

EVERSLEY PRIMARY SCHOOL, CHASEVILLE PARK ROAD, N211PD

PROPOSED EXPANSION

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION EVENING HELD ON 21ST APRIL 2009

This event was organised in two parts, starting with a presentation of initial building plans for the proposed expansion between 3.30 and 4.30pm for parents to view as they collected their children from school. The main part of the proceedings took place from 7.00pm attended by approximately 130 parents, school staff and local residents. Local Authority officers from the Education, Children's Services & Leisure and Architectural Services Departments were present at both parts. Consultation documents, which included an invitation to the meeting, had been sent to all parents, staff and local residents on 27th March. The local MP and three ward councillors had also received this documentation although none attended.

Presentations were made by officers with regard to the rise in demand for primary school places in Enfield principally caused by a rising birth rate (Enfield had consistently experienced one of the highest rates in London in recent years) and the need for additional pupil places in the area and why Eversley had been identified for expansion. As some early respondents to the consultation had expressed concern about potential disruption to the operation of the school during the construction period, a presentation was also made by the Headteacher of another Enfield infant school which had recently undergone a complete rebuild while the school continued to function on the same site. While this was inevitably disruptive, the school took control of the scheme and integrated the development into school life and the curriculum and it became a positive experience for both pupils and staff.

Following these presentations, the remainder of the meeting was conducted as a question and answer session which formally closed at 9.00pm. Officers and staff continued to answer questions and queries from individual attendees thereafter. The main issues that arose were as follows:

- One of the principal concerns of attendees was why Eversley had been identified for expansion in preference to other schools in this part of the borough, particularly De Bohun Primary School approximately 1.5 miles to the west.

Response: As a popular and successful school rated by OFSTED as "outstanding", Eversley was the type of school at which the government wished to see more places provided in order to satisfy parental demand. Despite numerous efforts by the School and the LA to boost demand, De Bohun, nominally a 2 FE school, has struggled to achieve 1 FE for a number of years. 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.

There is also an issue of cost-effectiveness, which has to be a material consideration for the Authority. De Bohun is accommodated in a 1930's listed building which is consequently very expensive to maintain and refurbish. Bringing the building up to standard to accommodate 2 FE would not represent good value for money in comparison to extending Eversley, as there is no guarantee that it would prove to be any more popular to parents as a result. The LA has formulated proposals in recent years to dispose of the listed building and use the capital receipt to fund the rehousing of De Bohun as a 1 FE school in a new modern building elsewhere on the site, but this has encountered difficulties in planning and conservation terms where a preference has been expressed to retain the building for its original purpose. While this proposal remains an aspiration, the current financial climate is not conducive to this strategy, so the School remains in the original building for the time being with other education functions using some of the accommodation on a temporary basis. Despite its current difficulties, De Bohun has made significant progress in recent years, particularly in early years provision.

Eversley in contrast has been consistently oversubscribed for many years and the radius around the School from which its intake has been drawn has remained very small and the LA would expect an enlarged School to remain essentially for local children. Offering 90 reception places has still left a waiting list in excess of 40 pupils for the School for this September. The proposed scheme is compact, making full use of currently underused areas of the site, and would have minimal impact on open space. The existing playground and field areas would remain unaltered. The scheme provides the opportunity to enhance the facilities in the existing buildings as well as creating the new accommodation.

Merryhills, a 2FE school approximately 0.3 miles to the north of Eversley had also been considered, but it was felt that this was not in the local area where the greatest need exists, demonstrated by the fact that its "catchment" extends more than 3 miles from the School. Vehicular access to the site is also very restricted along a single narrow driveway.

- Consultees asked why they had not been consulted earlier. Some consultees also queried whether the expansion proposals were in fact a "done deal" and would proceed regardless of local views.

