

Considerations about the proposal in relation to the Decision-Makers Guidance

The decision maker for these statutory proposals is the local authority, and this report presents the proposals to Cabinet for determination. If the local authority fails to decide proposals within two months of the end of the representation period the local authority must forward proposals, and any received representations, to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator for decision. This two month period will end on 2 April 2015.

Decision Makers are required to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State when they take a decision on proposals. New school organisation regulations and associated guidance came into force on 28 January 2014. The guidance documents are available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-organisation-maintained-schools>.

The document 'Annex B: Guidance for Decision-makers' sets out some the factors that decision-makers should consider when deciding a proposal. These factors are not exhaustive and the importance of each will vary depending on the type and circumstances of the proposal. All proposals must be considered on their individual merits.

The format of this Appendix follows the framework of the Annex B guidance.

- The headings and text in italics at the start of each section contains extracts from the guidance that are directly relevant to the statutory proposals to assist Members to understand the factors to be considered.
- The text beneath the extracts in each section contains officer comment in relation to the factors.

Consideration of consultation and representation period

The decision-maker will need to be satisfied that the appropriate consultation and/or representation period has been carried out and that the proposer has had regard to the responses received. If the proposer has failed to meet the statutory requirements, a proposal may be deemed invalid and therefore should be rejected. The decision-maker must consider all the views submitted, including all objections to and comments on the proposal.

Consultation about the proposals to combine and expand Welldon Park Infant and Nursery School and Welldon Park Junior School was conducted from Monday 29 September to Friday 14 November 2014. The consultation responses and outcomes (see 'Views submitted during the consultation' section below) were reported to Cabinet on 11 December 2014 when making the decision to publish statutory proposals.

Statutory proposals to expand to combine and expand Welldon Park Infant and Nursery School and Welldon Park Junior School were published on 5 January 2015 for a four week representation period which closed on 2 February 2015. In order to make the nature of the proposals explicit and clear for all stakeholders, the brief notice and the full proposals stated as full information as possible. It is considered that all necessary information was provided and made available for stakeholders and interested parties to see.

The brief notice and full proposals were developed with close reference to the Government guidance. It is considered that the published brief notice and full proposals comply with the statutory requirements.

Education standards and diversity of provision

Decision-makers should consider the quality and diversity of schools in the relevant area and whether the proposal will meet or affect the aspirations of parents, raise local standards and narrow attainment gaps.

The decision-maker should also take into account the extent to which the proposal is consistent with the government's policy on academies as set out on the department's website.

Quality of schools

Schools in Harrow perform well in comparison to national and statistically similar local authorities. The vast majority of primary schools and secondary schools are judged 'good' or 'outstanding' by OfSTED. As at October 2014, 87% of Harrow's primary and secondary schools are judged 'good' or 'outstanding', compared to 85% in London and 80% nationally (Source: Ofsted Data View).

Diversity of schools

There is a range of schools in Harrow offering diversity to parents both in terms of ethos and size. Harrow has a Church of England primary school, a Hindu primary school, a Jewish primary school, six Roman Catholic primary schools and two Roman Catholic high schools. Primary sector schools are organised as separate and combined infant and junior schools and have a range of planned admission numbers from one to four forms of entry.

Harrow is committed to securing greater autonomy, flexibility and scope for schools to drive their own agendas within a collaborative whole-borough framework. Harrow's success in this approach is demonstrated through the Harrow School Improvement Partnership and the Harrow Collegiate.

The community of Harrow schools has a tradition of collaboration and cooperation and is confident to develop and embrace innovative solutions. Within this context the local authority, in partnership with schools, will continue to explore routes that provide creative and innovative solutions for challenges faced by individual schools and groups of schools, and provide a means to secure school improvement.

Two primary schools established an academy trust to drive improvements in education attainment. Another primary school joined an academy trust with a high school.

Aspirations of parents

The responses to the consultation undertaken on Phase 2 school expansion proposals in September – October 2013 indicate broad agreement with the Council's approach to creating additional school places in Harrow. Over 60% of respondents agreed with the Council's approach to creating additional school places in Harrow.

94 responses to the consultation were received from parents and staff of Welldon Park Infant and Nursery School and Welldon Park Junior School on the proposals to combine and expand the two schools were:

- 36% of responses supported the amalgamation proposal; 57% opposed it and 7% were unsure.
- 58% supported expansion to 3FE; 26% opposed it and 15% were unsure.

15 responses to the expansion consultation online were received:

- 53% of responses agreed with the approach to creating additional school places in Harrow; 40% disagreed and 7% were unsure.
- 24% agreed with the proposal to permanently expand the Welldon Park Schools; 67% opposed it and 7% were unsure.

The consultation responses from the school communities supported the proposed expansion. Over one third supported amalgamation, though over half were opposed.

