

**Proposal to expand Thornhill Primary School,
Houghton Regis
to provide new primary school places for children in
Houghton Regis, Bedfordshire**



**Central
Bedfordshire**

Notice is given in accordance with section 19(1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and the statutory guidance for proposers and decision makers 'Making significant changes ('prescribed alterations') to maintained schools', October 2018, that Central Bedfordshire Council intends to make a prescribed alteration to Thornhill Primary School, Grove Road, Houghton Regis, Bedfordshire LU5 5PE from 1 September 2021.

This statutory consultation invites interested parties to respond to the proposed expansion of Thornhill Primary School.

Notice date:	3 May 2019
School:	Thornhill Primary School, Grove Road, Houghton Regis, Bedfordshire LU5 5PE
Proposer:	School Organisation, Admissions & Capital Planning, Central Bedfordshire Council, Priory House, Chicksands, Shefford, Beds, SG17 5TQ

Description of proposed alteration

Central Bedfordshire Council proposes to expand Thornhill Primary School by two forms of entry (60 places) per year group from 1 September 2021. This would increase the capacity of the school from 210 to 630 places.

Evidence of demand for proposed alteration versus need, including results of preliminary consultation

New primary school places are required in Houghton Regis as a result of current and future significant housing development on land north of Houghton Regis, known as HRN1. Up to 7,000 new dwellings are being provided within the HRN1 development, which includes sites for additional primary schools to serve the area and which has provided land and capital contributions towards the cost of the new proposed provision at Thornhill Primary School.

Thornhill Primary School is the preferred school for the proposed expansion due to its location adjacent to the HRN1 development, the piece of land secured from the developer and its 'Good' Ofsted rating.

As required by the Department for Education, the council consulted interested parties in order to develop this proposal. Stakeholders, which included school governors, staff, parents/carers, the local parish council, all other schools and academies within Central Bedfordshire plus council ward members, were invited to give their feedback via an on-line response facility on the council's website regarding the proposed expansion. This preliminary consultation ran from 4 January to 1 February 2019, during which time two drop-in sessions were held at the school to enable stakeholders to raise any queries or concerns regarding the proposal.

80% of the 15 responses received during the preliminary consultation, via the council's on-line response facility, either strongly agreed or agreed with the proposal. 13%% of responses strongly disagreed with the proposal. 7% neither agreed nor disagreed.

There was general agreement that due to the scale of housing development in Houghton Regis additional school places are required and that an expansion of Thornhill Primary School, due to its efficient governing body and staff, would build upon the school's success.

Concerns raised regarding the proposed expansion included the lack of parking within the vicinity of the school for both residents and for parents taking their children to the school. A suggestion was made for a dedicated cycle and footway route to help reduce the number of car journeys. The expansion will be subject to further town planning consultations and, if required, mitigations for traffic management. Another concern raised was for the number of schools that had been expanded by the council that had not included an increase in the number of places for children with special educational needs. The council recognises the need for special school places and as part of the council's priority entitled Schools for the Future, special school places are part of all future plans for school changes.

Objectives - including how the proposal would increase educational standards and parental choice

The objective of the proposal is to ensure that the council can continue to fulfil its statutory duty to provide sufficient school places in this area.

Central Bedfordshire Council and the Governing Body of Thornhill Primary School have carefully considered the expansion of the school and believe that it would bring many potential benefits to the school and the local community including –

- Ensuring that local children can attend their local school
- The expanded school would continue to have the same values, ethos and links with the town that currently exist
- An expansion would build upon an Ofsted 'good' school which is already very much part of the community providing the opportunity for the wider and expanding community to benefit
- Improved facilities for the school enabling it to offer a broader curriculum
- An opportunity to continue to raise standards of attainment, building on existing best practice and extending it to more children

The effect on other educational institutions within the area

The council believes that the expansion of the school would have little or no effect on other schools within the area.

Project costs and indication of how these would be met

The total cost for the proposed expansion of Thornhill Primary School is estimated at £8.3 m. The new build that would be provided has still to be agreed but it would consist of sufficient classroom space to accommodate the additional children plus space for the required support facilities.

