

Report of Director of Children and Families

Report to Executive Board

Date: 24 June 2020

Subject: Outcome of consultation and request to approve funding to permanently increase learning places at Leeds West Academy from September 2022



Are specific electoral wards affected? If yes, name(s) of ward(s): Bramley & Stanningley	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Has consultation been carried out?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Will the decision be open for call-in?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, access to information procedure rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary

1. Main issues

- This report contains details of a proposal brought forward by The White Rose Academies Trustees, working in partnership with Leeds City Council, to meet the local authority’s duty to ensure sufficiency of school places. The changes that are proposed form prescribed alterations under Department for Education advice for academy trusts, Making Significant Changes to an Open Academy (November 2019). For prescribed alterations for maintained schools the Local Authority would be the decision maker, but for expansions relating to Academies the Trust Board is the decision maker with regards to the proposal. However, as the scheme is being funded by the Local Authority, Executive Board would need to grant provisional approval for authority to spend (ATS) to deliver the proposed permanent expansion at Leeds West Academy.
- A consultation on a proposal to expand Leeds West Academy from a capacity of 1200 to 1500 students by increasing the admission number in year 7 from 240 to 300 with effect from September 2022 took place between 27 January and 1 March 2020.
- A total of 87 consultation responses were received of which 35.5% either strongly or somewhat supported the proposal. 60% strongly opposed or somewhat opposed the proposal and 4.5% neither supported nor opposed the proposal. Further details about the responses and issues identified by stakeholders and respondents during the consultation period are detailed in the main body of this report.

- Following the consultation period the White Rose Academies Trust Board met on 14 May 2020 to consider the outcome of the consultation that had taken place and approved the proposal to expand the school.

2. Best Council Plan Implications (see the [latest version of the Best Council Plan](#))

This proposal offers good value for money through its capacity to support achievement of the Best Council Plan outcome that states ‘we want everyone in Leeds to do well at all levels of learning and have the skills they need for life’.

This proposal is being brought forward to meet the LA’s statutory duty to ensure that there are sufficient school places for all the children and young people in Leeds. Providing places close to where children live allows improved accessibility to local and desirable school places, is an efficient use of resources and reduces the risk of non-attendance.

This proposal contributes to the city’s aspiration to be the best council, the best city in which to grow up and a child friendly city. The delivery of pupil places through the Learning Places Programme is one of the baseline entitlements of a child friendly city.

Providing additional good quality school places in an already established school, in an area where demand for places is increasing, will contribute towards the achievement of the Child Friendly City aim of ‘improving educational attainment and closing achievement gaps for children and young people vulnerable to poor learning outcomes’. In turn, by helping young people into adulthood, to develop life skills, this proposal provides underlying support for the council’s ambition to produce a strong economy and a compassionate city.

A good quality school place also contributes towards delivery of targets within the Children and Young People’s Plan such as our obsession to improve achievement, attainment and attendance at school.

3. Resource Implications

The funding provided by Central Government for this size of expansion is approximately £5.269m, however, early feasibility indicates the final cost is likely to be lower than this amount. The construction cost estimate of the proposed scheme will be funded from the Learning Places Programme, primarily through Basic Need Grant. However, the precise funding package would be confirmed at the design freeze stage, and detailed in the relevant Design and Cost report (DCR).

The proposed scheme would be subject to planning permission which would need to be granted prior to the commencement of construction works and would be subject to relevant stakeholder consultation.

Ahead of the proposed permanent expansion, some works are required at the academy to support a bulge of 2FE for the academic year 2020/21. Should approval be given for authority to spend with regards to the permanent expansion, these works of £110k will form part of the permanent solution.

