

Item No. 5.1	Classification: Open	Date: 26.11.03	Meeting Name Council Assembly
Report title:		Feasibility Study re: New Boys' School on Waverley Lower Site	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		Primarily Peckham Rye, East Dulwich and Nunhead	
From:		Strategic Director of Education and Culture (Acting)	

RECOMMENDATION

1. That Council Assembly receive the feasibility study into the proposal to establish a small boys' school on the Waverley Lower Site, with the intention of federating with Waverley School under a single Head and Governing Body, prior to its consideration by the Executive on 2 December 2003.

BACKGROUND

2. On 25 March 2003, Executive considered the outcome of a scrutiny of secondary school provision in the East Dulwich and Nunhead area by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Education, Youth and Leisure Scrutiny Sub-Committee. The Sub-Committee had considered the case for new school provision in the area, particularly in the light of an energetic campaign by a group of local parents – the Eden Group. Following examination of the issues, The Sub-Committee identified two options for further consideration. These were:

Option A – to establish a small boys' school on the Waverley Lower school site with the intention of federating under a single head and governing body with Waverley School.

Option B – to change Waverley School from a girls' school to a mixed school, expanding the roll and establishing post-16 provision.

3. The Sub-Committee recognised that Option B would be vigorously challenged by the governing body of Waverley School. On the other hand, Option A would require support from both Waverley Governors and residents and that without this will, the option was unlikely to succeed.
4. Executive resolved that Option A in the report should be pursued i.e. to establish a small boys' school on the Waverley Lower School site with the intention of federating under a single head and governing body with Waverley School. Executive decided that in order to make a success of this option, a feasibility study should be undertaken to include testing the will of the Council, the Governors of Waverley School, the Eden Group and residents. It was further agreed that the outcomes of this feasibility study would be reported to the Council Assembly prior to consideration by Executive.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

5. The Feasibility Study is attached to this report. The Study considers the relevant issues and can be summarised as follows:

Summary of Feasibility Study

Site and Buildings – Although a restricted site, Waverley Lower could accommodate a secondary school of three or four forms of entry and meet DfES accommodation standards - although external areas would fall below Government guidelines. This could be achieved by refurbishing the existing main building on the site and adding new accommodation of up to five storeys. Sharing of facilities with Waverley School – particularly for sports and a sixth form would be advantageous.

Funding – The cost would be considerable – in the region of £21M to £31M based on initial indicative estimates, with some £10M to £11M if a sixth form were provided at Waverley. These costs are not based on scheme proposals and should therefore be taken as an indicative guide. They contain contingency provision and include an allowance for future inflation, assuming a start on site in 2005. Such funding would need to be sought from the new DfES Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme or from the Academies programme if that option were pursued.

Need for School Places – Projections contained in the Council's draft School Organisation Plan 2003-08 envisage a shortfall in secondary places from 2006/07 which this new provision would be able to address. There is also evidence of substantial numbers of children from local Southwark primary schools transferring at age 11 to schools in Lewisham and elsewhere who could otherwise attend a local Southwark secondary school. What is not clear from the evidence is whether this local demand for places would be met by the proposed provision of a new boys' school in federation with Waverley. Account also needs to be taken of current proposals in Lewisham for new secondary provision.

The Education Issues – A school of three or four forms of entry would not normally be considered an effective size for a new school in terms of providing breadth and diversity of curriculum. The principle of federation is therefore central to the proposal as this could be used constructively to address the problems of small size with shared use of specialist facilities and joint teaching at sixth form level and for certain subjects at KS4. These arrangements would need to ensure the basic single-sex ethos of the two schools was protected. At a practical level, they would need to address the logistical and organisational difficulties of managing joint arrangements across two sites.

Timing – New statutory arrangements for establishing an additional school were introduced by the Education Act 2002. These now require a competition stage whereby interested parties can bring forward their own proposals for a new school. Taking these requirements into account, together with the actual implementation of the proposals, the Study concludes that an opening of the school in September 2006 is possible, although 2007 may be more feasible. It is however very clear that the Eden Group is seeking implementation at the earliest opportunity.

Acceptability – Consultation with the Waverley governors, the Eden group and parents of local primary school children have shown that firm support exists for the proposal. Indeed, Waverley Governors and Eden have produced a joint

document in support of federation and this is attached as Appendix 4 of the Feasibility Study. A wider range of views was apparent at the Community Councils (Dulwich and Nunhead & Peckham Rye) to which the findings of the Study were presented.

6. The Feasibility Study concludes that on each of the points it has addressed, the proposal is feasible – although further work will be needed to address fully some of the issues involved. These include:
 - securing the funding required for the level of investment needed
 - being satisfied that a new boys' school and Waverley in federation would command the confidence of local parents
 - further clarification on how federation would work in practice, avoiding the logistical difficulties normally associated with split site schools
 - clarifying the implementation timetable.
7. It is clear from the Feasibility exercise that there is support both from Eden and from the Governing Body of Waverley School for the federation option. A meeting attended by a number of local parents of primary aged children has also demonstrated support. In this respect, the terms of the Executive decision of 25 March 2003 in testing the will of these groups have been met. Executive may therefore consider that the proposal should now be progressed further.

