

AGENDA ITEM

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Cabinet

DATE: 23rd June 2003

CONTACT OFFICER: Mick Baker – 01753 875700, Special Projects (Planning and
(For enquiries) Performance), Learning and Cultural Services.
Jon Davies
Nick Kandola – Slough Sikh Education Gurmat Trust

WARD(S): All

PORTFOLIO: Children and Young People.

PART I
KEY DECISION

PROPOSAL FOR VOLUNTARY AIDED (SIKH) PRIMARY SCHOOL - RESULTS OF FORMAL CONSULTATION AND PROPOSED SALE OF LAND'

1. Purpose of the report

- 1.1 To inform Cabinet of the outcome of formal consultation, undertaken by the Slough Sikh Educational Gurmat Trust, regarding their proposal to open a new Primary School with a standard number of 60, with a nursery unit for 26 full time equivalent pupil places, from September 2005, on a portion of the land North of St Etherbert's school, off Wexham Road.

2. Recommendation (s) / Proposed Action

The Cabinet is requested to resolve:

- (a) To support / not support the proposal of the Slough Sikh Educational Gurmat Trust to open a new Sikh VA Primary School (Appendix 1); and
- (b) To agree / not agree the sale of X acres of the land North of St Ethelberts Primary School on Wexham Road, Slough, to accommodate the new school.

If Cabinet resolve to support the proposal and agree to the sale of the land then the Slough Sikh Educational Gurmat Trust (SSEGT) will move to publish statutory notices for the proposal before the end of June 2003. Thereafter the proposal will be considered by the Slough School Organisation Committee that would be expected to consider the proposal in the Autumn 2003.

The proposed construction of the school buildings will be subject to the proposers gaining Local Authority planning approval.

3. **Key Policy Priority Implications**

(a) Community Development

The purpose of the consultation undertaken SSEGT has been to seek the views of the schools, parents, local community and relevant professionals as to whether implementation of the proposal would be in the best interests of the Slough community.

(b) It is an important aspect of Community Development that these views are properly reflected and taken into consideration in arriving at the decision as to whether of not to publish statutory notices. The proposal will provide the Slough Sikh community with a single faith Sikh school.

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4. **Other Implications**

(a) Financial

Cost building the school and purchasing the land from the Council.

The Slough Sikh Educational Gurmat Trust (SSEGT) will be responsible for the cost of acquiring the school site and for the provision and maintenance of the new buildings. The trust will have to meet 10% of these capital costs of the site purchase, initial build and any subsequent improvement, enlargement or major maintenance projects. The remaining 90% of the cost of approved projects would be funded by central government.

The SSEGT made a successful bid to the 2001 VA bidding round and were provisionally allocated £6,070,000 in 100% terms for their proposal to convert LEA Junior school to a Sikh primary school. After initial consultation with parents, staff and governing bodies of schools on the Lea Campus this proposal was no longer pursued by the SSEGT. Subsequently the DfES have agreed that the allocation could be used for the current proposal and also that the allocation would carry forward to the 2002 bidding round. One constraint is that the SSEGT are required to publish statutory notices by the end of June 2003. If this is not undertaken the DfES have indicated that the SSEGT will be required to make a new bid for a subsequent years funding allocation.

Acquisition of the site from Slough Borough Council

ANDY ALGAR TO COMPLETE

Effect On Revenue Budgets

There are currently surplus places at primary schools in Slough and the school is not expected to cater for a large number of additional pupils. The effect on SSA of the new school is likely therefore to be marginal.

Individual schools that lose pupils that attend the new school will in subsequent years have the monies, that are allocated according to pupil number, reduced proportionately. Currently this stands at about £2,300 per pupil.

During the first year of operation the new school would need to have start up funding between September and the following March. If the new school was full during the first months of operation then this could be an additional cost to the schools revenue budget of £560,000.

In the longer term the LEA would seek to reduce the standard number and remove class-bases from those schools with more than 25% surplus places. This would best be timed to coincide with the replacement of life expired school buildings.

The implications of not proceeding with the scheme are,

- a) Slough Sikh Community expectations not met.
- b) New School not built.

(b) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

There are no Human Rights Act Implications.

Any proposals for the development of the land North of St Ethelbert's for the purposes of a school will be subject to the usual planning considerations and procedures. Although the site is in the Green Belt it is designated for educational purposes in the Review of the Local Plan for Slough. Proposers of the VA Sikh school would need to gain Planning Permission from Slough Borough Council and this may be "called in" by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

The School Standards and Framework Act 1998, provides that before publishing proposals for the closure or opening of schools, the Council shall consult such persons as appear to them be to appropriate, taking into account any guidance issued by the Secretary of State. This includes any school, which is subject to the proposals, parents and teachers in the area, who may be affected by the proposals, and any other interested party. This consultation has been undertaken, the outcome of which is summarised below.

