

CABINET MEMBER DECISION

Date of decision – 26 March 2024

FOXLYDIATE FIRST SCHOOL ACADEMY SPONSOR COMPETITION SPECIFICATION APPROVAL

Relevant Cabinet Member

Cllr Tracey Onslow, Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education

Relevant Officer

Tina Russell, Director of Children's Services

Local Member(s)

Cllr Kit Taylor
MP Sajid Javid

Recommendation

- 1. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education is recommended to:**
 - (a) note the outcome of the Public Consultation (summary report Appendix 1) on the proposal for a new first school and nursery in Redditch, which included the draft Academy Sponsor Competition Specification, during the period 8 January to 25 February 2024; and**
 - (b) approve the presumption Academy Sponsor Competition Specification as attached in Appendix 2.**

Background

2. In November 2023, Worcestershire County Council Cabinet authorised the publication of the proposal and draft Specification for a new first school in Redditch. This included authorising the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education to approve the final specification ensuring consideration of any representations made during the Public Consultation. In accordance with this decision, a 7-week consultation period commenced on 8 January 2024, closing on 25 February 2024.
3. The Consultation was published on the Worcestershire County Council website and was advertised in local Libraries digital displays and in Redditch Children's Centre. A link to the consultation questions was also shared across social media, emailed to local schools, organisations, and representative bodies, shared with the Worcestershire Viewpoint Panel, and published in local media.
4. In total 175 responses were received to the online Consultation: 53% were residents of Redditch or the immediate surrounding area.

Key Outcomes

5. 79% of respondents agreed that a new First School is needed in Redditch. 15% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, 7% neither agreed nor disagreed. This is a slight increase from the June 2023 engagement results which saw 75% agree or strongly agree.

6. There were several recurring themes among the responses to the consultation. The most common theme was regarding SEND places and provision, expressing the need for additional places to support children and young people in Redditch. Respondents also expressed their interest in increasing the age range of the school to a primary school and issues with the current safe walking routes to the new school.

Age Range

7. The majority of respondents (67%) to the online consultation supported the proposed age range of the school of 2-9 years. Those that were unsupportive wished to see the age range be increased to 11 years, a Primary school, opposed to a First school. The site of the Foxlydiate housing development sits within the Bromsgrove district boundary yet borders Redditch borough. The new housing development sits within the catchment areas of Tardebigge First School, Birchensale Middle School and Trinity High School and Sixth Form. We would therefore expect the majority of pupils from the new housing to choose to transition into the Middle and High school from which their homes will be in catchment for. Expanding the age range to 11 years would not be in line with schools in the surrounding area, which are 3-tier. Therefore, from a locality point of view it is important to provide consistency across education provision in the area.

8. 85% of respondents agreed that nursery and wrap-around provision is necessary. 6% disagreed and 9% were unsure. Of the comments received, it was noted that wrap around care is essential for both school and nursery, as well as the need for longer hours of provision to support parents' working day.

9. Evidence from previous large housing developments shows that fewer middle and secondary age children move into this type of new housing. The lower numbers of older pupils do not justify the addition of another middle or high school, and they can more easily be accommodated in existing schools. Current forecasting across the next 5 years suggests there are sufficient High School places in Redditch to accommodate the additional children from this development, however WCF are monitoring numbers closely to plan where and when additional middle and high school places need to be created.

10. Based on the consultation findings, Officers are not recommending amendments to the age range of the new school.

School Size

11. 64% of respondents to the online consultation supported the proposed size of the school for 450 pupils (90 x 5 year groups) with an additional nursery, with the school population growing yearly. The school is proposed to open in the first year to Nursery and Reception, with three forms of entry (90 reception places). 26% disagreed with the proposed size, and 10% were unsure.

12. Many of those that disagreed with the size of the school expressed concerns regarding three forms of entry (90 places per year group) being too large and overwhelming for primary aged children. Additional comments were made on the proposal to increase the intake year on year, in that this would be too slow, older age pupils would need to be placed in a school elsewhere and the pressure this would place on other local schools.

