



Cheswick Green Parish Council

SOLIHULL

Response to Solihull MBCs consultation on Cheswick Green Primary School

December 2020

Consultation response

The Parish Council appreciates the opportunity to respond to the proposed expansion of the school to accommodate 100% more children 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 principle 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 members 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 the needs to accommodate twice as many children and staff, 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 parking spaces are provided for all staff. It is not appropriate that they should have to park outside residents' houses as many do at present.

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 principle to this proposal which comprises of professional and informed lay persons whereas we as uninformed lay persons foresee insurmountable issues.

Surrounding area and infrastructure

We understand that should this proposal be approved Officers of the Borough 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? Should this appraisal have been done at all when the school is operating a temporary staggered access and egress whilst the pandemic is in operation. 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.

At present at least 1/3 of the children walk to Cheswick Green school but this proposal will also be to accommodate the children living too far away to walk to school. Footpaths from Blythe Valley do not exist. So, with 400 children and the accompanying staff, both classroom support and others, and the increase in HGV delivering to the school the present infrastructure will not cope at all.

Doubling the size of the school exacerbates a hazard that cannot be resolved now so how could this be resolved in future? Please be aware that one bus service will no longer travel past the school because of the congestion and therefore elderly residents must 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 travelling 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?

Presently traffic congestion along Cheswick Way and other roads local to the school is dreadful, it would of course be significantly worse if this proposal goes through. It is estimated that at least 150 children will be taken to school by car and the extensive congestion would inevitably flow over into Creynolds Lane. 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. The Parish Council is opposed to creating another access.

A path between Blythe Valley has been considered and we are uncertain whether that remains a possibility considering there would be a need for a bridge over the River Blythe. 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 we 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.

School Board of Governors meeting

During the course of writing this response we have been provided with further information that we would draw to your attention.

We have been provided with a copy of the draft minutes of the Board of Governors held on Tuesday 13th October 2020. The debate relating to this matter are shown in appendix 2.

Having read the content we are adamant that the Board of Governors should not have agreed in principle to the plan.

The following points made during that meeting give great cause for concern;

An old version of a picture of 3D modelling was shared but will be updated and shared with the school?

An Ecologist will do a habitat and biodiversity study?

The design is agreeable at present?

Assumptions are being made about services and exceptions?

White boards are not included but there used to be a fund?

As the ICT suite is being remodelled, the school would have to ask AW about funding for this?

If new computers are needed because of the new building, this is another discussion to be had?

Traffic was identified as a key issue.

Further considerations

This issue will be exacerbated by the children coming from Blythe Valley for which there is currently little or no alternative other than to drive. Detailed and workable solutions will be required to this issue in order to recommend the expansions and to obtain planning permission.

The continuation of the current staggered starts and finishing times in the school may be required. Unlikely to be favoured by parents once COVID19 abates.

New pupils are likely to come from Blythe Valley who would probably require car trips. A path from Blythe Valley is being looked at, but there are complications. Because a new school did not form part of the plans for Blythe Valley, plans need to be made for children to get to school. This may mean that some money would be available for transport.

A bus service from Blythe Valley might be a possibility, but these services are expensive and not always popular with parents.

Part of the planning process would be consultation with local residents and parents. Transport and highways would be part of this consultation.

The above extracts from the draft minutes do not give confidence that this is no more than an exercise of how can the extension of the school be shoehorned in. We are of the opinion that the Board accepted what they were being told and did

not have any questions or queries which in our experience is unusual particularly when the proposal is double the number of pupils.

On Thursday 26th November we received several enquires relating to why a white van was parking on various roads throughout the day. There were also posts on TOWIC (The only Way is Cheswick – Facebook page).

The concerns and implications of a van being parked in this manner are obvious.

A member of the Parish Council telephoned the Council and was informed that the vehicle had nothing to do with the Council, the Officer did kindly offer advice including contacting the police.

This member of the Parish Council then contacted Streetwise at their Head Office in Glasgow and was told that a traffic survey was being undertaken on behalf of SMBC in connection with Cheswick Green Primary School.

On Friday 27th November, the Parish Council sent an e-mail to the Council raising these concerns and asked for confirmation that Streetwise was acting on behalf of the Council.

On Tuesday 1st December, a reply was received which confirmed that Streetwise was undertaking a traffic assessment on behalf of the Council.

