

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

Decision Maker:	Executive Member for Education
Date:	24 October 2013
Title:	Additional primary provision in Aldershot – outcome of consultations
Reference:	5111
Report From:	The Director of Children’s Services

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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The purpose of this paper is to report on the outcome of local consultations on a strategy for the provision of additional primary phase places in the Aldershot area in relation to the new housing development at Aldershot Urban Extension (AUE), now known as Project Wellesley.
- 1.2. The paper sets out the background to the consultations, discusses responses to the consultations, assesses the options for providing additional primary school places, and recommends the next steps to be taken.
- 1.3. The recommended strategy to provide the additional primary places is to establish a new primary school providing 630 places on the western school site on the AUE development. This would be subject to the Department for Education (DfE) guidance on establishing a new school, which states that an academy sponsor should be sought to manage and run the new school.

2. Contextual information

- 2.1. At his Decision Day on 6 December 2012, the Executive Lead Member for Children’s Services authorised consultation on proposals to provide additional primary phase places in Aldershot from September 2015. The consultation documentation can be accessed at;
<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/aldershotprimaryplaces>

- 2.2. The new housing development proposed at AUE for 3,850 dwellings will be built over a period of some 13 years and will require additional primary and secondary pupil places. Primary provision will be needed providing 3 forms of entry (FE) (630 places) and 2FE (420 places) respectively, with the first primary provision being available for 2015/16. The first phase of primary provision would be opened in stages to match the inflow of pupils into the new housing. Once complete it will provide three forms of entry, giving an intake at 4+ of 90.
- 2.3. The availability of specialist provision for primary age pupils with social and communication difficulties in this area of the County is limited. The development at AUE will produce additional primary age pupils who would benefit from such provision. Therefore as part of the first phase of the additional primary places, resourced provision for up to 10 pupils with social and communication difficulties will be created.
- 2.4. The consultation undertaken was predicated upon the need for the first phase of new primary places and not about the provision itself, but about the school organisation structures and governance under which places will be provided. Future consultation will be undertaken in association with the second phase of primary education provision for AUE which is anticipated to be needed post 2018.
- 2.5. Additional secondary places will be required in due course as primary numbers feed through to the secondary sector. Places will be available for secondary age pupils at The Connaught School in the initial stages of the development.

3. The options for consultation

- 3.1. The December 2012 report set out two options and invited viable proposals for a further option.

Option A: Primary provision as part of The Connaught School

Option A is to expand The Connaught School to cater for the new primary phase provision to be provided on AUE and change the age range of the school so that it caters for pupils between the ages of 4-16. This option would require the publication of statutory notices proposing a change in The Connaught School's age range.

Option B: The provision of a new primary school

Option B would be to create a new stand-alone primary school. This would be subject to the Department for Education (DfE) guidance on establishing a new school, which states that an academy sponsor should be sought to manage and run the new school.

Option C: Alternative proposals

Consultees were invited to suggest proposals for viable alternative options.

4. Consultations

- 4.1. Consultations commenced on 10 June 2013 with a closing date for comments of 22 July, based around a dedicated web site setting out the details of the consultation and including a response form.
<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/aldershotprimaryplaces>
- 4.2. A consultation meeting was held on 18 June 2013 at The Connaught School from 3 pm to 6 pm attended by six people.
- 4.3. A briefing meeting was held with Aldershot headteachers on 3 June 2013 to alert them to the impending consultation exercise and answer any questions. Officers also attended a meeting of The Connaught School Governors on 8 July and the Talavera Infant and Junior Governors on 10 July to explain the proposals.
- 4.4. A list of consultees is set out in Appendix C to this report. This included the governing bodies, staff and parents at The Connaught School and its linked primary schools, headteachers and governors of all schools in Rushmoor Borough Council, local County Councillors, local MP and the Dioceses.
- 4.5. As well as inviting detailed comments, consultees were encouraged to complete a response form.

5. Consultation responses

- 5.1. A total of 15 written responses were received, including detailed responses from the headteacher of The Wavell School, the headteacher of Marlborough Infant School, the governing bodies of The Connaught School and Talavera Infant and Junior Schools and the Vice Chair of Governors of Henry Tyndale Special School, the latter writing in an individual capacity.
- 5.2. Of those who expressed a preference for an option, 4 were in favour of Option A (one being The Connaught School), 6 Option B and 4 Option C.
- 5.3. Responses from statutory consultees included Sir Gerald Howarth MP, two Rushmoor Borough Councillors, the Diocesan Director of Education and the Diocese of Guildford, all of which were in favour of Option B. In addition, a response from the Head of Community of Rushmoor Borough Council was in favour of Option A.
- 5.4. A response was also received from Grainger PLC, the developer of Wellesley who was in favour of Option B and that the new school should be established as a free school.
- 5.5. Copies of responses received are available in the Members Room.

