

Annex C – Main themes of concern and MKC Officer responses

The main concerns and objections raised throughout the consultation were:

- a) The latest OFSTED inspection, which was carried out in September 2017 during the consultation found that the school is underperforming and "requires improvement". Respondents felt that the governing board and teaching staff should be supported by MKC to deliver the required improvement in school performance before consideration is given to any expansion proposal.

Officer response – *The quality of education and the capacity of the senior leadership is a significant point for consideration. Following the recent Ofsted inspection, MKC officers are now working very closely with the governing board and senior leadership to address the issues identified as soon as possible. The proposal does not seek to admit the additional children until 2020, and only seeks to expand one year group at a time. The required expansion project could be separately managed to enable the Headteacher to focus on the school's improvement. However, There is a risk that if the school does not improve, the additional places would not be utilised if parental preference is impacted, or that families will be required to access provision judged as 'Requiring Improvement' against their will.*

- b) Staff turnover is high and there are a number of staff vacancies at the school. How will this be managed if the school expands?

Officer response – *Staff turnover is not significantly higher at The Radcliffe School than at other MK secondary schools. The school is fully staffed in the core subjects of English and math, which are areas where some other schools have experienced challenges. Some temporary turnover has occurred this year due to a number of maternity leaves.*

Recruitment of additional high quality teaching staff to meet the additional pupil demand is a point of national concern. MK schools are working closely with local training providers to help increase the supply of teaching staff. Close partnership working between the school and the local authority to identify and plan for the level of additional demand as early as possible will also help to mitigate this.

- c) Increasing the school's size will impact on pupils' anxieties, well-being and sense of belonging. Classes of more than 30 pupils will be detrimental. Larger schools can appear impersonal and have communication issues.

Officer response – *The proposal is to increase the size of the school by up to three additional forms of entry via an expansion to the accommodation. It will not impact negatively on class sizes. The Governing Board are also committed to maintaining a culture and environment which supports student's well-being and sense of belonging irrespective of the size of the school.*

- d) Concerns regarding the access route to the school, the possibility of a dedicated entrance and the impact on pupils and road users.

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Officer response – *Whilst this is an important issue, the informal consultation is seeking views from an education perspective on the principle of expanding the school. The statutory process determines that if a decision was made to expand, this would be subject to the grant of any planning permissions and would be considered separately by the relevant committee. Officers welcome the feedback received at this stage regarding traffic and road safety and will consider these matters further if the scheme progresses.*

- e) There is insufficient space in the sixth form area, dining hall and corridor space. Expanding the school will further impact on these areas.

Officer response – *The Governing Board has plans to address these issues, but feel they need to be considered in conjunction with any expansion proposal to ensure plans do not conflict.*

- f) Consideration should be given to expanding Denbigh School, The Hazeley Academy and Ousedale School.

Officer response – *The pressure for additional school places in this locality is from children living within the catchment area of The Radcliffe School. Permanently expanding other schools in Milton Keynes will mean that children and their families have to travel further afield to access a school place, which will impact further on traffic and pupil safety. There is also a risk that if parental preference changes in the future, there would not be sufficient places at The Radcliffe School to meet local demand. Denbigh School was expanded by two forms of entry in 2015 to meet demand within its own catchment area. Ousedale School is at capacity and is not felt to be within a suitable distance for children living in the catchment area of The Radcliffe School. The Hazeley Academy is also at full capacity. It is however possible for officers to talk with local schools that are currently popular with children from this catchment area, to consider their appetite and ability to admit over their admission number to support the additional demand in the short term.*

- g) The opening of the new secondary school in the Western Expansion Area (WEA) should help address the shortfall of places.

Officer response – *The new secondary school located in the WEA is due to open in September 2020. In the long term this school will meet the demand from the 6,600 new homes that are planned for this significant growth area and will accommodate pupils from the four primary schools in the WEA. However, the housing development is still in its infancy, and it is projected to take time for there to be sufficient demand to fill the local secondary school. It is currently projected that there will be some additional capacity at this school in the initial years after it opens. Given the close proximity and the recent Ofsted inspection outcome for the Radcliffe School, it is likely that a number of families living in the catchment area for The Radcliffe School will seek to access the additional capacity in the short term. This is a significant point for consideration.*

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h) Consideration should be given to expanding the school onto a second site.

Officer response – *This option has been explored however, there appear to be no suitable sites within the locality that can be used for education provision.*

i) Stantonbury Campus should not have been allowed to decrease their published admission number and this should be increased to meet the demand for school places.

Officer response – *Stantonbury Campus is its own admissions authority and as such, the governing board took the decision to decrease the published admission number following consultation. Milton Keynes Council did not support the change to the admission number and wrote to the Chair of Governors at the time to express concerns that there were already insufficient places at Stantonbury Campus to serve the number of children living in the catchment. Although the school was not full, data shows this was the result of parental preference, and a reduction in the admission number would further compound the need to secure additional places at other schools, at significant cost to the public purse. The council and the Governing Board of The Radcliffe School are considering the expansion proposal to meet demand from the school's own catchment area and not to meet the demand from children living within the catchment area of Stantonbury Campus. There is a risk however, that if families from The Radcliffe catchment are successful in applying for places in other areas, vacant places at The Radcliffe School may be filled by parents living in the catchment for other schools if they choose to apply.*

j) Children should only be allowed to attend their catchment school.

Officer response – *The framework for school admissions is set out in national legislation. All admission authorities have to comply with the national School Admissions Code. When applying for a secondary school place, parents and carers that reside in Milton Keynes are able to express preferences for up to four schools and all applications are ranked according to each school's oversubscription criteria and allocated up to the school's published admission number. It would be illegal to enforce children to attend their catchment school. Notwithstanding this, admissions data shows there are already more children living within The Radcliffe School catchment area than the number of school places available, but a number of parents are successful if applying for school places outside of the catchment area. Restricting children to only access their catchment school would compound the issue in this area, not alleviate it.*