

Report to: Cabinet
Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny
Committee

Date: 17 December 2009
14 January 2010

Subject: Building Schools for the Future: Stage 1 consultation
on proposal to enlarge Lowton Junior and Infant School

Report of: Executive Director of Children and Young People's
Services

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Purpose / summary: To report on the responses to stage 1 consultation on the proposal to enlarge Lowton J + I and to request Cabinet to determine the next step on the proposal.

Alternative options considered and reason for selecting the one recommended: The alternative options were considered by Cabinet on 30th July. Through the consultation process two parents suggested that Lowton J + I should be extended on its current site. This does not qualify as an alternative proposal as the LA is consulting on the enlargement of Lowton J + I and not on its relocation. School Organisation Regulations do not require the LA to consult on the relocation as the proposed site is very close to the existing site.

Recommendation / decision: The Scrutiny Committee is invited to give comment and make recommendations as appropriate.

It is recommended that Cabinet requests the Director of Children and Young People's Services to publish statutory notices to enlarge Lowton J + I with effect from 1 September 2012.

Key Decision: This report involves a key decision within

ground(s) 2.

The decision made as a result of this report will be published within **48 hours** and cannot be actioned until **seven working days** have elapsed, i.e. before 31 December 2009

This item is included in the Forward Plan.

Risks / Implications:

- Financial:) Should the proposal progress beyond
) statutory notice stage there will be financial
- Staffing:) and staffing implications associated with
) the enlargement of a school. These will be
) reported in full at the decision making stage.
) The capital costs of the project will be
) covered as part of the overall BSF cost
) envelope.
- Policy: Wigan's Strategy for School Places and
Buildings
- Equal Opportunities - Has a Diversity Impact Assessment been conducted? Yes
- Wards affected: Lowton East Ward

Property Implications – Does the proposal involve a reduction, addition or change to the Council's asset base or its occupation?

Yes

If yes, have the property implications been agreed with the Corporate Property Officer?

Yes

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- Has the Service Director - Borough Solicitor confirmed that the recommendations within this report are lawful and comply with the Council's Constitution? **Yes**
 - Has the Service Director - Corporate Services confirmed that any expenditure referred to within this report is consistent with the Council's budget? **Yes**
 - Are any of the recommendations within this report contrary to the Policy Framework of the Council? **No**

For Cabinet reports only :

Categorisation of the report:			
Discussion leading to a decision	X	Discussion	
Monitoring		Decision	
Sharing for corporate understanding		Information	

Tracking/Process:

	Consultation	Ward Members	Partners
Committee	Overview & Scrutiny	Cabinet	Council
		17 December 2009	

List of Background Papers in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972:

Title of document	Which meeting did it go to?	Date of meeting	Copy available from?
Wigan's Strategy for School Places and Buildings			School Place Commissioning Team, CYPS, Progress House, Westwood Park Drive, Wigan, WN3 4HH

Proper Officer N Hudson

Date 1 December 2009

1. Introduction

- 1.1 On 30 July 2009, Cabinet determined that the proposals to close Lowton J + I and Leigh Gilded Hollins to establish a new school on the Lowton Civic site should be withdrawn. Cabinet preferred, instead, to consult on a new proposal to enlarge Lowton J + I to a full one form of entry primary school.
- 1.2 The benefits of the alternative proposal are that it ensures the co-location benefits with the new secondary school could still be achieved; the small size of Lowton J + I and the condition of its premises would be addressed; and the additional primary places that are required for the Lowton area would be created.

2. Consultation

- 2.1 On 7 September, a consultation document was issued to all those with an interest in the proposals. A copy of the consultation document, which contains a distribution list, is provided at Appendix 1. In addition, the consultation document and an on-line questionnaire was made available on the Wigan Council website.
- 2.2 Consultation meetings were held with the staff and governors of Lowton J + I and the notes to these meetings are attached at Appendix 2. A drop in session for parents was held and the notes to the session are attached at Appendix 3.
- 2.3 The staff and the governors are very welcoming of the proposal. The governors are enthusiastic about the opportunities the proposal presents and considers that it will significantly benefit pupils and staff.
- 2.4 Only one parent and five residents attended the drop in session. Many of the concerns were around the proposals for Lowton and Golborne High School and the site for the enlarged Lowton J + I, rather than the enlargement of the school itself.
- 2.5 A total of 21 completed questionnaires were received. The details of the written responses are provided at Appendix 4. All of the staff, parents and governors that responded were supportive of the proposal and the vast majority agreed that co-location of primary and secondary schools was beneficial for transition and educational outcomes. A number of positive comments about the proposal were received.
- 2.6 The concerns were around the co-location of primary and secondary schools and increased traffic congestion.

3. Alternative options

- 3.1 The alternative options were considered by Cabinet on 30th July. Through the consultation process two parents suggested that Lowton J + I should be extended on its current site. This does not qualify as an alternative proposal as the LA is consulting on the enlargement of Lowton J + I and not on its relocation. School Organisation Regulations do not require the LA to consult on the relocation as the proposed site is very close to the existing site.

4. Consideration of the proposal

4.1 The expansion of Lowton J + I is required in order to accommodate the additional pupils predicted in Lowton and the neighbouring areas in the future. The issues that the decision maker is statutorily required to take into account when finally determining the proposal are provided in brief below, together with comments on how the proposals meet these requirements. This provides Cabinet with an indication of whether it wishes to proceed to publish statutory notices on the proposals.

4.1.1 How the proposal will impact on local diversity and the expansion of popular and successful schools

Lowton J + I will be one of only a few primary schools co-located with a secondary school and extended services in the Authority. The new secondary school will not be a community school and its management arrangements may offer the opportunity for formal collaborative management arrangements with Lowton J + I. Each year, the school receives first preferences at or around its admission number but some year groups have pupils on roll in excess of the admission number, including the current Reception year.

4.1.2 The effect on educational standards and school improvement

The school was inspected in February 2009. OFSTED graded the school as satisfactory and many outcomes were good. The curriculum is good and improving.

4.1.3 How the proposals will help every young person to achieve their potential within the Every Child Matters principles, for example, through extended school provision.

Lowton J + I will be co-located with the new secondary school on a site that will have additional community facilities and access to referral services. It will be ideally placed to offer a full range of extended services to its pupils and the co-location will aid transition and educational outcomes.

4.1.4 The need for additional places

In 2009, every available reception place was filled across the Lowton and Golborne primary schools. Births in the corresponding year were not particularly high and this was not predicted. Birth rates relating to all future intake years are higher and this suggests that additional places are needed in the future in order to provide sufficient flexibility in provision for any newcomers to the area.

4.1.5 Travel and accessibility

No changes are proposed to the school's admission criteria. The school is easily accessible to Lowton residents and will remain so when it moves to its new site.

4.1.6 Whether funding is in place to deliver the proposals

It is proposed to rebuild and enlarge the school from the proceeds of sale from site disposals of phase 1 BSF schools and the current Lowton J + I site.

4.1.7 The views of interested parties

These have been covered in section 2 of the report.

5. Proposals

- 5.1 It is proposed that the proposal to enlarge Lowton J + I be progressed and that statutory notices be published to enlarge the school with effect from 1 September 2012.

6. Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet requests the Director of Children and Young People's Services to publish statutory notices to enlarge Lowton J + I with effect from 1 September 2012.