6. Option A – consultees responses

- 6.1. Four responses were in favour of Option A including a submission from The Connaught School in support of them becoming a 4-16 school. Reasons given in support of this option were as follows.
- 6.2. One consultee felt that this option best served the children of Aldershot and the public purse, and further stated that provision for children with special needs is essential.
- 6.3. A 4-16 school will alleviate the difficulties faced by pupils at the time of transition from primary to secondary school.
- 6.4. A 4-16 school will enable expertise, facilities and other resources to be shared and provide a more sustainable future for The Connaught School.

7. Option B – consultee responses

- 7.1. Six responses were received in favour of Option B. The reasons given for supporting this option were as follows;
- 7.2. Provision of primary provision on site will be closer to the area where primary places are required. The Connaught School is too far away from the development site and the school was not in a strong enough position to take on the primary provision
- 7.3. Providing a stand alone and distinctive primary school to serve the development will help the new community establish itself whereas this would be more difficult if it is established as part of a school some distance away.
- 7.4. A new school will be able to recruit governors from the local area providing strong links with the new development.
- 7.5. The distance between the new school and The Connaught School will impede effective leadership and management, coupled with the fact that the school was assessed by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) as requiring improvement.
- 7.6. The distance involved would limit scope for pupils to use both sites for staff to work effectively across both sites and senior leaders would not have a visible presence on the primary site.
- 7.7. The Headteacher of The Wavell School felt Option B was “neutral” and would allow the new primary school to be linked with both The Connaught and Wavell Schools. With no link to Wavell the school is concerned that there will be numerous admission appeals as they are the nearest secondary school to the development and parental preference is often linked to geographical location.
- 7.8. The new primary school is a significant distance from The Connaught School incurring a journey across Aldershot for children thus increasing traffic congestion.

- 7.9. The Diocese of Guildford support Option B and is applying for the 630 place primary provision on AUE to be a Church of England Academy/Free School. Reasons put forward by the Diocese for not supporting Option A are that there is little research evidence to suggest the educational case for 4-16 schooling; the distance between the sites will impact on the ability to share facilities; The Connaught School's latest Ofsted report would suggest that the school is not in a position to undertake the lead role in a 4-16 development; potential economies of scale around leadership and facilities, administration and governance are unproven.
- 7.10. The joint submission from two Rushmoor Borough Councillors in support of Option B expressed concerns that the plan to open the primary school in 2015 is too early based on the number of house completions and that this will result in lower pupil numbers in local schools.
- 7.11. The local MP considers there to be a number of problems with Option A and believes that as a large primary provision of 630 pupils, it should be established as a school in its own right with its own headteacher and governing body. He also believes that it would be unwise to add any extra burden to the Connaught School due to its need to improve.

8. Option C – Consultees responses

- 8.1. Two responses were received suggesting alternative options.
- 8.2. The Headteacher of Marlborough Infant School suggested that the new primary provision be linked with a geographically closer school than The Connaught School and one that has established and outstanding primary practice expertise. It was also suggested that a Local Collaboration Trust of local schools be considered for the locality and that the Local Authority consider Marlborough becoming a primary school.
- 8.3. The Vice Chair of Governors of Henry Tyndale Special School, writing in an individual capacity, supported Option A but with the addition of on-site provision for pupils with special education needs (SEN) from 4-19 run as a special school with a separate budget.

9. Consultee responses received (R) and local authority comment (C)

- 9.1. R – That a 4-16 school managed by The Wavell School is created.
C – The development at AUE lies within the catchment area for The Connaught School thus secondary places will be available at the catchment school for pupils moving on to the development.
- 9.2. R – That a separate special school is provided.
C – There is no demand to establish a new special school as additional specialist primary provision is being proposed as part of the western primary school.
- 9.3. R – Marlborough Infant School becomes a primary school.

C – The requirement for Year R places in the local area is high. To create a primary school would reduce the availability of year R places at Marlborough Infant School creating a shortfall of Year R places in the local area making this option unworkable.

- 9.4. R - The Connaught School's latest Ofsted category being requires improvement, would suggest that the school is not in a position to take responsibility for this primary provision.

