

Background

Following the decision by the Abbey MAT to work in partnership with Leeds City Council on a proposal to expand St Chads C of E Primary School, a four week public consultation took place between the 16th January and 10th February 2017. During that period a number of meetings and drop-in sessions took place to ensure as many key stakeholders had the chance to learn more about the proposal, ask questions and raise any concerns. To ensure a thorough consultation took place, all parents of children at St Chads received a letter via the child's book bag. A leaflet drop to 800 resident's houses took place via a distribution company, although a number of residents have expressed concern at not receiving the leaflet. Details were posted on the school website, Abbey MAT website and Leeds City Council's website, an online blog was also created to allow views to be captured. All local schools and early years settings received information relating to the proposal, a banner was put on the school fence and posters were placed in some local shops.

During the consultation period, meetings took place with children, staff and governors of St Chads. Three drop-in sessions also took place that allowed any interested party/stakeholder to attend and ask questions or put their views forward. A separate drop-in session was arranged for the members of the West Park Residents Association (WPRA).

Outcome of consultation

There were a total of 146 responses received during the four week consultation period. Based on recent schools expansion consultations, this is a very good representation.

Ten of these responses were from children at St Chads who had a response form designed for children that asked their views only on the expansion and not on the use of the West Park Playing fields. In view of this the summary table below has been separated to reflect the statistics with and without the children's responses. With the responses included from the children, the question relating to the idea of expanding St Chads has 1% more support than opposition. However, taking these 10 responses out due to the response from being slightly different as mentioned previously, there is a 6% swing towards those opposed to the idea. In terms of the use of the West Park playing fields, the opposition is stronger with a 10% difference to those supporting.

Summary table of responses to the questions on the response form

	Proposal to expand St Chads	Proposal to expand St Chads	Use of West Park playing fields
	Includes children responses	Excludes children responses	
Support	71 (49%)	61 (45%)	58 (43%)
Opposed	70 (48%)	70 (51%)	72 (53%)
Neutral	5 (3%)	5 (4%)	6 (4%)

Summary of concerns raised by individual responses

The table below represents a more detailed summary of the comments raised through the response forms and meetings. These comments have been grouped by themes and then a description of the comments made. At the end of the table, several themes have been listed with a response to this or how these concerns may be addressed should the proposal proceed.

Summary of concerns raised by individual responses to the proposal to expand St Chads C of E h O and utilise a section of the West Park playing fields for sports provision			
MAIN THEME	SUB THEME	DETAIL OF RESPONSE	TOTAL RESPONSES
General		Support for additional local places	29
		Personally affected by lack of local school places	1
		Need not clearly demonstrated	2
		Future need not addressed	6
		Negative impact on less popular local schools	1
		Admissions should prioritise local children	2
		Proposal not in right location to serve need	5
		Disagrees with principle of faith schools	1
		Negative impact on value of own property	1
Total comments - General			48
Highways	General	Road safety concerns	16
		Volume of traffic concern	52
		Current travel plan inadequate	1
		No proposed highways solutions	2
	Parking concerns	Parents/public	36
		Staff	6
		Illegal/inconsiderate parking	10
	Environmental impact	Residents drives obstructed	8
		Detrimental to character of local area	15
		Increased litter	1
		Pollution concerns	10
		Spoilt views	4
	Noise concerns	4	
Total comments - Highways			165
School related	General concerns	Negative impact on ethos	15
		Reduced spiritual ethos	1
		Unsuitable for expansion (already undersized site)	4
		Negative impact on existing (poor) standards	2
		Preference for 1FE school	2
		Loss of outdoor amenities	3
		Disruption from building work	4
		Concern about design of building	1
		Increase in number of children attending from other areas	1
	Positive comments	Good education standards	2
		Support for recent changes to admissions policy	1
	Suggestions	Popularity of school	2
		Provide more OOSC	1
Alternative sites/schemes	Staggered finish time	1	
	West Park school	37	
	Disagree with reasons for not using WP school	1	
	Beckett's Park school	3	
	Adel - existing schools or new site	2	
	Bodington (relocation)	3	
Iveson	1		
Bulge at st Chad's	1		
Un-named site (non-faith provision)	1		
Un-named site	2		
Total comments - School related			91
West Park Playing Fields	Views on proposal	Support for size of proposed land take	3
		Proposed playing field too big	11
		Objection to principle of using FiT land	13
		Loss of amenity	41
		Sets a precedent for further development on FiT land	8
	Issues with community use	Supportive of shared playing field	3
		Inconvenient/fenced-off land not freely available	22
		Insufficient detail about arrangements for use of field	5
		Concern about availability of facilities out of school hours	1
		Insufficient compensation for FiT land take	3
		Possible financial incentive for MAT	1
	Practical issues	Drainage concerns	10
		Fencing unsightly	4
	Suggestions	Preference for playing field to left of school	11
		Re-provide lost FiT land e.g. West Park school site	2
		Include a playground on the school field	2
Land required to compensate for loss		1	
Total comments - West Park playing fields			141
OVERALL TOTAL COMMENTS			445

