

**EXPANSION OF THE BELLBIRD PRIMARY SCHOOL, SAWSTON**

**To:** Children & Young People’s Committee

**Meeting Date:** 13 November 2018

**From:** Wendi Ogle-Welbourn, Executive Director: People & Communities

**Electoral division(s):** Sawston and Shelford

**Forward Plan ref:** Not applicable      **Key decision:** No

**Purpose:** To seek the Committee’s approval for the permanent expansion of The Bellbird Primary School, Sawston from 315 to 420 places in response to demographic changes in the local area.

**Recommendation:** The Committee is asked to

- a) Note the current and projected demographic pressures and the strategic mitigations proposed to address these;
- b) Note the statutory consultation process to seek feedback on the proposal to increase the physical capacity of The Bellbird Primary School and the concerns raised by The Icknield Primary School; and
- c) Approve the proposal to expand The Bellbird Primary School from 315 to 420 places and for officers to seek approval from the Office of the Schools Adjudicator to delay the implementation of the increase in the school’s Published Admission Number (PAN) from 45 to 60 until September 2020 in response to the concerns raised by The Icknield Primary School.

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## 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Council has a statutory duty to provide a school place for every child living in its area of responsibility who is of school age and whose parents want their child educated in the state funded sector. To achieve this, the Council has to keep the number of school places under review and to take the appropriate steps to manage the position where necessary. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 also requires local authorities to adopt a strategic role, with a duty to promote choice, diversity and fair access to school provision.
- 1.2 Sawston is served by two primary schools. In broad terms, The Bellbird Primary School serves the south and west side of the village and the village of Pampisford. The Icknield Primary School serves the east side of the village. The Bellbird Primary School opened in September 2007 following the amalgamation of John Falkner Infant and John Paxton Junior Schools. The school building was designed in a way that would allow it to be extended to 420 places (two forms of entry (FE)) when this was required.
- 1.3 The Council has faced consistent pressure on primary school places in the area served by the two schools serving Sawston and Pampisford. This is set out in **Appendix A**, table 1, which provides an overview of the primary aged cohorts in the village. The capacity in Babraham helps offset these pressures to some extent, although as a popular school it fills from pupils outside the catchment, not just from the Sawston catchments. The impact of these pressures has been further exacerbated by similar growth in demand in surrounding villages. This increasingly limits the potential for parents to secure places at the schools which serve those villages.

## 2. CURRENT POSITION

- 2.1 Starting in 2015/16, where there have been insufficient places in Sawston to meet in-catchment demand, the Council has met the need for places by agreeing admissions above the school's Published Admission Number (PAN) at The Bellbird. This was because of the two schools it was the only one which offered the potential to make over-admissions prior to securing temporary accommodation and finally expansion of the school. To meet demand with the accommodation, it also reflected the fact that when the school was built it was designed with the scope to expand to 2FE, which meant that the cost of expansion would offer better value for money. Whilst recognising that it could affect admissions to Icknield, this was considered to be the most appropriate means of securing sufficient places.
- 2.2 In 2017/18, the Council took the decision to turn down a request from Bellbird to make over admissions as it did not consider there to be a case for the additional capacity proposed. There were, however, four families who chose to appeal for places at the school. All four appeals were upheld by the Independent Appeal Panel. In the period 2014-2018, these were the only four of ten appeals, for either school, to be upheld.
- 2.3 Tables 2 and 3 (Appendix A) provide an overview of the current pupils at both Bellbird and Icknield, as held by the Council's Admissions Team. This analysis shows that if the Council had not taken the decision to make over admissions in 2015/16, 2016/17 and 2018/19, then there would not have been sufficient capacity in Sawston schools to

meet the demand within the village and the Council would have faced the prospect of transporting significant numbers of pupils to other school, possibly as far as Linton in some years. However, as will also be evident, Icknield has and continues to operate with pupil numbers below the school's capacity.

