

# Title of report: **Aylestone School Expansion**

**Meeting: Cabinet**

**Meeting date: Thursday 23 February 2023**

**Report by: Cabinet member children and families;**

## **Classification**

Open

## **Decision type**

Key

Notice has been served in accordance with Part 3, Section 9 (Publicity in Connection with Key Decisions) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

## **Wards affected**

Aylestone Hill;

## **Purpose**

To approve the expansion of Aylestone School to accommodate additional pupils admitted from September 2026 in response to rising numbers in Hereford City.

## **Recommendation(s)**

That:

- (a) Cabinet agree to progress with the permanent expansion of Aylestone High School;**
- (b) Subject to securing planning consent, Aylestone High School is expanded to enable its permanent expansion to five forms of entry (150 pupils per year group) at a cost of not more than £13.1m including fees and contingency;**
- (c) Delegated authority for award of procurement contracts for the lifecycle of the project, is given to the Corporate Director, Children and Young People; and**

**(d) The Service Director, Education, Skills and Learning, be authorised to take all operational decisions necessary to implement the above in consultation with the S151 Officer and the Cabinet Members for Children and Families and Commissioning, Procurement and Assets.**

## **Alternative options**

1. Expand Whitecross High School – this would be our preferred option, as there is a significant shortage of capacity at the school. However, the school is part of a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contract for which the Council pays a unitary charge to the PFI contractor. The council explored what the impact of an extension at Whitecross would have on the PFI contract. Although the landlord was agreeable for the school to expand, it was identified that there would be a significant uplift in the annual unitary charge which has meant that any expansion, at this time, would not be financially viable, and therefore this option is not recommended.
2. Expand Kingstone High School – this was explored in detail and remains an option for the future, but not recommended at this time. A decision to expand Kingstone by one form of entry (1FE = 150 pupils) was due to be heard by Cabinet in November 2022 (to be closely followed by a further 1FE expansion proposal for Aylestone High School), but was later withdrawn to allow for: additional options to be considered following feedback during pre-cabinet scrutiny; and, further analysis identified a greater need for places in the city. Despite a number of housing developments in its catchment, Kingstone High School has the physical capacity to serve all the children in its catchment, meet the demand of the developments and provide the majority of places requested by parental preference. Any expansion at Kingstone, at this time, would result in transporting learners from the city to the Golden Valley and therefore would not align with the council's commitment to climate change.

## **Key considerations**

3. Ensuring there are sufficient school places to meet parental demand is a statutory duty for councils. This means that councils must make population and pupil forecasts in order to anticipate changes in demand. Where additional places are required the council is responsible for securing them. This applies to maintained schools, voluntary controlled schools, voluntary aided schools, free schools and academies.
4. Every year the council is required to make a school capacity (SCAP) return to the Department for Education (DfE). This includes information about the number of children on roll in each school planning area by age, as well as details of the capacity of schools.
5. The data from the SCAP return has, over recent years, identified building pressure on places in the north of the city, mainly at Whitecross High School, but increasingly at Aylestone School (which neighbour each other's catchment area). To put this into context, using Autumn Term 2021 data, 1189 learners have Whitecross as their nearest school, it has a capacity of 945. Likewise, Aylestone has 695 learners living closest and a capacity of 450. Both schools had a waiting list following admissions allocations in September 2022.
6. Additional capacity is now required to meet growing numbers in the north of the city. We are unable to build capacity at Whitecross, for the reasons outlined in paragraph 1 therefore additional capacity at Aylestone School would relieve the overall pressure in the north of the city whilst still allowing those who might sit in the catchment of Whitecross High School to be able to walk or cycle to Aylestone School.
7. Where demand exceeds the capacity of the schools, the DfE allocates a formula-based "basic needs" grant. This is intended to contribute towards the capital costs of adding places. The

council has approx. £6.5m of basic need grant remaining from previous years' allocations. The DfE announced early in 2022 that the council will receive a further £9.5m over the next 3 years to increase primary and secondary capacity across the county. Some of this grant will be used to fund the project.

