage design and build mini competition using the Essex Construction Framework.
- 2.4 Agree that the Head of Infrastructure Delivery may award the contract for the expansion of the School once he is content that the following conditions have been met:
 - a. A satisfactory planning permission has been granted;
 - b. The construction costs are within the agreed budget and represent value for money.

3 Background and Proposal

- 3.1 The demand for school places continues to grow within the administrative area of Essex County Council (ECC), and ECC has a duty to ensure that every child wanting one has access to a school place. In executing these responsibilities, the ECC also seeks to add value to the educational offer that can be made to parents and carers within a local area, to ensure that learners receive the best possible outcomes from their time in formal education.
- 3.2 Like many places across Essex, the town of Waltham Abbey is growing as a result of house building activity underway in the local area. Projected pupil numbers, as set out within Essex County Council's latest school place planning document (*10 Year Plan - Meeting the demand for school places in Essex, 2021-2030*) show a sharp rise over the next few years and as such, these children should ideally be accommodated within local schools.
- 3.3 Should these places not be provided locally then there is a strong possibility that increased car journeys will need to be made outside the local area, in order for parents to secure a preferred primary school placement. However, by enhancing provision that sits directly within the area of demand it is not unreasonable to see this as the more sustainable solution, with children able to walk, cycle or scoot to their local school, reducing congestion and the subsequent impact that that has upon public health.
- 3.4 There is a growing demand for primary school places within Waltham Abbey, the planning group within which Hillhouse Church of England Primary School sits. The ongoing deficit of places in Waltham Abbey over the next decade is illustrated by the following table should no mitigation be forthcoming, (which was published within the planning document referenced at 3.2). Over time several measures could be needed to relieve this forecast pressure on places within the local area, the expansion of the School.

Waltham Abbey

Current PAN: 240
Current Capacity: 1,734

Reception Place Forecast

Year	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29	29/30	30/31
+/-	-36	-18	-12	-19	-23	-26	-29	-31	-34	-34
High Beech Church of England Primary School, Hillhouse Church of England Primary School, Leverton Primary School, Upshire Primary Foundation School, Waltham Holy Cross Primary School										

- 3.5 ECC's proposal to increase the number of pupils able to attend the School will ensure that more local children can access a local school place. It will provide more places to meet the growing demand in the area and will enable parents to gain a place for their child at a school rated 'Good' by Ofsted (last inspected in June 2015). It is strongly supported by the School's senior leadership, who recognise the organisational advantages that moving to two forms of entry would deliver for future pupils.
- 3.6 It is anticipated that the School will grow on a phased basis, as it admits up to 15 additional pupils into its Reception Year cohort year-on-year. The School could be expected to reach its full capacity of 420 places in September 2029.
- 3.7 The potential impact of increasing the School's PAN on other local schools has been taken into account. As has been previously stated, this expansion by 15 Reception places does not fully mitigate the medium to longer term demand within the Waltham Abbey planning group on its own, and appropriate solutions will be delivered elsewhere within the group when it is prudent to do so, during the current 10-year forecast period.
- 3.8 A Formal consultation was undertaken by the School between 27th September and 8th November 2021. Documents outlining the proposal were hosted on the School's website between those dates, with an invitation for interested parties to have their say about the expansion to the School. No responses were received during the window for comment.

4 Links to our Strategic Ambitions

- 4.1 This report links to the following aims in the Essex Vision
- Provide an equal foundation for every child
 - Develop our County sustainably
 - Share prosperity with everyone
- 4.2 Approving the recommendations in this report will have the following impact on the Council's ambition to be net carbon neutral by 2030:
- 4.2.1 The School will benefit from a building that includes zero carbon enhancements to the specification, which will contribute to ECC's aspiration to reduce its carbon footprint, working towards its net zero targets. Any reductions saved

through cost avoidance could be reinvested into resources that improve the delivery of the curriculum, thereby improving education outcomes for young people.

4.2.2 The aspiration to achieve zero carbon in the project specification is consistent with ECCs emerging commitment towards commissioning zero carbon buildings as referenced in the climate change commission report presented to ECC. This project aspires to achieve Net Zero in operational costs and the budget estimate to achieve those aspirations has been estimated at £185,000. The proposed Net zero enhancements will consist of PV, LED lighting and Air Source Heat Pumps.