Recommendations

Executive Board is requested to;

- a) Note the outcome of consultation on the proposal to permanently expand Leeds West Academy from a capacity of 1200 to 1500 students by increasing the admission number in year 7 from 240 to 300 with effect from September 2022.
- b) Grant provisional approval for authority to spend (ATS) £5.269m to deliver the proposed permanent expansion at Leeds West Academy. Note that early feasibility indicates the final cost is likely to be lower than this amount.
- c) Note that implementation of the proposals is subject to funding being agreed based on the outcome of further detailed design work and planning applications as indicated at section 4.4 of this report and that the proposal has been brought forward in time for places to be delivered for 2022.
- d) Note the responsible officer for implementation of the capital budget is the Head of Learning Systems; and
- e) Note that the White Rose Academies Trustees intend to self-deliver the build scheme.

1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report contains details of a proposal brought forward to meet the Local Authority's duty to ensure a sufficiency of school places, which supports the achievement of the Best Council priority to improve educational attainment and close achievement gaps. This report describes the outcome of a consultation regarding a proposal to expand secondary school provision at Leeds West Academy and seeks a decision to fund delivery of a scheme to create the additional learning places required.

2. Background information

- 2.1 The West (secondary planning) area referred to in this report includes the following secondary schools/academies (Co-op Academy Priesthorpe, Crawshaw Academy, Dixon's Unity Academy, Leeds West Academy, Pudsey Grangefield School and The Farnley Academy).
- 2.2 The increase in the birth rate over the last decade in Leeds, which prompted the need to embark on a programme of primary provision expansion, is now beginning to feed through into the secondary sector with demand anticipated to grow markedly across most parts of the city until at least 2023-24. Current demographic data suggests that up to an additional 33 forms of entry (FE) of year 7 capacity may be required across the city over future years, with up to 5FE of additional year 7 capacity needed across the West of Leeds.
- 2.3 Ongoing discussions with schools across the West have established that permanent expansion of existing schools is the preferred approach to meet all of the additional mainstream need in this area.
- 2.4 Over the last few years a number of secondary schools in the West have admitted additional pupils, above their Published Admission Number (PAN), in response to a rising demand for year 7 places. As the number of secondary-aged students living

in the West is expected to increase further over future years, additional permanent places are now required to address the growing need.

- 2.5 The proposal to expand Leeds West Academy has been developed through discussions between Leeds City Council, The White Rose Academies Trustees and the principal of Leeds West Academy. The proposal is part of a planned approach to address future demand for places in West Leeds and it is anticipated that plans to progress expansions of other local schools will be brought forward in the near future.
- 2.6 The trustee's consultation on the proposal took place between 27 January and 1 March 2020 to seek the views of parents, local residents and other stakeholders. To maximise stakeholder engagement a variety of consultation methods were used, including email communications and an online survey. Informal drop-in sessions were also held at Leeds West Academy (for staff, parents/carers, residents and other interested stakeholders) which offered attendees an opportunity to discuss the proposal with the trustees and school leadership team of Leeds West Academy as well as Leeds City Council representatives. 5,000 leaflets advertising the consultation were delivered to residents in the close vicinity of Leeds West Academy. Details of the consultation and drop in sessions were also advertised in The Squeaker which is delivered to homes across West Leeds and in the West Leeds Dispatch (an online distribution). The academy informed parents and carers of existing pupils in writing. Details about the consultation were sent via email to primary and secondary schools in the area to share with their parents and communities. Information was also shared via email with local ward members, MP's and other stakeholders. Information was available via the academy's website, Leeds City Council website and through various social media platforms. A targeted Facebook advertising campaign was also undertaken to reach people living within postcode areas located across West Leeds.

3. Main issues

- 3.1 There is an identified need for additional secondary places in the West area of Leeds to meet anticipated demand over future years. Leeds West Academy is popular and consistently over-subscribed. The school is located in an area of high demographic need and the proposed 60 additional permanent year 7 places would address some of the anticipated future local pressure in West Leeds.
- 3.2 Leeds West Academy was rated 'Good' by Ofsted at its most recent inspection in May 2019 and is popular with local families. The principal and trustees are confident that if the academy were to expand, existing high standards of teaching and learning could be maintained, resulting in improved outcomes for a greater number of local children.
- 3.3 A total of 87 survey responses were received during the consultation period of which 31 (35.5%) either strongly supported or somewhat supported the proposal to permanently expand Leeds West Academy, 52 (60%) either strongly opposed or somewhat opposed the proposal and a further 4 (4.5%) neither supported nor opposed. The majority of respondents who either strongly or somewhat opposed the proposal were local residents.
- 3.4 A copy of the responses received can be requested from the Sufficiency and Participation Team at educ.school.organisation@leeds.gov.uk
- 3.5 A summary of the views expressed by the 31 survey respondents who strongly or who somewhat supported the proposal is listed below;

