Notes from St Mary’s CE Primary School expansion – 22/09/2014 – Morning session

JD - Jennifer Duxbury (Head of Education Services)
FH - Francis Hargrove (Head Teacher)
ER - Eveleen Riordan (Deputy Head of Admissions – Place Planning)
Cllr AW - Councillor Ann Waters (Cabinet Member for Children and Families)
JA - Jon Abbey (Assistant Director, Schools and Learning Services)
JH - Joanna Heard (Project Manager, Capital Delivery)

Meeting started at 9.15am with an introduction to all panel members

JA: Introduced the morning and underlined that this is a genuine consultation.

Cllr AW set out that she wants to hear what all stakeholders really feel about the proposed expansion. She will take a decision about whether or not to proceed to a statutory consultation on expanding the school.

JA: Introduced the morning by outlining the wider demographic trends in London show a population increase. Haringey is the most improved borough in terms of education, especially across GCSE results and we should be proud of our schools as they are becoming more popular. Haringey has a statutory duty to provide enough school places and we need to look at increasing provision to ensure that we can continue to meet this requirement. On the 9th October there will be a design meeting drop-in but this meeting is focusing on the principle of whether or not the school should be expanded. Notes of this meeting will be taken and published on the consultation webpage before the end of the consultation period. Recent changes in legislation means we don’t have the autonomy to open new schools and our role here is to consider the expansion of St Mary’s in order to provide additional local places which we project will be needed. This meeting will be repeated this evening.

JD: As part of our School Place Planning we work with the Greater London Authority (GLA) and they help us project how many schools places we will need in the future. The data they provide to us is published in our annual School Place Planning Report. The Report outlines how many places we project will be needed at primary and secondary level for up to ten years ahead. The borough is divided into five ‘Planning Areas’ (PAs) and these PAs are used to plan for local places, taking account of local and projected birth rates and new housing developments. We establish data on deficit and surplus reception places and our data shows that in this planning area we will need an additional 2 forms of entry (60 reception places) in the coming years. We have agreed and published School Place Planning Principles and these principles underpin any proposed school expansion. In deciding whether or not to expand a school we take into account demand, standards, leadership, space and indicative cost. At St Mary’s in the current Year 2 and the current Reception we already have agreed ‘bulge’ (one off) additional classes.

We (Haringey) don’t have the opportunity to build a new school, all new schools are expected to be academies or free schools and proposers would apply to establish these new schools direct to the Department for Education (DfE). To date no such provision has been made locally, although there are free schools in the borough in Muswell Hill (Eden) and Tottenham (Harris). We are now seeking views on expanding St Mary’s from 2 to 3 forms of entry. Any expansion would be a gradual process,
with the reception class providing 90 places (3 forms of entry) year on year, until 2021 when three forms would be established across all year groups. JH has provided some feasibility work on how an expansion could occur and what it might look like and this will be available to view at the design drop in and is currently on show in the school hall.

You can get involved in the consultation by speaking to us today (or this evening when the meeting is repeated), responding on paper or replying to us online. At the end of the consultation, we will write a report for Cllr Waters, the Council Cabinet member for Children and Families to consider. The report will recommend whether or not we proceed to the next stage – publication of a statutory notice setting out our intention to expand this school. The report will be considered by Cllr Waters in the first half of December 2014. The report will consider the responses we have received to this consultation and will balance these against other material considerations including providing enough local school places. If a notice is published a further period of consultation (known as a representation period) will follow at the beginning of January 2014 and last for a fixed statutory period of four weeks. The Council Cabinet would then decide in March 2014 whether or not to permanently expand the school.

JA thanked JD and said we now have a little over an hour for questions to the Panel.

FH: Can we have 5 minutes for parents to discuss questions amongst themselves – i.e. parent partners? Yes.

QUESTIONS:

1. **You talk about expanding 3 schools – do you need to expand one or all three?**
   JD: We definitely need the number of places that the three proposed expansions would provide.

2. **I can see the benefits for Haringey, what’s in it for us? Name 3 benefits.**
   FH: Economies of scale, support for children with additional need, more money will come into the school, we will be able to provide more resources, we can attract and retain the best staff because bigger schools can offer better career and progression opportunities for staff. We can do more with our school without further building and it will also negate the issues we have with a split site.