The School Standards and Framework Act 1998 also requires that following consultation and approval by the Council to proceed, statutory notices are published. A one-month period is allowed for the public to make objections against the Council's proposal. If there are no statutory objections during this period, or objections are withdrawn following a response, then following the expiry of the notice the proposals will automatically become

effective on the implementation date. If objections remain at the end of the consultation period then the matter will be referred to the Slough School Organisation Committee. Should the School Organisation Committee fail to make a majority decision, the proposal will be referred to the Adjudicator for determination.

(c) Workforce

There are no direct workforce implications arising from this report. If a new Sikh primary school were to be established then this would need to be staffed and resourced. In the long term a migration of pupils from existing schools may mean that classes must be lost from other schools in the area.

5. **Background Information**

The Cabinet meeting 20th January 2002 considered a report “Land North of St Ethelbert’s Released for New VA School” and resolved:

- (a) That “in principle” approval be given to the future sale of land to the Trustees of a future (VA Sikh) School yet to be proposed for establishment in Slough in order that appropriate consultation commences.
- (b) That, following an initial appraisal of the three potential sites identified by SEWA, the only potential feasible site would be the land north of St Ethelbert’s.
- (c) That, the availability of the land be conditional on the following:
 - Slough School Organisation Committee approve a statutory proposal to be made by SEWA (referred to in this report as SSEGT) for the establishment of a VA Sikh Primary School at this location under the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.
 - Local Authority Planning permission for the new school.
 - Slough Borough Council agreeing the terms of sale of the land and any other financial liabilities (Capital and Revenue) of the proposal.
 - That any conflict between this proposal and the Council’s desire to facilitate Slough Town Football Club can be resolved.
 - Consultation being undertaken on the proposal.

The results of consultation

- 5.1 Formal consultation has now been undertaken by the (SSEGT) on the proposals to open a new Voluntary Aided (Sikh) Primary school. The results of the consultation have been written up by SSEGT and are presented in Appendix A along with their commentary regarding the main issues that have emerged through consultation. The consultation document distributed by SSEGT is enclosed in Appendix B.
- 5.2 Information provided by SSEGT has been enclosed within Appendices in order to differentiate it from the main report which has been prepared by Officers of Slough Borough Council. If Cabinet agrees to support the proposal for the new school and to the sale of land, then following the publication of statutory notices, the SSEGT will be taking their proposal to the Slough School Organisation Committee.

The conclusion of the proposers

- 5.3 Having undertaken the consultation the proposers make the following summary conclusion:
- 5.4 “In the light of the consultation, there is considerable support from the results of the written consultation for a Sikh school in Slough (96% are in support). The Sikh community has taken this proposal to their hearts and are desperate for this school. The parents feel strongly that they should not be denied the right to send their children to a Sikh school and be treated with the same rules as Christian parents who send their children to Christian schools. The council are aware that there are nearly 10,000 Sikhs in Slough which represents over 9% of the Slough population. The consultation meetings were well attended and whilst some local residents are concerned about traffic congestion and Headteachers about losing places or funds, on balance there appears to be no fundamental reasons why Sikh parents should not be given a Sikh school. The recommendation from the proposers is therefore that statutory notices should be published as soon as possible.”

Potential conflict between this proposal and the Council’s desire to facilitate Slough Town Football Club.

JON DAVIES TO INSERT

- 5.5 Blah blah

Acquisition of the site from Slough Borough Council

ANDY ALGAR TO PROVIDE BACKGROUND INFORMATION

5.6 Blah blah

Comments of the Director of Learning and Cultural Services

CHRIS SPENCER TO PROVIDE INFORMATION

6 **Comments of Other Committees**

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee will consider the report on 9th June 2003 and there observations will be reported to the Cabinet.

7 **Conclusion**

8 **Appendices Attached**

Appendix A – “Results of Formal Consultation on a Proposal for A New Sikh Voluntary Aided School, Slough.”

Appendix B – “Consultation Document – Provision of a new Sikh VA primary school in Slough. March 2003”

9 **Background Papers**

Cabinet 20th January 2002 - “Land North of St Ethelbert’s Released for New VA School”

Appendix A

Results of Formal Consultation on a Proposal for A New Sikh Voluntary Aided School, Slough.

5.7 A consultation document was prepared (Appendix B) and circulated to all Slough schools, parish councils, and gurdwaras. Copies were also sent to local ward members, local community and faith groups, neighbouring LEA's, local MP and MEP's. An advertisement in the Slough Citizen promoting the consultation was published in March 2003 and was featured in numerous articles in the local press in April 2003. The consultation documents and reply forms were posted on the sloughsikhschool.org website during the period of the consultation. From the initial consultation meeting, some local residents asked for a further more local consultation meeting. A second consultation meeting was therefore held on the 29th April 2003. In addition, the original deadline for the consultation of 18th April 2003 was extended to the 2nd May 2003 to allow school governing bodies and local residents to submit their consultation replies. Those replies that were received by the 14th May 2003 were still taken into account in the published results.