### **3. FUTURE DEMAND AND RESPONSE**

- 3.1 It is anticipated that the demand for school places in the village in excess of the two schools' combined capacities will continue. This reflects continued demographic pressures, infill development and the impact of proposed housing development on the north-east fringe of the village (sites to the north and south of Babraham Road). The map attached as Appendix B shows the location of the two schools and the development sites.
- 3.2 The Council has been aware of these development pressures since 2013/14 as they were proposed allocations in the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan. The scale of development – up to around 600 homes - is slightly greater than proposed in 2013. This would suggest demand for between 180 and 240 additional primary school places based on the Council's general multipliers.
- 3.3 A number of meetings with all schools were held starting in 2013 through to 2015. These looked at potential options and phasing of mitigations for these growing pressures. The conclusions reached at the time were that:
1. The Bellbird would provide the most cost effective solution for creating the additional 0.5 FE identified as necessary to meet needs in the short to medium term.
  2. The Icknield should be redeveloped and extended to 2FE in response to the planned housing development on the edge of the village as this is the closest school to it. A further consideration was the potential to secure S106 funding to offset the costs of addressing the wider challenges of the site.
- 3.4 Following the conclusion of these discussions, the majority of engagement has been with the Bellbird Governing Body as part of the wider Design Process. As part of this strategic response, a capital scheme to expand The Bellbird was included as part of the Council's capital programme approved by the Committee in December 2017. A planning application for the proposed scheme was approved in early September 2018.
- 3.5 Tables 4 and 5, Appendix A, provide a summary of the most recent catchment level forecasts. These continue to suggest that there will be a significant gap between the demand in the village and the current combined capacity of the two schools. They also suggest that there could be very limited capacity to facilitate historic trends of out-catchment admission at surrounding schools. Additionally, these forecasts make limited allowance for housing development as the vast majority of homes would be built beyond the current forecast window. These forecasts do not include the impact of the planning application for 158 dwellings North of Babraham Road, submitted to South Cambridgeshire as a Full Application in late September. They also do not take account of the fact that the scale of development across sites locally is expected to significantly exceed that previously identified. Some projects suggest that these could total between 550-700 homes, although this cannot be confirmed at this stage.

#### **4. MAIN ISSUES**

- 4.1 On 5 September 2018, the Council published a statutory notice to make a prescribed alteration to increase the capacity of The Bellbird Primary School from 315 to 420 places with effect from 1 September 2019. The notice expired on 3 October. .
- 4.2 Through this consultation process a number of challenges have been made, notably by Icknield Primary School. Specifically these have highlighted concerns about the impact the previous decisions to over admit and the future expansion in capacity at Bellbird would have on the school.
- 4.3 The proposal to change the PAN at The Bellbird Primary School from 45 to 60 from September 2019 was included in the annual consultation on school admission arrangements undertaken from November 2017 to January 2018. This change was subsequently confirmed as part of the Council's determined admission arrangements and the school's PAN is shown as 60 in the information provided to parents who will be applying for Reception places for entry in September 2019.

#### **5. PROPOSED ACTIONS**

- 5.1 Officers have carefully considered the concerns raised by Icknield and accept that, given the delays in South Cambridgeshire District Council's Local Plan being adopted and the subsequent delays in housing, there is a case for deferring the PAN increase at Bellbird until September 2020. To this end, officers are in the process of seeking formal agreement from the Office of the Schools Adjudicator to facilitate this. If this is not approved, then the Council will be required to offer up to 60 places at The Bellbird for Reception entry in September 2019, in compliance with the Admissions Code.
- 5.2 Having reviewed accommodation at The Bellbird it has been determined that regardless of the outcome of decisions about PAN arrangements, there will be a need for additional teaching accommodation to be in place by September 2019. This is due to the number of classes currently being run at the school. The current year 6 is a single class cohort. Even if the admissions were limited to PAN (45 places), infant class size regulations would require two classes to be run. This would lead to an overall increase in class numbers. This could not be mitigated in any other way without having a detrimental impact on educational outcomes for pupils. In view of the wider situation, and reflecting on the cost impact of delays and provision of temporary accommodation, it has been determined that the expansion works should be progressed in line with the agreed programme of works. The contractors were, therefore, mobilised on 20 October with an expectation of completion ahead of September 2019.

#### **6. ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

- 6.1 **Developing the local economy for the benefit of all**
  - 6.1.1 Providing access to local and high quality education and associated children's services should enhance the skills of the local workforce and provide essential childcare

services for working parents or those seeking to return to work. Schools and early years and childcare services are providers of local employment.

## **6.2 Helping people live healthy and independent lives**

6.2.1 If pupils have access to local schools and associated children's services, they are more likely to attend them by either cycling or walking rather than through local authority-provided transport or car. They will also be able to access more readily out of school activities such as sport and homework clubs and develop friendship groups within their own community. This should contribute to the development of both healthier and more independent lifestyles.

## **6.3 Supporting and protecting vulnerable people**

6.3.1 Providing access to local primary education and childcare services will ensure that services delivered through the schools will meet the demands of those families within the respective catchment areas.