Concerns relating to future demand or current demography

The planning of future demand is based on the under 5 year old cohorts taken from the NHS data. This allows us currently to project places up to 2020 based on the latest 0-1 year olds. The projections are created for each school based on where they predominantly draw their pupils from with a factor added in for any known housing developments that are planned. In this case LCC have looked at the projected numbers for Weetwood Primary School as well as St Chads, due to the interaction between these areas. As shown within the consultation document the children due to start school in September 2020 that live within 0.5 miles of St Chads, this covers the area that both Weetwood and St Chads schools draw children from, exceeds the available places by across the two schools by almost one form of entry (30 reception places). We are unable to project numbers beyond 2020 as these would be based on children not yet born and would give some uncertainty. Oversubscription within this area has meant some children receiving unreasonable offers of a school place, this is likely to continue and become worse, if no additional places are required.

Concerns relating to general traffic and parking in the area close to St Chads

As part of any process to expand a school, if approved, there must follow a planning process. Within this process the Highways Services team are commissioned to do transport assessments which will assess the problems off site. They will also review parking on site and inform the Built Environments team of how many additional spaces will be required. An option to consider could be a pupil drop off, on site, although a viability study would need to be carried out to determine the options available.

Highways Services will be involved from the outset of the design stage, should the proposal progress to this stage and this will also determine what measures are needed off site and not just outside the school but the surrounding areas i.e. crossings speed bumps etc.

Use the former West Park site or another alternative site in the locality

When planning school places within this area, consideration was given to the former West Park site as an option to create the additional places, however the various options available have been ruled out for the following reasons:

- School planning legislation means the local authority is no longer able to open new provision and therefore any new school would need to be established through the free school process.
- The longer term need for additional places in this area is just less than one form of entry (30 places per year group). The DfE guidance states that to be viable any new free school should be at least two forms of entry (60 places per year group). A free school of this size would put too much provision in the area, would also be very close to other local schools and likely to have a negative impact on these.
- An option to operate St Chads over two sites is not viable due to the DfE not supportive of these types of proposals as this is likely to be seen as new provision and then the free school route as previously stated would need to be followed. In addition the Headteacher and governors of the school would not support this kind of proposal, due to the difficulties this would create trying to manage across two sites, which would need to double up in services. Things such as whole school assemblies, lunch times, play times and whole school events would be separated.
- Alternative sites or other school expansions were ruled out due to site constraints or not being in the area of pressure for places.

Concern over the use of the West Park playing fields

Any scheme to expand St Chads will require the school to have adequate playing fields/sports pitch. Therefore as part of the proposal a section of the West Park playing fields is being proposed to become part of the school and fenced to provide this. During the consultation, an indicative area was shown on a plan to demonstrate how this may be linked. This was adjacent to Northolme Avenue and was approx. 7600sqm. Many concerns have been raised through the consultation period about using the fields and how this will impact on the general public own access of these. The size and position of this was also a concern to many and therefore an alternative option suggested, is to have a shared community/school use of the pitch used by Old Centralians Football Club. This is located to the other side of the school and at the top end of the playing fields. This would need to be fenced and gated for safeguarding, but would also mean that the actual use would not directly impact on the community in terms of being visible to residents, would also allow people to access the fields off Northolme Avenue for play or walking dogs. A discussion with the football club has taken place and the view was positive about shared use. The size of this with standing area is approx. 5500 sqm, so is significantly smaller than the original area proposed. The drainage issues that currently affect this pitch would be addressed as part of the scheme if this option was to progress. A number of respondents suggested this option at the drop-in meetings or via the response forms. Any change of use, would still require FiT to approve.