Written consultation

5.2 686 written replies were received regarding the proposals. Overall 96% of replies supported the proposals and 3% did not support the proposal. 1% did not state whether they supported the proposal or were against it. The Sikh community were unanimous in their support for the proposal. Some local residents and school head teachers were against the proposal. (See Table 1)

5.3 The main reasons stated for the need for Sikh Primary school were:

- Believe it would enhance children's understanding of their language, values, culture, faith and religion
- Dream come true/Excellent idea
- Children will become more balanced and knowledgeable and good citizens
- It would allow parents to choose how they want their children to be educated
- Sikh school would benefit all communities as it would teach good citizenship
- Need to educate Sikh children more fully about their religion which cannot be done in mainstream schools.
- Good for Sikh community
- Will allow teachings and appreciation of Sikhism in more detail
- Why should I have to travel to Hayes to attend a Sikh School

The main reasons given for rejecting the proposals were:

- I oppose all current and proposed denominational schools
- Would result in extra traffic in area
- Would cause segregation
- Faiths schools of all denominations are socially and culturally divisive
- A COE school embraces and caters for all religions

Table 1: Written Consultation Analysis

| | Total | Support | Against | Unknown | Support % | Against % | Unknown % |
|--------------------------------|-------|---------|---------|---------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Overall | 686 | 659 | 23 | 4 | 96% | 3% | 1% |
| By Residency | | | | | | | |
| Slough Residents | 588 | 567 | 20 | 1 | 96% | 3% | 0% |
| Non-Slough Residents | 80 | 75 | 2 | 3 | 94% | 3% | 4% |
| Unknown | 18 | 17 | 1 | 0 | 94% | 6% | 0% |
| By Faith | | | | | | | |
| Sikh | 621 | 621 | 0 | 0 | 100% | 0% | 0% |
| Muslim | 5 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 100% | 0% | 0% |
| Hindu | 25 | 24 | 1 | 0 | 96% | 4% | 0% |
| Christian | 24 | 7 | 16 | 1 | 29% | 67% | 4% |
| Unknown/Other | 11 | 2 | 6 | 3 | 18% | 55% | 27% |
| By School staff(inc HT) | | | | | | | |
| | 10 | 6 | 4 | 0 | 60% | 40% | 0% |
| By School Governors | | | | | | | |
| | 10 | 3 | 6 | 1 | 30% | 60% | 10% |
| By Local Elected member | | | | | | | |
| | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 67% | 33% | |

Table 3a: Comments supporting Proposal*

| | Freq |
|--|-------------|
| Believe it would enhance childrens understanding of their language, values, culture, faith and religion | 38 |
| Dream come true/Excellent idea | 15 |
| Children will become more balanced and knowledgeable and good citizens | 10 |
| Allows parents to choose how they want their children to be educated | 5 |
| Sikh school would benefit all communities as it would teach good citizenship | 5 |
| Need to educate Sikh children more fully about their religion which cannot be done in mainstream schools. | 4 |
| Good for Sikh community | 4 |
| Will allow teachings and appreciation of Sikhism in more detail | 3 |
| Why should I have to travel to Hayes to attend a Sikh School | 3 |
| Sikh school would provide a better facility for Sikh community and other faiths to meet | 2 |
| Difficult to find time to educate children on culture and faith | 2 |
| Without Sikh school, our children will lose touch with their roots and heritage | 2 |
| In mainstream schools, little focus is made on Sikhism as major religions are Islam, Christianity and Hinduism | 2 |
| School would provide an opportunity for Sikhs and non Sikhs to be educated in an atmosphere of tolerance, respect and self discipline | 2 |
| Will help with reducing drugs/violence | 2 |
| Introduces greater diversity of teaching styles | 1 |
| Help Sikh children to show tolerance towards other faiths | 1 |
| Special needs of the Sikh religion justify a Sikh School | 1 |
| Mainstream schools are failing | 1 |
| Keep your child close to religion and he will be closer to nature | 1 |
| Sikh parents find it hard to educate their own children as some never received education on Sikh history, culture and scriptures | 1 |
| Society, fashion and 'do like the romans do' as nearly wiped out what Sikhs should be | 1 |
| Burdens of Sunday Panjabi Schools can be removed | 1 |
| Panjabi is not taught at all schools at GCSE level | 1 |
| Sports would play an important part of this school | 1 |
| Society and sikh children are becoming worse, need to get back to religion and values | 1 |
| Religion makes good human beings | 1 |
| School is required for preservation of Sikh identity and culture for generations to come | 1 |
| Some strict Sikh parents do not allow their children to partake in sports activities at mainstream schools. It would be different at a Sikh school | 1 |

| | |
|--|---|
| Sikh parents and children are suffering as the gap between them is widening. A Sikh school would help with this. | 1 |
| The Sikh school can become the centre of activity for all Slough community | 1 |
| So we do not all become cockneys | 1 |
| More jobs will be created | 1 |
| There is a lack of responsibility being shown to the community. | 1 |
| To extend choice of faith schools beyond christian and jewish school | 1 |
| Why cannot the sikhs have their own school, only 1 sikh school in Europe | 1 |
| Non-catholic faiths should have choice | 1 |
| the committee should not let this project down | 1 |
| I do not deny your right in our country to have your own school | 1 |

