

Part I

Electoral Division affected:
Chorley East; Chorley
North; Chorley Rural West;

Additional Primary Places in Euxton, Chorley - Proposal to Expand Balshaw Lane Primary School Chorley
(Appendices 'A' to 'D' refer)

Appendix 'D' is not for publication - Exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972. It is considering that in all the circumstances of the case the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

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Executive Summary

Between 6 June 2016 and 1 July 2016, the authority consulted on a proposal to permanently expand Balshaw Lane Primary School in Euxton, Chorley, with effect from September 2018. Under the statutory process, the County Council is now required to consider the responses to the consultation, and to decide whether to proceed to the next stage and publish Statutory Notices of the proposal. The purpose of this report is to provide the information necessary for that decision to be taken.

Recommendation

The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools is recommended:

- (i) to note the consultation arrangements which were undertaken and the responses that were received in respect of the authority's proposal; and
- (ii) to agree to the County Council publishing a Statutory Notice of its proposal to expand Balshaw Lane Primary School, Euxton, Chorley, by increasing the number of reception pupils admitted to the school from 45 to 60 from September 2018.

Background and Advice

As a result of the rising birth rate, coupled with the effect of significant housing developments, intake into primary schools in some areas is expected to increase over the foreseeable future. The changing dynamics of Lancashire's population, influenced by increased births, immigration, housing developments and economic migration, means that Lancashire County Council's provision of school places must also change in order to meet the changing needs of residents, whether through provision of additional places or through the redistribution of existing places within the county.

As reported to the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools on 12 January 2015, there is a sustained need for additional places in the Euxton area of Chorley. This increased demand for primary school places in Chorley is in addition to the places provided by the expansion of Primrose Hill Primary School from 210 to 420 pupils and the expansion of Trinity CE/Methodist Primary School from 420 to 630 pupils, both of which were approved by the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools on 13 July 2015.

Balshaw Lane Primary School is a popular school and has achieved an 'Outstanding' Ofsted rating. On 5 November 2015, the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools approved an increase of the published admission number for Balshaw Lane Primary School from 40 places to 45 places at Reception age, with effect from September 2017, as part of a capital improvement programme that provided additional places to regularise admission numbers and address suitability issues as identified by Ofsted. This programme was targeted at areas where pupil projections indicated increased demand for school places. The increase in the school's published admission number meant that it became compatible with class size of 30 requirements. This programme was funded from the Schools Single Capital Pot.

On 12 May 2016, the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools approved the consultation on a proposal to permanently increase the Reception intakes at Balshaw Lane Primary School from 45 to 60 places from September 2018. If the permanent expansion is approved, the capacity of the primary school would increase from 315 to 420. Should the permanent expansion be approved, then additional permanent accommodation will be provided on the existing site. This will be enabled by expansion of the existing building; subject to planning consent being granted.

A consultation on the expansion proposal took place between 6 June 2016 and 1 July 2016.

Process for permanent expansion

As the County Council wishes to propose an increase of the school's capacity for 2018 and beyond, it is categorised as a 'significant enlargement' under the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013, therefore, relevant statutory procedures must be followed. Details of the planned timescale to include these statutory procedures are as follows:

Action	Timescale
Consultation on the proposals to enlarge Balshaw Lane Primary School (non-statutory stage)	6 June 2016 to 1 July 2016 (4 weeks)
Report to the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools on the responses to the consultation and seeking permission to publish statutory notices	Current stage
Publish Statutory Notices	22 November 2016
Representation Period	4 weeks to 19 December 2016
Decision by the Cabinet Member	February 2017 (The decision must be made within 2 months of the end of the representation period)
Implementation	September 2018

The following are the statutory requirements around consultation as set out within Department for Education (DfE) guidance, 'Making Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools' (April 2016) and evidence of the authority's compliance with each requirement;

'Although there is no longer a statutory 'pre-publication' consultation period for prescribed alteration changes, there is a strong expectation that schools and LA's will consult interested parties. In developing their proposal prior to publication, as part of their duty under public law to act rationally and take into account all relevant considerations.'

