

TO: Parents (re. Eversley School)

Mr. R. Ayton
School Organisation and Development
Officer

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Dear Consultee,

Thank you for your comments on the proposal to expand Eversley School from two to three forms of entry. All comments sent to the Local Authority during the consultation period will be reported to the Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services and to senior managers of the Council, and will be considered in deciding whether or not to publish statutory proposals for the enlargement of the School. The purpose of this letter is to provide a brief summary of the proposal and its development, and also to respond to the various points raised by consultees.

The proposal is to expand Eversley School from two to three forms of entry (i.e. from 420 to 630 pupils) in order to meet additional demand for primary pupil places in the surrounding area. The admission of additional pupils will be phased, starting with 30 more Reception pupils in September 2009 and continuing with the addition of a further 30 pupils per year until the school is full (as a 3FE school) in September 2015. The possibility of expansion was discussed with the School in early 2008 and recommended to Cabinet in May 2008 as the subject of further investigation. Along with several other schools, Eversley School was considered for expansion through a viability study and options appraisal and the findings were reported to Council members in October 2008, when it was decided to fund a building feasibility study. At these early stages in the process, it was not clear whether a scheme would be feasible, what shape the scheme might take, whether it would be cost effective or whether members would agree to progress it, and the School was therefore not in a position to consult parents, carers and residents about it.

The outcomes of the feasibility study and of studies at a range of other schools were presented to Cabinet on 4th March 2009, when the decision was made that the scheme should proceed subject to statutory consultation processes, and that the formal agreement of the governing body should be sought. The School Governing Body ratified the proposal on 10th March, when a letter was sent to parents and carers. The comments of parents, carers, staff and residents were invited in a letter from the local Authority on 27th March, indicating that the period for consultation would close on 8th May. A discussion about the proposal with parents, carers and residents was held at the School on 21st April.

A report on the outcomes of consultation will be submitted to the Cabinet Member and Acting Director of Education and Children's Services in the next few days. If it is decided to proceed with the proposal, a notice will be published at the School site, in the local press and on the Council's web site; further representations can be made to the Authority during the statutory four week period following the publication date. If the Authority cannot make a decision within two months of the expiry of the statutory notice, the matter will be referred to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator. If a

decision is made to proceed with the expansion, a planning application for the building scheme will be submitted later in the year, and this too will be subject to consultation. If the application is successful, the building scheme will be on site in the spring of 2010 for completion in the autumn of 2011.

The main points of concern arising from the consultation were as follows:

Why is this being rushed through?

As suggested in the first paragraph of this letter, the possibility of expanding Eversley School has been under consideration for a year, although time has been needed to establish whether or not the scheme might be viable, whether a feasible building plan could be developed and whether the plan would be cost effective. Once Council members and School governors had given their agreement to proceed, wider consultation was launched as described above. It is true that the Authority is acting on this as on other expansion proposals with the greatest possible speed, while ensuring compliance with the necessary procedures. This is because Enfield, like many outer London authorities, is faced with a surge in demand for primary school places (recently reported in the national media). London Councils has just published its report "Do The Maths", which highlights the extent of the problem. One of the key drivers has been the extraordinary increase in the annual birth rate across the capital, which has risen by 20.5% between 2001 and 2007. The increase in Enfield during this period has been 29.6%. All children are of course entitled to a place at a school within a reasonable distance of their home, and the Council has a statutory duty to provide sufficient places for all pupils who need them.

What proof is there that additional pupil places are needed in the Eversley area?

As there can be no solid proof of demand until parents apply for places, Enfield has to base its plans on projections of need. For Enfield as for most London boroughs, an expert projections service is provided by the Greater London Authority, and this has a good record of accuracy. Ward-based factual information is used as fully as possible, for example birth statistics, counts of pupils now in schools, historical patterns, relevant population data and trends, new housing, international migration, etc. On this basis, projections are provided for 12 "planning areas" across Enfield, one of which is an area served by De Bohun, Eversley, Grange Park, Merryhills, St Andrew's, West Grove and Wolfson Hillel Schools. Borough-wide, the need is for at least 9½ additional primary forms of entry over a five year period. This includes a requirement for five additional forms of entry in September 2009, when five school expansions are proposed in order to add places in the areas of greatest need; these schools are Cuckoo Hall, Eversley, Firs Farm, Honilands and Suffolks.

Why has Eversley been chosen in preference to De Bohun, a two form entry school with unfilled places. Wouldn't this be a better and cheaper option?