13. New housing being built in the Foxlydiate area will attract families with children, and this will create a demand for additional childcare and school places. The scale of the forecast increased demand means that a new first school is needed. The new major housing development off Foxlydiate Lane, Redditch is planned to deliver 2,560 new houses by 2037. The additional housing is forecast to yield a demand for an additional 30 first school places per year group by 2027 and 51 first school places per year group by 2029 and over 100 pupils per year group by the time the development is completed and fully occupied. Other developments in the area (e.g. Brockhill) will also generate additional pupils and will increase the pressure on school places. The combined demand from Brockhill and Foxlydiate developments equates to an additional 49 first school places per year group by 2027, rising to 62 first school places per year group by 2028 and 91 first school places per year group by 2030. By 2037, we estimate this will have increased to 178 pupils per year group. The construction of a new first school, combined with expansion of existing schools will therefore be necessary to meet demand over-all. The majority of existing local schools are either 2FE (60 places per year group) or 3FE (90 places per year group) with the exception of Tardebigge the catchment First School which is 1FE (30 places per year group). This provides parent carers choice of size of schools, however, to meet the demand from the new housing, the new school will need to provide sufficient places per year group to meet the demand. Other schools in the area may also need to be expanded further.

14. Existing local schools within 2 miles of the new housing are factored into the forecasting need for the new school. Existing schools are at or nearing capacity, they will only be able to accommodate additional children from the new housing within the first few years, before additional places are required.

15. The school will open initially with nursery and Reception only, admitting up to 90 pupils, and then grow year on year as pupils move through the school, allowing the number on roll to grow organically each year until capacity is reached, with 450 pupils plus 52-place nursery. This allows the school to manage the recruitment of staff, and admissions intake into the school.

16. Based on the consultation feedback, WCF officers will continually monitor the forecasting of additional pupils and support the Academy Trust to open the school to offer the necessary number of places to meet the demand. The school will be built as a 3FE First School with nursery.

Admissions

17. Respondents were asked to rank how priority should be given to admissions for a new first school. 77 provided their 1st preference (50%) that first priority should be given to pupils within a defined geographical area (catchment area), 48 respondents (31%) said first priority should be given by the distance a student lives from the

school with no defined catchment area, 34 respondents (22%) said priority should firstly be given to pupils with siblings already attending the school regardless of catchment area.

18. Feedback on the admission policy were mainly focused on priority for SEND and EHCP pupils who live close by, and priority for children of staff members or those needing wrap around provision.

19. The School Specification details that it is expected that the school oversubscription criteria will ensure that Children and Young People (CYP) living within the local community of the school will have priority for places, therefore it is the preference of the Local Authority that, after children in care and those previously in care, priority will be given to siblings of pupils at the school, children of staff and then subsequent allocations based on distance.

20. Once a preferred Academy Trust has been identified discussions will take place to agree an Admissions Policy for both the school and for the nursery. It needs to be clear to parents/carers that admissions for school and nursery are separate and different admission arrangements apply to each.

21. WCF Officers will share the consultation feedback with the Academy Trust responsible for the Admissions Policies.

Values

22. Accessibility and Inclusivity and Health and Wellbeing core values were provided to all respondents. 88% of respondents agreed with the core values proposed for Accessibility and Inclusivity and 93% agreed with the core values proposed for Health and Wellbeing.

23. With regards to Accessibility and Inclusivity, feedback focussed on the need for SEND provision, increased support for SEND in mainstream schools and schools to be fully inclusive and accessible. Many also highlighted the need for values to focus on academic performance, solidary, cooperation, expressing creativity, safeguarding, multiculturalism and inclusive learning.

24. Responses to the Health and Wellbeing core values expressed the need for friendships, character development, mental health, and balanced workloads for staff.

25. Within the School Specification we expect the Academy Trust to actively take part in Partnership Working and collaboration; taking a proactive approach to providing and supporting Early Help, a Graduated Response for children with SEND, inclusive practices and Safeguarding – including creating a safe and inclusive environment and school community for all children and young people. There is an expectation the Academy Trust operate a quality assurance model to ensure pupil performance, behaviour and attendance targets are maintained and improved. Also, we expect the school to welcome and, through teaching, encourage an understanding of and respect for other cultures, faiths, communities, and world views, taking into account the community that will be served by the school and the views of different groups in the community.