The e-mail stated that the van had company details on it and if we had a concern that this could be checked with the company in question. We would not have thought that it is the responsibility of residents to make contact, surely it is for the Council to contact schools and local bodies so that they might pass the message on locally. As you are no doubt aware some residents would not be willing to approach others, but they would ring the Police.

We acknowledge that a transport and highways assessment will be undertaken but we do not know when. Are we and residents expected to retain this piece of information?

We were told that we will have the opportunity to comment on any transport and highways mitigation offered as part of the planning application. 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.

You will find this comment repeated in the summary of this response. This is just another example of no proper thought being given to a large project by the Council.

The e-mail exchange is shown in appendix 3.

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 Councils preferred model is a 2FE (420) place school.

The Parish Council recommends a new one (210) or two form entry (420) 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.

An alternative is to build a new two form entry school at Hockley Heath to replace the existing school which was built following the closure of the original school in 1913.

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. Further finance would be available from the sale of land if a new school is built in Hockley Heath.

A new school constructed within Blythe Valley or Hockley Heath would make journeys to and from Cheswick Green 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. We understand that the Council owns/ has an interest in parcels of land within the area.

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 Borough 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 1

As you know we live opposite the current school entrance and have for around 2 years. During our we 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.

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.











Appendix 2

CHESWICK GREEN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Full Board of Governors

Held at 6.30pm on Tuesday 13th October 2020 by Teams

All reports referred to in the minutes are available on request from the Clerk and had been circulated to governors in advance via GovernorHub.

1 Welcome and apologies AK welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were received from:

2 Purpose of Meeting The meeting was called to show governors the design as it stands at present.

The purpose of the meeting is to agree in principle to the plan.

This will allow statutory consultation to go ahead and BG and his colleagues to move ahead with more detailed plans.

3 Plans The plans presented are the ones produced in response to the last meeting with the school when CM requested a few amendments.

The proposed plans for the new school were shared on screen, explained and discussed in detail.

A picture showing 3d modelling was shared – this was an old version but will be updated and shared with the school.

An ecologist will do a habitat and bio-diversity survey. This may lead to the chance to upgrade the biodiversity on the site.

Challenge: has the design been costed? It has. It is expensive but has been discussed with AW who is in charge of budget. BG has spoken to PC and the design is agreeable at present.

Challenge: what assumptions do you make with regard to heating, lighting etc.?

This is based on BCIS indices by floor area. Recent tender exercises are also used. There would be assumptions about additional services and also exceptions which would be subject to survey.

ICT and infrastructure:

ICT is provided. Whiteboards are not included, but BG advised there used to be a fund for money per classroom, administered by SF. The build, finishes and anything fixed to the wall is covered. If the base plan is accepted in principle, the ICT work forms part of this.

As the ICT suite is being remodelled, the school would have to ask AW about funding for this.

Links and conduit would be provided, but usually a different company is used for the cabling. If new computers are needed because of the new building, this is another discussion to be had.

Cheswick Green Primary School. Full Governing Body Minutes. 13.10.20.

Prepared by AV 2

Programme:

The aim would be to start in September 2021.

Traffic:

BG identified traffic and accessibility to the school as the key issue moving forward. This issue will be exacerbated by the children coming from Blythe Valley for which there is currently little or no alternative other than to drive. Detailed and workable solutions will be required to this issue in order to recommend the expansions and to obtain planning permission.

BG explained that procurement of surveys and a transport engineer have already been started – parking at pick up and drop off is known to be a problem. A parking area would be needed for parents; the transport engineer would need to assess how many spaces would be needed, including extra spaces for extra staff.

The continuation of the current staggered starts and finishing times in the school may be required.

Before and after-school club provision helps.

New pupils are likely to come from Blythe Valley who would probably require car trips. A path from Blythe Valley is being looked at, but there are complications.

Because a new school did not form part of the plans for Blythe Valley, plans need to be made for children to get to school. This may mean that some money would be available for transport.

There may be an opportunity to bring a new access route.

A bus service from Blythe Valley might be a possibility, but these services are expensive and not always popular with parents.

The school travel plan would be revised and walking buses might be an option.

But this does not solve the problem of parents who drop their children by car on the way to work.

A meeting has already been held with transport engineers as they need to look at traffic flow and predictions. They are usually very demanding.

Consultation:

Part of the planning process would be consultation with local residents and parents. Transport and highways would be part of this consultation.

