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**MOWDEN SCHOOLS EXPANSION – PROJECT UPDATE**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member - Councillor Councillor Cyndi Hughes,  
Children and Young People Portfolio**

**Responsible Director - Murray Rose, Director of People**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To advise on progress of feasibility work previously approved by Cabinet and seek approval to release basic need capital grant to progress the expansion of Mowden Schools.

**Summary**

2. In February 2012 Cabinet approved the identification of Mowden Infant and Junior school for future expansion to meet a demand for school places in the area.
3. Feasibility work has been undertaken on the opportunities for expansion and this report provides an update on feasibility and consultation work undertaken.
4. The feasibility and consultation undertaken has developed the project to a pre-planning application stage that satisfies the school place planning requirements of the Council and the teaching and operational requirements of the school.
5. The report also seeks approval to progress the expansion project and release basic need capital grant to fund the project.

**Recommendation**

6. It is recommended that Members:-
  - (a) Agree a project budget of £3,050,290 from Basic Need Capital Grant allocation and release the funding to enable the project to progress.
  - (b) Authorise the AD Resources to agree terms and enter into any necessary agreements with the Academy.

**Reasons**

7. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons :-

- (a) That the expansion will create additional primary places which will help to meet the Authority's statutory requirement to provide a school place for all children of school age in its area and enable parents to express a choice of a local school.
- (b) To address the challenge from the Office of the Schools Adjudicator .
- (c) To secure the necessary agreements

**Murray Rose**  
**Director of People**

### **Background Papers**

Cabinet Report 19<sup>th</sup> July 2011  
Cabinet Report 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2012

Rachel Jones : Extension 2026

S17 Crime and Disorder	No recommendations from this report.
Health and Well Being	Provide facilities that enhance children's life chances and opportunities to thrive.
Carbon Impact	All work undertaken will be designed and constructed with the highest regard to sustainability and aim to reduce the carbon footprint and reuse energy and environmental resources.
Diversity	All projects will add to the diversity of buildings and technology available in Darlington
Wards Affected	Although the schools affected are in Mowden Wards there is potential for many other wards to be affected through the provision of school places.
Groups Affected	Children and young people aged 5 to 11 in full time Education.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not recommend a change to the budget and policy framework.
Key Decision	This is a key decision because the provision of additional school places affects all schools in the Borough.
Urgent Decision	For the purpose of the 'call-in' procedure this does not represent an urgent matter.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	The Capital Programme is consistent with Aspiring Darlington: providing high quality facilities that support modern approaches to education in schools and for lifelong learning.

## MAIN REPORT

### Background

8. In July 2011 Cabinet approved the release of £27,800 of basic need grant to enable feasibility work to identify the most appropriate schools in which to provide additional places. A subsequent report updating Members was brought in February 2012 that identified Mowden Infant and Junior school as the priority for future expansion.
9. The reasons Mowden was identified are:-
  - (a) To enable the creation of additional primary places which will help to meet the Authority's statutory requirement to provide a school place for all children of school age in its area.
  - (b) To enable parents to express a choice of a local school.
  - (c) To address the challenge from the Office of the Schools Adjudicator which names Mowden as the school to take any children not gaining a place at their nearest local school in the rural approaches to the west of the town
10. The decision to focus attention on priorities at Mowden resulted in further feasibility and consultation. The purpose of this report is to update Members and propose the next stages of the project.

### Expansion Plans

11. The feasibility work undertaken to date has focussed on a plan to:-
  - (a) Expand the infant school from a planned admission number (PAN) of 60 (two classes per year group) to a PAN of 90 (three classes per year group), and;
  - (b) Expand the junior school from a PAN of 62 (two classes per year group) to a PAN of 90 (three classes per year group).
12. This planned expansion will result in an additional 210 pupil places in total (90 infants, 120 Juniors). The places are required for reception for the start of the September 2013 school year.

### Feasibility

13. The project is being managed in accordance with the Authority's Capital Management processes and is aligned to the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) plan of work stages. The RIBA process defines the work into Stages from conception to post practical completion. These are known as stages A to L and can be easily aligned with the Councils Control Point methodology.

