

# **School Organisation Committee**

**16 January 2007**

## **I-Foundation Proposals for a New Voluntary Aided Hindu Primary School**

### **Report of the Director of Strategic Services Department, People First, Harrow Council**

#### **Section 1 – Summary And Recommendations**

##### **1.1 Summary**

- 1.1.1 This report sets out the background to the I-Foundation proposals to establish a new voluntary aided Hindu primary school in Harrow. Following two statutory consultations, I-Foundation published a statutory notice on 16 October 2006 to establish the Krishna-Avanti Primary School as a one form of entry school for 240 boys and girls between the ages of 4 and 12 from 1 September 2008. Comment is made on the I-Foundation proposals.
- 1.1.2 On 19 July 2006, the School Organisation Committee heard a presentation from I-Foundation about its proposals.

##### **1.2 Recommendations:**

- 1.2.1 The School Organisation Committee is recommended to approve the proposals published by I-Foundation to establish a new Voluntary Aided Hindu Primary School.

#### **Section 2 - Report**

##### **2.1 Background**

- 2.1.1 In 2005 the Government made it possible for promoters of voluntary aided schools to bid through the local education authority for the creation of a new voluntary aided school where there is a clear local demand. In May 2005 Cabinet decided to submit a bid to the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) for allocation from the Targeted Capital Fund to create a new voluntary aided school in Harrow. This bid had all party support.
- 2.1.2 The promoters of the new school are I-Foundation. I-Foundation is working in affiliation with the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, which has been running a private Hindu school in Hertfordshire for over 20 years.

- 2.1.3 The Targeted Capital Fund allocations were announced on 12 October 2005. Harrow's bid for a new faith school was successful, and £9,852,943 capital funding was allocated for 2005-08.
- 2.1.4 Since the allocation of capital funding was announced, I-Foundation has worked to identify a site for the proposed new school. Finding sites for new developments in Harrow is always problematic and identifying locations which meet all user requirements, planning constraints and are affordable is extremely challenging. The site named in the current proposals for decision by the School Organisation Committee is the second site consulted on by I-Foundation. DfES agreed extensions to its requirement for the publishing of statutory notices because of the difficulties identifying a site.

## **2.2 Consultations**

- 2.2.1 I-Foundation initially identified the possibility of the school being an integral part of a package for Pinner Park Farm, George V Avenue, Middlesex HA6 4SU. Consultation on proposals at this site occurred between 8 May 2006 and 16 June 2006. The Pinner Park Farm site was discounted as a site for the new school because I-Foundation was advised that the site was not viable due to it being greenbelt and issues around change of use. I-Foundation delayed publishing notices, with DfES agreement, to allow further time to identify the site.
- 2.2.2 On 29 June 2006 Cabinet authorised officers to commence negotiations with the I-Foundation in relation to a site for the proposed school. I-Foundation has considered other sites but none which offer realistic prospects for development. On 8 September 2006, I-Foundation began a consultation on proposals in relation to a site at the William Ellis Playing Fields, Camrose Avenue, Edgware, Harrow HA8 6ES.
- 2.2.3 This consultation was shorter than I-Foundation would have wanted because of the DfES deadline for statutory notices to be published by the end of September 2006. In view of a number of concerns expressed about the short length of the consultation, DfES agreed a further extension of the timescale for I-Foundation to publish statutory notices until 19 October 2006. As a result, I-Foundation was able to extend the consultation period until Friday 13 October 2006.

## **2.3 Statutory notice and representation period**

- 2.3.1 I-Foundation published its statutory notice on 16 October 2006. The representation period ended on 26 November 2006. A number of representations have been received by the School Organisation Committee administrator and by I-Foundation.
- 2.3.2 I-Foundation will respond to all representations in its report to the School Organisation Committee.

## **2.4 Decision making**

- 2.4.1 The School Organisation Committee is requested to decide the proposals published by I-Foundation to establish a new voluntary aided Hindu primary school. If there is not unanimity from all groups casting a vote, proposals are decided by an independent Schools Adjudicator. The I-Foundation proposals will be subject to a separate decision-making process in relation to any planning application. If and when the I-Foundation submits a planning application the Council will initiate a formal planning consultation process.
- 2.4.2 The DfES Decision Makers Guidance sets out the issues to be considered in deciding statutory proposals. Comment on the proposals, and a recommendation, is written below.
- 2.4.3 I-Foundation has set out its proposals in the Prescribed Information papers it has submitted to the School Organisation Committee.
- 2.4.4 I-Foundation has submitted a separate report and papers in response to the objections received.

## **2.5 Comment on the proposals**

- 2.5.1 I-Foundation has responded to the Government's wish to encourage the widest possible range of promoters to come forward who have a contribution to make to improving educational standards. The I-Foundation proposals set out its case to establish a new school in Harrow. The intention is to establish a flagship school with an ambition towards educational excellence whilst fostering attraction to the values, philosophy and practices of Hinduism. The proposals state that the school curriculum will incorporate the relevant government guidelines and frameworks, and will be adapted to suit the needs and abilities of each pupil to ensure high standards of academic, social and spiritual success.
- 2.5.2 In recent years there has been a surplus of places within the primary sector in Harrow, and this surplus is projected to continue for the foreseeable future. Action is in hand to reduce the number of places in Harrow primary schools to meet the Council's target of up to 10% surplus places. Actions include reducing forms of entry at some schools, and making alternative use of school accommodation (e.g. for Children's Centres).
- 2.5.3 For school planning purposes, Harrow is divided into five primary planning areas (PPA). There is not a uniform picture of surplus places across, nor within, the PPAs. The site for the proposed new school falls within the South East PPA, which is the PPA with the highest level of surplus places in Harrow. Though there are projected surplus places within the South East PPA, in the adjacent Central and North East PPAs there are forecasted shortfalls of places. The projection information below is drawn from data up to 2010. This is because projection calculations need to be

