

## **Background Paper - Governing Body response to the statutory proposals**

### **Email from the Chair of the Governing Body of Elmgrove Primary School and Nursery sent on 14 March 2014**

Our response is to confirm the response to the initial consultation, and to thank you and Mick for attending our recent Resources GB meeting. In particular:

- Your explanation of the funding was particularly helpful and I think addressed our concerns.
- We acknowledge there unfortunately isn't sufficient time to consider solutions that involve re-shaping the park.
- We note traffic impact and the amount of useable hard surface play space during and after the build remain unresolved questions at this stage.

### **Response from the Governing Body to the statutory consultation**

27<sup>th</sup> January 2014

Dear Mr Parker,

Thank you for your consultation about the permanent expansion of Elmgrove Primary School and Nursery ("the School") published 7 January 2014. This letter constitutes the formal response of the Governing Body of the School. We understand that the transfer of the Targeted Basic Needs funding referred to in the consultation has now been approved.

#### **Consultation Question 1**

#### **Do you agree with the approach to creating additional school places in Harrow?**

The Governing Body acknowledges the need for additional school places and recognises the difficult constraints faced by Harrow Council in meeting that need. Elmgrove already experiences directly the effects of the current under-supply of local school places, with 12 of our 22 classes comprising more than 30 pupils as a result of allocations under the Fair Access Protocol.

We agree with the approach outlined in the consultation paper. We would encourage Harrow Council to be creative and ambitious in seeking out the best long term solutions even if they require an greater level of initial co-ordination. Specifically we suggest that Officers and Councillors consider carefully whether there is scope to sensitively reconfigure "open spaces" in order to achieve the best outcomes for pupils and local residents. Indeed there may be such options at Elmgrove.

## Consultation Question 2

### Do you agree with the proposal to permanently expand Elmgrove Primary School?

The Governing Body agrees in principle with the expansion of Elmgrove to four-form entry. Our wish is for a properly equipped Elmgrove to play a proportionate role educating the increasing number of children in Harrow. We note that almost all of Harrow's primary schools are working with you and playing their part.

The details of how Elmgrove would be expanded are still being developed and potential problems (e.g. traffic) are as yet unquantified. The Governing Body will keep its initial position of support under review as further information emerges. There are five areas of concern set out below which we would like you to consider and provide us with additional information and assurance. We would be grateful if you and/or your colleagues could join our Resources Committee meeting at 7:30pm on 3 March to discuss these matters and to update us more generally on how the consultations are progressing.

1. **Funding:** Thank you for explaining that the build would be funded initially by an expected grant of £2 million from the Targeted Basic Needs Program, and additionally as required from the annual basic needs allocation to the Council. We would like to better understand the nature of these allocations and what risks there are of the funds either becoming unavailable or proving to be insufficient as work progresses.
2. **Traffic:** We have traffic concerns, considering both School relations with local residents, and the safety of pupils and their families. In our view there is already a significant traffic problem on the highways adjacent to the School and we see expansion as an opportunity to rectify the existing problem rather than just maintaining the status quo post-expansion. We welcome the independent review of traffic that has been commissioned and look forward to seeing the findings as part of the statutory consultation phase.

We encourage the Council to consider a full and creative range of options as part of the independent review. These might include reconfiguration of the highways adjacent to the school and the park and/or introducing a "shuttle service" from nearby car-parks. We would welcome the introduction of bike lanes to improve safety for pupils who cycle to school.

Elmgrove has made its own efforts to curb traffic volume and poor behaviour by drivers – there is frequent communication to parents and alternative modes of transport are encouraged. We welcome fresh ideas as to how the School can make a further difference but we have observed that the enforcement is what makes the biggest difference. If no other "magic bullet" can be identified by the independent experts, then at the very least we believe the Council should make a binding commitment to have enforcement officers present in the area at the start and end of each school day.

3. **Building work:** Our goal and expectation during any building work is that the School is operationally indifferent to the building work underway. We would commit appropriate school resources to liaise and jointly plan with those involved in the build and would expect the same commitment from the Council and its contractors.

A specific concern is that we retain sufficient useable outdoor space for sport and play throughout the whole of the build. Elmgrove has developed an excellent programme of sporting activities which, among many other benefits, has seen a marked improvement in pupil behaviour at lunch and playtimes for those who require

further support and guidance. We do not wish to see any of this good work undone as a result of reduced capacity in the rear playground. Members of our Senior Leadership Team will discuss this with the Project Team in the coming weeks and we would like you to work together to find a way of maintaining appropriate playground capacity throughout the build.

4. **Park:** We assume lorries and other traffic will access the building site through the adjacent park. We would like to offer the practical suggestion that the area of the park used for access is given over permanently to the school grounds, with the reduction in open space being offset by allocating part of the school's back field to the park. This would make the side extension much simpler and more viable, the MUGA would not need to be moved, no play-space would be lost during the build, it could facilitate a widening of the highway and pavement adjacent to the park to ease congestion, and ultimately pupils would be able to make excellent use of the space gained with little impact to school from the grounds lost at the back. The area of the park affected is not overlooked so objection from local residents would seem unlikely. We have asked the Senior Leadership Team to discuss feasibility when they meet the Project Team.

5. **Kitchen:** The proposed relocation and improvement of school kitchen facilities is very welcome. We look forward to seeing this included in the final plans.

Thank you for the engagement with the Governing Body and other stakeholders to date and for the professional consultation documents and meetings. We look forward to working with you further on this matter.

Yours sincerely

Chris Roberts  
Chair of Governors, Elmgrove Primary School and Nursery