



the NP is likely to give 4-5 new pupils at entry level. Admission of 35 pa is very difficult to cope with and an awkward size.

He suggested the real costs of relocation would be less than OCC's contractors tend to quote. He said patching the current school is an option but that there is now an opportunity to get new facilities and expand in stages. Asked where current funding comes from he replied that most capital funding comes from Government via the Diocese with 10% found by the Governors. Central funding comes via OCC on a per head basis.

**17/2/3**

BC stated OCC has a statutory duty to ensure sufficient school places; a key part being forecasting future numbers done using a mixture of demographics and forecast house build / numbers and both have historically been difficult to assess in Goring. Current forecasts suggest demand will subside slightly with a peak in births having dropped. There had been a couple of bulges due to turnover of housing stock and ready-made families moving into the village. The CC has to be careful not to over supply places with enough pupils available to keep smaller schools viable or risk closure which is never popular. Goring as a one form entry is in no danger of closure but the CC is mindful of all schools in the area.

The CC are consulted on housing planning applications of over 10 houses and make a case for developer contributions, this was previously s.106 and was by direct negotiation on specific requirements but SODC has now moved to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) which is based simply on payment per m<sup>2</sup> to SODC. They have not yet agreed a process for dissemination of CIL funds but it is possible that CIL paid for Goring developments could be used elsewhere in South Oxfordshire e.g. Didcot, as SODC themselves will decide the priorities for spending. The biggest demand for CIL is likely to be OCC Highways and Education.

BC explained the statutory process for making school changes which differs by school type, e.g. Academy School decisions are made by Regional Schools Commissioners. Goring is voluntary aided and for any significant expansion (over 25%) the decision maker is OCC. The Diocese could however appeal to an adjudicator. Any move of less than 25% expansion is up to the Governors and the Diocese. The Department for Education (DfE) have to approve the loss and reuse of school sites (e.g. allowing housing on OCC owned school land). SODC decide on planning permission for both schools and housing. For OCC to assess an application for the school to move it requires a specific, fully detailed and costed proposal.

MS clarified that for the school to move from one to 1.5 entry OCC would be the decision maker – BC confirmed and stated that although OCC are usually responsible for the proposal they will consider a fully worked up proposal submitted by others (e.g. School and Diocese) which is then subject to a statutory process including four weeks consultation and about two months for consideration – therefore a decision *could* be made within three months of receiving a proposal and the whole process from start to finish could be approx. six to twelve months.

A brief discussion took place on the current state of maintenance at the school.

**17/2/4**

KH said the Governors have legal responsibility for key decisions and strategy, they take a long term view of the school's future and hope a move could allow all Goring's children to come to the local school which is not a legal requirement but seen as a responsibility. The catchment area includes Ipsden as well as Goring.

In financial terms the Governors have to show best value for money which means for expansion they would need to look at 1.5 form entry even if that number of pupils were not immediately available. They would not seek out of catchment children but if space was available they could be taken on by application.

The Governors are accountable for the quality of education and have a long term commitment (e.g. extra tables and chairs) when occasional bulges in placement move through the school.

The Governors are willing to start the process for consideration by OCC.

GJ commented that once the school has published an admissions number for a year they

have to take up to that number if places are applied for. KH said the school is responsible for setting their numbers for each year, adhering to the admissions policy and if there are any significant changes that requires a full consultation with a number of stakeholders. For example last year they removed the Church led criteria from the policy. The Governors are responsible for the buildings being maintained and safe, by applying to the Diocese for DfE funding with the school liable for raising 10%.

MS asked whether that meant the Diocese had prioritised spending elsewhere. GJ stated their recent priorities have been heating boilers and roofs and few other funds are currently available. KH mentioned they are applying now for works to asbestos. TM stated the school budgets approx. £10k pa for routine maintenance.

### **17/3 Process for evaluation of future options**

**17/3/1** GJ commented that a staged approach could be taken with a design built for future development.

BC reminded that when any staged expansion reaches 25% then the full proposal would need to be approved by the CC which might cause difficulties with a partially completed project. She said a bid would need to be made for CIL funding for any later development. SB asked if the Diocese would contribute and GJ said they had done so in the past but realistically for the proposal to be viable it would need to be for a 1.5 entry school. KH stated the Governors are trying to plan for decades ahead.

SB asked if there was any reason not to build a 1.5 entry school now, GJ said it could be built as 1.5 and could stay as one form until ready using the extra space for other community use.