The response level of 109, from the school communities and online, needs to be viewed in the context of over 900 consultation papers being distributed:

- over 400 consultation papers distributed to the school communities;
- 500 consultation papers distributed to local residents.

Also the publicising of the online consultation response portal on the Harrow Council website.

The consultation responses and outcomes are summarised in the 'Views submitted during the consultation' section below. Members need to consider all the factors in the government guidance when making their decision.

Raise local standards and narrow attainment gaps

A key principle identified by officers and representative primary headteachers in the work to develop expansion proposals was the maintenance of high quality education standards, and all schools with council support as necessary will work to ensure high education standards are promoted through the expansions. The governing bodies and senior leadership teams of the schools will ensure appropriate structures are in place to manage the increased numbers of pupils and deliver the curriculum.

Suitable accommodation and facilities will be provided to accommodate the increased pupil numbers. Revenue funding is based on pupil numbers and the funding for increased numbers of pupils can enable opportunities for schools to be creative in use of resources to promote pupils' learning.

Closing the Gap is a fundamental part of Ofsted's school inspection process, and accordingly, the Local Authority monitors the attainment of identified groups of pupils in its schools.

Government policy on academies

The Government's policy on academies is not directly applicable to these amalgamation and expansion proposals. The amalgamation proposal does not create a new school which is when the 'academy presumption' applies. The governing body of schools are at liberty to consider conversion to academy school status regardless of whether the school is expanded or not.

Demand

In assessing the demand for new school places the decision-maker should consider the evidence presented for any projected increase in pupil population (such as planned housing developments) and any new provision opening in the area (including free schools).

The decision-maker should take into account the quality and popularity of the schools in which spare capacity exists and evidence of parents' aspirations for a new school or for places in a school proposed for expansion. The existence of surplus capacity in neighbouring less popular schools should not in itself prevent the addition of new places.

Reducing surplus places is not a priority (unless running at very high levels). For parental choice to work effectively there may be some surplus capacity in the system as a whole.

Competition from additional schools and places in the system will lead to pressure on existing schools to improve standards.

The Greater London Authority (GLA) prepares the pupil projections for Harrow Council. The GLA uses a range of information and data to prepare the projections including the number of births, number of pupils in Harrow schools, migration to Harrow and new housing development. Across London the population is growing, and the main reason for this is increasing birth rate.

The demand for Reception class places (for pupils reaching 5 years of age) in Harrow schools is increasing:

- In January 2006 there were 2,224 Reception aged pupils in Harrow schools;
- In January 2013 there were 2,879 Reception aged pupils in Harrow schools;
- In January 2014 there were 3,030 Reception aged pupils in Harrow schools;
- In January 2016 it is projected there will be 3,463 Reception aged pupils in Harrow schools.

To ensure sufficient school places to meet the increased demand, temporary additional Reception classes have been opened since 2009. In order to meet the actual and predicted increased demand in the next few years there is a need to increase the number of permanent school places, in the primary sector initially and in the secondary sector in due course. Additional places are also required to meet increased demand for provision to meet special educational need.

In September 2012 there were a total of 2,550 permanent Reception class places in Harrow's primary sector schools. Phase 1 of the primary school expansion programme was implemented in September 2013 with 8 schools in the borough permanently increasing their Reception intakes. In September 2015, when all the Phase 2 schools are expanded, there will be 3,240 permanent Reception places.

In order to ensure sufficient school places to meet the predicted increased demand by September 2016, Harrow needs to increase the number of permanent Reception places by at least a further 300 places to a total of 3,540. The Phase 3 proposals, that include Welldon Park Infant and Nursery School and Welldon Park Junior School, aim to ensure sufficient school places at the right time and in the right location to meet the increased demand up to 2016/17. Full information about the projected demand for school places and the planning to increase school places across Harrow can be viewed in the 17 July 2014 Cabinet papers (item 21 School Expansion Programme Appendix B) at

<http://www.harrow.gov.uk/www2/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=249&MId=62354&Ver=4>

School size

Decision-makers should not make blanket assumptions that schools should be of a certain size to be good schools, although the viability and cost-effectiveness of a proposal is an important factor for consideration. The decision-maker should also consider the impact on the LA's budget of the need to provide additional funding to a small school to compensate for its size.

Harrow's school expansion programme is very significant and is expected to involve all schools in opening additional classes on either a permanent or temporary basis. Over half the primary schools in Harrow will be permanently expanded by the end of the school expansion programme.

School revenue budgets are funded from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). As the Department for Education (DfE) allocates DSG based on pupil numbers, any increase in pupil numbers results in additional revenue funding for the expanding school. The revenue funding is allocated to schools based on the Harrow Schools' Funding Formula. School budgets are based on pupil numbers in the October prior to the start of the financial year, so there is always a funding lag when schools increase their pupil numbers. To ensure that schools who agree to an additional class are not financially penalised, the Harrow School Funding Formula provides 'Additional Class Funding' for the period from September to the end of March, following which the mainstream funding formula will take effect. This ensures that schools have adequate funding for at least the average costs of a teacher.