4.2.3 Building to the 2050 weather file helps mitigate the risks of future overheating, and the use of the weather data files enables designers to test their building models against a variety of weather scenarios and predictions for UK summer temperatures. This means buildings can be designed to be more sustainable and resilient to current and future weather conditions.

4.2.4 Considerations within the modelling process to avoid overheating and also improve energy efficiency, aligned with the Department for Education (DfE) guidance of a fabric first approach, would include, building orientation, building form, thermal mass of the building fabric, high insulation, increased airtightness, optimising solar gain and natural ventilation.

4.3 This report links to the following strategic priorities in 'Everyone's Essex':

- A strong, inclusive and sustainable economy
- A high-quality environment
- Health wellbeing and independence for all ages
- A good place for children and families to grow

5 Options

5.1 Option 1 – Agree to approve the proposal and expand the School (recommended option)

5.1.1 This proposal is part of the overall strategic response to meet the need for additional school places.

5.1.2 ECC's proposal to expand the School is intended to ensure that local children have the opportunity to access a local school and, as the need for these places is driven by demand that already exists within the town, these children will live well within walking distance of the School and a safe walking route must already exist for them to get there on foot, bicycle or scooter. However, ECC has dedicated officers who assist schools in drawing up travel plans, and this resource will be available to the School should it need to mitigate the impact of additional children travelling to the site by car.

5.1.3 On balance it is considered desirable to expand the School for the educational benefits this will bring (for example, the removal of mixed age teaching as it will run two full classes per Year Group). Further, education funding being largely driven by pupil numbers, financial benefits can be expected to follow the

expansion, in terms of the resource secured by the School to deliver the curriculum.

5.1.4 The outcome of the strategic analysis indicated that expanding the School is a viable option that represented good value for money to the Essex taxpayer.

5.1.5 Option 1 is therefore the preferred option.

5.2 Option 2 – Do nothing

5.2.1 The option to do nothing is not practicable. This report identifies a growing need for primary school places within town of Waltham Abbey, and Essex County Council is under a legal duty to make sure that a school place is available for each child within its administrative area that requires one.

5.2.2 Accordingly, taking no action is not the recommended option.

6 Issues for consideration

6.1 Financial implications

6.1.1 Please see the Confidential Appendix for details of the financial implications of this decision.

6.1.2 The total capital cost is included in the current and future years' capital programme and the revenue implications are included in the Medium Term Resource Strategy (MTRS). A contingency of 5% has been included to cover any risks identified.

6.2 Legal implications

6.2.1 ECC has a statutory duty to commission supply of school places. ECC is responsible for funding the 'basic need' provision of additional school places in Essex at all schools, including academies.

6.2.2 As an academy school, ECC does not control the size of the school or the expansion process which is for the School and the Department for Education to agree and approve.

6.2.3 ECC must comply with the terms of the Framework Agreement when awarding the contract for construction works. Since the School will not be a party to the works contract, it will be necessary for the contractor to provide collateral warranties to the School.

6.2.4 The School will need to enter into an agreement with ECC to allow ECC access to the premises for the construction works.

7 Equality and Diversity Considerations

- 7.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty applies to the Council when it makes decisions. The duty requires us to have regard to the need to:
- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act. In summary, the Act makes discrimination etc. on the grounds of a protected characteristic unlawful
 - (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.
- 7.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, gender, and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).
- 7.3 The Equalities Comprehensive Impact Assessment indicates that the proposals in this report will not have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic.

8 List of Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix 1 – Confidential Appendix
- 8.2 Appendix 2 – Equalities Comprehensive Impact Assessment

9 List of Background papers

- 9.1 Consultation document
- 9.2 Consultation letter to parents

I approve the above recommendations set out above for the reasons set out in the report.	Date 24/6/22
Councillor Tony Ball, Cabinet Member for Education Excellence, Lifelong Learning and Employability	

In consultation with:

Role	Date
Executive Director, Children and Families and Education	24/6/2022
Clare Kershaw on behalf of Helen Lincoln	
Executive Director, Corporate Services (S151 Officer)	31/05/2022
Stephanie Mitchener on behalf of Nicole Wood	
Director, Legal and Assurance (Monitoring Officer)	12/05/2022
Susan Moussa on behalf of Paul Turner	