Table 3b: Reasons Against Proposal*

| | Freq |
|---|-------------|
| I oppose all current and proposed denominational schools | 2 |
| Would result in extra traffic in area | 6 |
| Would cause segregation | 3 |
| Faiths schools of all denominations are socially and culturally divisive | 1 |
| A COE school embraces and caters for all religions | 1 |
| Northern Ireland is a good example of children being educated in separate faith schools. | 1 |
| Slough has had a great deal of trouble in recent years and ethnic groups have suffered from each other. | 1 |
| When you go to a country, acceptance into that culture can only come from full integration. | 1 |
| All schools what ever religion are now multi ethnic in slough | 1 |
| I wonder if non-Sikhs will take the places. | 1 |
| Slough already has more school places than it requires. | 1 |
| I would prefer the communities to contribute to the whole not divide into separate groups | 1 |
| Will the school take special needs pupils | 1 |
| Are their any guarantees of the national curriculum to be maintained. | 1 |
| Would prefer parents of all denominations or none could find cultural needs in a multifaith setting | 1 |
| To build strong community we have to mix and not segregate | 1 |

* NB Replies may have contained one or more reasons for supporting or not supporting the proposal.

Consultation Meetings

- 5.8 Two consultation meetings were held with local residents, parents, school staff, headteachers and the general public. The first consultation meeting was held at Ramgharia Community Hall and the second at St Ethelberts Primary School. 91 people attended the first meeting and 112 attended the second meeting. The first meeting had a majority (81) of Sikhs present who supported the idea of a Sikh school. The second meeting had a majority (69) of Sikhs present who supported the idea of a Sikh school. There were objections at both meetings, the details of which are summarised below. A summary of the proceedings of each of these meetings is provided as Appendix B.
- 5.9 The following provides a commentary regarding the main issues that were raised during the consultation meetings.

Need for a Sikh faith Primary school

Individual comments from both sides of the community supported the need for a Sikh faith primary school. Specific points that were made included the fact that over 9% of the Slough population were Sikhs and that they should have the same rights as other communities who have favoured Christian schools. One member who represented a Sikh forum spoke about the support for this project from over 60 Sikh organisations including Gurdwaras around the UK. It should be noted that Slough has the highest density of Sikhs in England.

Parental choice

Some parents commented that they should have the right to send their children to a Sikh school if they felt it was in their interest. In particular, one person felt that the head teacher at Castleview School (who is against this proposal), was being selfish and not respecting the parents choice to have a Sikh school. An ex-councillor stated that the Government is supporting faith schools and therefore there should be no reason why the Sikh community should not have a Sikh school.

Traffic Concerns

There were comments from some local residents about the potential impact of this school on traffic congestion around the proposed site. The council officers stated that detailed traffic assessments would need to be conducted when and if, the proposers seek planning permission.

Financial implications for surrounding schools

Some head teachers suggested that existing primary schools will lose places and funding due to the new Sikh school. Council officers stated that they will have to minimise the effects of this by careful management of excess spaces over a 2-3 year period. In addition the proposers stated that it was highly unlikely that the 400 child capacity would be taken up from Sept 2005. A more realistic forecast would be 100 children during the first year with increases of 100 per year.

School Modas Operandi

Some head teachers asked the proposers how the school would cope with issues such as recruiting teachers, provision for special needs pupils, provision for teaching non-Sikh faith children and the admissions policy. The proposers stated that the national curriculum would be followed at the proposed school and it would have to face difficulties that other schools experience. In terms of admissions policies, the proposers have stated that 20% of places will be specifically reserved for non-Sikh faith children and therefore the issues of segregation and exclusion are minimised. The proposers also stated that unlike some Christian faith schools, where all teachers have to be of Christian faith, the Guru Nanak School in Hayes has 90% of non-Sikh teachers in place.

The proposers stated that social and moral values will be at the heart of the school, they believe that in sufficient focus is given to these issues and some schools pay lip service to these important issues and concentrate on educational standards as a priority.

Process Issues

There were a number of questions raised by the public on process issues including the consultation process, deadlines, scrutiny committees, planning process, Schools organisation committee process, clarity about the response from head teachers and the land purchase process. In addition, questions about why the Arbourvale site was not preferred were asked and the response was that the funding for the school would have been lost had the proposers chosen that site. Specifically, some members stated that they were unhappy with the consultation process (even after the second meeting) and the council officers had to state that the process was run "by the book". Over 700 leaflets were personally dropped into houses by the local residents groups.