Proposed admission arrangements (including post-16 provision)

In assessing demand the decision-maker should consider all expected admission applications, not only those from the area of the LA in which the school is situated.

Before approving a proposal that is likely to affect admissions to the school the decision-maker should confirm that the admission arrangements of the school are compliant with the School Admissions Code. Although the decision-maker cannot modify proposed admission arrangements, the decision-maker should inform the proposer where arrangements seem unsatisfactory and the admissions authority should be given the opportunity to revise them.

No changes to admission arrangements arise from these proposals. Welldon Park Infant and Nursery School and Welldon Park Junior School are community schools that draw pupils from their local area. The admission arrangements of the schools are compliant with the School Admissions Code and would remain so as a combined school.

No changes to post-16 provision arise from the proposals.

National Curriculum

All maintained schools must follow the National Curriculum unless they have secured an exemption for groups of pupils or the school community.

Welldon Park Infant and Nursery School and Welldon Park Junior School follow the National Curriculum and no changes to this arise from these proposals.

Equal opportunity issues

The decision-maker must have regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) of LAs/governing bodies, which requires them to have 'due regard' to the need to:

- *eliminate discrimination;*
- *advance equality of opportunity; and*
- *foster good relations.*

The decision-maker should consider whether there are any sex, race or disability discrimination issues that arise from the changes being proposed, for example that where there is a proposed change to single sex provision in an area, there is equal access to single sex provision for the other sex to meet parental demand. Similarly there should be a commitment to provide access to a range of opportunities which reflect the ethnic and cultural mix of the area, while ensuring that such opportunities are open to all.

Equalities Impact Assessments have been undertaken on the proposals to combine and permanently expand Welldon Park Infant and Nursery School and Welldon Park Junior School. The conclusions of these assessments are that the implications are either positive or neutral in that the combining and expansion of the schools will help to ensure all children in Harrow have access to a high quality school place. The assessments have not identified any potential for unlawful conduct or disproportionate impact and conclude that all opportunities to advance equality are being addressed.

Harrow's schools are successful, inclusive and provide a diversity of provision. The school expansion programme will ensure sufficient school places for the increasing numbers of children in Harrow and will build on the successful provision that already exists in Harrow's schools.

Community cohesion

Schools have a key part to play in providing opportunities for young people from different backgrounds to learn with, from and about each other; by encouraging, through their teaching, an understanding of, and respect for, other cultures, faiths and communities. When considering a proposal, the decision-maker must consider its impact on community cohesion. This will need to be considered on a case-by-case basis, taking account of the community served by the school and the views of different sections within the community.

These are community schools which draw pupils from their local area and the pupil profiles reflect the ethnicity of their area. The October 2014 School Census demonstrates that the schools have an ethnically diverse pupil population.

Travel and accessibility

Decision-makers should satisfy themselves that accessibility planning has been properly taken into account and the proposed changes should not adversely impact on disadvantaged groups.

The decision-maker should bear in mind that a proposal should not unreasonably extend journey times or increase transport costs, or result in too many children being prevented from travelling sustainably due to unsuitable walking or cycling routes.

A proposal should also be considered on the basis of how it will support and contribute to the LA's duty to promote the use of sustainable travel and transport to school.

There would be no change to travel or transport arrangements arising from this amalgamation proposal because all the pupils attending the schools at the time of implementation would transfer to the combined school.

Schools that are proposed for expansion are located around the borough so that additional school places are available locally to where the children live. This approach minimises distances that children and parents have to travel to school and serves to promote accessibility. This helps to limit the need for car use by parents at the beginning and end of the school day. As far as possible, it is believed the schools chosen for expansion would be a popular choice amongst parents wishing to secure a place at their local schools.

The schools proposed for expansion, as is the case at many schools in Harrow, already have a degree of traffic and congestion issues from the current school intake and the expansions will exacerbate the problems if no mitigating measures are taken. To minimise the impact of the additional pupils a cross-council approach has been adopted to bring officers together from the

Children & Families and Environment & Enterprise directorates to work with schools and local residents. Transport Assessments at schools approved for expansion and Transport Statements at additional special educational needs place provision are undertaken and are submitted as part of the planning application for building work at the schools. Particular emphasis is being given to School Travel Plans as a means of focusing attention of the issues and to seek to bring about change in people's behaviour in delivering and collecting children.

Capital

The decision-maker should be satisfied that any land, premises or capital required to implement the proposal will be available and that all relevant local parties (e.g. trustees or religious authority) have given their agreement. A proposal cannot be approved conditionally upon funding being made available.

