

**HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL  
CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES SELECT COMMITTEE  
WEDNESDAY 24 JANUARY 2001 at 10.30am**

Agenda item  
no:

**2**

**NURSERY PROVISION IN OXHEY**

Report of Director of Education

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Executive Member:- Keith Emsall

Local Members: Frances Button, Graham Burrow, Michael Colne, Maureen Tomlinson,  
Jane Hobday

**1. Purpose of the report**

- To report to Select Committee the results of the public consultations about:
  - i) future nursery provision in Oxhey;
  - ii) the disposal of the Oaklands Avenue Site.
- To update the Select Committee on the feasibility work undertaken so far
- To present up-to-date cost estimates for the proposed package
- To seek the views of the Select Committee prior to a report to Cabinet and the Executive on 29 January 2001, seeking approval to proceed with the implementation of the proposed package and the publication of Statutory Notices for the establishment of nursery classes at Sacred Heart and St Meryl Schools.

**2. Summary**

2.1 The LEA has consulted widely about the proposals to:

- consolidate Oxhey Nursery School onto the Eastbury Road site by September 2002, offering an extended range of day care and community facilities;
- open a new nursery class at Sacred Heart RC Primary School, Bushey, by September 2002;
- open a new nursery class at St Meryl Primary School, Carpenders Park by September 2002.

2.2 A copy of the Consultation document is attached as appendix 1

2.3 An analysis of forms returned by the deadline indicated a favourable response of over 50% to the proposals and this is attached as appendix 2.

- 2.4 A consultation on the disposal of the Oaklands Avenue site has been conducted concurrently.
- 2.5 To date, the LEA has not received any objections from other schools to the proposal to dispose of the Oaklands Avenue site. However, the organisers of a Summer Play Scheme at Oaklands Avenue have registered disapproval of the proposal.
- 2.6 Concerns raised in responses to the consultation relating to traffic issues and interim arrangements are being addressed through current feasibility and developmental work
- 2.7 Section 4 of this report gives an outline of the preparatory planning and on going feasibility work currently being conducted by officers.
- 2.8 Sections 5 and 6 of this report refer to revised estimates for capital and expenditure for the proposals.
- 2.9 At the meeting of the Early Years Panel on 14 December 2000 it was recommended that officers prepare a report to CSF Select Committee on 24 January 2001 in favour of acceptance of the package proposed in section 2.1.

### **3. Conclusion**

- 3.1 The Select Committee's comments will be passed to the Cabinet and Executive when they meet on the 29 January 2001.

## 1. Background

1.1 On the 12 July 2000, the former Education Committee authorised the Director of Education to proceed with a consultation on the proposals as set out in section 2.1 of this report.

1.2 The consultation document has been widely circulated to:

- schools associated with Oxhey Nursery
- other local schools
- local residents/residents associations
- local private providers
- Early Years Partnership groups
- District Councils
- Library/Citizen Advice
- Oxhey Hall Horticultural Society

1.3 The consultation ended on 15 December 2000.

### Disposal of school playing fields at Oaklands Avenue

1.4 If the proposals are eventually approved, the County Council intends to dispose of this site. Three Rivers District Council have approved a planning brief for the site which allows for up to 1.2 acres (0.48 hectares) of housing development and a minimum of 1.1 acres (0.43 hectares) of land for general play space, including children's play equipment.

1.5 The open area surrounding the Nursery school at Oaklands Avenue is classified as school playing fields. Therefore, under Section 77 of the Schools Standards and Framework Act, 1998 disposal of any part of the site requires consultation with the local community, schools and parents, and the consent of the Secretary of State for Education and Employment. Therefore, the consultation on the proposed disposal was conducted concurrently.

1.6 A copy of the Consultation document has been submitted to the National Playing Fields Association.

1.7 Apparent existing playing field deficiencies at primary schools within a 2-mile of the Oaklands Avenue site are addressed through joint arrangements with other schools or use of public playing field facilities.

1.8 A shortfall of playing field space has also been identified at Watford Grammar School for Girls. It is understood that deficiencies at Watford Grammar School for Girls will be offset by arrangements currently being discussed between the school and Watford Grammar School for Boys where capacity appears to exist.

## **2. Outcomes from the consultation**

### **2.1 Oxhey Nursery: Analysis of Responses from the Consultation Document**

#### **2.1.1 Analysis of Respondents**

242 responses have been received to the consultation document - from a total distribution of over 4000. Over 90% of respondents were either parents (57.7%) or local residents (33.1%).

