

Proposal to join together Moor Allerton Hall and Allerton Grange School and expand primary provision

Consultation process – what are we asking?

We are currently in the pre-consultation or informal part of the consultation process. This will last until the 29 November and is an opportunity for all stakeholders to share their views and concerns with the council. The council will, where possible, try to answer questions and provide additional information as it becomes available.

In this part of the process we are consulting only on the principle of the proposed change. As with any other school expansion or building works an environmental impact and transport assessment would be undertaken. These would have to satisfy planning conditions and guidelines in order to be progressed. To do this work now, before the principle of the proposal has been agreed, would involve spending significant sums of public money 'at risk' on work which may not be necessary if the proposal does not progress. There will be opportunity for the public to comment on these detailed plans when they are available.

At this stage, we are asking stakeholders to tell us:

- What are your views on the proposed idea, and;
- What are the reasons for those views, including ways any barriers or issues could be overcome or mitigated

The reasons for respondents' views are then compiled into a report, along with any mitigation or identified further work needed, and considered by the council's Executive Board who will decide whether or not to continue to the next formal part of consultation, known as statutory notice. This is legally prescribed and has to last 4 weeks during which formal responses to the proposal, known as representations, are made.

Following the end of the statutory notice period the results are again reported back to the Executive Board who will then make a decision on whether to proceed. A decision has to be made within 2 months of the end of the statutory notice period; if this is not done the school's commissioner can make the final decision.

If, at this point, the decision is to proceed with the principle of making the change then the more physical elements are usually commissioned such as detailed design and cost reports, highways assessments, etc. The school and other key stakeholders are consulted as the design of any building work takes shape. If planning permission is required this has its own consultation process and requires all local residents to have formal written notice.

4FE and through school

There are pros and cons of larger schools and parents may feel that for small children a large school represents a large environment in which their child may be 'lost' and that the personal connection with the school leadership may be broken. These are entirely understandable emotive concerns and parents may well feel that a smaller school is more 'for them'. However, in support of larger schools, it is generally accepted that class size, syllabus and school leadership have the greatest impact on outcomes for children rather than overall size of school. Children can have a wider social circle and access to a broader syllabus and more or better equipment as larger schools have greater funding. Larger schools also have more budget to invest in teacher training and staff development.

As with any size school issues around safety, safeguarding and pastoral care are issues for the leadership to lead on with support, where appropriate, from the local authority.

The main benefits of through schools focus on prevention of the attainment dip usually associated with transition from year 6 to year 7, where a child remains in the through school at this stage. It is nationally recognised that traditionally children moving from one school to another at this point undergo a drop in attainment as they settle in to the new environment with new people. This can also extend well into year 8 in some circumstances. A through school can help to mitigate against this as the children are already well known to the school and staff, and the children are familiar with their environment.

Additionally the levels of pastoral care for children at through schools can be greater, a child and their family are known to the school for the whole time they are there. So, for example, issues a child faces in year 3 or 4 are known to the school throughout their school career so should there be further issues in years 9 or 10 there is an awareness of the background a greater understanding of where a child has come from and a connection with the family which may not be present in a standalone high school.

Children transitioning to a new school at the end of year 6 may also lose a number of their social group to other high schools. And while this is still possible in a through school it is less likely and so builds a much stronger social network for the child and provides a more stable ongoing environment.

