

**SCHOOL ORGANISATION COMMITTEE OF CABINET
– 24th MARCH 2020**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY SHEET – PART I

Title of Report: Proposed Enlargement of Willow Fields Primary School

Author(s): Executive Director of Neighbourhoods

Purpose of Report: The purpose of this report is to request a decision on the proposal to enlarge Willow Fields Primary School from a capacity of 140 places to a capacity of 315 places.

Description of Decision: School Organisation Committee of Cabinet is asked to:

Note the responses to the statutory and pre-publication consultations and consider the statutory proposal which is to:

Enlarge the premises which will increase the capacity of Willow Fields Primary School, Winslow Close, Sunderland SR5 5RZ from 140 places to 315 places with effect from 1st September 2021.

Under the provisions of the relevant Regulations, the Authority may approve published proposals with or without modification or may reject them.

The Committee is requested to approve the proposal as detailed above.

Is the decision consistent with the Budget/Policy Framework? Yes

If not, Council approval is required to change the Budget/Policy Framework

Reason for the Decision

Willow Fields Primary School is currently over capacity in 3 of 7 year groups. The current school has neither the capacity nor additional support resources to support this ongoing oversubscription.

The current building has insufficient physical capacity to provide 1 classroom per form of entry, with 5 general class bases for 7 year groups. The proposed expansion of the school will provide sufficient class bases and supporting areas for both a 210 and a 315 place school.

New housing proposals in the North Sunderland area will place pressure on the sufficiency of existing school places. Within statutory walking distance of the new Willow Field Primary School site at Redcar Road (as detailed below) there are proposals for in excess of 900 new homes. This level of housing development is estimated to require over 210 school places, the equivalent of a new primary school.

The proposal to increase the capacity of Willow Fields Primary School is associated with the already approved proposal to relocate the school to a new building at the former Maplewood School site at Redcar Road in North Sunderland. This proposal was approved by Sunderland City Council's Cabinet in March 2019. This proposal is to increase the physical capacity of the new build by 175 places over those currently available within the school's current buildings in order to meet demand for places in the area.

Alternative options to be considered and recommended to be rejected:

- Retain existing Willow Fields capacity of 140 places at existing site
- Relocate Willow Fields Primary School with existing capacity of 140 places

Impacts analysed;

Equality Privacy Sustainability Crime and Disorder

Is the Decision consistent with the Council's co-operative values? Yes

Is this a "Key Decision" as defined in the Constitution? Yes

Is it included in the 28 day Notice of Decisions? Yes

PROPOSED ENLARGEMENT OF WILLOW FIELDS PRIMARY SCHOOL

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF NEIGHBOURHOODS

1. Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to request a decision on the proposal to enlarge Willow Fields Primary School from a capacity of 140 places to a capacity of 315 places.

2. Description of Decision

2.1 School Organisation Committee of Cabinet is asked to:

Note the responses to the statutory and pre-publication consultations and consider the statutory proposal which is to:

Enlarge the premises which will increase the capacity of Willow Fields Primary School, Winslow Close, Sunderland SR5 5RZ from 140 places to 315 places with effect from 1st September 2021.

Under the provisions of the relevant Regulations, the Authority may approve published proposals with or without modification or may reject them. The Committee is requested to approve the proposal as detailed above.

3. Current Position

3.1 Willow Fields Primary School is a maintained primary school maintained by Sunderland City Council.

3.2 Willow Fields Primary School is to relocate to a new school building at Redcar Road in September 2021. The current school building is based at Winslow Close, Sunderland. The current school accommodates 140 primary aged children and has a 20 place nursery.

3.3 Willow Fields Primary School is currently over capacity in three of seven year groups. The current school has neither the capacity nor additional support resources to support this ongoing oversubscription.

4.0 Numbers on Roll and Impact of Planned Housing

4.1 At October 2019 Census there were 136 children on roll at Willow Fields Primary School, with the school over subscribed in three of seven year groups. However, September 2020 Admissions data indicates oversubscription in the class that will be commencing in Reception. Based on that data, from September of 2020 the school will be oversubscribed in four of seven year groups with at least 144 pupils on the overall school roll.

4.2 The development of new housing in the North Sunderland area is anticipated to further increase demand for places with in excess of 900 new homes either with planning permission or planned within statutory walking distance of the new Willow Fields Primary School site at Redcar Road. It is projected that 210 primary school

places will be required to meet the demand from new housing in the area. The expanded Willow Fields Primary School would supply 175 of the required places.

- 4.3 The Council has considered the suitability of the current Willow Fields Primary School site in meeting future demand for new school places. Based on statutory walking distance for children aged between 5 and 7 it has been established that the proposed new school site, at the former Maplewood Primary School site, would be within statutory walking distance for 350 more of the proposed new homes in North Sunderland than the current school site.
- 4.4 No children currently attending the existing school buildings who live within statutory walking distance of the current school site will have to travel a distance greater than statutory walking distance to access the new school site.

5.0 Consultation

- 5.1 In September 2019 Cabinet approved a proposal to commence the School Organisation processes required for the enlargement of Willow Fields Primary School.
- 5.2 A pre-publication consultation was live between 2nd October and 18th November 2019. The pre-publication consultation contained the Council's proposal to both expand the existing capacity of the school and the proposal to relocate the school. It should be noted that as the new school is within 2 miles of the current Willow Fields Primary School no statutory proposals are required by the relevant School Organisation Regulations to facilitate the relocation of the buildings.
- 5.3 Consultation was carried out with the following groups
- Parents of pupils attending Willow Fields Primary School
 - Current staff
 - Trade Union Representatives
 - The wider local community
 - Both the local RC and CE diocese

In total the Council received 35 responses to the pre-publication consultation. Of the 35 responses received, 32 (91%) agreed with the proposal to relocate Willow Fields Primary School. The Council received 34 responses relating to the proposal for the enlargement of the provision at Willow Fields Primary School. Of those, 30 (88%) agreed with the proposal to enlarge the school to 315 places. Responses are collated as Appendix 1 of this report.