8. This project seeks to address the immediate need for secondary places. In parallel, over the next 12 months, a longer term strategy, on school place planning, will be developed. This will be informed by the Herefordshire Local Plan 2021-2041 which is due to go out to public consultation later this year.
9. Aylestone School is located just off Aylestone Hill (A465). It currently has a capacity of 450 pupils but it has in the past had a capacity of 1250. This was reduced in 2003 (capacity 900), 2010 (capacity 750) and most recently in 2017 where it has been operating at 450.
10. During this time of reduced capacity, Broadlands primary has moved onto the site and dilapidated buildings/mobiles have been removed. As a result, in order to expand, additional accommodation will be required. The proposed expansion would allow for 150 learners per year group (total capacity of 750).
11. A feasibility study was commissioned to identify what opportunities there are at the school to expand. As part of the study, a curriculum gap analysis was undertaken to show deficit and surplus of existing provision compared to the schedules of accommodation requirements, as defined in the DfE's Building Bulletin 103 Area Guidelines for Schools.
12. The study identified that the increase in capacity causes the school to be under-provided for accommodation in several areas: with under-provided and under-sized general and specialist teaching spaces, an under provision of a suitable sports hall and under provision of administration, storage and toilet areas.
13. This project chiefly addresses the need for the required additional spaces, through some remodelling and a new build teaching block and sports hall which will be designed and built in such a way that it can be added to in the future.
14. Aylestone School comprehensively updated their School Travel Plan in July 2022, and the Assistant Head teacher is in regular contact with the Council's School Travel Plan Co-ordinator. Their travel survey showed that current student travel methods are: - Walk 46% - Car 35% - Bike/Scoot 3% - Park & Stride 3% - Other (bus etc) 11%. The current cycle parking provision has been identified as a barrier to cycling, and the school are keen to improve this. Road safety measures have included 'Parking Pals' signs to encourage parents who drive to school to park away from school gates, and information provided to encourage parent drivers to park at Aylestone Park instead – the school's designated 'alternative parking'. Broadlands Primary which is also located on this campus updated their School Travel Plan in 2022. Their travel survey showed that the current travel methods of pupils are: Walk 55% - Bike/scoot 11% - Car 48% - Park & Stride 7% - Other 1%. They also participated in Walk to School Week 2022 and the pupils collectively walked 652km and participate annually in the Council's Road Safety education programme for schools.
15. In a bid to increase the number of students accessing the schools by active travel means, the project will work alongside the emerging Hereford City Masterplan, in which active travel is a key priority. The plan features a network of Primary and secondary cycle routes. Significant improvements to the existing route along the A465 are in development and has funding secured from council's successful 'Levelling Up' funding bid. The secondary network that will be developed includes a route along Broadlands lane, Eastnor Drive and Whittern Way meaning the site will be directly accessed by the city's cycle network. The emerging masterplan also proposes a network of neighbourhoods with measures to reduce speeds and traffic in local neighbourhoods which will enable more walking and cycling for school journeys

and requests for reduced speed limits on Whittern way are already being considered by the council.

16. The construction industry still continues to feel the impact of the pandemic, with labour shortages, high demand for raw materials, soaring energy prices and the geopolitical situation in Ukraine and its consequent impact on oil and gas supplies are all serious causes for concern. A statement on product availability from the Construction Leadership Council (21 April 2022) noted that increased energy and raw materials costs currently remain key factors driving rising prices for construction in the UK.
17. In addition to the increasing prices for construction, inflation is the highest it has been for over 40 years, peaking at over 11% in October 2022. Given this volatility in the market, and in a bid to continue to deliver value for money effectively, a suitable contingency is vital in order to ride the waves of uncertainty and avoid further cost inflation by decision delay.