3. **How does this benefit us?**
   JA: There will be more opportunity within our school for development and this will benefit our children.

4. **We didn’t choose the school for it to be a 3 form entry school. Can you be confident that you will maintain the growth in demand for places?**
   JD: The metrics stack up with regard to demand for the foreseeable future.

5. **I don’t think you’ll fulfil the demand; I’m not keen on sending my third child to a 3 form entry school.**
   JD: As part of our consideration of whether or not to begin consultation on an expansion we
look at popularity and school standards. We have other proposals out at the moment on the possible expansion of two other schools and we may also need to expand other schools further into the future.

7. North Harringay (Primary School) has capacity, why not expand there?
   JD: That wouldn’t be considered a local school for parents that live in this area, although we have considered expansion at that school as well and it may be something that we might return to in the future.

8. We have had an awful lot of change in the last 2 years with bulge and expansions at this school. I want more stability for a period of time without constant change.
   FH: There has been a lot of change but there has had to be in order to keep the school going, especially when the Infant School went into special measures and meant that the future viability of the Junior School was threatened. Without the changes we made (closing the Infant School and increasing the age range at the Junior School) the Infant School would have become an academy and our school as we know it today would not have existed.

9. I still can’t see why this change is necessary or required.
   FH: Other parents have been positive about expansion at other schools.

10. You will encounter some opposition to expanding schools, are you going to ask parents to vote? Hasn’t a decision to expand already been decided?
    JA: We are here to genuinely consult, we have a duty to inform all parents, carers, residents and anyone who might have an interest in whether or not the school is expanded and to hear and consider their views. It is possible we won’t expand St Mary’s. We will hear everyone’s voice and we will use what we hear to help us to make a recommendation on whether or not to proceed with proposals to expand the school.

11. I don’t have children here at the moment. Will the proposal be subject to a vote?
    JD: No there won’t be a vote. Everything we hear at public meetings and that is submitted as part of the consultation will be recorded. Any statutory stage in an expansion follows after this consultation. We will balance all of the the analysis of views shared during the consultation and other considerations including demand in a published report for Cllr W.

12. Would you consider looking at other schools to expand them?
    JD: We definitely have to consider further provision for more places in this local area. North Harringay isn’t physically suitable for a one-off reception class (hence we have not asked them to take a bulge class), but additional school places do have to be found and we want to make this provision local to where the unmet demand for places is.

13. Would the building work be phased if the expansion were to go ahead?
    JH: As part of the feasibility work that has been done we have looked at a number of options for how an expansion might be delivered, you’ll see from images next door that it is physically possible to expand the school and, if it were to go ahead, we are looking to phase the building works and use summer holidays and other breaks to carry out the most disruptive works. From the feasibility work we have done we don’t believe temporary accommodation is necessary in helping us to deliver a permanent expansion to the school. A construction programme would be developed when we have more design details and we will ensure disturbance is kept to a minimum.

14. Will expansion effect every year in the school over a seven year period?
    JH: We think the delivery of any expansion would be over a period of 18 months maximum building works including work at Church Lane, based on our indicative programme. This will
be developed in more detail as the design develops, if the project goes ahead.
FH: As part of my vision for our school I wanted to change some things at Church Lane but I wasn’t going to agree to a proposed expansion unless we incorporated improvements to Church Lane that are part of my wish list to make our school better, this is something that has effectively been leveraged through the process and that will benefit all parents and children.
Governor: Disruption at Church Lane won’t be noticed as much as the works are less and they will be delivered over a summer holiday.
FH: The aim is to deliver any expansion over 18 months.

15. **What are the thoughts of the current teaching staff on the proposal?**
FH: On the whole they are very positive, they feel in charge of the process as they have seen and been included in much change in the last couple of years, but do please ask the teachers how they feel. Some of them will be here tonight and you will be able to hear their opinions. They have not been given a party line by me to support or oppose the expansion and they will express their own views.

16. **How about the views of the Governors?**
FH: They have agreed to consult on a possible expansion: no more and no less at this stage.
FH: I have made it clear from the start that I am not reducing current classroom sizes to achieve an expansion.

