

Report to Cabinet

13 September 2023

Subject:	Hamstead Infant School and Hamstead Junior School - Proposed Closure and Expansion
Cabinet Member:	Cabinet Member for Children and Education Councillor Simon Hackett
Director:	Director of Children and Education, Michael Jarrett
Key Decision:	Yes
Contact Officer:	Martyn Roberts, Service Manager - School Organisation

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That having taken the results of consultation into account, approval be given to the publication of a Statutory Proposal to:-
- i) formally close Hamstead Infant School, Tanhouse Avenue, Great Barr B43 5AS; and
 - ii) increase the age range of Hamstead Junior School, Hamstead Road, Great Barr B43 5BE from the ages of 8-11 years old to 3-11 years old to accommodate the displaced pupils from Hamstead Infant School.




- 1.2 That, subject to no objections being raised during the statutory representation period for the Statutory Proposal as set out in 1.1 above, authorise the Director of Children and Education to make a final decision on the proposal for the prescribed alterations at Hamstead Infant School, Tanhouse Avenue, Great Barr B43 5AS and Hamstead Junior School, Hamstead Road, Great Barr B43 5BE, in conjunction with the Director – Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer, and in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children and Education.
- 1.3 That in the event that any unresolved objections are raised during the statutory representation period for the Statutory Proposal, that a report is submitted to the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services with full details of representations received to inform a final decision on the proposal.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 Where there is a proposal to amalgamate 2 (or more) existing maintained schools, under ‘The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013’ and in line with the Department for Education (DfE) published guidance: ‘Opening and Closing Maintained Schools, Statutory guidance for proposers and decision makers January 2023’ and ‘Making Significant Changes (‘prescribed alterations’) to maintained schools Statutory guidance for proposers and decision makers January 2023’, the Local Authority must act as the ‘decision maker’.
- 2.2 The Local Authority can publish a proposal to close one school (or more) and enlarge / change the age range of an existing school (following the statutory prescribed alterations process), to accommodate the displaced pupils.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<p>The Best Start in Life for Children and Young People</p> <p>The recommendations in this report support: Ready for school “B9 We will provide enough good school places that offer families choice and confidence that their</p>
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	<p>children can experience high quality education and achieve good outcomes.</p> <p>B10 We will work with schools and other learning providers to improve educational outcomes for children and young people.</p> <p>Children and young people that need more support</p> <p>B16 We will ensure that children and young people with SEND can access high quality local services when they need them, by working with partners to ensure there is a comprehensive local offer available to children and families.”</p>
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4 Context and Key Issues

Purpose of the Report

- 4.1 To consider the outcome of Stage 1 statutory consultation (Appendix 1) undertaken on a proposal to close Hamstead Infant School, Tanhouse Avenue, Great Barr and expand Hamstead Junior School, Hamstead Road, Great Barr.
- 4.2 Following consideration of the Stage 1 consultation, Cabinet are requested to approve the publication of a Statutory Proposal to close Hamstead Infant School on 31 December 2023 and expand the age range of Hamstead Junior School from 8-11 years to 3-11 years with effect from 1 January 2024. The proposal, if agreed, will provide for the formal amalgamation of two twinned schools in Great Barr to form a 420 statutory place primary school, with a 39 full time equivalent place Nursery.

Background and main considerations

- 4.3 Hamstead Infant School and Hamstead Junior School are co-located on a single site at Tanhouse Avenue and Hamstead Road, Great Barr. Both schools continue to operate as community-controlled schools. Each school has a Governing Board responsible for the day to day management and performance of their school. Each school receives a delegated school budget from the Local Authority to operate.



