

## Decision Makers Guidance – Key Factors

1. In order to expand schools the Council must follow a statutory process and have regard to the relevant guidance. The 'Making Significant Changes to Maintained Schools' guidance sets out the requirements a Decision Maker must consider and have due regard to when considering a proposal such as the expansion of Cheswick Green Primary School.
2. **Consultation** – The guidance states that Cabinet Member should be satisfied that appropriate open and fair consultation and/or representation has been carried out and that due regard has been given to the responses received.

Pre-statutory consultation was carried out for six weeks in November and December 2020. Consultation information was widely circulated and published on the Council website and on social media. A frequently asked questions document was created and published in response to specific questions raised and a telephone helpline was manned by the School Place Planning Team.

A detailed analysis of the consultation process and its outcomes were considered by the Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Culture on 11 January 2021 before approval was given to publish a statutory proposal.

Following this approval by Cabinet Member, officers published a statutory proposal to expand Cheswick Green Primary School and a statutory notice was published on the Council website and in the local press, in accordance with DfE guidance. The four week representation period ran from 27 January 2021 until 25 February 2021. 45 representations have been received during this period and are attached at Appendix A for consideration as part of this report.

3. **Education Standards and Diversity** – When considering changes to school organisation the Decision Maker should consider the quality and diversity of schools and whether the proposal will meet or affect the aspirations of parents and improve local standards.

The School Organisation Plan outlines the criteria used for selection schools for expansion. One of the key criteria is that schools selected should be good or outstanding. Cheswick Green Primary School is considered to be 'good' by Ofsted. The provision of additional school places at this school extends the provision of good school places available to the school's community, and meeting the preference of local parents for a place in their most local school.

- 4. Equal Opportunities** – The Decision Maker must have regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty which requires that due regard is given 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 proposed changes.

This proposal will increase the number of places available in good and outstanding schools available. Through the published admission arrangements these places will be offered in a fair and transparent process in accordance with the Schools Admission Code.

These places are required to meet the demand from both the Blythe Valley Park and Cheswick Place developments. Without the creation of additional school places these families have the potential to be disadvantaged in their access to a local school place.

The Council operates a catchment area system to ensure that every family living in Solihull has a priority at a local school. Cheswick Green Primary School is the catchment area school for both of these housing developments. If families moving into the developments cannot access a place at their catchment area school then they will not have priority at any local school and will be considered alongside all other admission applications.

- 5. 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 should consider its impact on community cohesion.

The creation of additional school places at Cheswick Green Primary School will mean that there are sufficient school places available to meet the growing demand from the new housing developments located in the school's catchment area, therefore better meeting demand from the local community.

Through the published admission arrangements these places will be offered in a fair and transparent process in accordance with the Schools Admission Code.

- 6. 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.

The distances children travel is considered in determining the location of additional school places. Normally, school places will be within walking distance of where children live, however this is not possible for families moving into the Blythe Valley Park development to any school.

As part of the mitigation to support this proposal the Council will provide a dedicated school bus service to support families to access their primary school place at their catchment area school. For families moving into Cheswick Place the expansion will support their access to a school within easy walking distance to the development. The Blythe Valley development proposal included a S106 agreement of a sum up to £532,000 to develop or enhance bus services from Blythe Valley to Cheswick, Town Centre and Dorridge communities.

72% of families currently attending the school live in the catchment area for the primary school. Therefore this proposal may also seek to provide further mitigation to support families currently living in Cheswick Green and within walking distance of the primary school to walk to school.

7. **Funding** – The Decision Maker should be satisfied that any necessary funding required to implement the proposal will be available and that all relevant local parties (e.g. trustees of the school, diocese or relevant diocesan board) have given their agreement. A proposal **cannot** be approved conditionally upon funding being made available.

The Council has secured S106 funding to provide the additional school places required. The Children's Services Capital Programme currently includes budgetary provision of £2.5M for this proposals but this will be updated to reflect the latest feasibility scheme of circa £3M.