Where proposers are relying on the department as the source of capital funding, there can be no assumption that the approval of a proposal will trigger the release of capital funds from the department, unless the department has previously confirmed in writing that such resources will be available; nor can any allocation 'in principle' be increased. In such circumstances the proposal should be rejected, or consideration deferred until it is clear that the capital necessary to implement the proposal will be provided.

If these statutory proposals are approved, the Welldon Park schools would require building work to be undertaken to provide appropriate accommodation for the additional children.

Initial site scoping work at the Welldon Park schools has been undertaken by architects to identify potential design options to accommodate the additional children if the schools are approved for expansion.

Detailed feasibility work will be undertaken to develop the design proposal that will be subject to open pre-planning engagement with the school community and local residents so comments can be taken into account and influence the final design that is submitted in the planning application. This feasibility work would ensure that the necessary building work could be completed by September 2016 and any necessary interim accommodation requirements could be made for the intake of additional children in September 2015.

The budget for the school expansion programme, including primary school expansions in Phase 1 and Phase 2 and three expansions at Phase 3, secondary school expansions and provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is £91.788m.

Based on current estimates and market conditions it is expected that it is possible to deliver this programme with Education Funding Agency capital grants, without the need for council capital funding. If the programme is not deliverable within the current programme then borrowing may be required. This risk is being monitored closely in consultation with Cabinet Members.

School premises and playing fields

Under the School Premises Regulations all schools are required to provide suitable outdoor space in order to enable physical education to be provided to pupils in accordance with the school curriculum; and for pupils to play outside safely.

Guidelines setting out suggested areas for pitches and games courts are in place although the department has been clear that these are non-statutory.

Government regulations and guidelines are considered in relation to all the schools proposed for expansion in the school expansion programme when undertaking the design work to accommodate the additional pupils. All schools are considered in the same fair and transparent manner when identifying the design for building works. The current school facilities are considered against Building Bulletin 103 to analyse any current and potential shortfalls. Full consideration is given to suitable outdoor and indoor space in order to enable physical education to be provided to pupils in accordance with the school curriculum; and for pupils to play outside safely.

Closure proposals (under s15 EIA 2016)

The decision-maker should be satisfied that there is sufficient capacity to accommodate displaced pupils in the area, taking into account the overall quality of provision, the likely supply and future demand for places. The decision-maker should consider the popularity with parents of the schools in which spare capacity exists and evidence of parents' aspirations for those schools.

The proposed legal closure of Welldon Park Junior School is to effect the amalgamation of the two Welldon Park schools and does not displace any pupils. It is also proposed to expand the school(s) by one form of entry to ensure there are sufficient places for the additional children living in the area. All the pupils attending the schools at the time of amalgamation would transfer to the combined school. The combined school would have the same number of pupils overall as the two separate schools.

Schools causing concern

For all closure proposals involving schools causing concern, copies of the Ofsted monitoring letters for the relevant schools should be made available. Decision-makers should have regard to the length of time the school has been in special measures, requiring improvement or otherwise causing concern. The decision-maker should also have regard to the progress the school has made, the prognosis for improvement, and the availability of places at other existing or proposed schools within a reasonable travelling distance. There is a presumption that these proposals should be approved, subject to checking that there are sufficient accessible places of an acceptable standard available to accommodate displaced pupils and to meet foreseeable future demand for places in the area.

This section of the Department for Education Guidance for Decision-makers is written on the premise that a school may be closed for because it has been made subject to special measures. This is not applicable to these proposals. Harrow Council's Amalgamation Policy is being implemented and the discontinuing of Welldon Park Junior School has been triggered by the resignation of the headteacher.

Community Services

Some schools may be a focal point for family and community activity, providing extended services for a range of users, and its closure may have wider social consequences. In considering proposals for the closure of such schools, the effect on families and the community should be considered. Where the school is providing access to extended services, provision should be made for the pupils and their families to access similar services through their new schools or other means.

Harrow's schools view themselves as serving their local communities and the amalgamation and expansion proposals would not change this. Indeed, by meeting the increased demand in their local area, the schools would reinforce their position at the heart of their communities.

Views submitted during the consultation

Consultation was held from Monday 29 September for six weeks closing on Friday 14 November 2014. Consultation was held at the same time on both the amalgamation and the expansion proposals. 109 responses were received to the consultation. Separate consultation questions were given to the school communities from those given to local residents because the amalgamation proposal was not relevant to the local residents without children attending the schools.

- 94 responses were received to the consultation questions for the school communities.
- 15 responses were received to the consultation questions for residents

A number of comments were included with the responses given and these are themed below with officer response.

Responses from the school communities to the consultation questions about amalgamation and expansion

Questions were asked in the consultation about the two proposals. They were:

- "Proposal One: Welldon Park Infant and Welldon Park Junior School are joined together to form one combined school on 1 Sept. 2015."
- "Proposal Two: To expand the school(s) to three forms of entry (90 places) with effect from 1 September 2015."