## **Community impact**

18. These activities support the council's County Plan Ambition to strengthen communities to ensure that everyone lives well and safely together and the Children & Young People's Plan Pledge of helping all children and young people succeed – be amazing.
19. The County Plan outlines the council's priorities. The expansion of Aylestone School supports three of these: Ensure all children are healthy, safe and inspired to achieve, Protect and improve the lives of vulnerable people, and Invest in education and the skills needed by employers.
20. The project fulfils the delivery of school places which is included in Herefordshire council's delivery plan which highlights the key activity planned for 2022-23.
21. The children and young people's directorate schools capital investment strategy itemises 11 principles. The rebuild of the school would align with principles 1, 2, 7, 8, 10 and 11.
  1. High quality learning environments are more likely to deliver the best outcomes for all children and young people.
  2. A high quality learning environment is one where:
    - a) The building is in good condition with an affordable and planned programme of maintenance;
    - b) The building has the right number of suitable places;
    - c) The building supports the delivery of a suitable curriculum and learning;
    - d) There is sufficient suitable outdoor space including playing fields and all weather surfaces;
    - e) Children are not taught in temporary classrooms;
    - f) The building is energy efficient;
    - g) The school has full disabled access;
    - h) The school meets all health and safety requirements.
  7. As a whole across Herefordshire, there should be no more than 10% surplus school places. This margin is designed to reflect population variations and trends over time.

8. The council will be increasingly responsible for taking steps towards protecting the environment and will expect all schools to work towards achieving and displaying energy certificate rating of C or above and a silver eco schools rating along with reducing energy consumption located near community assets.
10. Any financial investment must represent best value for investors and could come from a variety of sources, including:
  - a) Specific grants and one off government schemes;
  - b) The planned release of sites to sell and reinvest;
  - c) External funding such as from The Education Funding Agency, the Diocese and section 106 agreements with housing developers.
11. The council will carry out detailed consultation on any changes or investment proposals.
22. As with all school provision, improvements to the quality of education is vitally important in improving the life chances of children and young people in the care system. The expansion of Aylestone School will improve the quality of education, and the educational experiences for all of the pupils on roll, including those who are in care and therefore the responsibility of the corporate parenting board.
23. The detailed design will address how the safety of pupils, parents, staff and the community can be assured throughout the construction period. This will include separation of school and contractor spaces, management of vehicle movements, and control of machinery and materials which may pose any health and safety risk.

## **Environmental Impact**

24. The developed design of the block will seek to minimise any adverse environmental impact and will actively seek opportunities to improve and enhance operational performance through a dedicated environmental and energy strategy.
25. The council and school have made a commitment to pursue energy performance over and above the minimum requirements of the building regulations, by targeting more stringent industry standards and will achieve a high standard of operational performance.
26. The council's brief for the new block will look to exceed council policy requirements of passivhaus standards and will aim to achieve net zero carbon emissions. This means that the building must achieve a consistent good level of thermal comfort with very little energy consumption.
27. The approach to achieving a high energy and thermal performance and therefore reducing consumption and carbon emissions on the site will be led firstly by passive measures, then energy and carbon efficiency.
28. Passive measures will be included to reduce the building's energy consumption in the first instance. These include improving the u-values of the fabric, optimising window sizes to maximise daylight while limiting the potential for overheating and using a passive summertime comfort strategy to eliminate the need for active cooling. These measures ensure that the energy demands are minimised over the lifetime of the building and therefore form the fundamental basis of the energy strategy.