- 5.4 The Council published notification of the statutory proposal for the enlargement of Willow Fields Primary School on 18th January 2020. The statutory notice period ended 17th February 2020. The statutory notice was published in the following places:
- Sunderland City Council's website
 - Willow Fields Primary School's website
 - The Sunderland Echo

The notice was also displayed at the entrances of the current buildings used by Willow Fields Primary School.

5.5 In addition to the publication of notices the following groups were consulted with as part of this process:

- Parents of pupils attending the school
- Current staff
- The local Church of England diocese
- The local Roman Catholic diocese and
- The Secretary of State for Education.

5.6 The Council has received one response to the notice objecting to the proposal. The statutory notice and the full proposal document are attached at Appendix 2 and Appendix 3 and the response is attached as Appendix 4.

5.7 Willow Fields currently has an Ofsted inspection grade of Requires Improvement with Leadership and Management at the school considered good. In circumstances where schools are underperforming, the Department for Education would not expect them to expand, unless there is a strong case that this would help to raise standards. The Council consulted with both the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Pupil Place Planning Team at the Department for Education on this proposal as required in such circumstances. The Department for Education responded on 18th January 2020 agreeing with the proposal to expand Willow Fields Primary School. The Department for Education response is also included within Appendix 4.

6.0 Next Steps

6.1 Planning permission for the new build was granted on 3rd March 2020. Subject to approval of this proposal the Council will seek to award a contract for delivery of the new school in May 2020. It is anticipated that the successful contractor will commence works on site in June/ July 2020 with works to be concluded in July 2021. The new, expanded build is projected to open in September 2021.

7. Reasons for the Decision

7.1 Willow Fields Primary School is currently over capacity in three of seven year groups. The current school has neither the capacity nor additional support resources to support this ongoing oversubscription.

7.2 The current building has insufficient physical capacity to provide one classroom per form of entry, with five general class bases for seven year groups. The proposed expansion of the school will provide sufficient class bases and supporting areas for both a 210 and a 315 place school.

7.3 New housing proposals in the North Sunderland area will place pressure on the sufficiency of existing school places. Within statutory walking distance of the new Willow Field Primary School site at Redcar Road there are proposals for in excess of 900 new homes. This level of housing development is estimated to require over 210 school places, the equivalent of a new primary school.

7.4 The proposal to increase the capacity of Willow Fields Primary School is associated with the already approved proposal to relocate the school to a new building at the former Maplewood School site at Redcar Road in North Sunderland. This proposal was approved by Sunderland City Council's Cabinet in March 2019. This proposal is to increase the physical capacity of the new build by 175 places over those currently

available within the school's current buildings in order to meet demand for places in the area.

9. Alternative Options

Retain existing Willow Fields capacity of 140 places at existing site.

- 9.1 As noted in para 4.4, on assessing the suitability of the current school site in relation to planned future housing developments in North Sunderland it is considered that there is both a projected need for additional school places in the area and that the Maplewood site, proposed as the new Willow Fields Primary School site, is within statutory walking distance of a greater number of the proposed new homes in the area than the existing Willow Fields School site. This option is therefore not recommended. While not a factor, the proximity of the current Willow Fields Primary School building to areas of land identified as Greenbelt also limits the potential to develop the school on its current site

Relocate Willow Fields Primary School with existing capacity of 140 places

- 9.2 This will not resolve the projected need for additional primary school places that will be required to meet the need of increased housing in the North Sunderland area and is therefore not recommended. It is also noted that from September 2020 the existing Willow Fields School building will have more pupils on roll than the capacity of 140.

10. Impact Analysis

Sustainability – The above proposal will ensure the provision of primary school places in North Sunderland is sustainable for future years. It will provide infrastructure support for new housing in the area, contributing towards the Council's identified priorities.

Equalities Analysis – The proposal is not projected to disadvantage any individual, social group or organisation. The Equalities Assessment is attached as Appendix 5.

11. Other Relevant Considerations / Consultations

- 11.1 **Co-operative values** – At Annual Council in May 2015, it was resolved that the following statement be included in the Constitution to reflect the values of the "Co-operative Council".

"Sunderland City Council is a co-operative council and in being so will act ethically in all its actions while adhering to and actively promoting its co-operative values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity. These values will underpin its decision making and actions."

11.2 Financial implications

The budget for the estimated capital cost for the provision of a new build (£4.9m) was approved as part of the Council's Capital Programme in March 2019.

The city operates a 'Growth Fund' mechanism to support the provision of additional school places when delivered as part of the Council's wider school place sufficiency requirements. This funding is available to schools rated as Good and Outstanding by Ofsted. At present Willow Fields Primary School is not eligible to receive support

from the Growth Fund and is not anticipated to be eligible by September 2021. Review of Willow Fields Primary School's eligibility for additional financial support for additional school places will be carried out in March of each year in the period up to March 2027.

11.3 Legal Implications

Throughout the process, from informal consultation to the publication of the statutory proposals, the Council has complied with the requirements of the applicable legislation (the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013) and has also adhered to the Department for Education's 2018 Statutory Guidance 'Making Significant Changes ('Prescribed Alterations') to Maintained Schools'.

12. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Pre-Publication Consultation Outcomes
Appendix 2 – Statutory Notice to Enlarge Willow Fields Primary School
Appendix 3 – Full Proposal Document
Appendix 4 – Response to Statutory Notice
Appendix 5 – Equalities Assessment

13. Background Papers

September 2019 Cabinet report - Publication of Statutory Notices related to School Organisation