Both questions offered the option to respond 'Yes', 'No', or 'Not Sure' to each question.

Opportunity was given for comments to be added after each question if the respondent wished to do so.

The following tables provide overall responses to the consultation questions.

Proposal One: Welldon Park Infant and Welldon Park Junior School are joined together to form one combined school on 1 Sept. 2015.

Please tick the relevant box to give your view

	Junior	Infant	Total (94)
I support combining the two schools	16	18	34 (36%)
I want the schools to stay separate	21	33	54 (57%)
I am not sure	5	1	6 (7%)

Proposal Two: To expand the school(s) to three forms of entry (90 places) with effect from 1 September 2015.

Please tick the relevant box to give your view (Note: 91 responses made to this question)

	Junior	Infant	Total (91)
I support expansion to three forms of entry as either combined or separate schools	25	28	53 (58%)
I do not support expansion to three forms of entry as either combined or separate schools	10	14	24 (26%)
I am not sure	6	8	14 (15%)

*Respondents were invited to indicate their interest by ticking **all** applicable boxes:*

	Junior	Infant	Total

Infant School parent	6	34	40 (34%)
Junior School parent	20	2	22 (18%)
Parent in both schools	13	13	26 (22%)
Member of staff in Infant School	3	6	9 (8%)
Member of staff in Junior School	13	4	17 (14%)
Other interested stakeholder	3	2	5 (4%)
<i>Note: Some multiple interests were indicated</i>	58	61	119

36% of responses supported the amalgamation proposal; 57% opposed it and 7% were unsure. 58% supported expansion to 3FE; 26% opposed it and 15% were unsure.

Responses from local residents to the consultation questions about expansion

Two questions were asked in the consultation. They were:

- “Do you agree with the approach to creating additional school places in Harrow?”
- “Do you agree with the proposal to permanently expand the Welldon Park Schools?”

Both questions offered the option to respond ‘Yes’, ‘No’, or ‘Not Sure’ to each question.

Opportunity was given for comments to be added after each question if the respondent wished to do so.

The following tables provide overall responses to the consultation questions.

The overall responses to Question 1 were:

Question 1: “Do you agree with the approach to creating additional school places In Harrow?”

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	8	53.33%
No	6	40.00%
Not Sure	1	6.67%
Total	15	100%

The overall responses to Question 2 were:

Question 2: “Do you agree with the proposal to permanently expand the Welldon Park Schools?”

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	4	23.67%
No	10	66.67%
Not Sure	1	6.66%
Total	15	100%

The response to the statutory consultation questions by respondent type is as follows.

Numbers Overall	
Harrow Resident	10
Parent/Carer	3
Pupil	0
School Staff	2
School Governor	0

Other	0
Blank	0
Total	15

The responses by respondent type for the first consultation question were as follows:

Do you agree with the approach to creating additional school places in Harrow?	Harrow Resident	Parent / carer	School Staff	Total
Yes	5	2	1	8
No	5	0	1	6
Not Sure	0	1	0	1
Totals	10	3	2	15

The responses by respondent type for the second consultation question were as follows:

Do you agree with the approach to permanently expand Welldon Park Infant and Junior Schools?	Harrow Resident	Parent / carer	School Staff	Total
Yes	3	1	0	4
No	6	2	2	10
Not Sure	1	0	0	1
Totals	10	3	2	15

Just over half the responses made to the first consultation question indicate agreement with the Council's approach to creating additional school places in Harrow.

Two thirds of the respondents to the second consultation question disagree with the Council's proposal to expand the Welldon Park schools, and just over a quarter agree with the proposal.

The response level of 15 needs to be viewed in the context of 500 consultation papers distributed to local residents. Also the publicising of the online consultation response portal on the Harrow Council website.

Other responses to the consultation

Governing Bodies

The Governing Body of Welldon Park Infant and Nursery School and the Governing Body of Welldon Park Junior School wrote a joint statement in response to the statutory consultation. The Governing Bodies recommended that the schools should not be combined and recommended that in principle the schools should be expanded.

Other responses

A letter was received from the staff of Welldon Park Infant & Nursery School in response to the statutory consultation stating disagreement with the proposal for amalgamation as a split site primary school and disagreeing that consultation should be taking place regarding expansion at the same time. The staff strongly believe alternative school models should be considered. Their preferred model for the school is an all through primary school with specialist provision for SEN on the present school site. The justification for their views is set out in the letter.

A junior school parent emailed some queries about the process and response mechanism of the consultation. Officer reply was given to the queries.

Officer response to the consultation comments

The six main themes in consultation comments and responses relate to:

- Lack of information about buildings and implications for residents;
- Other alternatives should be considered;
- The schools do well as they are - preference that they remain separate schools;
- The schools are already full to capacity;
- Traffic and congestion issues;
- Concerns about split site.