**17/3/2** LR asked if the school currently rejects any pupils from the catchment area – KH replied yes in some years, the numbers vary from year to year. MS commented that it was the admissions process stopping people in the catchment area, not just the reception class size. BC said the key is the point of admission into reception – it is a difficult balance as they cannot easily have eg a 32 or 34 placement. BC stated the CC would need to consider any proposal in light of the wider issues across Oxfordshire, for example, there is no direct funding to assist small schools to stay viable but there is political support for them.

**17/3/3** SB reiterated the NP is not against a school move but need to balance many pieces; the NP is a long way down the line to publication and can only work on evidence based submissions. Before the NP can assess, a fully costed, legally achievable proposal is needed and the reality is that any significant expansion needs to be processed through the Education Authority in a timely manner to have any chance of being included in the NP. DW noted that the NP would need to go back to the site assessment criteria and even a proposal with full support could have an effect on current decisions and might result in the collapse of AONB protection on other rejected sites, noting that a school site had also been offered by a developer for another site. SB commented that the NP needs to be made as soon as possible due to developers who may apply for planning permission while no protection is in place for the village. It may be more sensible for the school proposals to be in the next plan, or an amended version of this plan at a later stage. BC stated the NP needs to be examined and deliverable to be made, it will not be approved unless it is demonstrably achievable.

**17/3/4** NG said that with a timescale of approx. 6-12 months for a school proposal the NP cannot be deferred for that long and suggested it needs to be considered later. BC asked if the developer was proposing that his building of the school should replace his obligation to replace CIL. GJ did not know, TM and KH thought that the developer was relying on CIL money to fill the funding gap but didn't know for certain. BC said the funding element is vital – if SODC are to approve a school in lieu of CIL from developers they need to be approached by the developers / school, SODC may have very different

priorities for that money. Allied to this is a strong principle that developers should not be seen to 'buy' their way to planning permission and any contribution in excess of their CIL commitment could be seen that way. She also said that if the move is conditional on development of the current site there would be a need to show good value for the disposal.

**17/3/5** There was discussion about the option of expanding the current site but funding was the main obstacle.

**17/4 Agree next steps**

MS summarised the position:

When the NP started, contrary to some of the marketing, one of the key concerns was education and school places. It is clear that OCC are the authority both for proposing and deciding upon any proposal for expansion of the school by 25% or more, including proposals to effect that expansion over a longer period by incremental steps. It is also clear that the Governors require an expansion of 50% so as to form a 1.5 entry school. Accordingly if the NP is to consider any proposal for school expansion within this iteration of the Plan, a detailed, costed and evidenced proposal will have to come from OCC and demonstrate (i) precisely what is being proposed; (ii) an adequate consideration of other options; (iii) the need for development supported by expert evidence as to the state of the current school site and its unsuitability for the future; and (iv) that the proposal is genuinely deliverable within the next five years, with particular reference to funding and formal agreement from OCC, SODC and the Diocese.

NG said the NP needs to aim for the (now) expected referendum date of October but it can make reference to a proposal that is in the pipeline.

DW and TR re-iterated that even if OCC produces a deliverable proposal in time for the NP to consider it, there is no guarantee that it would be accepted when viewed in the context of sustainable development and the Plan as a whole or automatically lead to a change to any decisions made on GNP5.

TR noted that the timeline for submission to the Parish Council (GPC) is in April, followed by the GPC consultation at which point the NP can still be amended. After submission to SODC no further amendments are possible and therefore the timescales are very tight.

BC stated that in order to progress quickly OCC need to be able to make a decision by July as they will not consult or meet over the school holiday period – any submission needs to bear that deadline in mind which will include the consultation phase.

SB invited the Governors and Diocese to work through the NP Site Selection Criteria as part of any new proposal for the expansion/relocation of the school, to ensure all criteria are fully assessed and evidence provided (e.g. the land of the current school is available for development by all landowners) to the NP group. This assessment will be required alongside any formal proposal submitted and subsequently supported by OCC, before it can be included in the NP. If the provision of a new school is contingent on housing being permitted anywhere else, this needs to be clear with detail of numbers and precise location. The NP cannot consider any school proposal without being able to fully assess the ramifications both at this point and in terms of future planning applications.

**The Governors and Diocese agreed to submit a detailed and costed proposal to OCC as soon as possible, keeping the NP informed of progress via the Clerk.**

MS stated if the submission is not ready before the NP has to be with SODC then it can be reviewed and addressed in its next iteration.

TR noted the White Paper currently going through Parliament may make it easier to amend a NP in the future.

SB and MS commented on third party comments not helping and MS asked for the petition to be withdrawn. TM stated it was not their decision.

MS thanked all for attending, particularly GJ and BC who had helped to fully clarify the process required.

Tentative date for next meeting 1000hrs Friday 7 April – SODC (Cathie Scotting) also to be invited.