



Executive
14th November 2005

**Report from the Director of
Children & Families**

For Action/Information
* delete as necessary

Wards Affected:
ALL

Expression of Interest for a second Academy in Brent

Forward Plan Ref: C&F05/06-021

Above the line EXCEPT for Appendix 4 for which is not for publication as it relates to Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (other than the authority)

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 Attached to this report is an expression of interest for the establishment of a second Academy in Brent to be submitted to the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). If it is approved, the DfES will authorise the commissioning of a feasibility study, which will involve consultation with all interested parties including the local community.

The proposal is to establish by September 2009 an all-through Academy for 1,630 3 – 18 year olds, to be built on the Wembley Park site.

- 1.2 The format of the Expression of Interest is prescribed by the DfES.

2.0 Recommendations

The Executive is recommended

- 2.1 To approve the submission of the Expression of Interest (Annexe 1) for the establishment of an Academy in Wembley.
- 2.2 To approve, in principle, the acquisition of a site for the proposed Academy at Wembley Park Sports Ground from Transport for London (TfL).

- 2.3 To authorise the Director of Children & Families in consultation with the Lead Member to approve minor variations to the Expression of Interest which may be proposed by the DfES and sponsor.

3.0 Detail

3.1 Case for new school

- 3.1.1 There is continuing pressure on secondary school places in Brent and this is increasing. In September 2005 all available places at Year 7 secondary transfer were fully subscribed with the exception of denominational places at Cardinal Hinsley School. Recent arrivals in the Borough have put pressure on places in years 8 to 11 and parents are being offered vacant places in other Boroughs. Pressure on places in the north of the borough is now also spreading to the south of the borough as evidenced by Capital City Academy and Queens Park being oversubscribed by first choices.
- 3.1.2 All the indices point to an increasing demand for places in the borough. Individual schools are becoming more popular, there are decreasing exports to and increasing imports from neighbouring boroughs, and significant housing growth is creating an additional demand for secondary school places. There are also increasing numbers of new arrivals to the Borough from elsewhere in the UK from Europe, Africa and Asia.
- 3.1.3 A comprehensive report on the need for secondary places commissioned in January 2005 has estimated that by 2014 an additional 14 forms of entry (2100 places) will be required to meet the increased demand. It is expected that the demand will be greater if all the planned housing developments materialise. The report is attached at Annexe 2.
- 3.1.4 Work is underway to review the demographic trends in the primary sector; taking the raw data, which is still being interrogated, early indications point to an overall shortage of the equivalent of 9 forms of entry (1890 places) across the Borough.
- 3.1.5 The extra 900 (6 forms of entry) secondary places and 420 (2 forms of entry) primary places which could be provided by a second Academy would play an essential role in meeting this new demand in addition to the necessary expansion of a number of existing schools and the possible provision of another new school in a further planning period.

3.2 Choice of Academy for the new school

- 3.2.1 Following the establishment of a case for the provision of a new school there are two options for its procurement under the Education Act 2002 and Government policy. One option is to submit an expression of interest to the DfES for the provision of an Academy. The second option is to establish an open competition for any provider to establish a new school. As part of this competition the Council could propose the creation of a new community school, the DfES could propose an Academy and any other interested Religious, Voluntary or Parent group could propose a new foundation school. The winner of the competition would be decided by the Schools Organisation Committee not the

Council. The Council is represented on one of the five representative voting groups of the Committee. Voting on any proposal needs to be unanimous otherwise the proposal is referred for decision to an Adjudicator.

3.2.2 It is proposed to choose option 1 for the provision of a new school for the reasons set out in 3.2.3.

3.2.3 In the context of a competition the Council does not have the Capital resources to propose a Community school (estimated cost £25m to £30m). On the other hand, the construction costs of an Academy would be met by the DfES. Further information on this point is given under financial implications. The Council already has successful experience of working in partnership with the DfES and a Sponsor in establishing the Capital City Academy. It is in the best interests of the Council to work in partnership to provide a new school rather than opening up a competition to a possible provider who may not wish to work in close partnership. There are natural advantages for the school and community if the Council engages early into a relationship of trust, with the Sponsor based on deeply understood values. Further, the preferred model for the provision of new schools in London for which the DfES has indicated it will make resources available is an Academy. Local authorities are asked to provide the site and the total capital costs of the Academy are provided by the Government and the Sponsor who contributes up to £2m of the capital costs.

3.2.4 The Teacher Association Panel in Brent has indicated that they are opposed to the concept of Academies in principle because they regard them as private schools. The Teacher Associations on the panel do not accept the Government's or Council's position that they are state schools which can have a collaborative relationship with the Council and other schools in Brent. The Associations opposed the establishment of the Capital City Academy and discount the evidence of the successful collaborative relationship the Council has with Capital City Academy. The views of the Teacher Associations have been taken into account but their comments ignore the positive benefits of an Academy set out in section 3.3 and do not outweigh the arguments for the need of a new Academy. There are many constituencies in Brent who will have views on new schools: parents, young people, existing schools and teaching professionals among others. There is a particular concern expressed by Brent parents at year 7 transfer who find that available choices of secondary schools is restricted by shortage of places. A number of secondary headteachers in Brent while recognising the need for a new school and the Government's policy on Academies, are very concerned that many of their schools are in need of replacement and renewal and will look unattractive to parents compared with a brand new Academy. It is extremely disappointing that Brent has not been placed in an early Building Schools for the Future programme so that the provision of new school buildings would be on the same timescale as the proposals for an Academy. Representations have been made to the DfES on this issue. As one of the criteria for early entry to the Building Programme is poor examination results it is

felt that Brent schools are being penalised for their success in improving results.

