



Cheswick Green Parish Council

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If you as a resident/parent would like to comment on this consultation you must do so by Friday 18th December 2020 go to
www.solihull.gov.uk/consultation

Proposal to expand Cheswick Green Primary School

Consultation response

The Parish Council appreciates the opportunity to respond to the proposed expansion of the school but unfortunately is opposed to this project being undertaken.

We consider that there is complete lack of detail contained in the consultation documentation to make informed comments on the suitability both within and external to the school premises. Our response has required a search of Solihull MBCs (the Council's) website to obtain further information which may not have yielded all the facts in the time available to brief our residents. We are at a loss to understand how residents and in particular parents of children at the school can be expected to express their own informed views.

We contacted the Head Teacher of the School to arrange a meeting to discuss these proposals and would have been interested to know why the Governing Body in principal is in favour of an extension. We received the following reply which is not helpful when attempting to make a balanced view of this proposal. "*I would be happy to attend a meeting but such a request should be put through the Council (email researchandpolicy@solihull.gov.uk) as it is a Council proposal and would need Council officers in attendance as well to talk about certain aspects of the proposal. This would also give the member of the Parish Council a more detailed meeting.*"

Proposed extension

The proposed extension is only adequate rather than looking to the future. In our opinion while probably meeting need, the facilities do not compare to what was provided in the North of the Borough under 'The Building Schools for The Future' programme. Surely this is an oversight of the council Is there not sufficient funding from the Section 106 agreements to provide such facilities? We have read council documents in relation to building schools for the future. We have read the 'Primary Schools Strategic Framework' version 1.2

published in 2006. We are concerned that provisions of the ‘vision for primary school education in Solihull’ do not reflect what is proposed here. The strategic plans (North Solihull) published in 2012/13/14 have good outcomes but will the same be said of our school some years following this proposed expansion.

The proposed classrooms with breakout areas appear to be satisfactory however many other areas of the school are not.

The hall for 200 children is the same size for 400 children?

The after-school club for 200 children is the same size for 400 children?

The library for 200 children is the same size for 400 children?

The music room for 200 children is the same size for 400 children?

The number of toilets has been increased which probably meets the minimum requirements, but could not more modern considerations have been included as part of this project?

The staffroom is too small now yet presumably the number of staff will double. Will staff in an overcrowded room for lunch and meetings be in the right frame of mind to teach?

Is the reception of sufficient size to deal with parents’ queries?

Will all school staff be able to park within the school grounds? It is imperative that sufficient car park spaces are provided for all staff. It is not appropriate that they should have to park outside residents’ houses.

Will the proposal if approved take into consideration the environment, green credentials and be more eco-friendly? Indeed, would the school environment be a good place for children and staff?

Will current technology be utilised to aid learning?

The school was rated as good following the last two Ofsted Inspections and we are concerned that the standard may slip in the confined spaces of the school should this proposal be approved. The classrooms are adequate; however, it is the other spaces where we have concerns.

We understand the Governing Body have agreed in principal to this proposal which comprises of professional and informed lay persons whereas we as uniform lay persons foresee insurmountable issues.

Surrounding area and infrastructure

We understand that should this proposal be approved that Officers of the Council will commission a traffic and highways appraisal to assess the impact of this project.

In this instance should this appraisal not have been undertaken before approval when all residents and many Officers are aware of the likely impact particularly at peak times. We would expect that the commission should not only include the impact of 200 plus children travelling to and from Blythe Valley but also the impact of hundreds of children travelling to and from Shirley to attend the new school proposed as part of the 1000 plus homes to be constructed along part of the length of Dog Kennel Lane and the Stratford Road.

We are aware that a travel survey is being undertaken involving staff and parents of children attending the school. We are concerned that the survey does not include all residents of Cheswick Green in particular residents who live near the school. Perhaps residents and/or other surveys will follow, will they?

Parking outside of the school entrance is and has been a problem for decades. Doubling the size of the school exacerbates a hazard that cannot be resolved now so how could this be resolved in future. Are you aware that one bus service will no longer travel past the school and so elderly residents have to alight on Creynolds Lane and walk to their homes? We would point out that a large percentage of residents are elderly and/or infirm.

In the appendices are comments from a resident who lives opposite the school together with some photographs that he has taken.

One suggestion locally put forward recently is that parking should not be permitted within 100 metres either side of the school gates with a 20 mph speed limit outside the school. The Parish Council has considered this, but it would merely create parking hazards elsewhere. If the road was clearer outside the school, then children would be more at risk from motorists traveling faster. Designated parking areas were also suggested in the parking spaces of The Saxon Pub and the Village Hall. We would expect the management of these premises to continue to allocate their parking bays to the users of their buildings and for users of the nearby recreation ground.

Perhaps restrictive parking could be imposed between 8-9am and 3-4pm, but would such a measure be regularly enforced, we think not. In that event a 20mph speed limit would be irrelevant as traffic would be severely hampered in passing the school. We understand that the pilot of 20mph zones in close proximity to schools have not generally been successful.