14. A Project Execution Plan (PEP) has been developed for the Project and this is a core approved document that defines the strategy for the project management at Mowden Infants and Junior schools. By using a comprehensive methodology, that defines how the project will be executed, monitored and controlled; the aim is to ensure successful delivery of the project scope in line with the objectives of the client.
15. A Procurement and Contracts Strategy has is being developed. Should members agree to progress the project the strategy will be used to provide the procurement route and the form of contract(s) for the project. The document is used to consider how the procurement will be undertaken. It should be noted that the procurement strategy is consistent with Darlington Borough Council's overarching commissioning strategy and Corporate Procurement Rules. A copy of the draft procurement strategy is attached as Appendix 1 for information only.
16. The scope of the feasibility and designs that have been developed provide the following as part of the expansion proposals:-
  - (a) Infant School: Additional three classrooms, internal remodelling to alter use of some existing rooms, extension of administration area, improvements to secure entrance/reception area, additional small group/Special Educational Needs (SEN) areas and additional ancillary accommodation including stores, toilets and cloakroom.
  - (b) Junior School: Additional four classrooms, extension of admin area, improvements to secure entrance/reception area, creation of a specialist Resource/ICT area, additional small group/SEN room and additional ancillary accommodation including stores, toilets and cloakroom.
  - (c) Externals: Extension to hard standing playground areas including provision of a fenced ball-game area on the junior site.
  - (d) On site highways proposals including extension to junior staff car park
17. An initial period of consultation has been undertaken to help develop the concept and scope of the expansion. The outcome of initial consultation is provided in detail later in this report.
18. The design has been prepared in accordance with statutory requirements and Department for Education guidance regarding space provision (Building Bulletin 99). The design has been developed to Stage D on the RIBA Plan of works, which provides sufficient detail to develop budget estimates for the project and submission of a planning application. The design has been frozen by the school management team and governing body following the outcome of initial consultation outlined later in this report.
19. Based on estimates and information available to Stage D a project budget has been developed that includes Construction cost estimates, Professional fees and surveys, ICT provision, Furniture and equipment, Removals and storage. The estimated cost of the project based on the current information is £3,050,290.

## **Funding**

20. Basic Need Grant is an annual allocation of funding on a formulaic basis to meet the basic need i.e. the need for additional school places. The current funding available is £4,862,793, made up of £2,417,374 from the 2011/12 allocation and £2,445,419 from the 2012/13.
21. The priorities for Grant should be considered across all schools within the Borough, including maintained, Academies, Voluntary Aided schools and Free Schools. The Federation of Mowden Schools converted to academy status on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2012. It is proposed that the local authority retains the funding and responsibility for the delivery of the proposed project and that legal agreements regarding access and warranties be put in place before work commences. This has been achieved successfully with other schools which converted to academy status during Primary Capital Programme projects and no issues are foreseen in this instance.
22. Cabinet have previously recognised that Mowden Infant and Junior are a priority for expansion. The Project budget identified is within the available funding of the Basic Need grant allocation. If Members approve the project it is recommended that this Grant be used to fund the project.
23. Officers are currently developing a School Organisation Plan which will review the need for places from 2013 onwards, identify further areas for investment and allocate the remaining basic need funding accordingly. The plan and proposals will be presented to Cabinet in the Autumn.

## **Consultation**

24. In development of the feasibility a programme of consultation has been undertaken. This has included the project staff and other Council services, Governors, pupils, other school users (including 11 letting/tenant organisations).
25. Ward Councillors and local residents have been involved in an initial consultation process carried out in April and May. Meetings, assemblies, Q&A sessions and public events have been held in an attempt to discuss openly the expansion proposals and to listen to comments.
26. Sport England, a statutory planning consultee, has been party to the consultation and does not foresee raising objections at the planning stage.
27. The consultation sessions were all well attended and approximately 90 members of the local community attended the public events. Feedback has been grouped into three main themes:-
  - (a) Design - In general the comments made about the proposed design of the expanded school regarding layout and space provision were very positively received.
  - (b) School related issues - Concern was expressed about the possible change in ethos of the school after expansion and the potential for disruption to teaching and learning throughout the construction process. The head teacher and governors are fully

supportive of the project and are confident that concerns such as these can be managed and the risks mitigated by the school's management team. They have been clear that the expansion also provides short term opportunities regarding the integration of a construction project within the curriculum and also longer term opportunities for professional development for staff through a larger staffing structure.

- (c) Highways - The main concern registered (55% of all individual comments contributed) was regarding highways related issues caused by the increased number of pupils and staff on both sites. General traffic, parking and road safety issues were all raised.

Highways related issues are highlighted as a risk of delivery at Planning Application stage. However, like most schools, Mowden Infant and Junior schools have peaks in traffic at the start and end of the school day. This is exacerbated by the limited parking on site for staff.

To mitigate this risk a highways transport assessment has been commissioned to accompany the planning application and assist in the development of the project.

The highways consultants were available at both public events where they discussed their assessment methodology and evidence gathered thus far. The consultation process was careful not to present solutions before hearing consultees' views on the subject.

28. The assessment findings are being built into the detailed design being prepared for submission for Planning Approval (subject to Cabinet approval of this project.)

### **Conclusions and Milestones**

29. The feasibility and consultation undertaken has developed the project to a pre-planning application stage that satisfies the school place planning requirements of the Council and the teaching and operational requirements of the school.
30. A project budget has been developed on the information available to date. The project budget will be kept under review as part of the project management role. Subject to Cabinet approval the project development process will be ongoing and subject to change as a result of detailed design progresses, planning approvals requirements and the procurement process. Any variations that increase the approved project budget will be reported to Cabinet. It is recommended that a project budget of £3,050,290 be approved and released to enable the project to progress.
31. Subject to Cabinet approval of this project and the release of funds the following milestones have been defined as part of the project timetable:

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Timetable</b>
Planning Application	July 2012
Technical Design	July to October 12
Planning Application decision	October 2012
Tendering / Appointment Processes	November 2012

Phase 1 Infants	Construction – Early 2013 to August 2013
Phase 2 Juniors	Construction August 2013 to Summer 2014.