- Most comments received recognised that an expansion at Leeds West Academy is needed in order to address the rising demand for secondary places in this area.
- Some comments mentioned that an expansion could have benefits to the school in terms of budget and/or improved facilities.
- Some respondents felt that increasing the number of places would give local parents a better chance of gaining a place at their preferred school.
- Some comments noted that adding capacity to an existing school that is improving its quality of education would be a sensible solution to accommodate the anticipated growth in need for secondary school places in the local area.

3.6 A summary of concerns raised by respondents and responses to those concerns is given below;

3.7 **Concern about potential negative impact on traffic and highways:** comments received expressed concern that there would be increased traffic on roads around the school, some respondents also went on to mention concern related to parking on streets close to the Academy and concern over road safety.

Response: If the proposed expansion were to progress a full traffic assessment and a transport statement, based on the results of surveys commissioned for this project, would be produced to reflect and support the planning application process. This would include an assessment of current highways issues and modelling what the impact would be of additional traffic in the area. LCC encourages sustainable travel and although it is expected that the majority of children would walk to school any planning application would need to demonstrate how any issues resulting from an increase in traffic could be mitigated. Specifically these would look at concerns raised by residents and parents, such as parking around the school and safe walking routes. An updated school Travel Plan would also be required, and the provision of improved cycle facilities and electric parking points to support sustainable travel would be considered in light of the Council's commitment to carbon reduction. The academy promotes walking and cycling to school for both students and staff. The White Rose Academies Trust has a cycle to work scheme for employees and the academy has a reward scheme for students which includes bikes as rewards to encourage cycling to school. The academy also takes part in the annual national "Walk to School" week. The principal and senior leadership team are keen to develop further initiatives and have also been working towards securing the Eco-Schools National Award for 2020/21. The increase in pupil numbers would happen gradually over a 5 year period so the full impact of increased numbers of pupils walking to and from school would not take place suddenly. Although there will be an increase in students from year 7 to 11 of 300 pupils it should be noted that the academy was until recently operating as an 11-18 provision and there has been a reduction in the overall school population due to the change in age range to 11-16. The academy has previously been operating with up to 190 students in sixth form meaning the net gain in the school population will actually be closer to 100 pupils.

3.8 **Concern about potential increase in anti-social behaviour:** a minority of the comments received expressed concerns over behaviour of students in the local area around school with regards to issues such as swearing, causing damage, litter and being rude to residents, which they anticipate would become worse with an increase in student numbers.

Response: Leeds West Academy has high expectations in terms of how its students should conduct themselves and the senior leadership team is confident

that the proposed expansion would not lead to an increase in anti-social behaviour from its students within the local community. The academy believes that appropriate measures are in place to work with the local community on any issues of concern that may emerge with regards to this. Conduct within the school and the wider community is a key part of the curriculum and is supported and informed by well-established links with both local feeder primary schools and a variety of external organisations including youth workers and social workers working with young people in the Bramley area. The academy has an experienced pastoral team who oversee students' needs, liaising with families and members of the community as necessary. If the proposed expansion were to progress the levels of staff in the pastoral and behaviour support team would also increase.

Leeds West Academy has a successful Student Parliament, who have established various groups including a "Department for Environment" with a focus on improving the environment across the Bramley area. They have taken part in community activities such as the recent 'anti-litter campaign'.