Lack of information about buildings and implications for residents

Information about the proposed expansion of the Welldon Park schools was sent to 500 residents in properties adjoining the school sites and along approach streets and included invitation to attend the consultation meeting for residents on 23 October 2014. This action was taken deliberately to give early information to residents about the proposal and so residents' perspectives can be taken into account from the outset. Inevitably, detailed information could not be given about the building arrangements if expansion is approved because site scoping work needs to be undertaken. However, the comments and issues stated by residents have been noted for consideration by Cabinet and these would inform the building design proposals should the expansion be approved.

The initial site scoping was completed by the end of December and was undertaken by the Council with the schools. Options will be developed for detailed feasibility work to develop design solutions to meet the requirements. This process will be undertaken in partnership with the school(s).

Other alternatives should be considered

Comments were made that it has been confusing to have consultation about the amalgamation and expansion proposals at the same time. Also, that there are alternative proposals that could be considered.

It is important to have clear proposals so that the consultation is not confusing. Harrow Council has an Amalgamation Policy and the consultation proposal is to amalgamate the two schools in accordance with the policy. The Council believes this is the best model for a primary school. The Steering Group included additional information about other models of school organisation for example, federation, and academy status.

Harrow Council also has a School Expansion Programme. Harrow Cabinet has approved that Phase 3 school expansion proposals be brought forward to meet the increased demand for places in 2015 and 2016. It is expedient to consult about both proposals at the same time rather than in close proximity to each other. Consultation at the same time on amalgamation and expansion proposals has occurred also at the Weald schools.

Some preference has been expressed for two separate primary schools to be created at the Welldon Park school sites to meet the increasing demand for school places. Although two additional forms of entry are projected to be needed in the South West Primary Planning Area within which the Welldon Park schools are located, there is not the demand for these additional forms of entry to be provided at the one location. Additional places are opened as local to the demand as possible to minimise any need for parents to use cars to take their children to and from school, and expansion by a form of entry at a different school location will be sought.

Additional considerations are:

- two community primary schools beside each other would have the potential to introduce unhelpful competition;

- concerns have been raised in consultation responses about the congestion on the road infrastructure for the proposed expansion of one form of entry, which can be expected to be heightened if a doubling of pupils was proposed;
- the capital costs of creating two primary schools are likely to be comparatively high.

The proposal that one of the schools could be a one form entry is not considered to be the most efficient form of school organisation. Although small schools do perform well, they are very susceptible to changes to funding and have little capacity to develop economies of scale as single entities.

For transparency, other school organisation options were outlined in the consultation document distributed to parents and staff that the working group had investigated. Also, at the parent consultation meetings, addresses giving alternative perspectives were made by the Headteacher of Welldon Park Infant and Nursery School and by the Chair of Governors of Welldon Park Junior School. During the consultation it was pointed out that comments on other models could be made and responses in other formats e.g. email or letters would also be accepted, and this has occurred.

The schools do well as they are - preference that they remain separate schools

Amalgamation is about combining two schools organisationally while preserving and building on what works well at each school. Achieving high educational standards and preserving ethos that is in the children's interests will be key focus of the governing body and leadership team of a combined school. A combined school enables the curriculum for the whole primary phase to be planned and delivered under one leadership. This provides continuity for the pupils throughout their primary education. It is of note that the governing bodies of the two schools have put forward options around extending the age range of each school to provide a primary school, therefore the concern does not appear to be about primary provision under one head teacher and governing body, but more about the individual schools amalgamating.

The schools are already full to capacity

Site scoping work has been undertaken and architects have made an assessment of the current buildings and compared them to the government's area guidance for a three form entry school and for the proposed amalgamation. This work is intended to ensure that there is sufficient and appropriate space for additional children on the school sites. The two schools sites are very different in their current buildings and accommodation and therefore the solutions will be site specific.

Points were made at the infant school parent consultation meeting that only two additional classrooms would be needed at the infant school site. Architects could perhaps look into the possibility of a second storey. The school were able to work around the hall space when there were 60 more children at the school before the changes in the age of transfer in September 2010 that led to the move from first and middle schools in Harrow.

The architects gave further feedback to the schools about site scoping options before the end of last term.

Traffic and congestion issues

The concerns expressed about traffic congestion, parking and road safety in the area are fully recognised and are the consistent major theme arising from the expansion consultations. To minimise the impact of the additional pupils attending the schools proposed for expansion, a cross-council approach is being implemented. This approach brings officers together from Children and Families, Enterprise and Environment and Communications to co-ordinate work.

Additional resource has been committed to ensure an appropriate profile to all the school expansion projects in particular.