SUMMARY OF QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS AT CONSULTATION MEETINGS

25th March 2003 at Ramgharia Community Hall, Slough

The meeting was well attended with 81 Sikhs and 10 non-Sikhs. The meeting began with Council Officers' introductions and an outline of the purpose of the meeting and a summary of the decision making process including SBC Cabinet, the Slough School Organisation Committee and the possible role of an Adjudicator. A summary of the proposal and the reasons for the LEA bringing the proposal forward was presented with reference made to the consultation information. Copies of the consultation information were distributed for those required.

The following people were introduced by Chris Spencer (Director Education) to the public:

| Name | Role |
|-------------------------|--|
| Mick Pavey (MP) | Consultants to proposers |
| Mick Baker(MB) | Council Planning officer |
| Nick Kandola(NK) | Chairman of Slough Sikh Education Gurmat Trust |
| Jagdeesh Singh(JS) | Member of Slough Sikh Education Gurmat Trust |
| Bherminder Singh (BS) | Member of Slough Sikh Education Gurmat Trust |
| Avtar Singh (AS) | General Secretary of the Ramgarhia Gurdwara Slough |

CS stated the agenda, and the format of the meeting and that the meeting would last around 1 hour – 1 ½ hours long. CS then described the role of the council officers and that they have to play a neutral part in this consultation meeting.

MB introduced him self and explained his role and the procedure and criteria the project organisers have to fulfil. Explained the decision making process and that all questions would be recorded for the record in a cabinet report and this report would be used to make any decisions.

NK highlighted the history of the Sikh school project in Slough together with the reasons why a Sikh school is desired by the Sikh community in Slough.

JS spoke about the ethos of the school and highlighted that the Guru Nanak School in Hayes would be used as a model for the proposed school in Slough.

Question were invited by CS as follows:

Q1 Do the consultation response forms need to be filled in today?

- A1: (NK) No, the closing date was the 18th April 2003, the forms were available to any one at the back of the hall and indeed more were available on request.
- Q2 Would the SOC justify their decision publicly or is a closed meeting?
- A2: (MB) SOC encourages the publication of their reasoning, in that way the public can see for them selves the reasoning behind any decision.
- Q3 Will there be any other consultation meeting?
- A3: (NK) The proposers considered this meeting as the official consultation meeting as per advice from the LEA, but if the public asks then it may be possible to conduct another.
- Q4 A complaint from the public that not all local residents around the proposed site were made aware of this meeting. ?
- A4: (MB) replied that it was always difficult to target members of the public. The organisers had complied with previous consultation procedures on the advice of the LEA. For e.g. Slough Citizen advertisement was made which is delivered to all households in Slough. If the local residents felt that this was not sufficient then the organisers may consider holding another meeting for just the local residents.
- Q5 Question on consultation with Schools from the Head teacher at Castleview School.
Having received a named letter from the organisers, it was not made clear to him if the letter was also meant to be passed on to the parents body, other teachers and or Governors?
He was also concerned that the consultation did not coincide with Governors meetings, such that this matter could be discussed in advance of any consultation. He went to say that the 18th April dead line did not give the Governors of the school to meet and discuss this issue. He suggested that there was still time to involve parents and Governors in this consultation process.

A5: (NK) We did not specifically send a letter to address the governors or parents of children but were advised by the council to send the letter to the headteachers. If more time was required to seek the views of governing bodies then this would be considered.

Statement: Councillor David Macisaac addressed the meeting to clarify situation and remarked that it was as wide a consultation as possible. He was generally in favour of the Sikh School principle considering Slough has a 9.1 % population of Sikhs. His main concern was the competing conflicts between the Football club and the traffic issues.

Statement: Mr Gurmukh Singh commended the project organisers and explained that the Slough School project was discussed at a all party recent Sikh forum which represented over 60 Gurdwaras and other institutions around the UK and firm support for this proposal was minuted during the sessions. He would keep a keen interest in its progress.

Statement: A member of public suggested that the local residents needed to be consulted.

Statement: The head of Castlevew explained that there still may be a way to address the response from parents and Governors.

Statement: Inderpal Singh, a member of the public, suggested that it may be possible to create a rolling Road Show to gain the views of the wider public. He was against holding another consultation meeting as it would only be a repeat of this meeting.

Q6: Would the Sikh school accommodate behavioural difficulties?

A6: (JS) The organisers would have to investigate this issue in more detail.

Q7: What would the policy for Staff recruitment ?

A7: (JS) Staffing would be from cross section of the community and would be recruited as per normal practice in other school based on market forces.

Q8: What provision would there be for teaching other non Sikh faiths in this school

A8: (JS) All faiths will be taught as per the national curriculum. JS cited the Sikh School in Hayes where this is a common practice.

Q9: Current primary schools will lose places and funding, how would this affect other schools in the local area?