A 'pre-publication' consultation period was held for a four week period during term time from 6 June 2016 to 1 July 2016. The consultation document set out at Appendix 'A' provided full details of the proposal, and a consultation event was held at the school on 16 June 2016 for parents, staff, governors and other interested parties. A list of all those that have been consulted appears on page 8 in the consultation booklet. Pages 5 and 9 of the consultation document provided information on how to make views known. In addition, pupils' views were invited through a children's consultation carried out by the school.

This report provides an analysis of views expressed which will be taken into account prior to making a decision as to the publication of proposals.

Consultations

The consultation document asked whether people supported the expansion of Balshaw Lane Primary School, to increase the number of pupils admitted to Reception year at the school from 45 to 60 with effect from September 2018.

All responses received, together with the notes of the public consultation event, have been made available via the councillor's information portal, Councillor First.

A total of 28 responses were received:

- 21 via completion (either manually or on-line) of the questionnaire provided; one individual email from a Head Teacher in the local area who supports the proposal;
- one individual letter from an interested member of the community who strongly disagrees with the proposal due to a perceived increase noise from the play area due to additional pupil numbers, the view that the current play area was installed without any consultation and a suggestion that the reception class and play area are relocated away from residential houses; one individual email from a Councillor for Chorley North West who supports the expansion of the school;
- two joint responses; one from Ofsted and one from Whittle-le-Woods Parish Council who note the consultation but make no comments;
- one joint response from the Association of Teachers & Lecturers undertaking to work together with all stakeholders; and
- one response from a Councillor for Chorley South West Ward, Chorley Council, stating concern over the lack of primary school places in the area for local people which will become a bigger issue with future proposed housing developments coming forward in the area.

Of the 28 responses, the following information was obtained with regard to the view as to whether or not there was support for the proposal to expand the school:-

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Totals
14	2	6	0	6	28

Of the 28 respondents, 25 (89%) gave a reason for their response and 3 others (11%) gave no reason.

The responses came from the following categories of people with an interest in the school:

- 8 (29%) from parent/guardian of pupils currently attending Balshaw Lane Primary School;
- 9 (32%) from members of staff at Balshaw Lane Primary School;
- 2 (7%) from political representatives;
- 5 (18%) from an interested member of the local community; and
- 4 (14%) from others.

The 'others' comprise: the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, the Head Teacher of Trinity CE/Methodist Primary School, Whittle-le-Woods Parish Council and Ofsted.

From the responses, the following comments were received:-

Support

Of the 16 respondents (57%) that agreed or strongly agreed with the proposal to expand Balshaw Lane Primary School, the following reasons were given:

- 9 of the respondents felt that expansion would be a benefit to current and future pupils, through the provision of single year group classes being 2FE;
- 2 of the respondents offered their full support to the proposal and staff;
- 1 of the respondents felt that there was a need for other school expansions in the area;
- 3 of the respondents felt that it would be easier to teach in a 2FE and ensure full curriculum was met;
- 3 of the respondents expressed concern over lack of local primary school places;
- 1 of the respondents stated that parking facilities for staff would need to be increased;
- 8 of the respondents felt that expanding the school would provide more space through a larger hall and improve facilities including more intervention rooms;
- 2 of the respondents felt that parents would be happier if there were no mixed classes;
- 1 of the respondents felt there would be advantages to 2FE/Partner Teaching for sharing resources;
- 1 of the respondents felt that the consultation booklet was unhelpful and incorrect;
- 1 of the respondents hoped that teaching standards would not be compromised; and
- 1 of the respondents felt that Balshaw Lane Primary School was a super school and that expansion would benefit children's opportunities.

Opposition

From the 6 responses (21%) that strongly disagreed with the proposal to expand Balshaw Lane Primary School, the following reasons were provided:

- 4 of the respondents were concerned about the increased traffic and noise around school and local estate;
- 2 of the respondents expressed concerns about parking within the local area which they say is already an issue;
- 2 of the respondents raised concerns about safety and danger due to an expected increase in traffic and cars;
- 1 of the respondents felt that there was a need for a designated drop off point;
- 1 of the respondents expressed concerns over large class bases making it difficult to follow the correct curriculum;
- 1 of the respondents felt that the class sizes were already too large;
- 1 of the respondents felt that too many children were travelling into the school from outside of the village;
- 1 of the respondents expressed concern about increased noise from the play area due to increased pupil numbers;
- 1 of the respondents was concerned that the current play area was installed without any consultation; and
- 1 of the respondents suggests relocating the reception class and play area away from the local houses.