In line with many other high schools across the city, Leeds West Academy has appointed a Safer Schools Police Officer (SSPO) who will start with the Academy in September 2020. The SSPO will provide an additional layer of support and guidance for young people and work with school staff to enhance students' awareness and acceptance of their responsibilities and rights as citizens and members of the community.

- 3.9 **Concern about potential negative impact on teaching and learning:** comments received expressed concerns that the standards of education and teaching might be compromised were the academy to increase in size. Staffing levels may not be adequate and class sizes may increase.

Response: Were the academy to expand, additional teaching and support staff would be required over the five year period that it would take for all year groups (years 7 to 11) to increase in size to 300 places. The principal and Local Accountability Board are committed to maintaining the current high standards and feel that due to the positive reputation of the academy they would be able to continue to attract high quality staff. The principal and senior leadership team are confident that the proposed expansion would not have a negative impact on students and anticipate that with an increase in pupil numbers they would be able to enhance their curriculum offer, providing more choice for students and be more effective at meeting students' needs. The principal has confirmed that there are no plans to increase class size as a result of the proposed expansion.

- 3.10 **Concern about the proposed number of students:** comments received expressed concerns that the proposed number of students was too large and that there could be overcrowding which would put extra pressure on certain facilities within school –i.e. dining area and science labs.

Response: An initial assessment has identified that there will likely be a need for additional classrooms, science labs and dining provision in order for 300 pupils per year group to be accommodated. We have agreed with the academy to fund further feasibility work to investigate what additional accommodation is required and inform how this could be delivered. The academy has commissioned further detailed work and will provide this to inform the proposed design. Were the academy expansion to go ahead then the proposed design would address these issues and ensure that there was adequate provision of all necessary facilities for 1500 pupils.

- 3.11 For expansions relating to Academies the Trust Board is the decision maker with regards to the proposal. Following the consultation period the White Rose

Academies Trust Board met on 14 May 2020 to consider the outcome of the consultation that had taken place and approved the proposal to expand the school.

4. Corporate considerations

4.1 Consultation and engagement

4.1.1 The process in respect of this proposal has been managed in accordance with the relevant legislation and with local good practice.

4.1.2 The trustee's consultation on the proposal took place between 27 January and 1 March 2020 to seek the views of parents, local residents and other stakeholders. To maximise stakeholder engagement a variety of consultation methods were used, including email communications and an online survey. Informal drop-in sessions were held at Leeds West Academy to provide an opportunity for parents, carers, students, school staff, local residents and other interested stakeholders to ask questions and discuss the proposal with the trustees and school leadership team of Leeds West Academy as well as Leeds City Council representatives. Information about the consultation was distributed widely. 5,000 leaflets advertising the consultation were delivered to residents in the close vicinity of Leeds West Academy. Details of the consultation and drop in sessions were also advertised in The Squeaker which is delivered to homes across West Leeds and in the West Leeds Dispatch (an online distribution). The academy informed parents and carers of existing pupils in writing. Details about the consultation were sent via email to primary and secondary schools in the area to share with their parents and communities. Information was also shared via email with local ward members, MP's and other stakeholders. Information was available via the academy's website, Leeds City Council website and through various social media platforms. A targeted Facebook advertising campaign was also undertaken to reach people living within postcode areas located across West Leeds.

4.1.3 Comments were received via the online survey from parents and carers, students, local ward members, staff, trustees and local residents.

4.1.4 Ward members for Bramley & Stanningley, Armley, Pudsey, Farnley & Wortley and Calverley & Farsley were communicated with to make them aware of the proposal and given an opportunity to attend one of the drop in sessions or respond via the online survey. Ward Members for Bramley & Stanningley, where the academy is located, were represented at a drop in session and also through the Local Accountability Board for the academy and have expressed support for the proposed expansion.

4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration

4.2.1 The EDCI screening form for the proposal is attached as an appendix to this report.

4.3 Council policies and the Best Council Plan

4.3.1 This proposal offers good value for money through its capacity to support achievement of the Best Council Plan outcome that states 'we want everyone in Leeds to do well at all levels of learning and have the skills they need for life'.