- 4.4 Both schools remain popular, Hamstead Infant School has a Published Admission Number (PAN) of 60 places for Reception, Hamstead Junior School a PAN of 60 for admission into Year 3, providing a total pupil capacity of 420 places across both schools. In addition, Hamstead Infant School has capacity to operate a non-statutory 39 full time equivalent (fte) place Nursery.
- 4.5 The retirements of the former Head Teacher, and subsequent Acting Head Teacher, at Hamstead Infant School provides an opportunity for the Local Authority to consider closure of the school. With a concurrent extension of the age range of Hamstead Junior School from 8 to 11 years old, to 3 to 11 years old, the Junior School could then operate as a 420 place, two form entry primary school with the transfer of infant aged children to the primary school.
- 4.6 The Authority has adopted a similar successful policy across a number of infant and junior twinned schools, most recently through the amalgamation of Warley Infant and Bleakhouse Junior Schools, to form Bleakhouse Primary School.
- 4.7 Upon the closure of the school, and expansion of the age range at Hamstead Junior School to form an enlarged 420 place primary school, the day to day responsibility for the Infant School site and building would transfer to the Governing Board of the new primary school.
- 4.8 The Governing Boards of both schools have been supportive of the proposal through their engagement with the Authority and have set up an interim Joint Management Board to prepare both schools for a final decision on the proposal.
- 4.9 A number of benefits have been identified with the proposal. Administratively, duplication of functions with staffing and use of spaces can be reviewed by the enlarged primary school. Financially the new school budget would see economies of scale compared to the two former individual budgets, with a similar number of employees appointed to the expanded Primary School.



- 4.10 Utmost consideration for the proposal is that children attending the school should not see any major upheaval as a result of the closure of Hamstead Infant School and the extension of the age range at Hamstead Junior School. As the two schools share the same site, there is minimal impact expected for children.
- 4.11 The new primary school will continue to serve a highly populated residential area of the Borough. The proposal will support parental choice, maintaining quality provision in the area.

The current position

- 4.12 The council consulted with a range of stakeholders between 6 June and 3 July 2023 on a proposal to close Hamstead Infant School and permanently increase the age range of Hamstead Junior School to take effect from January 2024.
- 4.13 Stakeholders included all parents / carers of all pupils attending both schools, staff, governors, local ward councillors and the local Member of Parliament.
- 4.14 A consultation event to meet with senior education officers by appointment was arranged at the schools for 13 June 2023 for any stakeholder to meet to raise questions. No appointments were requested.
- 4.15 Stakeholders were provided further opportunity to raise any questions with the council via the questionnaire enclosed within the consultation document (see Appendix 1). No questions were received during the consultation period.
- 4.16 Subject to approval of the report recommendations, a Statutory Proposal to close Hamstead Infant School and extend the age range of Hamstead Junior School from 8-11 years to 5-11 years will be published, followed by a four-week statutory consultation period.
- 4.17 Following completion of the statutory consultation period all representations will be considered. Subject to no objections being received authority is sought to grant to the Director of Children and Education, authority to make a final decision on the Statutory Proposal in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children and Education.



Should any objections be received during the statutory consultation period a further report will be submitted to Cabinet for a final decision.

Consultation (Customers and other Stakeholders)

4.18 The four-week initial consultation process undertaken by the council (Stage 1) commenced on 6 June 2023 and ended on 3 July 2023 with the following stakeholders consulted:

- Hamstead Infant School Governing Board
- Hamstead Junior School Governing Board
- Parents / carers at both schools
- School staff
- All schools in Sandwell
- Ward Councillors
- Member of Parliament
- Trade Unions

4.19 The consultation elicited a positive response with unanimous support to the proposal.

Category	Number Responding	Yes (to the proposal)	No (to the proposal)	Don't know
Parents / Carers	22	22		
Staff	0			
Governors	2	2		
More than one category	3	3		
Community Member	0			
TOTAL	27	27		

Appendix 2 provides detail of responses received from consultees that responded to the proposal.