Policy Implications

8. The proposal is in line with the Council's overall policy in raising standards in schools and with the new secondary school strategy. It follows a substantial review by the Education, Youth and Leisure Scrutiny Committee. It is in line with the conclusions of the draft School Organisation Plan 2003-08 (SOP) and particularly with the following propositions:
 - *that the School Organisation Plan establishes a framework that encourages all schools in Southwark to become centres of excellence, including where appropriate the introduction of academies and specialist schools*
 - *that school provision is planned to take account of an increasing proportion of Southwark parents seeking Southwark schools for their children*

The Feasibility Study reports that the federated schools have the potential to meet a local demand from those who are currently transferring from Southwark primary schools to schools outside the borough.

- *that the Council aims for a broad balance between the numbers of boys and girls in mixed schools.*

A major problem noted in the SOP is the substantial imbalance between boys and girls in most mixed secondary schools. A major reason for this is that across Southwark there are four single-sex girls' schools but only one boys' school. A proposal to establish a new boys' school would address this issue directly.

- *that 16-19 provision in Southwark is offered to meet a rising staying-on rate on the basis of diversity within a coherent framework, agreed by the Learning and Skills Council after consultation with school and FE partners in Southwark's 14-19 Forum*

Effect of proposed change on those affected

9. The implementation of this proposal would need to take full account of the views of parents and pupils at Waverley School, particularly those who have chosen Waverley because of its single-sex ethos. The Feasibility Study recognises that federation will have an impact on the ethos of traditional single-sex education.
10. The proposal, and the scale of capital investment linked to it, would provide an opportunity to provide a set of premises that are fully accessible to all, constituting a firm basis for an inclusive approach to education provision. The opportunity would also be taken to provide for the needs of the local community. These are aspects that will need to be further developed as the proposal is progressed.

Consultation and the Next Stages

11. Any proposal for change to school organisation requires a statutory process. This is set out under Issue 5 of the Feasibility Study and is summarised in Appendix 3 of the Study. The first stage would be formal consultation with all those parties involved. This would be a much larger process than that undertaken under the Feasibility Study. It would include parents at Waverley and at local primary schools and would involve consultative sessions at a number of local primary schools in order to obtain as wide a range of contributions as possible. Others included in the consultation would be:
 - governors and staff of Waverley School
 - primary schools and other secondary schools in Southwark
 - adjoining LEAs
 - trade unions
 - the appropriate Community Councils
 - the Learning and Skills Council (LSC)
12. This process would provide a further opportunity to assess the level of support for this solution. At the same time, further exploratory work could be undertaken on those matters listed in para. 6 above. It would be necessary to give sufficient time for effective consultation arrangements to be carried out together with the necessary publicity. It is therefore proposed that the main consultation be carried out over the first half of the Spring Term 2004. The result of this consultation would be reported back to Executive in March 2004 for a decision on whether or not to proceed to the next stage.
13. If Executive decides, in the light of consultation, to proceed with the proposal, the Council must then publish a statutory notice proposing the opening of the new school and inviting interested parties to bring forward proposals for the new school. Responses to this could include proposals for a new foundation or voluntary school or for an academy. (It should be noted that legislation does not permit federation between an academy and an LEA maintained school and therefore both Waverley and the new school must be of similar status for full federation to take place - although a more informal partnership could still be applied). The Council's response to any proposals received plus its own proposals are then reported to the School Organisation Committee. This Committee gives its view on the proposals and these will then be forwarded to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills for a final decision.

Resource implications

14. The main resource implication will be the capital cost of implementing the proposal. As referred to in para. 5 above and under Issue 2 of the Feasibility Study, the capital cost of £21M to £31M (and potential costs of £10M to £11M at waverley for sixth form provision) would need to be sought from DfES. Funding could be made available either from the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme or as part of the Academies programme. Informal discussions with DfES officers are in hand.
15. The immediate cost of the consultation process as outlined in paras. 11 and 12 above can be met from existing revenue resources.

REASONS FOR LATENESS

16. This report is late so that all the outcomes of the consultation undertaken thus far could be incorporated within the Feasibility Study, and so that Council Assembly could be provided with the most complete commentary possible on those findings.

REASONS FOR URGENCY

17. This report is urgent because it has to be considered by Council Assembly prior to a decision by Executive on 2nd December 2003. Following consideration by the Executive the proposal will be subject to consultation in January and February 2004. The Executive agreed that Council Assembly should receive the report prior to its consideration, if the report is not considered in November 2003; the next scheduled meeting is not until the end of January 2004. If the Executive decision were to be postponed, the timetable proposed for further and formal consultation would be delayed by up to two months. There is considerable interest from the local community, as represented by both the EDEN group and Waverley School governors, in moving forward with a proposal to enhance secondary school provision in the area as swiftly possible.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Feasibility Study – Secondary School Provision in East Dulwich Draft School Organisation Plan 2003- 08	CEA@Southwark, John Smith House, Walworth Road London SE17 1JL	John Elliott 020 7525 5143

APPENDIX A

Audit Trail

Lead Officer	Michael Daniels, Assistant Director Management Services
Report Author	John Elliott, Head of Asset Management
Version	Seconddraft

Dated	17.11.03	
Key Decision?		
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / EXECUTIVE MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Borough Solicitor and Secretary	Yes	No
Executive Member		
Date final report sent to Constitutional Support Services	17.11.03	