Over a quarter of respondents were linked in some way with Oxhey Nursery School.

#### **2.1.2 Analysis of Proposals**

50.4% of all respondents agreed with the proposal to consolidate Oxhey Nursery School on to the Eastbury Road site. 30.2% disagreed with the proposal and nearly 20% of all respondents either did not give an answer or did not know whether they agreed with the proposal or not.

Agreement was also found on the proposals to establish nursery classes at St Meryl and Sacred Heart Schools. 57% agreed with the St Meryl proposal and 44.6% to the Sacred Heart proposal.

#### **2.1.3 Responses from Different Groups**

57.7% of respondents were parents. When parental responses alone are analysed the percentage of those agreeing to the proposals increase: 58.7% of parents agree to the consolidation of Oxhey Nursery on the Eastbury Road site; 68.1% agree to the nursery class at St Meryl; and 54.3% agree to the nursery class at Sacred Heart.

2.1.4 However, responses from residents move in the opposite direction. Fewer residents agree to the proposals when compared to the overall responses. Only 27.8% of residents agree with consolidation of Oxhey Nursery School on to the Eastbury Road site, while 54.4 % disagree with the proposal.

2.1.5 35.4% of residents agree with the establishment of a nursery class at St Meryl with 12.7% disagreeing, and 27.5% agreed with a nursery class at Sacred Heart with 20.3% disagreeing. In all cases more residents agreed with the proposals than disagreed, but a large proportion of residents either failed to give an answer or indicated that they did not know whether they agreed with proposals or not.

2.1.6 Of the 43 residents who disagreed with the consolidation of Oxhey Nursery on to the Eastbury Road site, 27 live in Oaklands Avenue itself and 12 in neighbouring roads.

### **Written Responses**

2.2 The main concerns of Oaklands Avenue residents focus upon the scale and type of housing allowed by the Local District plan for the site. Other respondees raised concerns about the management of the public play area and traffic management.

2.3 The organisers of the Summer Play Scheme at Oaklands Avenue have registered disapproval of the disposal of the site. The LEA has offered the availability of the new facilities at the Eastbury Road site to enable the play scheme to continue.

2.4 Concerns about traffic were raised generally in relation to all four sites.

### **3. Outcome from the public meeting**

3.1 The meeting took place on 19 October 2000 at Bushey Hall School. There was a low attendance by parents but the Oaklands Avenue residents were well represented.

3.2 The main issues raised were as follows:

- interim arrangements for children attending the nursery on the Eastbury Road site 2001/2002;
- possibility of transport being provided for those children living furthest from the Oaklands Avenue site;
- need for community facilities at Eastbury Road;
- need for traffic management plans for the Eastbury Road site to avoid parking problems on Eastbury Road and for the temporary increase of traffic in Oaklands Avenue;
- future use and management of the open space at Oaklands Avenue;
- future of the Summer Play Scheme at Oaklands Avenue;
- need for a community base for the elderly;
- the scale of housing development planned for the Oaklands Avenue site.

### **4. Work done so far**

4.1 Preliminary designs for the new nursery school at Eastbury Road have taken into account the need to provide accommodation for use by the local community.

4.2 A suggested layout for the design of the nursery is attached as Appendix 3. Designs are in the process of being refined to meet regulatory requirements and the accommodation needs of the nursery, day care and the local community.

4.3 Officers have entered into informal discussions with Watford Borough Council concerning the vehicular access to the rear of the Eastbury Road site from Longcroft.

4.4 Advice has been sought from officers from the Highways Authority regarding traffic management measures that would be necessary for the Eastbury Road site, at Sacred Heart and St Meryl schools.

4.5 A survey recently conducted by Oxhey Nursery School with parents using the Eastbury Road site revealed that out of the total of 60 children attending that location, 30 walk, 26 are full time or occasional car users and 4 are unknown.

4.6 As part of the requirements for planning permission a detailed Green Traffic Plan will need to be prepared and the maximum cost for this has been included in the revised estimates in section 6.

4.7 Preparatory work for the transitional accommodation and arrangements at Oaklands Avenue is also being undertaken.

## **5. Financial Implications**

### Capital Funding

5.1 The sale of the Oaklands Avenue site will release funding for the rebuilding of Oxhey Nursery School on its Eastbury Road site and the two proposed new nursery classes.