Response

The school acknowledges that the increase in pupil numbers was likely to result in increasing traffic and demand for parking, however, they were confident that any issues could be managed. Lancashire County Council was proposing to increase the number of staff car parking spaces on the school grounds in accordance with LCC parking standards. This would form part of a planning application for the scheme. Parking and traffic issues will be further considered as part of the traffic risk assessment which will be undertaken as part of the application to obtain planning permission required for the permanent new build, if the proposal goes ahead.

The Head Teacher and governors are committed to ensuring that the increase in the number of pupils does not make the school feel 'too large' for pupils and will not have a negative impact on them. The size of individual classes will not increase as a result of the expansion, as a 60 admission number allows for 2 classes of 30 per year, compared with the current split year arrangements. An expansion to a 2 form entry school would allow teachers to work through the curriculum with single age classes and not mixed age classes as taught currently.

The school currently has more pupils on roll than the accommodation should support. The school has 276 pupils but the net capacity of the school suggests that only 257 pupils should be accommodated. The proposed expansion would result in the net capacity of the school being increased to 420 by providing additional accommodation, and this would mean that some of the current overcrowding issues at the school would be improved by the expansion.

Given that the expansion is gradual then the noise level would be expected to increase gradually also. There are a few different play areas on the school site so noise level should be split accordingly. Ball games and football would be played in the Multi-Use Games Area which is planned towards the middle of the school site. This school has been open since 1976 and children play outside therefore some noise is to be expected in this environment.

In relation to the concern regarding a play area being installed without consultation, the school states that a small play area was added to the end of the infants' playground but was under the required size requiring planning approval therefore, consultation was not required. Any of the new play areas that will be affected will form part of the planning application.

The suggestion to relocate the reception class and play area away from the local houses is a suitability issue and outside the scope of the proposed expansion.

Neither in support nor in opposition

Of the 6 respondents (21%) that neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposal, one provided no reason for their response. The Association of Teachers and Lecturers confirmed that they will endeavour to work with all stakeholders involved. Whittle-le-Woods Parish Council and Ofsted noted the consultation but made no comment.

One response was raised by a Councillor from Chorley Council, stating concern over the lack of primary school places in the area for local people which they fear will become a bigger issue with future proposed housing developments coming forward

in the area. A second response was raised by an interested member of the local community who expressed concerns around parking within the local area and the need for additional staff parking facilities to be incorporated into any school expansion plans as the need for further parking spaces will increase as staff numbers increase.

Response

The School Planning Team meets regularly with Pupil Access colleagues to discuss how the number of places is meeting the needs of the local communities. A number of additional places have been added in the Chorley area over recent years in order to meet the needs of additional housing in the area.

Officers keep the process under constant review and undertake pupil forecasts twice yearly, in order to keep up with the changing housing land supply position (which are used to monitor the progress of new housing amongst other factors). Such forecasts also take account of births on a ward by ward basis, levels of in-year transfer into and out of schools and the relative market shares of school intakes.

At the current time, there are deemed to be sufficient places in the area should this proposal be approved, from a school place planning point of view.

The parking and traffic issues will be considered as part of the traffic risk assessment which will be conducted as part of the application to obtain planning permission required for the permanent new build, if the proposal is approved. Lancashire County Council is proposing to increase the number of staff car parking spaces on the school grounds in accordance with LCC parking standards, should the proposal be approved. This would form part of a planning application for the scheme.

Consultation event

As part of the period of consultation which ran from 6 June 2016 to 1 July 2016, an appointment led consultation event was held at the school on 16 June 2016. In total, 29 individuals attended the event. These included parents and grandparents of current and potential pupils, staff and local residents. A comprehensive list of comments made at the consultation event is set out at Appendix 'B'.

All individuals attending the consultation event were in support of the proposal but 19 expressed the following issues of concern:

- size of the current school hall will not be large enough to hold all the children;
- loss of land available to the school for outdoor play if it is built upon to extend the school;
- disruption to current pupils whilst building work is undertaken;
- only having one access point into the schools grounds;
- car parking and increase in traffic issues;
- how the school would maintain the same 'feel' with the additional pupils;
- impact on local high school places; and
- can the school remain 'outstanding' with additional children.