# **7. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS**

## **7.1 Resource Implications**

- 7.1.1 The cost of the scheme to expand The Bellbird from 315 to 420 places was approved for inclusion in the Council's capital programme by the Committee in December 2017 and was £2.46m. The current assumption is that £59k will come from the Schools Condition Grant and £2,401k from prudential borrowing although part of the cost will be recouped from contributions from new housing developments, which have recently received planning permission in the local area.
- 7.1.2 The Council has responded to concerns raised by Icknield about health and safety and significant condition issues with the current accommodation. Over the summer holiday, a programme of work to address the most pressing issues was commenced, with investment in the region of £600k being made.
- 7.1.3 It is recognised that there will remain significant challenges associated with the school's accommodation. However, the Council's approved priorities for investment, around meeting basic need, and wider financial pressures on borrowing to deliver its capital programme, significantly restrict the Council's ability to address these without substantial additional capital resources. The potential to secure S106 contributions from the substantial developments around Sawston will help to partially mitigate this issue.
- 7.1.4 A planning application (Full not Outline) has recently been submitted to South Cambridgeshire District Council for consideration. In the Council's response the need for additional investment in education provision in the village has been identified. Following this application, officers will be working to review the anticipated timescales of mitigation to be secured. It is likely that this will require a scheme to be identified with the Council's five year capital plan within the next 18 months. The final approach to this will need to be determined following further discussions with the developer and planning colleagues at the District Council.

## **7.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications**

7.2.1 The design and build project will be undertaken under the Council's framework arrangements.

## **7.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications**

7.3.1 The Council has complied throughout with the relevant Department for Education (DfE) statutory guidance. Officers have responded to all questions and queries raised throughout the process. The Council published a statutory notice on 5 September 2018 to give effect to the enlargement proposal. This commenced a four week period during which anyone with an interest in the proposals could make representations to the Council.

## **7.4 Equality and Diversity Implications**

7.4.1 The Council is committed to ensuring that children with special educational needs and/or disability (SEND) are able to attend their local mainstream school where possible, with only those with the most complex and challenging needs requiring places at specialist provision.

7.4.2 The accommodation provided by the Council will fully comply with the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty and current Council standards.

## **7.5 Engagement and Communications Implications**

7.5.1 The Bellbird Primary School was designed in a way that allowed it to be extended to 420 places when this was required, hence the potential expansion of the school has been known about for a number of years.

7.5.2 There have been discussions between the Council and the Governing Body of the Bellbird Primary School, and other local schools, since 2013 regarding the need to increase its PAN and the overall capacity of the school. Since 2015 when the way forward was identified these discussions have mostly involved The Bellbird's Governing Body. The school has been kept informed of these proposals and has been involved in the proposed design of the building.

7.5.3 The PAN change to 60 for September 2019 was included in the annual consultation on school admission arrangements undertaken from November 2017 to January 2018 as required by the School Admissions Code.

7.5.4 There has been ongoing planning consultation with neighbours, as identified by planning officers as the proposed scheme has been taken through the planning application process. A public consultation was held at the school in March 2018, attended by 39 people. Individuals were able to respond by completing the questionnaire at the end of the consultation document or writing separately to the named officer. 10 feedback forms were submitted at the end of the consultation event. Details of the proposals were also made available more widely within the village, including displays at the library and discussions with the Parish Council.

- 7.5.5 As required by statutory guidance, copies of the Council's proposal to expand The Bellbird from 315 to 420 places effective from 1 September 2019 were sent directly to:
- union representatives
  - the governing bodies of the two schools
  - the Local MP
  - South Cambridgeshire District Council
  - the Regional Schools Commissioner
  - the Church of England Diocese Ely
  - the Roman Catholic Diocese of East Anglia

Local schools and pre-schools were asked to inform their staff and parents of children attending of the proposed changes.

## 7.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

- 7.6.1 The local Members (Sawston & Shelford division) have been kept apprised by officers of each stage of the process and its outcome.

## 7.7 Public Health Implications

- 7.7.1 It is Council policy that schools:

- should be sited as centrally as possible to the communities they serve, unless location is dictated by physical constraints and/or the opportunity to reduce land take by providing playing fields within the green belt or green corridors;
- should be sited so that the maximum journey distance for a young person is less than the statutory walking distances (3 miles for secondary school children, 2 miles for primary school children)
- should be located close to public transport links and be served by a good network of walking and cycling routes
- should be provided with Multi-use Games Areas (MUGAs) and all weather pitches (AWPs) to encourage wider community use of school.