17. **Is there space to provide more outdoor space given more pupils would be in the school as a result of an expansion?**
JH: At the moment St Mary’s has more than the required outdoor space for a 3 form entry school, based on DfE recommended design standards and we will look to develop and enhance outdoor learning areas as part of any expansion delivery. The preferred option from the feasibility study builds up rather than out so does not reduce the existing outdoor space at Rectory Gardens.
FH: We do have a lot of outdoor space when compared against what is recommended for a school of our size.

18. **Please tell us a bit more about what’s in it for us, more sweeteners please?**
FH: From the outset of discussions with the Council, I was clear that there were non negotiables including not reducing playground space, I wanted a cookery space and dedicated cookery room, new toilets and a library bus, as well as better ICT.
Governor: We have made sure we have protected space in discussions that took place as part of feasibility.
FH: A considerable proportion of my wish list has been included in feasibility plans for delivering any expansion.
JA: One of the bonuses is that money has been devolved to schools for them to use and so FH is largely holding the purse strings.

19. **Why no more expansion at Weston Park Primary as it has lots of space and is only 1 form of entry? A map circulating shows unmet demand for places is east of Weston Park, not here.**
JD: A clarification on information circulating is that a recently published ‘map’ showing demand for school places has been supplied by journalists and not produced by the Council. Weston Park Primary is on a very small site and, given their footprint, we could not expand there without a significantly larger budget than the one proposed here.
20. I’m sure you (to FH) will help to deliver an expansion successfully but what if you leave?  
   FH: I am passionate about my job, I love my school and this suits my life and I live locally and have a child at a local secondary school. Through choice I would not leave this school. I make a commitment to stay at the school and see any expansion through.

21. Does the funding continue after the expansion is delivered?  
   FH: Once it’s bought and paid for, it’s up to us to maintain equipment.
   JH: As part of the design and construction process we look at life cycle cost to minimise maintenance costs.
   Governor: When this school increases in size, so will the funding as funding is pupil led so more pupils means more funding.

22. Will an expanded school affect school trips?  
   FH: We may use private transport a bit more often as opposed to solely aiming to rely on public transport. We might also stagger any year group trips because pupils are always put into small groups when they reach the trip destination so it is not necessary for a whole year group to go at the same time.

23. What made you change your mind (to FH) about considering 3 forms of entry? I recall a meeting about a year ago where FH ruled out future expansion to 3 forms of entry.  
   FH: I didn’t quite say that, that was a different process question and not about going to 3 forms of entry.

24. Has the school changed its mind about 3 forms of entry? It seems the decision has already been made?  
   JA: Most certainly not
   JH: I appreciate that it looks like we have made up our mind but we had to develop proposals through feasibility work so we could answer questions about what any changes would look like: that’s why we had to do initial design work – so we could answer questions about how any expansion might be delivered.

25. What about increased traffic?  
   JH: We will produce a transport statement as part of our design work and we are working with Highways colleagues to understand and manage the impact of additional numbers coming to the school. We are also aware of the school’s existing Travel Plan and will use this to inform our assessment (Travel Plan currently says that 100% of parents and carers come to the school on foot or public transport).
   Governor: We would push for additional zebra crossings if the expansion is to go ahead.
   FH: Parents already cause lots of problems driving to school and cause problems u-turning on tight spaces or where there are yellow lines. I would ask all parents to challenge such behaviour when they see it.

26. Are there any plans to support the teaching assistants through this process?  
   FH: We have taken on additional staff already, we may add additional senior members of staff if we were to expand and part of their role would be to discretely and sensitively support teaching assistants and other staff members. We will look at forward planning from a staff perspective as part of any expansion.

27. Will designated church places affect the number of school places available?  
   JD: The Governors set the admission criteria: it is proposed to make it 50:50 based on church places and local places.
   FH: Currently it is 36:24 (Faith/Open places)
FH: We are equitable in that our aim is to deliver the best education based on shared values and principles.

28. My concern is that we already need additional support from the council about local parking and about punctuality in dropping children to school. This may be negatively affected by making the school larger.
   JD: We will look into this to see what is possible.
   FH: On the lateness issue, the staggering of start times has improved punctuality but we do still have some perpetual offenders.
   JA: We hope a lot of people are now walking to school and not getting into their cars.

29. I don’t want the notion to change that we are a Church school rather than a Faith school.
   FH: We are here to educate the local community.

The meeting closed at 10.30am with a reminder that it would be repeated this evening at 6.15pm.