Conclusion:

More work is needed from the design team, structural and mechanical engineers etc.

BG was thanked for the support he and his team have given to CM so far.

Governors agreed in principle to the expansion of Cheswick Green based on the layout plan submitted

(Proposed Option 1E rev P05) and discussed at the meeting. Governors accepted that further work

is needed to get the plan ready for planning.

4 Governors' Actions BG left the meeting at this point

AK will speak to AP to ask what she needs from the governors to proceed. It also needs to be understood who from SMBC will co-ordinate the various issues and practicalities involved with this.

The mitigation events would afford a compound area to access the site away from the present school. An enabling drawing would be drawn up to show how the build would be arranged.

AK to speak to AP

Cheswick Green Primary School. Full Governing Body Minutes. 13.10.20.

Prepared by AV 3

Plans will be brought back to the FGB at appropriate times. Governors agreed that the Buildings Committee should oversee some of the decisions in the meantime.

Governors agreed that the plans can be shared more widely with staff after the meeting with cabinet next week. AK to confirm with CM when this can be done. The Buildings Meeting on 21st October 2020 is no longer needed.

Appendix 3

From: clerk@cheswickgreen-pc.gov.uk <clerk@cheswickgreen-pc.gov.uk>
 Sent: 27 November 2020 13:22
 To: Pearson, Ann (Childrens Services - Solihull MBC)
 <annpears@solihull.gov.uk>
 Cc: 'Cllr. Mick Swain' <cllr.mickswain@cheswickgreen-pc.gov.uk>; 'Margaret Gosling' <cllr.margaretgosling@cheswickgreen-pc.gov.uk>; 'Sam Sedgley' <cllr.samsedgley@cheswickgreen-pc.gov.uk>; 'Michelle Smith' <cllr.michellesmith@cheswickgreen-pc.gov.uk>; cllr.lencresswell@cheswickgreen-pc.gov.uk; cllr.petertownsend@cheswickgreen-pc.gov.uk
 Subject: Streetwise Services Ltd.

Dear Ann,

Yesterday, Parish Councillor's received several queries about a Streetwise Services Ltd van being parked in various locations all day around Cheswick Green. There were also posts on TOWIC. (The only way is Cheswick – Facebook page)

The concerns and implications of a van being parked in this manner are obvious. One of my Councillor's phoned the Council and was informed that the vehicle had nothing to do with the Council and the officer did kindly offer advice including contacting the police.

My Councillor then contacted Streetwise at their Head Office in Glasgow and was told that a traffic survey was being undertaken on behalf of SMBC in connection with Cheswick Green Primary School.

Please can you confirm if this is correct and if it is why the Parish Council was not made aware of this happening.

Regards

Marie Zizzi

Clerk

Cheswick Green Parish Council

Cheswick Green Village Hall, Cheswick Way, Cheswick Green, Solihull B90 4JA

Tel: 01564 700168

Email: clerk@cheswickgreen-pc.gov.uk

From: Pearson, Ann (Childrens Services - Solihull MBC)

<annpears@solihull.gov.uk>

Sent: 01 December 2020 10:51

To: 'clerk@cheswickgreen-pc.gov.uk' <clerk@cheswickgreen-pc.gov.uk>

Subject: RE: Streetwise Services Ltd.

Good morning Marie

Thank you for your email. I have checked with our Building Design Team and can confirm that Streetwise have been appointed to support our traffic and highways assessment which is required as part of our proposal to expand Cheswick Green Primary School. I am sorry if this caused some concern, I am assured that the vehicle does have company details on it so that if there is any concern then this can be checked with the company in question. If there are any future concerns like this, please contact me or Mr Brett Goody from our Building Design Team (0121 704 6890) so that we can confirm any company details for you. Our consultation literature does indicated that a transport and highways assessment will be undertaken as part of this process, to ensure that all interested parties are aware that this work is underway.

This assessment work will form part of any future planning application which will be subject to the normal statutory consultation process, which will happen in addition to the consultation around the proposals to expand the school. At that

stage of the process all interested parties will have the opportunity to comment on any transport and highways mitigation offered as part of the planning application. In the meantime, if you have any further concerns please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards
Ann Pearson
Team Leader – School Place Planning
Children’s Services and Skills
Tel: 0121 704 6702
Email: annpearson@solihull.gov.uk



Photographs taken at approximately 10:40 showing that parking is an issue even after the start of the school day