

## Record of operational decision

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| <b>Decision title:</b>                   | To approve the expansion of Aylestone School from a capacity of 450 to 750 from September 2026   |
| <b>Date of decision:</b>                 | 20 July 2023   |
| <b>Decision maker:</b>                   | Head of Educational Development  |
| <b>Authority for delegated decision:</b> | <p>The authority for the specified officer to take this decision as set out in the Children and Young Peoples scheme of delegation line 91.</p> <p><a href="https://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/documents/s50111047/Children%20and%20Young%20People%20Scheme%20of%20Delegation.pdf">https://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/documents/s50111047/Children%20and%20Young%20People%20Scheme%20of%20Delegation.pdf</a></p>   |
| <b>Ward:</b>                             | Aylestone Hill   |
| <b>Consultation:</b>                     | <p>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 annual school capacity survey (SCAP) 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.</p> <p>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 council's commitment to the climate emergency.</p> <p>The Trustees and Headteacher of Aylestone School have been involved in the feasibility study and are supportive of proposals to expand the school.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>The proposal has been discussed with the Ward Councillor for Aylestone Hill. They have raised concerns regarding the impact an expansion would have on the highways, specifically Broadlands Lane and Aylestone Hill and an increase in air pollution in that vicinity as a result of additional vehicles. They also raised concerns of expanding a school that has a Requires Improvement judgement by OFSTED.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Aylestone school conducted a public consultation from 5 May to Monday 19 June 2023. They received 19 responses: 3 in support and 16 against the proposal.</p> <p>In summary, those in support suggested that improved infrastructure would reduce environmental impact, a wider curriculum could be offered with a larger and more resilient teaching team.</p> |

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|   | <p>Those against the proposal were mainly concerned over increased traffic and therefore issues with parking, safety of pedestrians and increased pollution and the impact that will have on the natural environment. Some raised concerns of expanding a school that has a Requires Improvement judgement by OFSTED. Other comments included the lack of investment in other schools that are oversubscribed and additional lettings by the school. Some could not agree yet as there are no details of what the expansion would look like.</p> <p>Impact on the highways and environment will be looked at in in greater detail in the design stage. In addition, and 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.</p> <p>The council will continue to support the school in their improvement journey.</p> <p>Further consultation will take place as part of pre-planning and a further statutory consultation at planning stage.</p> |
| <p><b>Decision made:</b></p>  | <p>Approve the expansion of Aylestone School</p>   |
| <p><b>Reasons for decision:</b></p>   | <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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 below in alternative options, 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.</p>   |
| <p><b>Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality considerations:</b></p> | <p>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</p>   |

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|   | <p>undertake a planning function to ensure that the supply of school places balances the demand for them.</p> <p>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.</p>   |
| <p><b>Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:</b></p> | <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> |
| <p><b>Details of any declarations of interest made:</b></p>               | <p>none</p>   |

Signed..... Date: 20 July 2023

Head of Educational Development