

Subject:	Possible relocation of West Hove Infant School (Connaught Road site)		
Date of Meeting:	8 November 2021		
Report of:	Executive Director Families, Children and Learning		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Richard Barker	Tel: 01273 290732
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Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT**

- 1.1 The report seeks approval for the relocation of the West Hove Infant School (Connaught Road) classes to the Hove Junior School (Holland Road) site.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the committee note the responses to the public consultation held between 20 September and 25 October 2021.
- 2.2 That the committee agrees to the relocation of the West Hove Infant School (Connaught Road) classes to the Hove Junior School (Holland Road) site with effect from January 2022.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 West Hove Infant School is currently a 6-form entry school located on two sites. The Portland Road site has accommodation for four forms of entry and is predominantly full. The Connaught Road site has capacity for a further four forms of entry, but the Published Admission number is currently two forms of entry.
- 3.2 The governing body of West Hove Infant School have been concerned about the financial impact on the school's budget of maintaining the current provision at Connaught Road for a period of time. Especially as they have encountered a reduction in the number of parents making applications to the school and an increase in parents opting to move their children mid-year when places at other primary schools have become available.
- 3.3 In September 2021 approval was granted by the Children, Young People & Skills committee to undertake a 5-week consultation between 20 September and 25 October. The proposal to be consulted on was the relocation of the West Hove Infant School (Connaught Road) classes to the Hove Junior School (Holland Road) site with effect from January 2022. The reason that the proposal was for the infant school classes to move to the junior school site rather than the other way around is that the Connaught Road site is not large enough to accommodate all the pupils that would eventually be on the site if the proposal was to proceed.

- 3.4 Connaught Road was built as a 4 FE infant school and therefore contains 12 classrooms plus ancillary spaces. The Holland Road site was built as a 4 FE junior school and therefore has 16 classrooms plus ancillary spaces. The proposal will require 14 classrooms plus ancillary space which cannot be provided on the Connaught Road site; however the Holland Road site has 16 classrooms meaning that there is more than sufficient space to accommodate the pupils.
- 3.5 It is recognised that moving pupils mid-year may not seem an ideal time to move the pupils. The reason behind moving so swiftly is the budget position of the infant school. The longer they stay on the Connaught Road site the larger the budget deficit is likely to be and the longer it will take the school to restore a balance budget.
- 3.6 The school believe that they can implement the change mid-academic year without there being any negative impact on the pupils at the school. The schools are already working closely together making plans in readiness for January should it be decided to progress with the proposal. The schools are considering transition activities for the pupils in the same way that they would for pupils moving from the infant school to the junior school. For pupils in Year 2 it will provide them with more time in their new school building and an earlier move than usual.
- 3.7 A total of six public meetings were held, as outlined below:
- | | |
|------------------------|-------|
| Wednesday 22 September | 10:00 |
| Thursday 23 September | 18:00 |
| Tuesday 28 September | 13:30 |
| Thursday 30 September | 10:00 |
| Wednesday 6 October | 18:00 |
| Thursday 7 October | 13:30 |
- 3.8 In addition, a response form was hosted on the council's website <https://consultations.brighton-hove.gov.uk/>.
- 3.9 Themes that emerged through the public meetings included concern that the Council were proposing a move mid-year, the absence of an early indication that proposals were being considered, disappointment that the school location parents had chosen (often based on a feeling when parents had attended the school's open events) was being proposed to move and concern about how pupils will be supported to change location. Some parents stated that they had specifically chosen an infant school for their child.
- 3.10 Questions were asked about the future of the Connaught Road site and the school's future should the move not take place. In addition, there were concerns about the impact on staff at the school, the decision not to relocate the Holland Road pupils to Connaught Road and the practical impact of families who now will need to travel further to school potentially disrupting their own commuting arrangements.

- 3.11 The school staff in attendance at the meetings provided responses to questions about the facilities including the outdoor space and the much-valued elements of both sites currently.
- 3.12 Questions were raised about the proposals in the context of future pupil numbers in the area and the impact on the provision at Holland Road, should the proposed move take place.
- 3.13 Requests were made to visit the proposed site so that parents could gain more of an understanding of how the delivery of education would look. In response it was agreed that opportunities would be made available before the end of the consultation and a FAQ document (Appendix 2) was produced during the consultation period answering common questions that had come up in the public meetings. In total, 29 participants took part in the public meetings.
- 3.14 The response form hosted on the council's consultation portal asked respondents to reply to the question, do you agree or disagree with the proposal to move West Hove Infant School from Connaught Road to Holland Road? In total there were 101 responses.
- 3.15 A total of 76% stated that they strongly or tended to agree with the proposals. The majority of respondents (67%) were parents affected by the proposals. When asked what the reasons for their responses were, the replies included comments such as: "We have 2 children, 1 at Connaught Road and 1 at Holland Road so the school runs will be much easier and less stressful.", "It will be more practical I think for everyone to have these two schools on one place." And "It would make sense as both sites share the same ethos."
- 3.16 22% of the responses strongly or tended to disagree with the proposals and provided reasons with similar feedback to the public meetings. The most common theme was concerns about the timing of the move and the disruption to pupils particularly those in reception. Comments were also expressed about the lack of available schools this will leave in the west hove area and concerns from a local resident that the move will cause increased noise levels on the Holland Road site.
- 3.17 [Statutory guidance](#) on making significant changes to maintained schools states that where the main entrance of the proposed new site for a school would be more than two miles from the main entrance of the current school site the Local Authority can propose the transfer to an entirely new site following a set process.
- 3.18 It is calculated that the walking distance between the main entrances of West Hove Infant (Connaught Road) and Hove Junior (Holland Road) sites is 1.0 mile. The statutory process therefore does not apply.

