

## Report to the Cabinet

Meeting to be held on Thursday, 7 April 2022

### Report of the Head of Service – Asset Management

#### Part I

Electoral Divisions affected:  
Ribble Valley North East;  
Ribble Valley South West;

**Corporate Priorities:**  
Caring for the vulnerable;

### The Proposed Permanent Expansion of St Augustine's Roman Catholic High School, Billington, near Clitheroe

(Appendix 'A' refers)

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#### Brief Summary

Lancashire County Council has a statutory duty to ensure that a primary or secondary school place is available for every child of statutory school age living in Lancashire who requests one.

As a result of a rising secondary school population and increasing primary school population moving through to secondary schools, additional secondary school places are required in Ribble Valley for the 2023/24 academic year and beyond.

This is deemed to be a Key Decision and the provisions of Standing Order C19 have been complied with.

#### Recommendation

Cabinet is asked to:

- (i) Approve a permanent increase in the admission number of St Augustine's Roman Catholic High School from 215 to 240 places from the academic year 2023/24.
- (ii) Approve the capital expenditure detailed in Appendix 'A' to provide additional accommodation and associated works at St Augustine's Roman Catholic High School.

## **Detail**

### **Need for places in Ribble Valley Secondary Schools**

There is a rising secondary school population in Ribble Valley, due to unprecedented housing development, and an increasing primary school population moving through to secondary schools. For the 2023/24 intake, the school place provision forecasts are showing an expected intake to Year 7 of 1,066 pupils, and there are currently 1,028 places available, suggesting a potential 38 place shortfall. Whilst the population is forecast to fluctuate in subsequent years, in all years to 2028 it is anticipated that there will be insufficient places to accommodate demand and, therefore, the need is for permanent places.

St Augustine's Roman Catholic High School currently has a Published Admission Number of 215, and a total of 1,098 pupils on roll in five year groups. The expansion would provide for a permanent increase of 25 additional pupils in Year 7 from the academic year 2023/24, and would ensure that sufficient places are available for future year groups through to 2028, and allow for housing development levels to be accommodated. The proposal would expand the school's capacity to 1,200 mainstream places.

### **Expressions of Interests and Proposed Scheme**

Information regarding the forecast shortfall position was shared with all local secondary head teachers, diocese and trust representatives in November 2021 and, following a number of discussions with individual schools, they were invited to submit expressions of interest in providing additional places. Only St Augustine's Roman Catholic High School came forward. The school scheme was assessed for its feasibility, given that it is a successful and popular school, and it is now proposed to take this forward. The Trustee and Salford Roman Catholic Diocese have undertaken the necessary consultation and approved the expansion at the School's Committee on 8 March 2022 as follows:

- St Augustine's Roman Catholic High School: raising the admission number from 215 to 240, providing an additional 25 places in each Year 7 group on a permanent basis from 2023/24. This scheme ensures that sufficient places are available for future year groups through to 2028, and allows for planned housing levels to be accommodated.

### **Special Educational Needs Units in Mainstream Schools**

In line with the Special Educational Needs and Disability Sufficiency Strategy, the school had expressed an interest in having a Special Educational Needs unit, and the school and Inclusion Service undertook an informal consultation on the provision of a unit. The outcome of the consultation determined that a proposal for the provision of a Special Educational Needs unit would be taken forward at St Augustine's Roman Catholic High School, having received approval by the Trustee and Salford Roman Catholic Diocese. The unit would accommodate up to 16 permanent places for pupils with Speech, Language and Communication needs.

Formal consultation to provide Special Educational Needs places on the site will be undertaken later in the year.

### **Proposed Scheme**

A comparison of the spaces currently provided at the school, and those recommended for a school of 1,200 pupils and a 16 place Special Educational Needs unit was carried out. Based on this, a brief for additional accommodation was agreed.

A feasibility study has been carried out which recommended provision of the new accommodation in a separate block in an agreed location within the site, which would house one general teaching department and the Special Educational Needs unit provision (subject to the formal consultation noted above).

### **Consultations**

The proposal from St Augustine's Roman Catholic High School is not of the scale to require statutory consultation in accordance with Department for Education Guidance. Informal consultation to provide special educational needs places on the site has been undertaken as required, and this will be followed by a formal consultation later this year. As a Voluntary Aided Roman Catholic school, this proposal was subject to consultation and approval by the Trustee and Salford Diocese. The proposal was discussed at the Diocese School's Committee on 8 March 2022, and the decision was approved.

### **Implications:**

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

### **Risk management**

If additional secondary school places are not created, there remains a risk that the authority would fail in its statutory duty to ensure 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 area and, if projected pupil numbers fail to materialise as expected, there may be surplus places created by the proposals. In these circumstances, the authority proposes to work with the group of Ribble Valley schools to ensure that there is a strategic approach to managing the level of places.

### **Equality and Cohesion**

The proposed expansion will impact most protected characteristics groups but will have its greatest impact on the age (children and young people) protected characteristic and pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disability. It is anticipated, however, that the impact should be broadly positive and will contribute positively towards the Public Sector Equality Duty's general aims of advancing

equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between protected characteristics groups.

## **Legal**

Lancashire County Council's statutory obligations in relation to school place commissioning are set out in the School Place Provision Strategy 2022-25. This strategy informs the future planning of school places and sets a collaborative framework for discussions with schools and other stakeholders.

## **Property Asset Management**

The county council owns the playing field area of the school, and the Diocese owns the buildings and land they are built on. Should the new block be sited on an area in county council ownership, arrangements would be made to transfer the land under the new block to the Diocese, as per established practice. 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 of the land (or meeting the terms of The School Playing Fields General Disposal and Change of Use Consent (No 5) 2014).

## **Financial**

Cabinet is asked to approve the capital expenditure as set out at Appendix 'A', to provide the additional accommodation at St Augustine's Roman Catholic High School.

The build project will be funded by Basic Need Grant allocations, and this has been accounted for within the existing Basic Need allocation. However, part of the cost will be offset by s106 monies due to be received by the Authority from housing developers.

Should the expansion of the school be approved, revenue funding assistance would be provided to account for pupils starting in school two or three terms before the increased numbers are reflected within the school budget. This would be provided through the Dedicated Schools Grant, in accordance with the rules agreed by the Lancashire Schools Forum. This will ensure that the school is not financially disadvantaged by the expansion.

Further financial implications are set out at Appendix 'A' and are deemed to be Part II for the reason set out below.

This section of the report contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

## List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
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None

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

Appendix 'A' is not for publication - Exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972. The appendix contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). It is considered that in all the circumstances of the case the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.