

News on the proposed Sefton Park Schools Expansion

September 08

Compiled by I.R.I.S: Involving Residents In Solutions on behalf of Bristol City Council

Thank you to all those who responded to the first stage in the consultation started as part of the proposed Sefton Park Schools expansion with the intention of fulfilling the need for more primary school places for children living in the Bishopston and Ashley Down areas.

Your views, questions and suggestions will be used to inform the next stages of providing more primary school places for children in the area. We have summarised the information provided and have used the questions asked by participants to provide further information.

The next stage of consultation has been developed in response to the information provided. There will be opportunities to see the current outlined options which the architects have developed, at meetings which will be held on dates to be confirmed from the week beginning the 16th of September.

Stage 1 and 2 of the consultation are aimed to be completed before any detailed plans for the Sefton Park Schools Expansion have been decided upon, prior to significant costs being incurred. The current plans are simply geared to look at what is possible on the space available.

Summary of the first Stage in the Consultation

A total of 109 people responded in total by July 27 2008 to the invitation to complete the I.R.I.S participation form following a letter initialising the first stage of consultation on the proposed Sefton Park School Expansion.

- 50 responded through the web site: www.bristol.gov.uk/seftonpark
- 43 via the school
- 16 by post to the I.R.I.S office

95 of the 109 participants gave their addresses and/or e-mail addresses to be kept informed.

Approximately 700 participation forms with accompanying letter had been distributed through the school, Windsor Playgroup, Sparks after-school, users of the Scout Hut and through doors of resident's living adjacent to the site.

NB: Additional activity alongside the participation form

- Two e-petitions have been set up by stakeholders, one against Expansion on the Sefton Park site and one against using the Brunel site for building a new school
- Stakeholders connected to the school independently organised two open meetings held at the school.

A cross-section of stakeholders responded with their views:

- Parent of existing child or children at school: 75
- Parent of prospective child or children waiting to attend school: 21
- Local resident bordering on the perimeters of the school: 20
- Staff or Governor at the school: 11
- Windsor Playgroup: 14
- After-School Group: 16
- Scout Hut: 29

Of those who responded 8 welcomed the expansion of the school. They were aware that places locally were urgently needed in the area. Also the current school needed more outdoor space, and proper accommodation, in addition to current after-school provision/community groups needing proper provision.

18 thought it maybe a good idea but had questions

90 did not think it was a good idea for a number of reasons.

Many needed more information on the options considered.

Questions and Answers

What happened to the plan to build a school on the Brunel site?

Over the past few years Cabinet has considered various proposals to remedy the shortfall in school places.

On 22nd February 2007 (CAB 85.2/07) officers were instructed by Cabinet to consult on the establishment of a new school on the Brunel Field site (within the Bishopston Ward) and to commission the Local Education Partnership (LEP) to undertake the design of the school to Stage 1 (RIBA C) within the Strategic Partnering Agreement.

In May 2007 new legislation came into force the School Organisation Committee was abolished and new school organisation arrangements were published. Developing new Council processes to meet these new statutory requirements created a delay in opening the consultation on the new school.

The Brunel Field is only suitable for a 1 form of entry primary school (210 pupils). The external space remaining after a two floor building is constructed only just meets the DCSF requirements for outdoor school space 'on a constricted site'.

Although the Brunel Field was an ideal location for a 210 primary school, the Primary Review Framework agreed by Cabinet in October 2007, looks to move away from smaller schools because there are limitations on curriculum delivery in smaller schools, especially where they are not up to capacity and funding has to be supplemented.

The Sefton Park Schools are well managed and delivering good quality education. It is believed that by expanding the school BCC would be adding capacity to a very popular and well run school.

Is an extra class enough to accommodate needs of neighbourhood?

Various calculations are done to project the needs of a community. The need for more primary school places in the Ashley, Redland, Bishopston wards has been evident for some years and with new building and other factors this need is predicted to continue.

Why not add classes to Ashley Down/St Barnabas.

St Barnabas is being considered for expansion on its current site or in the former Fairfield building. (But see reply to next question).

Ashley Down was considered but the site is more restricted than Sefton Park and therefore any additional build is likely to be more complex and more costly.

Why not use the old Fairfield site? 3

Using the Fairfield building is an option which is being considered as part of the Primary Review. The building presents a number of significant challenges. It is listed and therefore the changes that can be made are limited. It has a number of level changes, narrow corridors and stairs etc and it may prove to be prohibitively expensive to ensure compliance with current requirements on disabled access.

Why move St Barnabas they have ample green space?

The decision to move St Barnabas has not yet been made.

Could the new supermarket site be used for a school instead?

The site was investigated during a search for possible alternatives to the College field site but is not in council ownership and was considered to be too small.

Is a three form school entry is too big, especially for younger children? Also is it not difficult to organise, plan, ensure even coverage cross three classes?