26. Based on the consultation feedback Officers do not recommend any changes to the School Specification. WCF Officers will share the consultation feedback with the Academy Trust responsible for the Admissions Policies.

Travel arrangements

27. 81% of respondents agreed with the travel arrangement proposals for the new First school. Within the feedback, respondents expressed the need for a safe drive through and managed drop off area for those driving pupils to school. There were concerns raised about traffic congestion and nuisance parking in the surrounding area.

28. Respondents are keen to see active travel routes promoted to support the mental and physical wellbeing, and there is the need for the infrastructure to enable safe travel routes. A total of 64 comments were received in response to additional active travel routes that respondents would like to be considered. Among the “others” included comments regarding pedestrian crossings, sheltered pathways, staff parking and electric charging points.

29. One of the key outcomes of this proposal is for families in the new housing development to have a first school within their local community, resulting in reduced car use and enabling more pupils to travel to school by active travel methods, i.e., walking and cycling. A Traffic Impact Assessment will be carried out as part of the planning process for the school build and the appointed Academy Trust will be required to develop a School Travel Plan encouraging safe travel to school which promotes walking and cycling. The provision of safe walking routes for children and parent carers between home and the new school is a key requirement. The Foxlydiate housing development design guide includes promotion of inclusive access from foot and cycle ways and streets, and includes cycle stands as part of the street furniture. The school and community building parking, and pupil handover off point is planned to be located within the northern part of the school site, minimising conflict with the local centre square.

30. Based on the consultation feedback, WCF/WCC will work with the District Council and County Council Highways Team to consider the design of the whole Foxlydiate site by the developers to ensure the creation of a high-quality space that enables safe trips to be made to key facilities via all modes of transport.

31. Through the design phase of the new school, working with the Academy Trust, options will be considered to cater for working parents particularly those using wrap around childcare on their way to work.

Other Comments

32. A notable number of comments were received from the online survey about the importance of SEND support and provision, consideration of the local area when planning active travel routes and values to also focus on academic performance and learning.

33. The Department for Education (DfE) expects local authorities to seek developer contributions towards school places that are required to meet the need arising from new housing developments. Any contribution towards education provision will be

relative to the expected pupil yield from the number of dwellings being delivered. The Foxlydiate development was assessed pre-2019 for the infrastructure contributions required to mitigate the impact of the new development. At this time, the local authority Education Planning Obligations Policy only included seeking contributions towards mainstream education mitigation, therefore no contribution was sought towards additional specialist/special school provision. Post-2019 the Education Planning Obligations Policy was amended to seek contributions for Early Years provision and SEND provision, based on projected pupil yields.

34. WCF Officers keep under review the need for provision to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND. Where additional provision is required to meet the needs of children whose needs cannot be met within a mainstream setting, Officers will recommend to Cabinet High Needs Capital Funding is allocated to create additional specialist places. For September 2023, Tudor Grange Academy Redditch was funded to expand the Enhanced Mainstream Autism Base.

35. WCF Officers will continue to keep under review the demand for provision to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND and develop new or additional provision where required.

Legal, Financial and HR Implications

36. There are no changes to the Legal and HR implications from those outlined in the Cabinet report.

Joint Equality, Public Health, Data Protection and Sustainability Impact Assessments

37. A full Equality and Public Health, and Sustainability Impact Assessment (Appendix 3) has been carried out in respect of the recommendations. At this stage, a Data Protection Assessment is not required. The Equality and Public Health Impact Assessment has been updated to reflect the findings of this consultation.

Supporting Information

- Appendix 1 – School Specification Consultation results report
- Appendix 2 – Final draft Academy Sponsor School Specification
- Appendix 3 – Joint Impact Assessments

Contact Points

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Specific Contact Points for this report
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Background Papers

[Agenda for Cabinet on Thursday, 23rd November, 2023, 10.00 am - Worcestershire County Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)