- Transport Assessments are being undertaken at each of the schools proposed for expansion. The assessments provide an independent view of the proposals by reviewing baseline information about current traffic volumes and current issues and make recommendations about any impact as well as setting out any actions required. The assessments take account of the consultation responses already received.
- A Transport and Travel Planner Officer for the expansion projects works with schools to develop and implement effective travel strategies in conjunction with the schools. This is a key role in influencing and engaging with all stakeholders to change attitudes to travel through the review and the development of School Travel Plans in order to minimise the use of private car travel to the school, particularly by parents. This role also liaises with the Highways, Traffic Management and Enforcement teams to ensure that any necessary engineering work and enforcement action, including Safer Neighbourhood Teams, is provided in line with the travel plans developed. This officer is also involved in the pre-planning engagement activities and input into the planning applications.
- The Transport Assessment and School Travel Plans are submitted as part of the planning applications.
- There is a communication strategy for the expansion projects which includes raising the profile of school travel planning. Additional Communications officer time gives communication and engagement work a high profile.
- Parking enforcement officers visit the areas of all schools in Harrow and issue tickets when applicable. Two automatic number plate recognition CCTV cars have been introduced to reinforce enforcement work. They are dedicated to schools exclusively.

This proposal would require a building programme, for which planning permission would be needed. If an application is submitted, a decision on this will be a matter for the Planning Committee. This committee will consider highways and traffic concerns and the impact of the development on the local area. Residents and parents who believe they are impacted by this decision are entitled to make representations to the planning committee during the statutory planning consent timescales.

Concerns about split site

The governing bodies raised a concern about an amalgamated school on split sites and in particular the funding for this. Whilst it is true that all other amalgamations of primary schools in Harrow have been on one site, there is evidence of one head teacher and one governing body leading schools on different sites. Specifically, the hard federation of Heathland and Whitefriars worked successfully prior to conversion of the schools to academy status. Other schools in London and other areas have amalgamated on separate sites.

A combined school would receive a budget calculated in accordance with Harrow's funding formula, which is primarily based on an amount per pupil. In accordance with the Schools Funding Formula, as a combined school, there would be the loss of one 'lump sum' which currently totals £154,230 annually.

This would put the combined school in the same position as existing all-through primary schools over time. If the schools were to combine, in the first year, the two separate school budgets would be brought together.

In the year following the proposed amalgamation (2016/17) the combined school would receive the equivalent of 85% of two lump sums. This would allow time for the Governing Body to plan

for this change which represents a comparatively small amount of the combined school budget (about 5%). Funding efficiencies arising from combining the schools can be used to offset this reduction. The Governing Body and leadership team of a combined school should be able to plan strategically in a cost effective manner in the best interests of the children in order to achieve positive outcomes for the children in the long term.

It should also be noted that there is currently no provision in the School Funding Formula for split site schools as this is not relevant to Harrow. However, the Schools Forum will consider this funding element from April 2017 when it may be required after the lump sum reduction has been implemented.

Over time, other amalgamated schools have found that there have been efficiencies generated as a combined school including one Headteacher salary and shared back office functions. In general larger schools have greater economies of scale and capacity to deal with financial pressures and to be more flexible and creative with their funding although some of these savings will be more difficult to achieve on a split site.

Representations about the statutory proposals

Two representations in relation to the statutory proposals were received by Harrow Council by the closing date of the representation period on 2 February 2015. The representations by a resident and by the Governing Bodies are attached as Appendix 1 and Appendix 3 to this report. Commentary about the issues raised in the representations is given below together with officer comment.

Governing Bodies of Welldon Park Infant and Nursery School and Welldon Park Junior School

A joint response from the Governing Bodies was submitted and a copy is at Appendix 3. In their response the Governing Bodies outlined their concerns about amalgamation:

- That the schools are unique being on separate sites and that this was a reason for not amalgamating in November 2009 and nothing had changed. That they felt that the separation of the sites would not secure the financial advantages of amalgamation.
- Their concerns that the consultation was meaning less and that the outcome was a foregone conclusion.
- That both governing bodies were not opposed to the educational amalgamation as such but had serious concerns about the physical constraints of separate sites; the building requirements, financial implications of the loss of the 'lump sum' and the timescale for the appointment of the headteacher for September 2015 with a decision in February. They suggested that any decision to amalgamate should be subject to it not happening unless and until the recruitment of an executive headteacher.
- The Governing Bodies raised their concerns about the uncertainty of the situation for the schools' future and stated that the decision rests with Cabinet and therein the responsibility.

There was no reference to the expansion of the two schools.

Officer comment about the joint response by the Governing Bodies of Welldon Park Infant and Nursery School and Welldon Park Junior School

The Governing Bodies supported the proposed expansion in their response to the consultation reported to Cabinet in December 2014. The demand for places in the South West Primary Planning Area continues and this expansion would contribute to meeting this demand.