A9: (NK) The New school would create 400 places. Children from a number of schools are expected to fill these places as well as 70 – 80 that currently attend the Hayes school. Other children from the surrounding area eg, Maidenhead, Reading, Windsor and Uxbridge might well attend. The effect would be slow to start with in the initial years but the LEA will have to minimise the effects by careful management of excess spaces over a time of two to three years. There will be revenue cost to the council , in return the council would agree to sell the plot of Land for building the school and LEA would provide the playing fields.

Q10: How was the land to assigned to the organisers?

A10: (NK) The proposers would purchase it freehold.

Q11: The new school would increase the accident rate, what facilities are there in area to accommodate increase in congestion?

A11: (CS) This was a planning issue and would be dealt in the planning process and subsequent public consultations.

Statement: The Head of Castleview spoke well of the organisers intentions and referred to all the positive attributes that organisers had eluded to. His school had almost 50 % children from the Indian subcontinent and there was already a school in Slough that delivered all the aspiration that the organisers expects. What do you need another school as existing schools already provide for the needs of Sikh children? The kid's achievements exceed targets at Castleview. 50% go to

grammar schools and they have always aspired to excellence. This was still possible in existing schools and not by creating new one. It was with regrets that he could not support the project.

Statement: A member of the public suggested that a Sikh School would provide a choice to any parents to send their children to an equally well run school as Castleview. The headteacher at Castleview is being selfish as some children may leave his school in favour of the Sikh school. Why should any child be denied the opportunity to attend a Sikh school or any other school.

Statement: Harry Gahtora, an Ex. Slough B. Councillor reiterated the sentiments and spoke in favour of the project and remarked “The government want this type of school, why can’t we have this school”

Chris Spencer then thanked all these present for attending and taking part in the meeting. He encouraged any one who had not done so to take a response form from the back of the hall and provide there views on the subject. The meeting was then closed.

Meeting held on the 29th April at St. Ethelberts Primary School Wexham Road, Slough

The meeting was well attended with 69 Sikhs and 43 non-Sikhs. The meeting began with Council Officers' introductions and an outline of the purpose of the meeting and a summary of the decision making process including SBC Cabinet, the Slough School Organisation Committee and the possible role of an Adjudicator. A summary of the proposal and the reasons for the LEA bringing the proposal forward was presented with reference made to the consultation information. Copies of the consultation information were distributed for those required.

The meeting was Chaired by Chris Spenser (CS), accompanied by Mick Backer (MB), Nick Kandola (NK), Jagdish Singh (JS), and Hari Singh Sawak (HSS).

CS welcomed everyone and provided every one with an insight to his and his Department's role in managing the proposed Sikh School from the LEA's perspective. He explained that he was facilitating the project as he was duty bound in an unbiased manner. The Government's had an agenda to promote diversity and encouraged schools to achieve a VA or Grant Maintained status. The Government was keen to encourage groups to come forward with plans such as the Sikh School Project in order to promote diversity and as such CS and his team were there to facilitate such initiatives on behalf of the proposers. There were not there to promote or undermine such projects but to provide unbiased help, assistance and advise, to the proposers, for them to deliver their goal. It would be up to the " Local " community to decide it's final fate. CS then went on to introduce MB, who dealt with the day to day management of this project, who was conversant with the complex nature of this particular project.

MB Introduced him self, as Planning Officer, He explained that this was a formal consultation, convened at the special request of the residents. The results of which would be combined with the previous consultation held on the 25th March 2003 at the Ramgharia Community Centre, Slough. All views and questions would be formally recorded and will presented to the decision makers (SBC and SOC). He encouraged every one to express their views and reminded all present that consultation documents were available to any one and that if any had not done so, they should to fill one in to register their view. It was an important document, the results of which would form the official evidence for the authorities to refer to, in arriving at any decisions. The process at arriving at any decision would be as following.

SBC will receive the summery of the consultation meetings and response forms. SBC will make an initial decision to sell the land for the purposes of building a School, if agreed at the meeting. This would be followed up by publishing the Statutory Consultation Notices (SCN), which would have to be published to the public, via the Newspaper, public places etc. A two month period is allowed for any one to formally object in writing to SBC, after which the Schools Organisation Committee (SOC) would decide on the proposal as it will be a VA School. The SOC is made up of five groups including the LEA, Cof E, Schools Groups and the SREC.

There is an adjudicator, a single person, who normally has extensive experience in educational matters and is allowed six week to consider the facts. There is an adjudicator decision is final.

Q1: A question was raised about the scrutiny process ?

A1: (MB). This will be considered a significant decision and as such the scrutiny process will apply two weeks before Cabinet meeting.

Q2: From a member of the public asking for Councillor's names ?

A2: (CS). Referred the questioner to ask The Clark to SBC who would provide him with the required list.

Q3: From the public. When would the planning process be considered for this project.

A3: (CS) It would all depend on when the proposers submit a planning proposal. Any decisions made by SOC would be subject to planning permission granted by SBC.

