

Special Meeting of the Children and Families Scrutiny Panel

Thursday, 8th December 2005

Expression of Interest for a Second Academy in Brent

Specified reasons for call-in of decisions and response by the Lead Member for Children and Families:

1. Opposition to the unnecessary building on Green Open Space

There are already buildings and hardstanding on the site. The majority of the site will be available as open space. (Section 3.4 of the Executive Report).

2. The loss of an actively used sports ground also makes this a poor site

The sports facilities of the Academy will be available for community use (Section 3.4 of the Executive Report). The site is of good size, is prominent and has good public transport accessibility.

3. Inadequate consideration has been given to the Palace of Arts and Industry site- which is the right size, would be more convenient to bus routes for much of the proposed catchment, and is nearer the large-scale new Housing development. It would provide a safer route and reduce additional traffic in an already heavily congested area.

This site is adjacent to the stadium and arena and is appropriate for development related to the Wembley regeneration. It would be too costly to acquire. The Wembley Park site is as convenient for bus routes. The issues of traffic management also apply to this site. It is further from the Tube station. Routing of bus routes would be discussed with Transport for London.

4. Request for the Executive to openly consult local residents based on BOTH options and progress the favoured one

The provision of the Academy is a strategic decision for the whole Borough. If a feasibility study is approved by the DfES the proposed site will be the subject of full local consultation and will be subject to full planning procedures.

5. That the chosen site is totally unsuitable given the traffic congestion already in the area

See comment on point 3 and Section 3.4 of the report covering a traffic impact study as part of the overall feasibility study.

6. The chosen site is completely wrong for the catchment area and would involve very young children having to travel ridiculous distances to attend school

The site is close to the major new housing for Wembley and the Academy will meet excess demand for primary places in the Wembley area.

7. The concept of a City Academy is against the ethos of schools in Brent

The ethos envisaged for the new school is fully compatible with the collaborative ethos of Brent schools. The new Academy would participate fully in Brent's Excellence in Cities Partnership and the 14/19 Forum following the good practice of Brent's first Academy-Capital City Academy. As with all Brent schools the Academy would follow the Code of Practice on Admissions. (Section 3.3 of the report).

8. The expansion of existing schools is not given sufficient priority compared to the desperate rush to create another City Academy

The report makes clear that there is a parallel need to expand existing secondary schools to meet forecast demand for places. The planning is happening at the same time as the planning for the Academy. Forecasts demonstrate that a new school is needed now in addition to the expansion of the existing schools and not to progress this would be irresponsible.

9. City Academies remain unproven as a means of providing education

Capital City Academy is oversubscribed and popular with parents. Monitoring Ofsted inspections have shown it to be making good progress. Value added indicators of student progress are good. Taken as a whole examination performance for Academies in 2005 show progress. We intend to build on the good experiences of Capital City Academy.

10. The concept of an all through 3 to 18 school is a drastic departure from existing arrangements

The All-Through proposal is an innovation and offers parents wider choice. Three Academies have been established as all-through and evidence from Europe shows such schools can be successful.

11. The very close proximity of the selected site to other schools is inappropriate

The compact nature of Brent and the extremely limited availability of sites mean that such proximity is a necessity. Schools can

work successfully close together. Proximity allows schools to develop partnerships and joint projects, to share facilities and to provide a richer curriculum offer.

12. The other potential sites for a new school have not been given proper consideration by Brent Council

The report describes the consideration given to other sites. All options have been assessed.

13. The merits of the potential sponsor need to be the subject of scrutiny.

The Sponsor has been assessed by the DfES and interviewed by the Leader and Lead Member. Section 3.3 of the report states how his vision fits well with the vision of the Council for schools. The Sponsor will take part in the consultation on the proposal if the feasibility study is approved.