C – It is expected that any school expressing an interest in managing additional primary provision would have a strong record in providing high quality education as judged by Ofsted.

- 9.5. R – Opening the new primary provision in 2015 is too early.

C – It is intended that the additional places be provided to meet demand as it arises. Further information is awaited from the developer on the timing for the construction and occupation of new houses, which will inform the opening date for the new provision. Present expectation of house completions and occupation indicate a need for new primary provision at AUE in September 2015.

- 9.6. R – The Diocese of Guildford supports the creation of a new primary school and is proposing to apply for a Church of England Academy- Free School.

C – If the recommendation to establish a new primary school is agreed, the process to seek an academy sponsor will commence. The Diocese of Guildford, together with other potential sponsors, will be invited to submit a proposal to become the sponsor of the new school as part of that process.

- 9.7. R - The new provision is linked to both The Connaught and Wavell Schools

C – The development at AUE lies firmly within the catchment area of The Connaught School which currently has surplus places and will be able to accommodate pupils of secondary age as they move into the development. Parents will be able to apply for a place for their child at The Wavell and any other secondary school of their preference. It is the case that The Wavell School has admitted in excess of 150 children from The Connaught's catchment area historically. It may be the case that families living on the AUE/Wellesley development will live closer to The Wavell School than some who have historically been offered a place.

- 9.8. R - The distance between the primary school site and The Connaught School will create difficulties in managing a 4-16 provision on two sites some distance apart.

C – It is acknowledged that the distances between the sites creates greater management challenges than if the new provision was co-located. However, there are federations within Hampshire that operate successfully over a greater distance than is being proposed in Option A.

- 9.9. R – A stand alone school will aid community cohesion.

C – A new primary provision will be created on the AUE site with either option thus creating opportunities for local community involvement with the school.

- 9.10. R – There is no evidence that transition issues will be any less in a 4-16 school.

C – The consultation document detailed research papers to support the conclusion that when children transfer from one school to another there is likely to be a dip in the academic progress they make. It is felt that a much closer working relationship between teachers who teach year 7 with those who teach year 6 will exist through there being in the same school.

- 9.11. R – There will be a need to consider a change in catchment areas.

C – A review of primary school catchment areas will be undertaken as a catchment area will be required for the new primary provision.

10. Views of local County Councillors

- 10.1. Councillor Wall favoured a 4-16 school managed by The Wavell School.

- 10.2. Councillor Staplehurst supported the creation of a new primary school with the benefits of it being local to the area of need for places reducing traffic by enabling pupils to walk to school. There would be opportunities for the building to be used by the community and a new facility will create pride in the area. There would be no peer pressure from older children at Connaught which is situated a long way from the development meaning more parents would drive their children to school.

11. Capital strategy

- 11.1. It is proposed that the new primary provision is built in two phases, initially providing 420 places, with a further expansion by 210 places in due course to match demand for places from the new housing development. The project has been included in the Children's Services Capital Programme which was approved on 23 January 2013 with an indicative sum for the first phase, budgeted at £10m in the 2013/14 Programme and an indicative sum for the second phase budgeted at £3m in 2015/16. Negotiations are currently taking place with the developer regarding a Section 106 legal agreement for capital contributions towards additional primary and secondary school places and which will lead to a revision of the indicative sums above.

12. Assessing proposers for running new primary provision

- 12.1. In order to assess the suitability of existing schools to run new provision it is important that any potential proposer has the ability to establish new primary provision that provides the best outcomes for pupils. It is expected that any existing school seeking to manage new primary provision would have a strong record in providing high quality education as judged by Ofsted.

13. Assessing the options

- 13.1. There is a fundamental need to provide additional primary schools places in Aldershot to serve the new housing development at Aldershot Urban Extension. Two options were proposed with an invitation to propose alternative viable options.
- 13.2. Of those alternative proposals received (Option C), none were felt viable. No other school or group of schools has put themselves forward proposing they be considered to manage the new school provision. Additional special education needs (SEN) provision is being provided through resourced provision at the new primary provision. No further SEN provision is felt to be required at this stage but a review of future needs will be undertaken in relation to the second primary school on AUE.
- 13.3. The Connaught School submitted a statement in support of Option A believing that an all through school would create a positive environment for learning and growth, which would promote excellence and inspire each individual to discover, develop and fulfil their intellectual and personal potential and to become lifetime learners.
- 13.4. The Connaught School is situated 1.8 miles (straight line distance) from the proposed western primary school site on AUE which will house the new primary provision.
- 13.5. The creation of a catchment area for the new primary provision will be needed whichever option is chosen.