5.2 The ‘mechanics’ of this funding are still being worked, but are likely to involve a contemporaneous contract whereby the developer who buys the housing site also builds the new nursery thereby avoiding the need for forward funding from balances.

5.3 The latest estimated value of the Oaklands Avenue site is £1.4million.

### Revenue

5.4 School budget shares - There would be annual savings of approximately £15,000 in school budget shares as a result of the slightly lower per pupil funding in nursery classes and the ending of the split site funding currently paid to Oxhey Nursery.

5.5 Potential redundancy costs - There is a potential of redundancy for nursery staff. However, this may be reduced as a result of staff being re-deployed to work in the day care provision or the new nursery classes.

5.6 The one off costs of potential redundancy would be up to approx. £15,000 depending on the outcome of any redeployments.

## **6. Revised Estimated Costs**

6.1 Latest estimates for the costs for the Eastbury Road nursery have taken into account recent building cost increases and reassessments of designs based upon more specific details.

6.2 The new figure for the cost of the temporary accommodation on the Oaklands Avenue site includes the funding required for the provision of additional hard and soft play space. Officers are continuing with their investigations into the most economical arrangements for the temporary accommodation.

6.3 The nursery class at Sacred Heart School is part of a larger scheme and the Westminster Diocese submitted a bid for the scheme to the DfEE Voluntary –Aided Major Works Programme. On the 19 December 2000 the LEA was notified that the DfEE had approved the scheme at Sacred Heart School for a start in 2001/2002. The actual level of funding remains under discussion between the Westminster Diocese and the DfEE and it is anticipated that this should be resolved shortly.

#### 6.4 Previous estimates (July 2000)

Capital receipt for Oaklands Avenue site = £1.3million.

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| Eastbury Road Nursery including replacement of car parking bays | £915,000   |
| Vehicular access  | £25,000    |
| St.Meryl nursery class  | £70,000    |
| Sacred Heart nursery class                                      | £158,000   |
| Total   | £1,168,000 |
| Saving  | £132,000   |

#### 6.5 Revised estimates

Capital receipt for Oaklands Avenue site =£1.4 million

|   |            |   |
|---|------------|---|
| Eastbury Road Nursery                                       | £1,105,000 | * |
| Temporary accommodation                                     | £50,000    |   |
| Pedestrian crossing   | £20,000    |   |
| Vehicular Access  | £25,000    |   |
| Replacement of parking bays                                 | £5,000     |   |
| Preparation of Green Travel Plan                            | £10,000    |   |
| Removal costs   | £2,000     |   |
| St Meryl nursery including additional car parking (£27,000) | £103,000   | * |
| Total cost  | £1,320,000 |   |
| Saving  | £80,000    |   |

\* Category B estimates based upon an anticipated start date of January 2002 for the Eastbury Road Nursery and St Meryl School Nursery class.

6.5.1 Costs for Sacred Heart nursery class have been excluded now that the nursery class has been included in the DfEE VA Major Works Programme.

### 7. **Timescale**

#### 7.1

|  |                     |
|--|---------------------|
| CSF Select Committee   | 24 January 2001     |
| Cabinet/Executive  | 29 January 2001     |
| Statutory Notices St Meryl, Sacred Heart Schools   | February/March 2001 |
| School Organisation Committee considers outcome of Statutory Notices for St Meryl and Sacred Heart Schools | April/May 2001      |
| Building starts  | January 2002        |
| Eastbury Road Nursery children move to Oaklands site   | January 2002        |
| Building complete  | July 2002           |
| New Nursery School opens at Eastbury Road  | September 2002      |
| New nursery class at St Meryl School   | September 2002      |
| New nursery class at Sacred Heart School   | September 2002      |

7.2 The process for applications for nursery admissions for the academic year 2002/2003 begins in December 2001.

7.3 All political and statutory processes for the opening of the nursery classes and the disposal of the Oaklands Avenue site need to be completed by May 2001 in order to allow time for the necessary planning process prior to commencement of building in 2002.

## **8. Conclusion**

8.1 The Select Committee's comments will be passed to the Cabinet and Executive when they meet on the 29 January 2001.

8.2 If the decision is taken to proceed with the implementation of the proposed package, the Director of Education would need to be authorised to publish statutory notices for the establishment of a nursery class at St Meryl School. The governors of Sacred Heart School will be responsible for the publication of statutory notices for the Sacred Heart nursery class.