- 4.20 Stage 2 is the statutory stage of consultation which, in accordance with prescribed regulations, the council is required to publish a 'Statutory Proposal'. The Statutory Proposal will formally publicise the proposed closure of Hamstead Infant School, and the extension to the age range of Hamstead Junior School to 3-11 years of age, to enable the school to operate as a two-form entry primary school.
- 4.21 Arrangements for publication will follow a similar format to the first consultation exercise, i.e., uploaded via the council's website, with a link from each school's website, and key stakeholders accordingly advised. Following publication of the formal proposal and a statutory notice on 25 September 2023 a representation period will last 4 weeks, during which time any objections or observations could be made to the council. At the expiry of the representation period on 22 October 2023, any objections received will need to be considered, and a final decision made on the Statutory Proposal.
- 4.22 A formal consultation would be arranged with staff if a decision is taken to close Hamstead Infant School and extend the age range of Hamstead Junior School.

5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 To not proceed: would continue to lead to inefficiencies in revenue expenditure across both schools with duplication of certain functions and spend, and not provide the opportunities to streamline across one school.
- 5.2 Closure of Hamstead Junior School: the school has a substantive Head Teacher in post, whereas at Hamstead Infant School there are 3 senior Leadership post vacancies, including Head Teacher, with an Acting Assistant Head Teacher in post. Both the SENDCO and Office Manager posts are now also vacant. With the number of senior staff posts currently vacant the Infant School could not support a successful expansion to its age range to operate at the two-form entry primary school model required.



- 5.3 Closure of both schools: the Authority would not be able to establish a new community maintained school to replace the two existing schools, but would be required to seek a free school sponsor to open a replacement school.

6 Implications

<p>Resources:</p>	<p>The Department for Education “Scheme for financing local authority maintained schools” (Updated 1 April 2020) states the budget shares of schools for which approval for discontinuation has been secured, will be made available until closure on a monthly basis, net of estimated pay costs.</p> <p>Where a school has been established or is subject to a prescribed alteration as a result of the closure of a school, the authority may add an amount to the budget share of the new / enlarged school to reflect all or part of the unspent budget share, including any surplus balances carried forward from previous funding periods of the closing school for the funding period in which it closes.</p> <p>If the proposed amalgamation is approved, the Authority intend to act as described above; giving all unspent budget share to Hamstead Junior School, and any surplus balances carried forward, and there would no additional financial resource implication of this proposal.</p> <p>No major capital works are proposed for the school sites.</p>
<p>Legal and Governance:</p>	<p>Statutory consultation was carried out in accordance with guidance issued by the DfE entitled ‘<i>Opening and Closing Maintained Schools, Statutory guidance for proposers and decision makers January 2023</i>’ and ‘<i>Making Significant Changes (‘prescribed alterations’) to maintained schools Statutory guidance for proposers and decision makers January 2023</i>’ and under ‘<i>The</i></p>



	<i>School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013</i> .
Risk:	<p>The Corporate Risk Management Strategy has been complied with. The Cabinet has a statutory duty under the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 to make a decision on a prescribed alteration proposal. Based on the information provided, it is the officers' opinion that there are no current "red" risks that need to be reported with regards to this proposal.</p> <p>Agreement to the report recommendations may result in minor risks being highlighted, namely inadequate publication of the Statutory Proposal, or the receipt of any objections during the statutory notice period. Appropriate mitigation measures have been identified to minimise the occurrence of any such risks, including a follow up report to Cabinet should any such objections be received.</p>
Equality:	An Equality Impact Assessment initial screening has been undertaken and a full Equality Impact Assessment is not required for this report.
Health and Wellbeing:	The proposed expansion will accommodate projected levels of pupil demand which is expected to be sustained into the foreseeable future.
Social Value	In supporting the prioritisation of applications from the local community the proposal will ensure that children have access to a school place, and will be educated and develop within their residential and social communities.
Climate Change:	No impact on climate change.



<p>Corporate Parenting:</p>	<p>The report recommendations will establish a two-form entry, 420 place primary school through the closure of Hamstead Infant School and the expansion of the age range of Hamstead Junior School.</p> <p>The new enlarged school will fulfil the role of Corporate Parenting by supporting the care and safeguarding of all children throughout their time attending the school, from Early Years through to end of Key Stage 2.</p>
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7. Appendices

- 7.1 Appendix 1 - Consultation document.
Appendix 2 – Consultation responses.

8. Background Papers

None.