14. Future direction

- 14.1. There is a requirement to provide additional primary places to serve the Aldershot Urban Extension housing development. No viable alternative option was identified during the consultation exercise so an assessment has been undertaken of the two options remaining, that being to provide primary provision as part of The Connaught School or creating a new primary school.
- 14.2. As stated in 12.1 it is expected that any school expressing an interest in managing additional primary provision would have a strong record in providing high quality education as judged by Ofsted. Whilst there were many positive aspects cited in the latest Ofsted Inspection Report in March 2013 of The Connaught School, the overall conclusion was that the school requires improvement. The Connaught School has clearly considered very carefully, as demonstrated by the submission from staff and governors, the benefits of 4-16 schooling. However, and notwithstanding a positive monitoring inspection visit by Ofsted in June 2013, officers are of the view that The Connaught School needs to focus on 11-16 education at this stage in its ongoing development.
- 14.3. The remaining option, to create a new primary school was the most favoured by those who responded to the consultation. This would be subject to the Department for Education (DfE) guidance on establishing a

new school, which presumes that any new school would be an academy or free school.

- 14.4. Potential sponsors would be invited to submit proposals to Hampshire County Council for the establishment of a new academy/free school. The County Council would then assess any proposals received and make a recommendation, in line with DfE guidance, of a preferred bidder to the Secretary of State for Education for his consideration and final decision. The successful proposer would then work with the County Council to deliver the primary school.

15. Recommendation:

- 15.1. **That approval be given to the publication of proposals and invitations to potential sponsors to establish a new 630 place primary school with resourced provision of up to 10 places for pupils with social and communication difficulties to serve the Aldershot Urban Extension housing development known as Wellesley.**
- 15.2. **That an assessment of any proposals received be made and a recommendation, in line with DfE guidance, of a preferred bidder be made to the Secretary of State for Education for a final decision.**
- 15.3. **That consultation on the primary school catchment area for the new primary school be undertaken.**

CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:**Links to the Corporate Strategy**

Hampshire safer and more secure for all:	no
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Maximising well-being:	no
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Enhancing our quality of place:	yes

Other Significant Links

Links to previous Member decisions:		
<u>Title</u> Aldershot Urban Extension – additional primary places	<u>Reference</u> 4333	<u>Date</u> 6 December 2012
Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives		
<u>Title</u> None	<u>Date</u>	

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
Copies of consultation responses	Children's Services Department

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equalities Impact Assessment:

An impact assessment has been undertaken. This has not identified any adverse impact on equalities.

2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:

The proposals have no impact on crime and disorder

3. Climate Change:

A. How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption?

Any new permanent accommodation will be built according to the County Council's sustainability and carbon reduction standards. By seeking to provide primary places in as close a fit as possible to the homes of pupils the impact of vehicular transport and associated emissions is minimised. No other impacts have been identified during the consultation process.

B. How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts?

No specific measures have been identified.

LIST OF CONSULTEES:

Headteachers, staff and Chairs of Governors at local schools

Bellevue Infant
Cherrywood Community Primary
Cove Infant
Cove Junior
Farnborough Grange Nursery and Infant
Fernhill Primary
Grange Junior
Guillemont Junior
Manor Infant
Manor Junior
Marlborough Infant
Newport Junior*
North Farnborough Infant
Park Primary*
Parsonage Farm Nursery and Infant
Pinewood Infant
South Farnborough Infant
South Farnborough Junior
Southwood Infant
St Bernadette's Catholic VA Primary
St Joseph's Catholic Primary
St Mark's CE Primary
St Michael's CE Infant*
St Michael's CE Junior
St Patrick's Catholic VA Primary
St Peter's CE Junior
Talavera Infant
Talavera Junior
Tower Hill Primary
Wellington Primary*
Cove Secondary
Connaught Secondary*
Fernhill Secondary
Wavell Secondary
Henry Tyndale Special
Samuel Cody Special
Linden Education Centre

Parents of children at The Connaught School and its linked primary schools (*).

Trade Unions:
Teacher's Liaison Panel
GMB
Unison
Unite

Local Dioceses:

Portsmouth and Winchester CE

Portsmouth RC

Member of Parliament for Aldershot.

County Councillors:

Aldershot East

Aldershot West

Farnborough North

Farnborough South

Farnborough West

Early Years Partnership

Rushmoor Borough Council Chief Executive