Central Bedfordshire Council's New School Places Programme is funded by developer contributions and Basic Need grant income from the Department for Education. The council also continues to ensure that all opportunities are taken to increase income and to seek alternative funding sources for new build and expansions of existing school buildings.

The day to day running costs of school provision are met through revenue funding which is made available to each school as part of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and is based primarily on the numbers of pupils attending each school. This increases accordingly within an expanded school and would fund the additional staff and resources that would be required.

Where necessary and where schools and academies are undertaking significant expansion on commission from the council, additional revenue support for relevant costs is accessed through the council's Growth Fund, reviewed annually by the council's Schools Forum.

Capital expenditure within the New School Places Programme is subject to the council's Code of Financial Governance.

School size

Thornhill Primary School has a published admission number of 30 per year group and there are currently 196 statutory school aged children on roll at the school. The expanded school would increase in size from 210 to 630 places.

In addition to statutory school aged children, Thornhill Primary School also has early years provision for children aged from 2 years of age. The council is to review the number of nursery school places available at the school and, if additional places are required, address how these might be provided.

The council is currently working with school clusters to review the future structure of schools within Central Bedfordshire: this project is referred to as 'Schools for the Future'. As the council deliberates this with schools, all expansions will seek to future-proof their sites to enable any changes to be accommodated.

Proposed admission arrangements

There are no proposals to change the admission arrangements for 2021/22 for Thornhill Primary School if the school is expanded. The admission arrangements are published on the school's website and include the criteria that is used to determine how places are allocated if there are more applications for places than the number of places available.

The published admission number would be updated accordingly.

National curriculum

The school would continue to follow the age-appropriate National Curriculum.

Equal opportunity issues

There are no planned changes - there would be a continuation of the school's current policies and procedures to ensure there is no discrimination and to promote equal opportunities and foster good relations.

Community cohesion

This expansion would enhance and improve wider opportunities and experiences within the local community for all families.

All school expansions are expected to enhance community facilities. It is generally accepted that schools should provide a community use agreement.

Travel and accessibility

Local children and families are encouraged to walk, cycle or scoot to school and the school would be required to work with Central Bedfordshire Council to update their Travel Plan.

School premises and playing fields

Under the School Premises Regulations all schools are required to provide suitable outdoor space in order to enable physical education to be provided to pupils in accordance with the school curriculum; and for pupils to play outside safely.

The proposed expansion at Thornhill Primary School would be built on the adjacent plot of land that has been provided by the developer.

Proposed stages for implementation

If the expansion is approved by the council, it is anticipated that it would be implemented from 1 September 2021.

How to respond to this formal consultation

This formal consultation commences on **3 May 2019** and closes on **7 June 2019**

You can **have your say via the online form** which is available on the council's website here – <http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/council/public-statutory/notices.aspx>

Or you can complete the response form on pages 6 and 7 and return it to the FREEPOST address provided at the end of the form.

Both on line responses and completed forms to confirm your support, raise any objections and submit any comments should be returned by **5 pm on 7 June 2019**

Following the close of the consultation, the council's Executive will be asked to consider the responses received and determine the proposed expansion.

Q4 Are you: (please select one)

Male

Female

Q5 What is your age? (please select one)

Under 16 yrs

45-59 yrs

16-19 yrs

60- 64 yrs

20-29 yrs

65-74 yrs

30-44 yrs

75+ yrs

Q6 Do you consider yourself disabled? (please select one)

Under the Equality Act 2010 a person is considered to have a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a sustained and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities.

Yes

No

Q7 To which of these groups do you consider you belong? (please select one)

White British

Mixed ethnicity

Black or Black British

Other ethnic group

Asian or Asian British

If other, please specify:

Q8 What is your home or organisation's postcode?

This will only be used for analysis purposes and will not be used to identify you in any way.

Q9 If you would like to receive alerts for any new consultations, please provide your email address below to be added our database, this will not be used or shared in any other capacity:

Thank you.

**Please return your completed form by Friday 7th June 2019 to:
Freepost RSJS GBBZ SRZT (you do not need a stamp)
Thornhill Primary school statutory consultation,
Central Bedfordshire Council
Priory House, Monks Walk
Chicksands, Shefford
SG17 5TQ**

Data Protection Act 2018

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