29. Operational and carbon efficiency then become the focus of the design. All equipment and plant included in the design will be selected based on high efficiency performance and quality, prioritising the reduction of carbon emissions.
30. Employing passive design measures will minimise both heat loss in the winter and heat gain in the summer from the outset. It is the most effective way of ensuring a low energy impact of the building over its entire lifetime.
31. In keeping with this 'passive first' approach, the proposed new fabric will be highly thermally efficient and careful consideration will be paid to the airtightness and thermal lines to prevent uncontrolled airflow and its associated heat loss.
32. Most occupied spaces within the new school building will be provided with a good level of natural daylight to create a bright and enjoyable environment.
33. Part of the design for maximising daylight involves finding a good balance with limiting solar gain. The building orientation and envelope will be optimised while creating the daylighting and summer comfort strategies.
34. The proposed passive measures will minimise heat loss through the fabric and significantly reduce the need for active equipment. The following systems have been specified to ensure that where active equipment is required, its energy demand and associated carbon emissions are as low as possible:
  - a. Mechanical Ventilation with Heat Recovery (MVHR) - The building uses MVHR systems throughout to minimise the ventilation heat loss during winter months. One central unit ventilates most occupied spaces, while smaller locale units ventilate toilet blocks. Both types of unit have highly efficient heat recovery (>80%). Simple controls will ensure an easy and intuitive user interface allowing the system to operate efficiently.
  - b. Air Source Heat Pumps - Heating to the new school building will be provided by electrically driven air source heat pumps. By using ambient air as a heat source, heat pumps avoid the need to burn fossil fuels on site to create energy and are up to three times as efficient as boilers.
  - c. Hot Water Generation – Given the limited demand for hot water in the building, hot water will be generated locally via point of use electric water heaters. This eliminates the energy lost by circulating hot water throughout the building.
  - d. High Efficiency Lighting - High efficiency LED light fittings will be specified throughout. Communal spaces will be controlled via presence/absence detection to ensure unoccupied spaces are unlit. All spaces with windows will also be provided with daylight dimming to limit the amount of time that the artificial lighting is used.
  - e. Water Efficiency - Low flow water outlets will be used to minimise the water usage. This includes low flow taps for wash hand basins and classroom sinks.
  - f. On Site Generation - As a final measure, on site electricity generation has been maximised to partially offset any energy consumed by the new school building. The single storey nature of the building provides abundant space for PV panels. Panels have been mounted wherever possible on the flat roof, with consideration to shading from parapets/other architectural elements to maximise scope for electricity generation. Any energy generated on site will feed directly back into the grid, ensuring all electricity produced, regardless of the building's occupancy or usage, will be useful.

35. Key building performance criteria such as thermal performance, insulation, daylighting, ventilation and on-site energy generation will be carefully considered and remained an integral part of the design process throughout.

## **Equality duty**

36. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to –

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
  - b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
  - c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
37. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. Our providers will be made aware of their contractual requirements in regards to equality legislation.
38. The new school building is intended to serve all members of the local community, including those with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.
39. The principle equalities impact of the decision to expand Aylestone School related to the design and layout of the building. The current buildings are deficient in many respects. The new building would conform to all current legislative requirements and would meet the needs of disabled pupils and their families, as well as staff and other users of the building.

## **Resource implications**

40. By taking the decision to proceed to implementation of the project, the project will follow the council's Programme Management Office process. There will be no call on IT, property services and human resources within the council for this project. Internal support will be required by procurement and legal services, these services are accounted for in the budget plan.
41. The procurement process will be carried out in line with the council's contract procedure rules. The costs shown are estimates only and may vary once tenders are received.
42. There are no future revenue implications to the council as any ongoing maintenance costs will be funded from the school's budget.
43. The capital costs of the decision are set out below. All project costs to be incurred, from the decision to proceed point, have been included. Funding sources have been itemised, and include the year during which they will be required, any unspent Basic Needs Grant will be allocated to future projects as it's a ring fenced grant from DfE.

<b>Capital cost of project</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>2023/24</b>	<b>2024/25</b>	<b>Future Years</b>	<b>Total</b>
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Feasibility	10				10
Construction		250	750	7,422	8,422
Construction Contingency / Risk		25	75	742	842
Inflation			200	263	463
Professional Fees and Surveys		500	500	460	1,460
Internal Fees and Charges	5	65	65	65	200
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>		<b>840</b>	<b>1,590</b>	<b>8,952</b>	<b>11,397</b>
HC Retained Risk Contingency		100	608	1,000	1,708
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>940</b>	<b>2,198</b>	<b>9,952</b>	<b>13,105</b>

<b>Funding streams (indicate whether base budget / external / grant / capital borrowing)</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>Future Years</b>	<b>Total</b>
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Basic Need Grant	15	940	2,198	9,952	13,105
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>940</b>	<b>2,198</b>	<b>9,952</b>	<b>13,105</b>

## Legal implications

44. Sections 13 and 14 of the Education Act 1996 (as amended by the Education Acts 2006 and 2011), sets out that, the Council has a general statutory duty to ensure that there are sufficient school places available to meet the needs of the population in its area. The Council must also promote high educational standards, ensure fair access to educational opportunity and promote the fulfilment of every child's educational potential. In order to discharge this duty the Council has to undertake a planning function to ensure that the supply of school places balances the demand for them.
45. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 requires local authorities to promote choice and diversity when carrying out their strategic duties in relation to the provision of new school places. The proposed works set out within this report satisfy the legal duties imposed upon the Council and will ensure that there are sufficient school places in their area, promote diversity and increase parental choice for school places.



