

Consultation on the proposed new voluntary aided primary school for the Whiteley area

January - February 2006



The **Methodist** Church 



Consultation on primary school provision to serve the Whiteley area

Introduction

Following consultation with the Whiteley community in the spring of 2005, the County Council's Cabinet approved the principle of establishing a new 210 place, one form entry primary school, expandable to 420 places, subject to the availability of a suitable site and an appropriate funding strategy.

Since July, progress has been made both with the identification of a suitable site and with securing funding to build the school. To help to move the project on to its next stages, we need to ask your views about the type of school to be provided and its location.

An option discussed over recent years is for a new primary school to be a church voluntary aided (VA) school, sponsored by the Diocese of Portsmouth, with an ecumenical character. Earlier in the year a bid was made to the Department for Education and Skills for capital funding for such a school and this was successful, with an allocation of £4m towards the cost of providing the school.

Work has also been carried out to develop options for a site for the school, with two locations at Whiteley District Centre now identified as preferred sites.

We want obtain your views about::

- the character of the new school as a church voluntary aided primary school; and
- the location of the school.

The results of this consultation will be used to help decide on the best available site for the new school. The Diocese of Portsmouth will consider the results of the consultation before deciding whether to publish the statutory notices required to establish a new church primary school in Whiteley.

A church primary school

A voluntary aided school is different from other types of school in several important respects. VA schools have a more pronounced religious character and ethos and different rules for governing body membership which reflect their religious character. The governing body is also responsible for determining the school's admission arrangements. The governing body rather than the County Council owns the building and employs the staff and the governors are responsible for meeting 10% of the cost of most capital expenditure on the buildings, with 90% being met through grant from the Department for Education and Skills.

In terms of ethos, the voluntary aided primary school proposed for Whiteley will aim to serve its community by providing an education of the highest quality, within the context of Christian faith and practice. It will aim to promote Christian values through the overall experience it offers its pupils.

It is hoped that the school will be promoted jointly by the Church of England, Methodist and United Reformed Churches, reflecting the ecumenical character of the local church community at Whiteley.

It may also be possible to incorporate a church within the school building and discussions are currently under way to determine the feasibility of this approach. Funding would need to come from the churches concerned and the additional accommodation be added without increasing the amount of land required for the school, or contributing to any delay in its construction.

We are working towards providing the new school from September 2007. Interim arrangements will be made for reception age children to be admitted in September 2006 and prospective parents have already been notified of opportunities to discuss arrangements with members of the County Council's school admissions team.

Location of a new primary school for Whiteley

The County Council will need to find a site for the new school. The lack of a suitable site owned by the County Council was made clear during the consultation earlier this year. The Cabinet considered two possible sites, both at the district centre. These are:

- land to the west of the district centre adjoining the existing coach park and church site, owned by the Universities Superannuation Service (USS)Ltd.; and
- part of the recreation land, adjoining the Meadowside Centre, owned by Winchester City Council.

The only land which the County Council owns in the Whiteley area which would be large enough for a primary school is at Leafy Lane, adjoining the M27 in the south east of Whiteley. However, it has a number of serious disadvantages which rule it out of further consideration. In summary, these are:

- separation from the main area of Whiteley housing by main distributor road and Solent Business Park;
- noise and air pollution from the M27;
- poor access at the top of a long residential road;
- given the distribution of families within Whiteley, 80% of the 210 pupils at the school would need to come from other parts of Whiteley.

Land to the west of the District Centre owned by USS Ltd.

This site could accommodate the new school, but whilst USS supports the principle of a new school, it is unwilling to dispose of any part of its landholding. Although the County Council could seek compulsory purchase powers to acquire this site, the procedure can be lengthy, with no guarantee of a successful outcome. This would delay the provision of the new school.

While the County Council will continue discussions with USS about the use of this site, it is not the preferred location because of the issues outlined above.