Response

If the proposal is approved:

- the school hall would be enlarged within the scope of this scheme;
- the school is located on a large site which is sufficient to give the larger pupil numbers sufficient outdoor area, even with the extended building;
- the County Council would replace 'hard' playground space which will be used for building on and also install a Multi-Use Games Area which will have an artificial surface therefore could be used all year round;
- the aim will be to minimise disruption to the pupils as far as is reasonably practical to do so and in liaison with the school. Any major disruptive works to high traffic areas of the school e.g. the hall would be programmed outside of school hours/during a holiday period;
- during the proposed construction phase of the works a separate access for contractors vehicles would be made off Balshaw Lane and in liaison with LCC Highways;
- parking and traffic issues would be considered as part of a traffic risk assessment which would be conducted as part of the application to obtain planning permission required for the permanent new build;
- the Head Teacher and governors are committed to ensuring that any increase in the number of pupils does not make the school feel 'too large' for pupils. The size of individual classes will not increase as a result of the expansion, as a 60 admission number allows for 2 classes of 30 per year, compared with the current split year arrangements.

In addition:

- the County Council monitors the need for additional places for secondary aged pupils on a continuous basis and is addressing a shortfall in secondary places in the Chorley area currently; and
- Lancashire County Council will aim to provide additional places at existing schools, wherever possible and appropriate, rather than commission new provision. The rationale for this approach is to maintain stability in the existing school system; to provide the places in the shortest timescale possible; and to achieve best value for money. There are already 46 other 2 form entry primary schools in Lancashire, 43 graded 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted. The Head Teacher and governors are also committed to ensuring that the high standards achieved by the school are maintained.

The Children's Consultation

During the consultation period the school consulted all 9 school classes on their views towards the proposed expansion of Balshaw Lane Primary School. Of the 266 pupils who were involved in the consultation, 243 responses were in favour of the proposed expansion and 23 were opposed. The children's consultation response summary is set out at Appendix 'C'.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Additional primary school places are required in Euxton, Chorley area, in order to meet the demand from the increasing birth rate and increased demand resulting from housing development. The authority must ensure that it fulfils its statutory obligations in respect of the provision of school places.

The consultation process has highlighted a small range of concerns around the impact of the expansion of Balshaw Lane Primary School, mainly around potential traffic and parking issues. These issues will be considered as part of subsequent planning consultation if the Cabinet Member makes the final decision to proceed to expand the school.

Having considered the responses received as part of the consultation, it is recommended that a Statutory Notice is published to propose that Balshaw Lane Primary School is expanded by increasing the number of reception pupils from 45 to 60 with effect from September 2018. The school accommodation would be increased to a capacity of 420 in order that the school will be able to admit up to 60 reception pupils per reception year.

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Risk management

If additional primary school places are not created there is a risk that the Authority would fail in its statutory responsibility to make sure that a maintained school place is available to all Lancashire children of the appropriate age range who want one.

Providing additional places increases the overall capacity in the areas and, if birth rates fall or planned housing development fails to materialise in the future, there may be surplus places, with the possibility that the impact may be felt greatest by one or a small number of neighbouring schools.

If the County Council delays its statutory consultation or decision making in respect of the provision of primary school places in the Chorley area, there is a real risk that increased demand will lead to emergency action rather than planned additional places. Emergency action can be disruptive for both the affected school and the families involved in the primary allocation of places, and can impact negatively on the schools' capital programme.

The expansion of the school would be subject to planning permission being granted.

Educational Structure of the School

The school Governing Body is currently considering how the school would manage its teaching arrangements, with the objective of maintaining the school's high standards and ethos.

Land and Property

The expansion of Balshaw Lane Primary School could be accommodated on the existing school site. A feasibility assessment has been carried out for the proposed expansion.

The approval of any physical school expansion will be subject to obtaining relevant planning permission and Section 77(3) consent for the change of use in the land (or meeting the terms of The School Playing Fields General Disposal and Change of Use Consent (No 5) 2014).

Legal and Financial Implications

The legal and financial implications are recorded for inclusion in Part II and are set out at Appendix 'D'. Reason for inclusion in Part II, is as follows:

Exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972. This section of the report contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). It is considering that in all the circumstances of the case the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
Consultation responses for the expansion proposals of Balshaw Lane Primary School	6 June to 1 July 2016	Asset Management, 01772 531957

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

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