## Risk management

46.

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
The project could cost more than the provision in the capital programme.	The feasibility has given high level costs and included regular reviews of the market and inflation. More cost certainty will be identified at design stage with a clearly defined budget. In addition, a suitable retained contingency, with delegated authority gives better decision making ability and scrutiny.
The project could expand to include works not originally intended.	The recommendations specify as precisely as possible what the project is intended to achieve. This will be in consultation with the school. Any additional extras to the design could be achieved at the school's cost.
There could be planning or similar regulatory requirements that add to costs.	Early involvement of planners will take place at RIBA stage 3, with amendments to the design being made where appropriate.
The work of the school could be disrupted by any resulting building works.	This possibility is anticipated and the architect is asked to address and suggest mitigation strategies for such potential disruptions.
Timescales may slip, if for example, governance, procurement and post pandemic related issues occur.	Timescales within the control of the council will be closely monitored. Should any unexpected delays happen, these will be escalated by exception to mitigate any impact.

## Consultees

47. A number of virtual consultation meetings were carried out in February and March of 2021. All head teachers, chairs of governors and ward councillors were invited to comment on wider proposals to increase both primary and secondary capacity across the county. During the consultation, graphical data from the SCAP return was presented to the groups, which quantified the pressure on places being experienced currently and forecasted over the next decade across each planning area. Aylestone School was one of five secondary schools, included in the proposal, to have a feasibility study undertaken to see how the school could be expanded.
48. There were no objections received to the proposal. The main concern raised was around legislation allowing for parental preference, which does not align with the councils commitment to the climate emergency.
49. The Trustees and headteacher of Aylestone School have been involved in the feasibility study and are supportive of proposals to expand the school.

50. The proposal has been discussed with the cabinet member for children's and family services and young people's attainment and the cabinet member for commissioning, procurement and assets. Both are supportive of the expansion plans and see how the expansion would fit into the wider city plan and the advantages of bringing together inclusivity through a campus of the school and the Beacon and further education colleges.
51. The proposal has been discussed with the ward Councillor for Aylestone Hill. They are not supportive of the proposal to increase capacity at Aylestone without further exploring the barriers preventing the expansion of Whitecross High School and that Highways have considered the junction of Broadlands Lane and Aylestone Hill to accommodate additional school time traffic/congestion.
52. Political groups were consulted on 23 January 2023. Representatives attended from Independents for Herefordshire (IfH), True Independents, Conservatives, and the Green Party. The session was recorded and sent out to all parties to comment. There was no objections or points raised to the proposal to expand Aylestone.
53. A public consultation will take place on the proposal, which is statutory requirement when making a prescribed alteration to a maintained school. This will take place in the summer term 2023.

### Appendices

None

### Background papers

None

### Report Reviewers Used for appraising this report:

Please note this section must be completed before the report can be published		
Governance	John Coleman	Date 01/02/2023
Finance	Karen Morris	Date 03/02/2023
Legal	Pooja Nahar	Date 03/02/2023
Communications	Luenne Featherstone	Date 01/02/2023
Equality Duty	Harriet Yellin	Date 01/02/2023
Procurement	Lee Robertson	Date 30/01/2023
Risk	Elizabeth Freedland.	Date 30/01/2023
Approved by	Darryl Freeman	Date 15/02/2023

**Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.**

DfE	Department for Education
FE	Form of Entry
MVHR	Mechanical Ventilation with Heat Recovery
PFI	Private Finance Initiative
SCAP	School CAPacity Data Collection
PAN	Planned Admission Number