Despite numerous efforts by the School and the LA to boost demand, and despite the School's real achievements and good level of performance, De Bohun, nominally a two form entry school, has not recruited more than one form of entry of pupils for a number of years; even in the current year, in which there has been severe pressure on Reception places in the area, the number admitted has not risen above 36. Unusually for Enfield, the area in which De Bohun is located has remained relatively static in terms of new residential development and population movement and has consequently generated comparatively few children of school age. The School is also located on the western boundary of the borough and several very popular schools in Barnet are nearby, which have proved attractive to Enfield parents. In cost terms, De Bohun is accommodated in a 1930s listed building which is consequently very expensive to maintain and refurbish. Bringing the building up to standard to accommodate two forms of entry would not represent good value for money in comparison to extending Eversley, and there is no guarantee that it would prove to be any more popular to parents as a result. As a popular and successful school rated by OFSTED as "outstanding", Eversley is the type of school at which the Authority wishes to see more places provided in order to satisfy parental demand. Offering 90 reception places has still left a waiting list in excess of 40 pupils for the School for this September; the 90 children offered places all live within 0.89 of a mile from the School, predominantly from the areas immediately to the north and south of the School. Only a handful of children will travel from the area around De Bohun School.

The expansion of the School could change its character and threaten its excellence. Some parents have chosen Eversley because of its current size and because they believe this helps it to be outstanding.

One of the reasons for identifying Eversley as a School that could expand was the strength of its management and leadership allied to very good teaching, making it an outstanding school. It is the view of the Authority and the Governing Body that these qualities can be sustained during and after the expansion, ensuring that the process will be well managed and that educational standards will not be impaired during this period, in spite of the inevitable disruption during the construction period. There is no evidence nationally or locally to show that two form entry schools are generally more successful than three form entry schools.

Will the School suffer from lost play space? Will there be any improvements other than additional classrooms? (The School already has good accommodation)

In terms of the overall size of the site, the areas of soft and hard play and the spaces provided in the new buildings, the enlarged School will comply with the Government's (non-statutory) guidelines for a three form entry primary school. An area behind the current junior building will be landscaped and brought into use, and more play space will be released when the existing temporary classroom is moved at the end of the project. Other planned improvements are:

- New classrooms, and several additional small group rooms.
- A readily accessible office/admin area to be established near to the main entrance to provide enhanced security.
- A lift in the junior school building.
- New cloakrooms.
- A Special Needs therapy room.
- All meals to be served in one dining hall, removing the need for food to be transported between buildings.
- The removal of temporary classrooms.

Will children lose the use of a room in order to accommodate the additional class in September 2009?

A temporary classroom will be provided for September. This will accommodate music teaching, while the existing music room will revert to its earlier function as a Reception classroom. The temporary building will be removed at the end of the project.

Traffic and congestion in the area will be increased, adding to pollution rather than reducing it, further compromising access for emergency vehicles to residents of Oakwood Crescent, adding to blocking of access to residents' properties, etc.

The current problems around the School (which are shared by many schools in the rest of the borough) are acknowledged. Traffic counts and local surveys will be undertaken to assess what measures could be introduced to address these problems. The Authority also wants to encourage as many parents and pupils as possible to walk to School (and because Eversley will continue to draw most of its pupils from a relatively short distance this would not be an unreasonable expectation in most cases). There will also be further local consultation with residents about specific proposals for the area emerging from this work and it will be essential for an approved scheme of traffic management (including parking provision) to be agreed before any work starts on site. Such measures will also have to be recommended to the Planning Committee at the time a planning application for the expansion of the School is presented for consideration.

Will there be problems with asbestos? Will a full intrusive survey be done?

Known asbestos at Eversley School is minimal, and is recorded on the corporate asbestos register, a copy of which is held by the School. In any part of the School where alterations to the structure are planned, it is expected as a matter of course that a detailed intrusive survey will be carried out to ascertain whether any type of asbestos is present. This will only be carried out under strictly controlled conditions with the area unoccupied. The survey will be carried out by suitably qualified analysts and any subsequent removal of asbestos-containing materials will be carried out by contractors licensed by the Health and Safety Executive. A method statement will be submitted to the Council's Asbestos Team for comment prior to any asbestos work starting. However, it is too early in the process for this work to have been undertaken at Eversley, or to know precisely when it will take place. It is proposed that all parents, carers, staff and residents will be kept regularly informed of the progress of the scheme, including an update on any work related to the treatment of any asbestos.

Isn't there likely to be a subsidence problem on the site?

As part of the project, a specialist structural engineer will be commissioned to survey earth movements as well as site drainage and levels.

The building works will cause dust, noise and pollution as well as disturbance to pupils' learning.

All working practices will be subject to Health and Safety, Construction, Design & Management regulation requirements. Working times and practices will be limited to minimise disturbance and controlled and subject to the submission of an approved construction methodology by the selected contractor, which will be a condition of any planning approval. These conditions will be set out in the Health and Safety Plan and in the building contract. Regular liaison will be maintained with the School in order to plan the works as far as possible with the School's educational priorities in mind, and the timing of particularly noisy works will be carefully considered. The contractor will be required to keep residents informed of developments and in particular to give advance warning of any specific noisy work or disturbance.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R. W. Ayton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Bob Ayton
School Organisation and Development Officer