There are many examples of very successful 3 form entry primary or infant and junior paired schools – Bishop Road, Henleaze and Elmlea are nearby examples. The school can structure itself in a way which retains the more personal elements of a small school whilst gaining the benefits that increased size can bring.

The school already has experience as 3 forms have been admitted on a number of occasions.

The permanent expansion would allow the school to plan more effectively and provide suitable ancillary accommodation in addition to increased numbers of classrooms. Where access to facilities is required schools can adjust the timetable to ensure all pupils are able to benefit. For instance playtimes can be staggered where playground space is shared between different age groups.

What will it cost ?

Feasibility plans are only just being completed with rough costs based on amount of work required and comparisons with previous projects. The main purpose is space analysis to see what is possible on the site. 10 options have been considered against various considerations including comments from planners. Three options are considered feasible. The next stage is to examine the plans in sufficient detail to work up more detailed costs based on the actual designs.

Funding to the value up to £6.92m has been allocated in the CYPS draft capital programme to cover the cost of the scheme.

How can a three form entry be fitted onto the site? Is there not insufficient space?

All possible sites within the area have been looked at. The area is already significantly built up and land owned by the City Council is in short supply, so apart from the Brunel field option, this is the best option in terms of space and possible synergy.

The space is tight but with an innovative use of space and building design it should be possible to provide the appropriate accommodation.

It will also address the current temporary accommodation set up to accommodate the three form entry years.

The Government produce guidance (BB99) on space and design for new primary schools and this is the starting point for any works to a primary school. The guidance includes a schedule of accommodation that is appropriate for a 3FE / 630 place primary school and shows the range of spaces inside the building that can reasonably be expected to be included in this type of school. BB99 is available online at:

http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/_doc/81117/BB99%20revise.pdf

This is what the extension and refurbishment proposals will try to include:

- The modernisation of the existing school (i.e. classroom extension)
- The provision of new teaching areas, hall and kitchen facilities (including water sprinklers in the new building)
- New 'off-street' car parking facilities (to reduce congestion in Saint Bartholomew's Road and Williamson Road. This will also make access and egress to all properties in these two locations much safer)
- Additional external facilities (including a new 'all-weather' Multi Use Games Area (MUGA));
- Safer new access and egress arrangements to the school
- Full compliance of the whole school to the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) access requirements
- Improved external landscaping (improving the overall aesthetics of the area).

The feasibility studies have resulted in 3 options which could be accommodated with different designs and uses of space on the site.

**These will be available to view at meetings to be organised after
15 September 2008.**

What is the proposed use of the Brunel Field?

The playing fields are included in the proposal as offsite provision for sports. This does add facilities that are much needed and it does offer some possibilities for use by the children within the area for out of school sporting activities.

It is intended that the playing field will still be transferred to the city council in line with the planning agreement for the development of the College site. This agreement also makes provision for the surface of the field to be improved. It will therefore still be available for school use. Provision for future maintenance etc of the field is still to agreed

What about the Youth Centre building?

The building is not listed and has been turned down for listed status. Options being developed include retaining the building as well as possible demolition and replacement with new build.

What will happen to the current users of the Youth Centres?

The youth services provided currently will be relocated to another site.

BCC is in discussion with Windsor Playgroup and Sparks after-school club about how they can possibly be accommodated within the expanded school. This could provide better and more suitable accommodation.

BCC would also expect the school to further develop after-school use in line with 'extended schools' policies.

Noise Levels once the school has been built during playground use?

There is unlikely to be a significant change to noise levels as a result of the expansion.

What about access?

Access issues will be considered as part of the plans.

Respondants indicated the following issues:

- access on foot through Happy lane is currently congested at entrance to school
- Happy Lane access to community facilities is shut after school hours and therefore makes community facilities difficult for children to safely access after-school provision
- Access, safety, congestion and volume of traffic within the cul-de-sac.
- Parking problems, parents need to drop off/collect children.

One suggestion was to put staff car park underneath the school and use as a 5 a side football pitch when cars have gone home.

What will happen to the Scouts and Guides if the Scout Hut becomes a car park?

The council recognise the high usage and value to the community of the facility. The land is council owned and is leased by the Scouts and Guides. The hut is owned by the Scouts and Guides and they have contacted BCC because the building is coming to the end of its life.

As part of the feasibility work various options have been considered including provision of space within the expanded school buildings which provides benefits in terms more use of school buildings out of school time, well maintained and safe accommodation and sharing of costs.

Other options include moving the scout hut to another nearby site, such as the Brunel College site.

What plans are there to cope with disruption during the building work

The contractor which BCC uses for major works on schools are very experienced having delivered 3 large secondary schools already within the city. They work to strict codes of conduct which ensure that disruption to pupils is minimised as far as possible. They will work with the school so that pupils can be more engaged with the work providing educational opportunities.

There will also be opportunities for pupils to contribute with art works which could be incorporated into the building – for instance at Barton Hill pupils worked with an artist to design etchings to go on glass doors and windows.

In addition planners will set restrictions on working times on the site which will limit noise to neighbours over the building works period.