Response: The LA has a statutory responsibility to ensure that sufficient school places are available to meet demand and that these places are within a reasonable distance of pupils' homes. The need for additional primary places particularly in London had been well documented recently and Enfield was one of the boroughs where this need was particularly acute. GLA projections and feedback from the

borough's admissions service indicated that this area of the borough was one of those where demand was particularly high. It had been necessary for the LA to lead in developing an initial strategy to provide the additional primary school places needed across the borough, and the Authority had only just achieved the position of being able to present a meaningful proposal emerging from a feasibility study for Eversley School to parents and the local community. The Council's Cabinet had also just approved funding for the scheme the previous month. It was emphasised that approval to expansion would still have to be sought following the publication of statutory proposals and planning consent was required before the scheme could proceed. The Council wanted to ensure that it fully understood the issues for parents, staff and local residents and do as much as possible within the scheme to address them. It would be the Council's role to balance the views and concerns of the local community against the strategic need for additional school places in the area before it made the final decision.

- Concern was raised about noise and disruption to both the School and residents during the construction period. Pupil security and safety were particular issues for parents.

Response: Working times and practices would be limited and controlled and subject to the submission of an approved construction methodology by the selected contractor, which would be a condition of any planning approval. Contractors would have access points separate from those used by the School and compounds would be completely fenced off. No construction operatives would have any contact with children unless agreed with the School for special lessons about the project, etc. All employees would be checked with the Criminal Records Bureau. Regular liaison in respect of particular stages of the work, noise, restricted times because of exams etc, would be conducted with the School through a Clerk of Works. All working practices would be subject to Health and Safety, Construction, Design & Management regulation requirements.

- A consultee asked about whether there was any risk of asbestos being present in the School and if so how it would be dealt with.

Response: Whilst it was genuinely believed at the time this question was raised that no asbestos was present in the School, it was subsequently clarified that minimal amounts had been previously identified, but these were all in safe locations and in a safe condition. 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, and any subsequent removal of asbestos bearing materials, will be carried out by suitably accredited / approved contractors, who will be required to submit a method statement to the Council's Asbestos Team for approval. However, it is too early in the process for this work to have been undertaken at Eversley, or to say precisely when it is to 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.

- One of the principal issues raised was the increase in traffic, potential congestion and parking created by expansion.

Response: The current problems around the School (which are shared by many schools in the rest of the borough) are acknowledged. Architectural Services will be in dialogue with the Council's Traffic and Transportation service about the particular issues around Eversley School, and traffic counts and local surveys will be undertaken to assess what measures could be introduced to address these. The Authority also wants to encourage as many parents and pupils as possible to walk to School (and because Eversley draws its intake from a very limited area from the School site this would not be an unreasonable expectation in many cases). There would also be further local consultation 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.

- Some consultees wondered whether the School would gain any improvements in accommodation, other than additional classrooms.

Response: The building scheme will modernise the School as well as expanding it. Areas of improvement will include:

- a) All meals to be served in one dining hall, removing the need for food to be transported between buildings.
 - b) A readily accessible office/admin area to be established near to the main entrance to provide enhanced security.
 - c) Accessibility to be provided in line with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act in the Junior building.
 - d) Additional small group rooms.
 - e) Enhanced medical facilities.
 - f) New therapy rooms.
- Fears were expressed about the risk of the School's educational standards falling because of expansion. Some parents had selected the School because it admitted 2 rather than 3 FE.
- Response:** One of the reasons for identifying Eversley as a School that could expand was the strength of its management and leadership as an outstanding school. Parent Governors echoed the Authority's view that these qualities were the real key to a school's success rather

than just good physical facilities and that they would remain in an expanded Eversley School. Morale was high in the School and staff were keenly anticipating the scheme despite the inevitable disruption during the construction period. The Headteacher was confident that the School would manage this process and that educational standards would not be impaired during this period. Many of the concerns expressed at the meeting on this issue were logistical ones that the School's Management Team would be able to address.

- Enquiries were made about the next stages in the process and how the outcomes of the consultation would be dealt with.

Response: The move to publication of statutory proposals and the 2 month limit for the Authority to make a decision before referral to the Adjudicator were explained. The main issues arising from consultation would be considered by the Council before any decision was taken. The planning application process and the opportunity this presents to comment on the scheme were also outlined.