CS then asked NK to give a brief synopsis of the proposed project. NK explained the history behind the school project and also highlighted that Arbour Vale school could not be considered as an alternative site as the Dfes had confirmed that we would lose the funding due to the long process of the PFI bid for that school.

JS talked about the ethos of the school.

HSS gave a brief synopsis of his back ground and reiterated Nick Kandola and Jagdish's sentiments.

The meeting was then open to the public and CS invited any questions.

Q4: As there was a National shortage of teachers, how would the organises proposing to recruit such teachers

A4: (JS) replied that the normal methods would be employed and the best teachers sought in the current situation. He referred to Guru Nanak School in Hayes, where 90 % of teachers are non-Sikhs. Only appropriate staff will be employed fit for the purpose.

Q5: The question of traffic was raised.

A5: (MB) suggested that this matter be referred to the planning stage of the proposed project. The Planning Authority meeting would focus on such matters in detail and would be dealt with in the planning consultation process.

Q6: What was the selection process to schools admission?

A6: (NK). On a First come, first serve, where 80 % would have a Sikh background and the remaining 20 % from a cross section of the community. The Schools prospectus would

outline the official selections process at a later stage and this would not be very dissimilar from other faith based schools.

Q7 Will other non – Sikh faiths be taught in the School to both the Sikh children as well as the non – Sikhs?

A7: (JS). There will an active encouragement to provide an opportunity to teach the faiths based on the National curriculum. JS quoted the examples at the Guru Nanak Sikh Hayes. Where there is clear evidence of the multi faith education provided to the children.

Q8 Social awareness and teaching good citizenship is already catered for in existing schools, so why do we need Sikh School ?

A8: (JS). There was much evidence that this was not the case. A Sikh School will provide additional benefits over and above just attending school. The school will make a distinct effort to building a “good character” and providing an environment for realising the full potential of a child.

Q9: Teachers have always taught moral values to school children , this proposal was encouraging segregation and would lead to problems in the future years?

A9: (CS). Replied that the National Curriculum will be taught by law and that all religions would be taught as per the practice in all schools.

Statement: Councillor David Macisaac, He did not agree with the person who asked the previous question and has been to the Guru Nanak School in Hayes and there are no segregation issues. He reminded all present that Sikhs represented 9.1 % of Slough’s population and that there no objection to a Sikh school in principle and that traffic was the main concern.

Statement: Jagroop Singh from the public discussed three elements he had noted. Language, Integration and segregation, and that he had benefited from his faith, being a third generation Sikh who was on the path of drugs not so long ago.

There was some argument between Jagroop Singh and another member of the public.

Statement: Jagroop Singh eluded to the fact that he did not like to use the word religion, but rather use the word Ethics. Building the child’s morals just in the home was not sufficient, but also required an effort during school time. The School will encourage children to develop them selves in an environment where the Sikh Ethos facilitates spiritual, social activities on a daily basis.

Q10: A member of the public was not happy with the consultation process and there was a lack of information.

A10: (NK) replied that the prospers had followed the prescribed process for planning a consultation. MB had advised the group and that they had followed the process as exercised many times in the past. The consultation documents have always been available and responses have always been sought. MB reiterated the process of progressing the

project as stated earlier. CS stated the MB was being polite and actually the proposers have run the consultation process “by the book”.

Statement: A member of the Borderside residents association reminded everyone that 700 leaflets had been posted to the local residents giving notice for this meeting.

Q11 From the public, He had nothing against a Sikh School, but when he was working in Southall in the mid 80's there was certain political issues in India(Amritsar) , What would the Schools policy be in managing controversial Sikh issues?

A11: (CS) suggested that a school was a micro-cosom of the wider society and that it was not fair to ask the proposers to accept such reasonability, citing Northern Ireland as an example.

NK remarked that in such situations, the schools policy would be to advocate the Sikh Ethos first and foremost and promote unity in the community.

Q12 A member of the public was not aware of the proposed site.

A12: (NK) identified it as the plot of land between the allotments and the St Ethelbert's School

Statement: (CS) reminded every one that the proposal was not yet at the planning stage.

Q13: A resident was concerned about the fact that she was not aware of the second consultation process.

A13: A local resident stated that he himself had organised the delivery of 700 notices to local residents.

Q14: Kevin from the Public asked if there were any plans for a secondary school.

A14: (NK) replied that there were no plans as yet, but may be considered in the next phase once the primary school was up and running successfully.

Q15: A member of the public asked what was the value of the proposed site.

A15: (NK) replied that there were no figures available at present and that the District Valuer was in the process of accessing the value on behalf of the SBC and the proposers.

Q16: If the Land was assigned to another purpose(say new houses), would the general public ever have an opportunity to discuss it to the degree this proposal had been.

A16: (CS) explained that if there were competing demands for the land, then if it was an educational matter then it would be, but if it was any other then it may not be consulted to this degree.

Q17: What would the School's position be if there were possible political or social divisions in the Sikh community?

A17: (NK) stated that the school would promote Social Cohesion and would expect the school to go out of its way to promote unity.