Land adjoining the Meadowside Centre

A one form entry primary school could be accommodated on the recreation land immediately adjoining the Meadowside Centre which is owned by Winchester City Council. We believe this could be achieved with no overall reduction in the nature of the sports facilities currently provided on the site although they would all need to be moved around quite considerably. The

plan included in this consultation document shows the proposed site for the new school and the proposed relocation of existing sports facilities.

Building the school on this site would involve moving the existing pitches some thirty to forty metres to the west to accommodate the school buildings and playing fields. They would be nearer to people's houses than they are at present and removed from the leisure centre. Existing tennis courts would move from the north of the Meadowside Centre to south of the Centre and the proposed skateboard park would be located slightly west of the location currently planned for it. The existing children's play area would have to be moved and would be nearer to residential property. These proposals would result in a loss of amenity open space and there would be considerable disruption for a period whilst the changes are made. An additional football pitch would, however, be provided to junior standard and for use outside school hours.

To compensate for the loss of amenity space which would result from building the school on this site, the County Council would provide additional open space at its site in Leafy Lane, which would be of particular benefit to residents in this part of Whiteley, where limited amenity land is currently available.

Although the Cabinet decision envisaged a school which would be expandable to two forms of entry (420 pupils), this expansion would not be needed to provide places for children from the existing Whiteley development. An urban extension to the north of Whiteley is under consideration in response to Government house building targets, and should this be approved it will require new education, community, and other social infrastructure to support the needs of the expanded population. This would allow the local authorities to review the manner in which these services are provided across the whole of Whiteley.

The use of this site would provide for the needs of a one form entry primary school but there would be an impact on recreational facilities which we would try to compensate for. It would prevent any future expansion of the sports facilities at the Meadowside Centre which would be a disadvantage. The City Council is concerned that the changes to the recreational land and the disruption to the sports facilities represent a loss to the community even though it might enable a school to be provided more quickly than on another site and with more certainty.

Planning consent would be required for the new school and the other changes to the recreation ground. The development would not be in accordance with planning policy at national and local level. The planning application might be 'called in' – that is to say, a decision on whether the scheme could go ahead would be made on the recommendation of a planning inspector appointed by a Government department.

The recreational land is owned by Winchester City Council. The City Council has not agreed to sell the land to the County Council and will decide on whether to do so only once it has seen the response to this consultation exercise. It is very important that you express a view one way or another to help the City Council decide. The City Council's position is that it would prefer not to see any changes to the recreation ground but recognises the importance of school provision to the local community.

Whiteley Parish Council supports the principle of new school provision but does not support the use of any land at the recreation ground.

The above demonstrates that in order to provide a new primary school for Whiteley, difficult choices have to be made now. Should the City Council agree to make the land available, the proposed VA school offers the prospect of the earliest opening date, will be well located for its catchment and would include community use of its facilities. However, there are disadvantages

regarding the changes to the layout of the existing recreation facilities and disruption during construction which would be offset in the longer term by the availability of community use of the school buildings and pitch and new open space to be provided at Leafy Lane. Whilst other possible sites have been suggested, each has uncertainties; notably their availability for school use. For these reasons, the proposal to reshape the recreation ground represents the County Council's preferred site for the new primary school for Whiteley.



