

Meeting date: 22nd February 2021
Report to: Cabinet Portfolio Holder Children,
Education & Skills
Subject/report title: Proposal to expand Alderbrook School
Report from: Director of Children's Services and Skills
Report author/lead contact officer: Ann Pearson – Team Leader School Place Planning



Wards affected:

St Alphege

Public/private report: Public

Exempt by virtue of paragraph: N/A

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 To update Cabinet Member on the progress in delivering an extra one form of entry (150 places) at Alderbrook Secondary School from September 2022.

2. Decision(s) recommended

- 2.1 Approve the commissioning of an additional 150 places at Alderbrook School from 1 September 2022.
- 2.2 Approve the budgetary provision within the School's Capital Programme to the deliver the accommodation scheme as agreed with the Governing Body of the School.
- 2.3 Approve that officers support the school with a period of consultation and the development of a business case for consideration by the Regional School's Commissioner.

3. Matters for Consideration

- 3.1 The School Organisation Plan, approved in September 2020, provides a detailed analysis of pupil numbers and sets out forecasting methodology and housing developments for the Borough. The plan outlines the areas within the Borough that require additional school places and a process for working in partnership with schools, academies and the Regional Schools Commissioner to deliver the additional school places
- 3.2 The increased cohort leaving primary schools and the housing developments that are

approved and currently under construction will impact on pupil numbers entering secondary schools in the coming years. Over the next 7 years secondary school rolls are forecast to rise by nearly 6% to just under 16,695 pupils.

- 3.3 Alderbrook School is located in the West and Central planning area where there is significant growth in housing as well as migration in to the area, so additional school places will be required. The forecasts show a shortfall of 147 places by 2026. Tudor Grange Academy Solihull has expanded by 150 places from September 2018, which will go some way to meeting this demand and addressing the place shortage in this planning area. However the addition of further school places is required in this area to meet this future demand.
- 3.4 The expansion at Alderbrook School will ensure that Solihull families are able to access a secondary school place. Initially this expansion will meet the demand from the significant growth that has taken place in primary schools and the existing housing developments located in the Central and West planning area. In the longer term this expansion will meet some of the demand from the housing developments identified in the draft Local Plan.
- 3.5 Detailed feasibility work has been undertaken by the Council in partnership with the School and a scheme to expand the school's building has been approved by the School's Trust Board. Feasibility work has identified that the site can accommodate the additional buildings required. Any additional building will require planning permission and will be subject to all normal planning processes.
- 3.6 If this report is approved, the School, as an academy school, will undertake a process to seek permission from the Regional School's Commissioner to formally expand and to change their funding agreement. Approval for the expansion does not lie with the Council. This process will include a period of consultation and then the submission of a business case to the Regional School's Commissioner.

4. What options have been considered and what is the evidence telling us about them?

- 4.1 The options available to the Council to add additional secondary school places are:
- Make no change
 - Expand an existing school
 - Create a new secondary school.
- 4.2 **Make no change** – the School Organisation Plan 2020 has identified the need to add additional places in the Central & West Planning Area to meet the increase in demand due to larger numbers of pupils transferring from primary schools, as well as demand from existing housing development. If no further places are created then some families will not be able to access a place at a local school and may have to travel some considerable distance to access their secondary school place which would incur additional costs for the Council's transport budget.
- 4.3 **Expand an existing school** – The level of places required support the expansion of

an existing school, which will provide a cost effective method for creating the number of school places required.

- 4.4 **Create a new secondary school** – the demography outlined in the School Organisation Plan 2020 does not support the creation of the number of places required to open a new secondary school. This proposed expansion will deliver sufficient places to meet the short and longer term needs of this planning area.

5. Reasons for recommending preferred option

- 5.1 Alderbrook School is judged ‘good’ by Ofsted and the School is significantly oversubscribed each year.
- 5.2 The School is located in the Central & West Planning area where the shortfall of places has been identified. A number of the most recent housing developments sit within its catchment area, such as Cheswick Place in Cheswick Green. In addition to the increased demand from housing development the school is well located to meet the increase demand from larger cohorts leaving Solihull primary schools.
- 5.3 Feasibility work has shown that the school site can accommodate the expansion of buildings required to support an expansion of this nature and the school is serviced by a school bus service as well as good public transport links.

6. Implications and Considerations

- 6.1 State how the proposals in this report contribute to the priorities in the [Council Plan](#):

Priority:	Contribution:
<p>Economy:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Revitalising our towns and local centres. 2. UK Central (UKC) and maximising the opportunities of HS2. 3. Increase the supply of housing, especially affordable and social housing. 	<p>This proposal seeks to provide additional school places required to meet the demand from housing sites and the increasing demand from families within the primary school phase.</p> <p>The Council has a statutory duty to provide sufficient school places for families living in Solihull.</p>
<p>Environment:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Enhance Solihull’s natural environment. 5. Improve Solihull’s air quality. 6. Reduce Solihull’s net carbon emissions. 	<p>Secondary school catchment areas serve a wide geographical area. Alderbrook School is serviced by good transport links and a school bus service so that those families that live some distance from school can travel easily by public transport.</p>
<p>People and Communities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Take action to improve life chances in our most disadvantaged communities. 8. Enable communities to thrive. 	<p>Increasing the number of school places in good and outstanding schools will ensure that high quality school places are available to families living in Solihull. This proposal</p>

9. Sustainable, quality, affordable provision for adults & children with complex needs.	seeks to provide a cost effective solution to the need to provide additional school places.
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6.2 Consultation and Scrutiny:

6.2.1 If this report is approved, the School, supported by the Council will undertake a period of consultation with all interested parties on this expansion proposal. The outcome of this consultation process will be considered by the School's Trust Board before they submit a business case to the Regional School's Commissioner for approval.

6.2.2 Any changes to the accommodation on the school site will require planning permission and will be subject to all normal planning processes.

6.3 Financial implications:

6.3.1 **Revenue** – Additional pupils generate additional Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), which funds extra pupils. In addition, School Forum has approved growth criteria to identify additional revenue funding for those schools experiencing growth in pupil numbers. There is an annual specific grant to fund the revenue cost of pupil growth in the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), which for 2021-22 is £645,500.

6.3.2 **Capital** - S106 funding has been secured from housing developments for the delivery of secondary school places, this along with basic need grant will provide the Capital funding required for this proposal. The Children's Services Capital Programme currently includes budgetary provision of circa £3.1M for this proposal but will be updated to reflect the latest feasibility scheme.

6.4 Legal implications:

6.5 The Council has a legal duty to ensure there are sufficient school places to meet the needs of Solihull children. As an academy, Alderbrook School is required to seek the approval of the Regional School's Commissioner for an expansion of this nature. Risk implications:

6.5.1 The key risk is that the additional school places cannot be provided in time to meet the growth in demand from the development

6.5.2 The possible impact on the Council's transport budget should children have to be educated at schools further away from home, in the event that the new places are not delivered in time to meet demand

6.5.3 This expansion requires significant additional accommodation to be provided at the school and will be subject to a planning application.

6.6 Equality implications:

6.6.1 This proposal seeks to ensure that families living in Solihull and those moving into new housing developments in Solihull, have access to a local school place.

6.6.2 The proposal will expand the number of good and outstanding school places available.

7. List of appendices referred to

7.1 None

8. Background papers used to compile this report

8.1 School Organisation Plan 2020

9. List of other relevant documents

9.1 DfE guidance on making changes to open academy schools.