

## **STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF PAULTON SCHOOLS EXPANSION ACTION GROUP.**

I am here to represent the views of parents and local residents who have become aware of the proposed expansion of Paulton Infants and Junior School. The Facebook Group 'Paulton Schools Expansion Action Group' has now grown to 370 members and what I am about to say is reflected in the comments posted by these people.

The statement made on behalf of this group at the Cabinet meeting on 13th February 2013 still applies, but in addition I would like to highlight the following points.

### **Consultation Returns**

Firstly, it is felt that the Summary of Statutory Notice Representations Received (in the Summary Appendix) is misleading in the actual number of objections raised. The headline figure suggests that 34 representations were made (with 27 objections) but does not count the 93 signatures on the e-petition and the 102 returns of the leaflet. The Council must recognise that some parents / residents who are daunted by constructing an argument themselves, elected to sign the e-petition or return the leaflet to register their objections.

### **Outside Area**

The Officers Response (in the Summary appendix) states that there will be 'no reduction in outside play space as a result of the new buildings'. However, this fails to address the fact that there will be more children sharing the same amount of space - therefore it will become more crowded. It also fails to take into account the findings by Ofsted that identified 'the lack of resources and activities to stimulate children's ideas'. This is in part due to the extremely limited space allowed to the infants in its current form. This would be recorded as a "requires improvement" using the current Ofsted framework. The current space is already at saturation point for 60 children – this cannot cope with additional numbers and is likely to impact on future Ofsted inspections.

### **Accessibility**

The Department for Education's Guide that details the statutory regulations requires that decision makers have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State when they take a decision on proposals (Statutory Guidance – Factors to be Considered by Decision Makers ) This goes on to detail that for Travel and Accessibility for all, in considering proposals for the reorganisation of schools, Decision Makers should satisfy themselves that accessibility planning has been properly taken into account. Facilities are to be accessible by those concerned, by being located close to those who will use them, and the proposed changes should not adversely impact on disadvantaged groups, have the effect of unreasonably extending journey times or increasing transport costs, or result in too many children being prevented from travelling sustainably due to unsuitable routes.

This still needs to be determined prior to any decision to expand.

### **Traffic and Highways**

Traffic management is considered important to those that live in the immediate vicinity as having an impact on their own property. This is also a significant concern with regards to the safety of those people who are at increased risk of incident when walking to and from the school.

The road network is already at capacity and there is no local capacity for additional parking on the adjacent road network without serious impact on the highway safety in the vicinity. Parents are already operating their own recognised "park & stride" to the school as it becomes increasingly dangerous to even get a vehicle near to the school. This is to the detriment of residents in the adjoining roads.

The Officers Response highlights the implementation of a Park & Stride system and yet there is strong feeling that there is nowhere else for people to park.

Any decision must take into account the need to escort all children both to and from the classroom door which is already at saturation point based on the current intake.

### **School Ethos**

The character and Ethos of the school will be impacted by any expansion. Given the likelihood of a new Head Teacher for the infants school in the foreseeable future, there is concern that there will be too much change happening at the same time and standards will suffer.

Paulton Infants school has a good reputation as being a Good Community School and by expanding it there is a risk that the personal attention and sense of identity afforded to each child will be lost.

### **Non- Classroom Resources**

The school hall is already of insufficient size to accommodate current requirements. A 30% increase in headcount should mean that the hall and other non-classroom areas be increased to the same proportion. Parents question how can this be achieved in the current footprint. Anything less than an expanded hall will be inadequate to accommodate families at festival times to support children's learning and development.

There is also a lack of space in shared areas for example the IT area. In this day and age of technology children are only able to use the computer area once a week.

The size of shared areas will remain disproportionately small for the overall size of the school. An additional class in each year will impact on shared resources for which there is already an inadequate space and availability.

Whilst currently all pupils have equal access to these resources, this equal share will be further diluted by the need to share the same resources with a larger number of children.

We urge the cabinet to think 'Smarter' and consider more progressive solutions than to shoe horn more pupils into the existing schools.