3.3 Character of the Academy

The sponsor Andrew Rosenfeld has been introduced to the Council by the DfES. His aim is for the Academy to have a strong community focus and the proposed features of the Academy are in accord with the Council's ambitions for successful collaborative schools in Brent. The Governing Body of the Academy will have representation from the Council. The curriculum will be based on the five outcomes of the Children Act so that students can achieve at a high level, have good health and a safe environment, make a positive contribution to the community and society and have the skills, knowledge and attributes to enter further and higher education and employment. The specialism of the Academy will be Citizenship. There will be no selection and the Academy will serve a catchment area (Annexe 3) containing some of the most disadvantaged communities in Brent. The sponsor is proposing an all-through school (two forms of entry at primary level and six forms of entry at secondary) because this will best enable the essential partnership with families and continuity and progression for students. There will be appropriate governance and management arrangements made for the nursery, primary and secondary phases of the proposed Academy. Parents will be well represented on the Governing Body.

It is proposed that the new Academy will play a full part in Brent's strong partnership of schools which has its roots in the Excellence in Cities programme. The Capital City Academy's role in the partnership is a model for this.

3.4 Siting of the Academy

- 3.4.1 The Council is responsible for the provision of the site for the proposed Academy and a study has been undertaken to identify the most suitable site in Brent. A confidential report at Annexe 4 summarises the options considered.
- 3.4.2 The preferred site for a second Academy would be the Wembley Park Sports Ground which will need to be acquired by the Council from Transport for London.
- 3.4.3 Concerns have been expressed by the Teacher Associations and others about the suitability of the site on account of its proximity to another secondary school, the possibility of traffic congestion and loss of recreational space.
- 3.4.4 Wembley has been chosen as a site because of the projected 4,000 - 8000 new homes associated with the Wembley Regeneration Area. The site also has excellent public transport links for the proposed catchment area to the south and east of Wembley. It is a very prominent site and is considered by the DfES to be one of the best sites they have seen for proposed Academies in London. There are very few available sites for a new secondary school in Brent and a

detailed appraisal has shown the Wembley Park site to be the best. Depending on the feasibility study and design options to be explored, as much as 85% of the site can be retained for external landscaping access and sport/recreational use. Student access to the Academy from the south and east is not expected to conflict with student traffic access to the neighbouring secondary school.

- 3.4.5 The site is currently underused as a sport and recreational facility and the establishment of the Academy will enable it to be used fully by the community.
- 3.4.6 If the expression of interest is approved the feasibility study will cover in detail the issues of traffic impact and community use.

4.0 Legal Implications

- 4.1 The characteristics of an Academy, previously referred to as a City Academy, as set out at the Education Act 1996 section 482 are that it is an independent school which provides a balanced and broadly based curriculum but with an emphasis on a particular subject area or particular subject areas specified in the agreement between the Secretary of State and the sponsor. The Academy must provide the education for pupils of different abilities who are wholly or mainly drawn from the area in which the school is situated.
- 4.2 Arrangements for the governance of the school covering such matters as admissions, curriculum, capital expenditure, staffing structure, pupil discipline, special educational needs etc would be determined in discussions between the sponsor, the Secretary of State and Brent LEA and would be set out in the funding agreement between the Secretary of State and the sponsor.
- 4.3 At this stage, Members are being asked to express an interest in a second academy within the borough. Detailed consultation will take place at subsequent stages of the development of the proposals. As the Council is a partner in these discussions and is contributing the site it will need to be satisfied that the details in the funding agreement are in accord with Council policies and strategy before consenting to the transfer of the land.
- 4.4 Members are also being asked to agree in principle to the acquisition of a site for the scheme. If the scheme is progressed then members will need to formally agree any site acquisition and will be given all relevant financial and other information to enable them to take the decision. Any change of use and/or development of the site would require planning permission in the normal way.

5.0 Diversity Implications

- 5.1 The Academy is needed to meet demand for extra school places from Brent's diverse community. Academies are intended to serve areas of social disadvantage and this factor is reflected in the proposed catchment area of the Academy. If the Expression of Interest is approved a full Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken as part of the Feasibility Study.

6.0 Financial Implications

- 6.1 The capital costs of the Academy will be provided by the Sponsor and DfES. The Council is required to provide the site. The site will need to be acquired from Transport for London and the London Development Agency is negotiating its acquisition. Site values are commercially sensitive, and still to be finally established. It is expected that the purchase of the site will be funded from existing Section 106 resources.
- 6.2 There is another report on tonight's agenda, on the Capital Programme. This sets out that the current programme for 2005/2006 to 2008/2009 is fully committed, and a number of pressures remain un-funded. If this Expression of Interest were not to be agreed by Members or subsequently fails to succeed the ability of the Council to find the £25m on offer to build the school from its own resources is very unlikely. It would need a mixture of drastic reductions in the programme elsewhere, plus very high levels of borrowing (£25m would generate annual financing costs of around £2.5m per annum), which would not be affordable within the current budget and prudential guidelines. This also does not take into account the further spending required to deliver a much higher level of additional places, across the Borough.
- 6.3 The revenue costs of running the Academy, excluding financing charges, will be met directly by Central Government.

Background Papers:

- i) DfES Guidance on the establishment of Academies
- ii) Arrangement on Review of Secondary Places

Contact Officers:

John Christie, Director of Children and Families, Chesterfield House, 9 Park Lane, Wembley Middlesex HA9 7RW, T: 020 8937 3130,
E: john.christie@brent.gov.uk

Nitin Parshotam, Head of Asset Management, Chesterfield House, 9 Park Lane, Wembley Middlesex HA97RW, T: 020 8937 3080,
E: nitin.parshotam@brent.gov.uk

Director of Children & Families
John Christie