Neighbours nearby the school are being inconvenienced on a twice daily basis which periodically has escalated into arguments and threats of violence between householders and motorists. These confrontations are generally the result of blocked drives, a situation which will only worsen if these proposals are approved. Cheswick Way and nearby roads become heavily congested or gridlocked by inconsiderate motorists and the air pollution is hazardous to residents and children.

What may mitigate traffic congestion to some extent is a free bus service from Blythe Valley. Unless the rules have changed a free bus service is not possible, is a subsidised service possible?

The proposed plan does not show a secondary access/egress to the school which is vital to ease congestion on Cheswick Way. Consideration could be given to a secondary entrance to the school off Creynolds Lane and while that might maintain and not increase the existing level of congestion on Cheswick Way, congestion will increase on Creynolds Lane and create 2 'bottle necks' where one 'bottle neck' currently exists.

A path between Blythe Valley has been considered and we are uncertain whether that remains a possibility. A path runs around Blythe Valley which could be extended to Cheswick Green but what safe route would it follow. Great for walkers but is it likely that a path would be used by children to walk the 2.2 miles to and from school?

A suggestion put forward locally is that children should be accommodated at all three local primary schools. In that eventuality the schools would not have sufficient space to accommodate enough children without expansion of those schools. And presume that the teacher pupil ratio would be out of proportion. Congestion would not be eased and the problem outside St Patricks CE Primary School in particular situated on a B road would be exacerbated. In a wider context consideration should have been given to the increase in traffic from feeder roads on to and through the Stratford Road corridor as part of this consultation. The cross flow of traffic between Blythe Valley and Cheswick Green Primary School would not be necessary if a new school or extension had been constructed on Blythe Valley or Hockley Heath.

Alternative Proposal

Under a 'presumption route' the Council is able to make a business case for a new school. We understand that under this arrangement the Council is responsible for the capital cost and revenue set up costs. We agree that creating over-provision of school places has the potential to destabilise the viability of neighbouring schools, but the Council's preferred model is a 2FE (420) place school.

The Parish Council recommends a new one form entry (210) place school.

The Council has said 'That no site has been identified for a school at Blythe Valley.' We recommend that Officers are asked to re-examine Blythe Valley and examine Hockley Heath for a site suited to a one form entry school and Officers will conclude there is sufficient demand for places for a new school to be feasible at both sites. Indeed, should the construction of 90 plus dwellings earmarked for Hockley Heath in the current draft LDP be approved, that development could be commenced in the first stage (5 years) of the plan and further school places for children would be available.

Either of these two proposals could be financed from Section 106 agreements arising from the developments at Cheswick Place and Blythe Valley to pay for a new school.

A new school constructed within Blythe Valley or Hockley Heath would make journeys to and from school easier and safer for children with the benefit of easing congestion locally. Blythe Valley has a mix of uses including housing and has been effectively removed from the green belt. Hockley Heath has a settlement boundary around it and we would reiterate that there are proposals to remove more land from the green belt. Both areas are also sustainable with good connectivity and transport links.

Solihull Council should be looking to the future education of our children by constructing a new school incorporating up to date environmental, bio-diverse, energy saving and technological advancements.

Summary

This consultation lacks proper detail and expanding Cheswick Green Primary School is an easy option without any recourse to the implications for the local area. It seems that no other options have been given any detailed consideration.

The primary concern of the Parish Council is the expansion of the school with exception to other criteria. Will the school be 'fit for purpose' appears to be a secondary consideration and the impact on residents not a consideration at all.

Residents do not need a commissioned traffic and highways appraisal to know that whatever mitigation is recommended congestion will be far worse than at present.

The Parish Council would ask the Councillors concerned to reject the expansion of Cheswick Green Primary School when so many questions posed require answers and seek an alternative location to accommodate the children within Blythe Valley or Hockley Heath.

Appendix

As you know we live opposite the current school entrance and have for around 2 years. During our have experienced several issues with traffic and parking associated with the school run as it stands. I've even stood in the road and directed traffic when a Mexican standoff has occurred!

The biggest issue for us is parents parking across our drive restricting access to our property or guests from leaving. We are not the only people on Cheswick Way in the vicinity of the school who experience this issue. Most properties between the School and Creynolds Lane experience this regularly.

I have looked to address the situation directly with people but having been called racist amongst other things, when all I asked was them to move their vehicle and experienced further repercussions of this I have stopped doing so due to concerns it may impact on my kids.

There are 2 further points regularly that are shown in the photos (below).

The 1st is parking on the Zig Zag and blocking the safe access for others to enter/leave the school.

The 2nd being people parking on the double yellow lines opposite the entrance. It has been indicated that the school suggested to a few who are disabled that this was acceptable, but it is not just them who park there.

When you have a combination of all 3 which is pretty often it totally restricts the flow of traffic on Cheswick Way. Adding yet more vehicles to the school runs is only going to make the situation worse.









