

School location and building design

Why expand on the current site?

There has been some speculation regarding the site of the school, and whether there is/was an option to move it to another location. This was discussed at the earliest stages of the project, but has never been a workable proposition for a number of reasons. The key considerations were: easy access for children and families, preserving the amenities for the children, safety, and value for money - so the funds available are used for maximum benefit of the children. Moving the school to any other site was not going to be cost effective and would have a considerable negative environmental impact. The concept of relocating the school to the former garden centre site has been much discussed in the community, but has never been a viable proposition. Further details regarding these issues are detailed below.

Cost of buildings, playground, landscaping and car park:

Leaving the school on the existing site means that the only significant cost is the new classroom block and preparing the field for sport. The cost of re-building the existing site and outside amenities would be prohibitively expensive. As well as the new block of 8 classrooms, the existing school, and all of the outside amenities would need to be built too. This includes: 10 classrooms, a dining room, hall, kitchen, library, children's and adults' toilets, staffroom, offices, entrance hall, central spaces, store rooms and plant room, boilers, heating systems, fixed shelving etc. As the current site is in good repair, it would be a completely unnecessary expense.

Outside, there is outdoor play apparatus with safety surfaces, four playgrounds, a pond, playhouses, the hobbit house, an outdoor stage, the foundation stage outdoor area, animal enclosure, the Reception garden, Forest school area, KS1 woodland, canopies outside the classrooms, storage sheds, a car park, secure fencing, and established landscaping.

From an environmental position, demolishing the current site would generate huge amounts of rubble, much of which cannot be re-cycled, and the new site would require new building materials, not all of which are currently easily available.

Re-location costs

The entire contents of the school which includes all of the furniture, resources, books, paperwork etc would have to be packed up, moved and unpacked.

Classroom size

The classrooms in the current school are considerably larger than the current recommended minimum class size, and bigger than the standard size built, benefitting the children by giving them additional space. The replacement classrooms would be smaller.

Size of site:

The present site is spacious, and with the acquisition of the field, it means the children have a large area for sport and recreation. To retain the size of the site, the school would take up a considerable amount of the garden centre plot and it is unlikely the developers would provide

this. The School Governors would not agree to the school having a smaller site as this would disadvantage the children.

The current site would need to be sold for housing to provide funds toward buying the new land and paying for the re-building and additional classrooms. As it is a voluntary controlled school, land ownership is more complex, and it could take several years before this could be resolved. In addition, the current site and field would need planning permission for housing before the site could be sold for the amount of money it would need to generate. A straight 'land swap' is not an option as the land on which the school building is on is owned by the Diocese of St. Albans, whilst the playing fields belong to Herts County Council.

Demolishing the school and building housing on the site would be a longer disruption for local residents, than building the new block .

One Storey:

Having the new building on one storey means that it is fully accessible to all children. The space which would be used for corridors, stairs and lifts will be used to provide a large central space for a non-fiction library, group activities with relaxation areas. The design also mirrors the existing building in terms of the opportunities it creates for children from different classes to socialise and meet during the day in a central space, in the same way the hall currently works. Every classroom has immediate access to outdoor space, which enables the building to be evacuated very quickly and safely should the need arise.

Location:

The current site is quiet and safe. It is bordered by residential gardens and not close to any main roads. The school is in a central location, meaning most families do not have far to travel. Areas of planned housing are very close the existing site meaning short journeys to school.

If it was moved to the former garden centre site, most families would have to walk along a busy road. This is obviously a potential hazard to the children, increased significantly by the large numbers using this route. The pavement width would not be able to be increased all along the road. As well as the traffic, the children would be exposed to fumes and noise.

Some families would have to walk over a mile to get to school, in all weathers. This would be particularly challenging for our youngest children and for parents with pushchairs. It is likely that car use would be further increased. There are no safe places to park on the Codicote Road for those parents who need to drive to school.

Decision Making

The children have been at the centre of the decision making process regarding the school expansion. Governors and staff have been keen to ensure that everything works for the children. The plans have been carefully evaluated and scrutinised at every stage to provide a beautiful new building for the children and staff to be in, to address the extreme overcrowding we have experienced over a number of years, and to continue to provide the

outdoor space every year group benefits from. Expansion on the current site is the only option which meets these principles.