4.3.2 This proposal is being brought forward to meet the LA's statutory duty to ensure that there are sufficient school places for all the children and young people in

Leeds. Providing places close to where children live allows improved accessibility to local and desirable school places, is an efficient use of resources and reduces the risk of non-attendance.

- 4.3.3 This proposal contributes to the city's aspiration to be the best council, the best city in which to grow up and a child friendly city. The delivery of pupil places through the Learning Places Programme is one of the baseline entitlements of a child friendly city.
- 4.3.4 Providing additional good quality school places in an already established school, in an area where demand for places is increasing, will contribute towards the achievement of the Child Friendly City aim of 'improving educational attainment and closing achievement gaps for children and young people vulnerable to poor learning outcomes'. In turn, by helping young people into adulthood, to develop life skills, this proposal provides underlying support for the council's ambition to produce a strong economy and a compassionate city.
- 4.3.5 A good quality school place also contributes towards delivery of targets within the Children and Young People's Plan such as our obsession to improve achievement, attainment and attendance at school.

Climate Emergency

- 4.3.6 Due to anticipated increases in the demand for secondary places in West Leeds the provision of 60 additional year 7 places at Leeds West Academy has been proposed as part of a strategy to address secondary need in the West over future years. Leeds West is located in an area where we are experiencing an increase in pupil numbers. This proposal would support more local families to access local places thereby potentially reducing journey times to and from school.
- 4.3.7 As part of any planning application, the school's 'Travel Plan' would be considered and a package of measures would be identified in order to mitigate against the potential negative impact on the highway as a result of the development. Leeds City Council's 'Influencing Travel Behaviour Team' would support these measures and seek to ensure safe routes to and from school by promoting walking, cycling and other sustainable methods of transport. Progress on these matters would be monitored and support offered where appropriate.
- 4.3.8 The academy supports initiatives that promote walking and cycling to school among both students and staff. The White Rose Academies Trust has a cycle to work scheme for employees and the academy has a reward scheme for students which includes bikes as rewards to encourage cycling to school. The academy also takes part in the annual national "Walk to School" week. The principal and senior leadership team are keen to develop further initiatives and have also been working towards securing the Eco-Schools National Award for 2020/21.
- 4.3.9 The responsibility for the design and ensuring the proposed development meets the demands of current building strategies and social responsibility, such as the use of renewable energy and energy saving technologies, will be that of the academy and their appointed architectural practice.

4.4 Resources, procurement and value for money

- 4.4.1 Planning permission would need to be granted prior to the commencement of construction works required. Once the feasibility stage is complete and, subject to the proposal gaining approval to proceed to the detailed design stage, budgets

would be realigned to reflect that all parties have agreed the final design and cost estimate, which would take account of the site investigations and survey information, in accordance with standard project and risk management principles. The scheme would also be subject to relevant stakeholder consultation.

- 4.4.2 The construction cost estimate of the proposed scheme would be funded primarily through Basic Need Grant, which, based on a Department for Education (DfE) Central Government funding rate of £17,564 per new secondary place, is approximately £5.269m. The precise funding package would be confirmed at the design freeze stage, and detailed in the relevant Design and Cost report (DCR).
- 4.4.3 School Places Programme Board (SPPB) provides strong cross council and corporate involvement to ensure that appropriate governance is applied to learning places schemes. The Director for Children and Families, who Chairs SPPB, provides the final approval of individual scheme DCRs, along with any Capital Risk Fund applications. Executive Board approved the establishment of a Capital Risk Fund to provide a mechanism which enables timely and proportionate responses to variations which are required to individual project budgets. Decisions by the Director of Children and Families to access the fund must be made with the prior approval of the Director of City Development and the Director of Resources & Housing, both of whom are Board members, and be in consultation with the appropriate Executive Members.
- 4.4.4 Executive Board is asked to approve 'provisional' authority to spend of £5.269m for this scheme. Once design freeze has been reached, School Places Programme Board will be asked to approve authority to spend for the scheme along with any necessary risk fund application, in line with the governance arrangements set out above.