- kept under continuous review, and they are less reliable the further ahead one looks.
- 2.5.4 The projections for the South East PPA are that the roll remains steady between 2006 and 2010 following a small increase since 2004. The number of places is being reduced in the South East PPA from 2,727 in 2002 to 2,578 in 2010. The number of pupils on roll is expected to remain lower than the number of places available. In 2006 there was 15.8% of surplus places (417 places). In 2010 this is projected to have dropped to 13.7% with 2.6% of places being removed.
- 2.5.5 I-Foundation has recognised the current surplus of places in the primary sector when developing its proposals. Accordingly, the school will open as a one form of entry school and fill on an incremental basis. Therefore the school will not have full capacity until 7 years after its opening. This will help to dampen the impact on schools within Harrow and the locality.
- 2.5.6 The experience of voluntary aided schools has shown that pupils have been drawn from a wide catchment area. For example, this has been the experience of the Moriah Jewish Day School. I-Foundation has indicated that it is keen to work with the Admissions Forum and schools, and will consider carefully and take advice on the relationship between its proposed admission criteria and the potential impact on the area where the school is established.
- 2.5.7 Government policy is to increase choice and meet community needs. Given the population profile in Harrow this proposed school will meet a need of a significant and increasing part of the community. Harrow has the largest percentage Hindu population in its area of any local authority in the country, and there is currently no voluntary aided Hindu school in Harrow or nationally. Hindu faith organisations have been in informal contact with the Council since 2003 exploring the possibility of such provision, but were unable to proceed to any formal position. The promoters represented a strong wish from a large section of the community to establish a Hindu school in Harrow.
- 2.5.8 The Decision Makers Guidance states that where proposals add to surplus capacity but there is a strong case for approval on parental preference and standards grounds, the presumption should be for approval.
- 2.5.9 The proposals are consistent with the Harrow Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP). The CYPP recognises that Harrow has the highest proportion of Hindus of any London borough. Integrated and collaborative working is key, and extended schools are viewed as pivotal to the success of the plan. The plan seeks to build on educational achievements, and to work with schools to promote a rich, relevant and inclusive curriculum and develop a learning culture both within and across schools, including the provision of personalised learning.

- 2.5.10 The papers from I-Foundation contain much information about promoting inclusion, equality and community cohesion. Proposals include: partnership working; active work for interfaith cohesion and inclusiveness of all faiths; teacher commitment to inclusiveness; 'citizenship events'; religious education both in its own faith and other major faiths; commitment to the environment.
- 2.5.11 The school will work towards the extended school agenda, in line with local and national policy, and will look to build deep partnerships and collaborations with local schools. Proposals include: being a hub for community activities and making maximum use of the facilities; serving as a resource to develop adult learning and open learning to meet local need; childcare facilities; work within local cluster groups; language tuition, computer literacy and weekend courses; learning opportunities for all ages; parenting support classes and family learning sessions; study support and homework groups. Where the provision of extended services are a feature of proposals this should strengthen the case for their approval.
- 2.5.12 I-Foundation will need to take account of the new code of practice on school admissions that has just been laid before Parliament and comes into force on 28 February 2007 for admission arrangements in 2008. For example, the new code of practice confirms that any child with a statement of special educational need that names the school must be admitted whether or not the school has places. I-Foundation will also need to consider defining the terms they are using so they are clear and parents can understand them (e.g. residential address, siblings).
- 2.5.13 The proposals identify a number of initiatives towards a Green Travel Plan, including: promoting use of public transport; a comprehensive minibus system; safe walking routes; walking bus scheme; staggered traffic flow. I-Foundation views the travel plan as working towards ensuring the needs of local residents are fully considered, reducing road accidents involving school children, and reducing any complaints about congestion arising from school traffic.
- 2.5.14 The proposed site for the school will be freehold, and I-Foundation is in the process of setting up an independent charitable trust for the purposes of the school. The legal entity, Krishna-Avanti Primary School, has been established as a registered company on 20 November 2006 (number 06002701) and has applied for charitable status. The proposals are for part of the William Ellis playing fields site, and it is anticipated that a section 106 agreement would enable improvements to Belmont Football Club ground, including enhancing the Football Club facilities. The Council has obtained legal advice that the proposed site may be used as a school. Negotiations about the proposed site will need to be concluded with both I-Foundation and Belmont FC, and Member approval obtained. The I-Foundation proposals will be subject to a separate decision-making process in relation to any planning application.

2.5.15 The Targeted Capital Fund allocation to create the new school will be made direct to the promoter. The breakdown of costs is provided in the Prescribed Information. DfES have confirmed that the funding for this project will be held until the proposals have been considered by the School Organisation Committee (or Adjudicator if appropriate). I-Foundation states it is able and willing to meet its liabilities through private funds (see Form 18). No capital costs are to be borne by Harrow Council.

2.5.16 The revenue funding for the new school would be contained within the Dedicated Schools Grant. The Dedicated Schools Grant is set by the Government. If the new school draws its pupils from within the existing Harrow schools' population then the majority of the revenue funding for the new school would be redistributed from other Harrow schools. If the new school draws its pupils from outside of the existing Harrow schools' population then the majority of the funding would be provided by an increase in the Dedicated Schools Grant

### **Section 3 - Recommendation**

#### **3.1 Recommendation**

3.1.1 The School Organisation Committee is recommended to approve the proposals published by I-Foundation to establish a new voluntary aided Hindu primary school.

### **Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers**

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**Background Papers:**  
Report to the School Organisation Committee on 19 July 2006