It is noted that the Governing Bodies of both schools are not opposed to the educational rationale for amalgamation and this is aligned with the Council's Amalgamation Policy. The Council's Amalgamation Policy is based on an educational rationale and it is considered that the educational benefits will be achieved across two sites.

The issues raised in terms of the school site are being addressed through the site scoping and feasibility study processes. The expansion options are being developed for both sites and now this would be extended to consider the amalgamation.

There would be a reduction in funding as the combined school would receive one 'Lump Sum' under the current funding formula. This is a graduated reduction over two years and would take effect from April 2017. The Schools Forum will be considering a Split Site factor for the schools funding formula. To inform the level of funding for this factor, Schools Finance Officers will work with the school and Schools Forum. This will be essential to ensure that there is an appropriate level of funding.

Officers from Education Strategy and Harrow School Improvement Partnership are supporting both schools and would continue to do so through the amalgamation process, including the appointment of the Headteacher.

It is very important that there is a clear timeline for the amalgamation process and expansion so that there is clarity about the future. Extended periods of uncertainty are to be avoided and therefore it is proposed that the amalgamation and expansion are implemented with effect from September 2015.

Representation from a resident

A representation was received by email from a resident whose property backs onto Welldon Park Junior School objecting to the expansion of the school and is at Appendix 1. The representation states:

1. It does not seem to have been widely publicised to local residents, that this representation period for comment on the proposals is in fact open;
2. It is vital that we are made aware of all the timescales in relation to the expansion in order that we can make our views known and have them listened to and for them to influence the final decision on the planning of any expansion;
3. In particular, concerns about:
 - The close proximity of any new buildings to our small back garden.
 - The possibility of being overlooked by any build upwards.
 - The disruption the building works may cause.
 - The increase in traffic and parking across drives in our small cul de sac.
 - Impact on saleability and price of our property.
 - Noise impact of larger school population.
4. Without access to information on the planning proposals, no actual decision on whether to go ahead should be made at Cabinet on 19th February, as it may be that none of the planning proposals are acceptable to residents.

Officer comment about the representation from a resident

Officer response is given using the numbers above.

1. The statutory proposals have been publicised in the normal manner and in accordance with the government guidance. This includes: the public notice has been published in Harrow Times, at the entrances to the schools and in the local library; the public notice and full proposals have been published on Harrow Council's website; letters have been sent to interested parties.

For the consultation that preceded the publication of the statutory proposals, letters about the consultation and publicising the consultation meeting for residents were delivered to residents of properties adjoining the school boundaries in the following roads: Northolt Road; Wyvenhoe Road; Roxeth Grove and Kingsley Road. Letters were also delivered to addresses on both sides of Wyvenhoe Road and Scarsdale Road and to addresses in Kingsley Road beyond the top end of Scarsdale Road.

2. At the consultation meetings the separate Planning processes that would follow if the proposal was approved were described. The current timeline is as follows:
 - Initial site scoping work was concluded by the end of December.
 - Feasibility design and survey work, including independent Transport Assessment, is being progressed from January up to Easter (if Cabinet approves the expansion proposal, though there may be some building work if the schools are combined, albeit while remaining on the two sites).
 - Pre-Planning engagement with the school communities and local residents would occur shortly before or soon after Easter. Written notification about this would be distributed to residents as was done for the consultation.
 - Planning application would be submitted in April followed by statutory Planning consultation, with a view to Planning Committee decision being made in June.
 - Construction work would commence in August for a period of 12-15 months.
3. The points of concern would be considered in design feasibility work, though concerns about impact on saleability and price of property would be outside the scope. Planning requirements in relation to these issues would be complied with. There would be early discussion with Planning officers about design proposals so that any potential issues would be identified and addressed early in the process. If the expansion of the schools is approved, pre-Planning engagement would occur around Easter 2015 when design proposals would be available for comments that could be incorporated into refining the design proposal. There would be statutory consultation following a planning application being submitted for any further comments and any concerns to be considered.
4. Statutory Planning processes would follow as outlined above if Cabinet decides to approve the expansion proposal. The Planning process and decision is separate from the school expansion decision. It is not normal to carry out a design phase prior to a decision on whether to expand or amalgamate a school. If a decision is made on expansion, a design for new works will be prepared and a planning application submitted. It is normal for these to follow the expansion decision because the Planning process would not happen if Cabinet decides not to expand the schools.

Though Planning is a subsequent and separate statutory process, extensive efforts were made during the consultation phase to bring the expansion proposal to the attention of local residents. This is to bring early awareness to residents of the possibility of new build and in recognition of concerns about traffic congestion around schools at school drop off and collection times. . As part of the planning application, the school will be required to submit a School Travel Plan. An independent Transport Assessment will be undertaken and the outcomes of the Transport Assessment would be submitted as part of the planning application.