- 7.7.2 There is also an expectation that schools will provide access to and use of the school's accommodation for activities e.g. sporting, cultural, outside of school hours.

<b>Implications</b>	<b>Officer Clearance</b>
<b>Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance?</b>	Yes Name of Financial Officer: Martin Wade
<b>Have the procurement/contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by Finance?</b>	Yes Name of Financial Officer: Paul White
<b>Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by LGSS Law?</b>	Yes Name of Legal Officer: Ismail Shahin
<b>Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your Service Contact?</b>	Yes Name of Officer: Jonathan Lewis

<b>Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications?</b>	Yes Name of Officer: Matthew Hall
<b>Have any localism and Local Member involvement issues been cleared by your Service Contact?</b>	Yes Name of Officer: Jonathan Lewis
<b>Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health</b>	Yes Name of Officer: Tess Campbell

<b>Source Documents</b>	<b>Location</b>
Sawston Housing Development Map	<b>Appendix B</b>
Opening and closing maintained schools. Statutory guidance for proposers and decision-makers. April 2016:	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-organisation-maintained-schools">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-organisation-maintained-schools</a>
Complete proposal document and public notice	<a href="https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/proposed-bellbird-primary-expansion/">https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/proposed-bellbird-primary-expansion/</a>

## Appendix A – Demographic and school forecasts for Sawston schools

Table 1: Current primary-aged cohort in Sawston, Pampisford and Babraham

Year of Entry	Current Year Group	Babraham	Sawston & Pampisford
2017/18	Rec	2	95
2016/17	Yr 1	4	86
2015/16	Yr 2	5	101
2014/15	Yr 3	1	83
2013/14	Yr 4	3	83
2012/13	Yr 5	3	68
2011/12	Yr 6	3	92

\* It should be noted that there may be slight variations between intake and current numbers due to in-year movements and families moving into the area choosing not to change schools.

Table 2: Icknield pupil numbers – based on School Organisation Chart held by the Council (5 October 2018)

Year of admission	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13
Year Group	Rec	1	2	3	4	5	6
Pupils on Roll	25	22	26	28	26	27	25
Comparison to PAN of 30	-5	-8	-4	-2	-4	-3	-5

Table 3: Bellbird pupil numbers – based on School Organisation Chart held by the Council (5 October 2018)

Year of admission	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13
Year Group	Rec	1	2	3	4	5	6
Pupils on Roll	60	49	58	60	45	46	27
Comparison to PAN*	+15	+4	+13	+20	+5	+6	-13

\* Bellbird's PAN increased from 40 to 45 effective from September 2016

Table 4: Sawston Pupils Numbers – based on School Organisation Charts held by the Council (5 October 2018)

Year of admission	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13
Year Group	Rec	1	2	3	4	5	6
Pupils on Roll	85	71	84	88	71	73	52
Comparison to PAN*	+10	+4	+9	+18	+1	-3	+18

\* Bellbird's PAN increased from 40 to 45 effective from September 2016

**Table 5: Projected catchment demand showing only Sawston and Pampisford. Includes analysis of impact of proposed PAN increase.**

	<b>Projected 4 years olds</b>	<b>Combined current PAN</b>	<b>Projected shortfall / surplus</b>	<b>Combined proposed PAN</b>	<b>Projected shortfall / surplus</b>
2018/2019	100	75	-25	90	-10
2019/2020	81	75	-6	90	+9
2020/2021	95	75	-20	90	-5
2021/2022	89	75	-14	90	1
2022/2023	93	75	-18	90	-3

\* It should be noted that these forecasts reflect the numbers of pupils born and living within the catchment area who attend a state-funded school. It does not represent the numbers of pupils projected to attend the catchment school.

**Table 6: Projected catchment demand showing Sawston and Babraham. Includes analysis of impact of proposed PAN increase**

	<b>Projected 4 years olds</b>	<b>Combined current PAN</b>	<b>Projected shortfall / surplus</b>	<b>Combined proposed PAN</b>	<b>Projected shortfall / surplus</b>
2017/2018	97	87	-10	102	5
2018/2019	110	87	-23	102	-8
2019/2020	86	87	1	102	16
2020/2021	103	87	-16	102	-1
2021/2022	98	87	-11	102	4
2022/2023	101	87	-14	102	1

\* It should be noted that these forecasts reflect the numbers of pupils living with the catchment area who attend a state-funded school. It does not represent the numbers of pupils projected to attend the catchment school.