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 This report seeks approval for the relocation of the West Hove Infant School (Connaught Road) classes onto the Hove Junior School (Holland Road) site.
- 4.2 If no change was proposed the governing body of West Hove Infant school have identified that the school budget would move into a deficit that they would

struggle to clear without a significant impact on the education provision of pupils at the school. It can be expected that this will then create budget pressures in the junior school and a similar impact on the education provision in future years.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 A public consultation ran between 20 September and 25 October 2021 and included a response form hosted on the council's website <https://consultations.brighton-hove.gov.uk/>.
- 5.2 In addition, there were six public events scheduled at various times of the day between 22 September and 7 October. The results of this public consultation have been reported earlier in this report.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The report proposes that the re-location of the West Hove Infant (Connaught Road) site to the Hove Junior School (Holland Road) site takes effect from January 2022.
- 6.2 Whilst the statutory guidance does not require a public consultation a 5-week community engagement event took place between 20 September 2021 – 25 October 2021.
- 6.3 A total of 29 participants took part in the public meetings and 101 responses to the consultation hosted on the council portal.
- 6.4 The responses to the public consultation indicated that overall the majority of respondents supported the proposals.
- 6.5 Both governing bodies are supportive of a proposal that it is expected will help to address the unfavourable budget position for West Hove Infant School forecast if the separate provision remains at the Connaught Road site. Which can be expected to transfer to the junior school over time.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 It has been identified that a move to the Holland Road site would require some minor changes to the outdoor space so that it is suitable for Reception aged children and some modifications to the existing internal space. The associated costs (not expected to exceed £100,000) can be met by funds identified within the education capital budget.
- 7.2 Under the current Local Authority funding formula West Hove Infant School receives an allocation as part of its annual budget to recognise the split site nature of the school. This allocation will be retained under the proposed relocation arrangement as the criteria for the identification of a split site will continue to be met in the local funding formula.

Finance Officer Consulted: Steve Williams

Date: 19/10/21

Legal Implications:

- 7.1 Paragraph 14 of Schedule 2 of the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) Regulations 2013 provides that a Local Authority is only required to go through the statutory process to transfer a school to a new site if the main entrance of the new site is more than two miles from the main entrance of the current site. As the Connaught Road site and Holland Road site are one mile apart there is no need to go through the formal statutory process outlined in paragraph 3.14 above.
- 7.2 DfE Guidance “Making Significant Changes (“Prescribed Alterations”) to maintained schools (2018) makes clear that when making changes outside of the statutory process LA’s are nevertheless required to adhere to the usual requirements of public law and must (i) follow a fair procedure which includes open and fair consultation with parents and other interested parties, (ii) act rationally, and (iii) take into account all relevant and no irrelevant considerations.

Lawyer Consulted: Serena Kynaston

Date: 20.10.2021

Equalities Implications:

- 7.3 The public consultation sought to understand what implications there would be for current or future parents/carers of children who attend West Hove Infant School. The schools are linked and as such parents would expect to attend both the Connaught Road and Holland Road sites as part of their child’s primary school education.
- 7.4 The public consultation identified that there were concerns about the distance families would have to travel, the disruption to pupils some of whom had only started school in September and the quality of the facilities for infant aged pupils at the junior school site. No other specific issues associated with pupils or families with protected characteristics were identified.
- 7.5 The EIA attached outlines the consideration of issues such as families having a changed journey to school and the impact on characteristics such as age and disability. In addition, the move of school may have an impact on who is able to obtain a place at the school, if it became oversubscribed because the places will be allocated on a distance criteria.

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.6 The report proposes a consultation on a change that may reduce the journeys between the infant and junior school sites for families with children at both schools and staff who may need to attend both sites. However it is acknowledged that some families will need to travel further if the school is relocated and this may have a negative impact on the choices some families make in relation to how they travel to school.

Brexit Implications:

- 7.7 There are no Brexit implications in relation to this report.

Any Other Significant Implications:

None

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. EIA
2. Frequently Asked Questions document

Documents in Members' Rooms

Summary of consultation response forms and summaries of each public consultation events

Background Documents

None