4.5 Legal implications, access to information, and call-in

- 4.5.1 The processes that have been and will be followed are in accordance with the statutory framework and departmental advice set out in: Making Significant Changes to an Open Academy and Closure by Mutual Agreement (November 2019).
- 4.5.2 This report is subject to call in.

4.6 Risk management

- 4.6.1 These proposals have been brought forward in time to allow additional secondary places to be delivered for 2022. A decision not to proceed at this stage may result in fresh consultations on new proposals, and places may not be delivered in time. It may also result in further bulge cohorts being delivered in other local schools which would be more costly in the longer term. The Local Authority's ability to meet its statutory duty for sufficiency of school places in the short term may be at risk.
- 4.6.2 In response to growing demand for year 7 places, Leeds West Academy and other local schools have been admitting over their Published Admission Number (PAN) for the previous three years and have committed to doing so again in September 2020. As the number of secondary-aged students living in the West is anticipated to increase further in future years, additional permanent places are required to address the growing need. A decision not to proceed with the expansion of Leeds West Academy could result in insufficient school places being available to meet local demand.

- 4.6.3 If the proposal does not proceed there is a risk that increased demand for places in the local area would have to be met further from the area of need, reducing the opportunity for more children and young people to walk to their local school, and potentially increasing journey times and car use.
- 4.6.4 There is also a corporate risk associated with failing to provide sufficient school places in good quality buildings that meet the needs of local communities.
- 4.6.5 The trustees of Leeds West Academy are intending to self-deliver the scheme with design and delivery being managed via an architectural practice commissioned directly by the Academy. A Grant agreement will be in place prior to any work that identifies the level of financial support from the authority.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 Our ambition is to be the best city in the country. As a vibrant and successful city we will attract new families to Leeds, and making sure that we have enough school/learning places, is one of our top priorities. This proposal has been brought forward to support learners in Leeds to benefit from being able to access a local secondary place and so delivering our vision of Leeds as a child friendly city.
- 5.2 There was recognition from a number of respondents to the consultation that more school places are needed in this area, this was the most frequent comment received. The majority of respondents that expressed concerns were local residents and the concerns raised have been responded to in this report. All concerns raised during consultation have been considered, and on balance, the proposal remains strong and addresses the need for school places in the area.
- 5.3 In response to growing demand for year 7 places, Leeds West Academy has already been admitting over its published admission number (PAN) for the last three years. Other local schools have also admitted above their PAN. As the number of secondary aged students living near to Leeds West Academy continues to increase this proposal will allow more children and young people to attend their local school, which they will be able to walk or cycle to, reducing reliance on private cars and public transport.
- 5.4 The additional places are required to ensure the authority meets its legal requirement to ensure sufficiency of secondary provision for September 2022. There is evidence that up to an additional 5FE of year 7 places are required across the West area over future years and, if implemented, this proposal would contribute towards addressing that need. It is therefore recommended that the proposal to permanently expand Leeds West Academy be approved.

6. Recommendations

Executive Board is requested to:

- a) Note the outcome of consultation on the proposal to permanently expand Leeds West Academy from a capacity of 1200 to 1500 students by increasing the admission number in year 7 from 240 to 300 with effect from September 2022.
- b) Grant provisional approval for authority to spend (ATS) £5.269m to deliver the proposed permanent expansion at Leeds West Academy. Note that early feasibility indicates the final cost is likely to be lower than this amount.

- c) Note that implementation of the proposal is subject to funding being agreed based on the outcome of further detailed design work and planning applications as indicated at section 4.4 of this report and that the proposal has been brought forward in time for places to be delivered for 2022.
- d) Note the responsible officer for implementation of the capital budget is the Head of Learning Systems; and
- e) Note that the White Rose Academies Trustees intend to self-deliver the build scheme.

7. Background documents¹

7.1 None

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.