EXISTING DISTRICT CENTRE

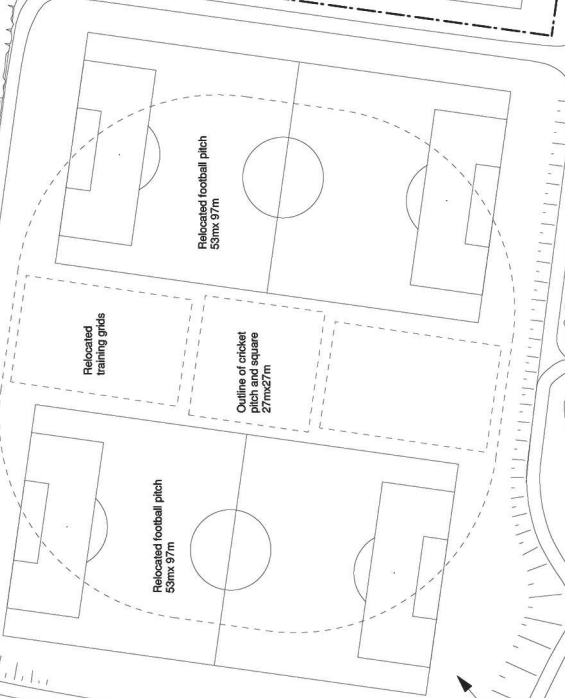


Vehicle access to school via existing access road

Pedestrian link maintained to sports pitches from Community Building

Existing tennis courts relocated to area adjacent to existing car park

Football pitch to be cut into site. Existing footpaths to be relocated accordingly



Existing play equipment to be relocated south of existing position

Cut material used to fill and build up levels to south west corner of football pitch. Existing footpaths to be re-created

Area of long grass and ecological wet land



PROJECT Whiteley Proposed New Primary School

SCALE @ A1 @ A3 DATE Oct. '05

SHEET CONTENTS Proposed Site Plan

DRAWING NO P6325-132 Rev ref: P-6325-132

REVISION

How can I find out more?

The report on a new primary school for Whiteley considered by the County Council's Cabinet on 25 July 2005 and a record of the Cabinet's decision can be viewed on the internet at:

<http://www.hants.gov.uk/decisions/decisions-docs/050725-cabine-R0715155838.html>
<http://www.hants.gov.uk/decisions/decisions-docs/050725-cabine-R0715155824.html>
<http://www.hants.gov.uk/decisions/decisions-docs/050725-cabine-R0905123357.html>

Details of the County Council's policies for the provision of school places are given in the School Organisation Plan, which can be found at:

<http://www.hants.gov.uk/education/department/sop/sopfinal2005.pdf>
<http://www.hants.gov.uk/education/department/sop/sopfinal2005.doc>

Opportunities to discuss the issues further have been set up as follows.

County Council and diocesan officers will be available at the following locations on two days to answer questions and hear your views. Details are:

Meadowside Centre	Tuesday 31 January 2006 1.00 p.m. – 6.00 p.m.
Whiteley Community Centre, Yew Tree Drive	Wednesday 1 February 2006 8:15 a.m. – 1.00 p.m.

There will be a public meeting at the Meadowside Centre at 7.45 p.m. on Thursday 9 February 2006. Officers will make a presentation about the issues and there will be an opportunity to ask questions and express your views.

How can I respond to this consultation

All comments made will be noted and reported to the County Council's Cabinet and the Portsmouth Diocesan Board of Education. Comments about the location of the school will be passed to Winchester City Council.

If you wish to make comments in writing, please use the response form on the following page, which should be sent to:

Bob Eardley, Strategic Planning Unit, Children's Services Department, The Castle, Winchester, Hampshire SO23 8UG, or by e-mail to: bob.eardley@hants.gov.uk, to arrive by Friday 17 February 2006.

In addition, there is a response sheet which can be accessed via <http://www.hants.gov.uk/education/whiteleyreview>

Your views are welcomed and will be very carefully considered before any decisions are made.

Hampshire County Council and Portsmouth Diocesan Board of Education

Consultation on primary school provision to serve the Whiteley area

Please tell us your views about the proposals for the new primary school Whiteley area.

Do you support the provision of a new primary school within Whiteley:

Yes No

Do you support the proposal for the school to be a church voluntary aided primary school with an ecumenical character?

Yes No

Please give reasons for your preference

Do you support locating the school on recreation land adjoining the Meadowside Centre despite the impact on the recreation facilities ?

Yes No

Please give reasons for your preference

Are there other options for the provision of a school which should be considered?

Yes

No

Please explain what you believe these are

Please complete below:

Name (please print)

Status (e.g. local resident, parent, etc.)

Signed Date

Please return to:

Bob Eardley, Strategic Planning Unit, Children's Services Department, The Castle, Winchester, Hampshire SO23 8UG, **to arrive by Friday 17 February 2006.**