Q18: Time scales for the proposed plan.

A18: (NK) The school was expected to, assuming all the authorities gave their agreement, to start teaching in Sept 2005

Q19: A member of the public was concerned that the traffic issue was being ignored. The suggestion was that it should be discussed now rather than at the planning stage. There was the football ground and the road was a busy hospital road. Was there any plan to take away some of the green verge to accommodate the extra traffic?

A19: (CS) replied that no traffic flow analysis had been carried out and that it would be difficult to conduct a discussion on traffic until all the facts were known. He referred to his earlier comments about planning process where this matter could be discussed in detail.

Q20: Would there be school closures if a new school was built.

A20: (CS) replied that there was no guarantee. It was the responsibility of the L.E.A for planning the places accurately. Other schools may lose places by creating space. Indeed it was raised in the previous meeting and indeed the proposal would have an effect. The effect would be spread over a number of schools. The LEA manages evolution and may indeed have to look at amalgamating schools. This proposal would provide opportunity to re evaluate the schools in general.

NK remarked that the impact may not be as severe as one might think as in the first few years there would be a low intake and indeed some of the children that currently attend the Sikh School in Hayes may help to lower the impact. Over time spare spaces spread over a number of schools would be managed by the LEA.

Q21: The Head teacher at St Ethelberts School asked if the school budgets were likely to effect her school especially with respects to capital and number of teachers?

A21: (CS) replied that there would indeed be a revenue implication, but not until the school starts filling up.

Q22: The Arbervale school was a potential site, why was it not considered by the proposers.

A22: NK replied that it had indeed been considered and that due to long term uncertainties for that school and especially the PFI bid, it did not fit in well with the time scales that the proposers had to work against, especially the June dead line set by the DfES.

Statement: The Local councillor reminded every one that the consultation process could have only taken place if there was a potential site identified and such the council would have the right to make the final decision.

CS then thanked the Head teacher for hosting the event and congratulated every for taking part in a meeting in an honourable manner. NK thanked the headteacher for hosting the event.

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Appendix B

CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

**Proposal for a new Sikh Voluntary Aided School,
Slough.**

7th March 2003

Consultation Statement

Purpose of this paper

- 1) The purpose of this consultation paper is to provide the local community with details of a proposed new Sikh Voluntary Aided primary school in Slough, and to invite opinions and comment. Please reply using the form at the end of this leaflet. Your views will be summarised and presented initially to the Cabinet Committee of Slough Borough Council as part of the planning process. Your completed form should be returned by 18th April 2003.

To assist in the understanding of the educational terms used in this document, footnotes have been provided at the end.

- 2 An open meeting for the purpose of this consultation has been arranged for the 25th March 2003 at 7pm in the Ramgharia Sikh Educational and Community Centre, Woodland Ave, Slough, Berkshire, SL1 3BU

Introduction

Provision for a Sikh V.A. Primary School in Slough

- 3) Faith schools have a good record of delivering a high quality of education to pupils and many parents have welcomed the clear ethos of these schools. The government recognises this and therefore welcomes more faith schools , where there is clear local demand from parents and the community.
- 4) For the first time, Muslim, Sikh and Greek Orthodox schools have been brought inside the state system and are being funded on the same basis as, for example, Church of England and Catholic schools have been for some time. Last year the following faith schools were given provisional funding by the government:
 - 42 Roman Catholic/Church of England
 - 1 Muslim
 - 1 Sikh
- 5) Based on these government policies, the Slough Sikh Community has taken steps to establish a brand new Sikh faith school in Slough. The government has ear marked £6.2 Million towards the building costs.

The Proposal

- 6) The Slough Sikh Educational Gurmat Trust proposes to open a new Primary School with a standard number of 60, with a nursery unit for 26 full time equivalent pupil places, from September 2005 The proposed site is off Wexham Road, adjacent to St. Ethelbert's Roman Catholic Primary School.

The Aims of the School

- 7) It is extremely important for any educational establishment to have a mission. The success of the Sikh School is based on the following aims:-
- To build a strong community basis on the Sikh ethos of equality, honour, social responsibility and righteousness.
 - To enable all pupils to achieve their potential through the highest standard of learning, whilst developing self-esteem, self-confidence and consideration for others.
 - To strengthen the bonds between home, community and school, this will provide each pupil with the support necessary to participate in the wider society.
 - To provide an environment for pupils where they can feel comfortable within their own identity and culture building individuals with strong self awareness and citizenship, with mutual understanding of others regardless of colour, class, gender or religion.
 - To make provision for life long learning and personal development.

Sikh Ethos

- 8) The fundamental belief of Sikhism is that all of humanity is equal, regardless of gender, faith, creed and caste, and the respect for one another's values and customs are the right of every individual without oppression or segregation from society.
- 9) On the religious principles of Sikhism, it teaches that there is only 'one' supreme lord who has many names, and some call this supreme lord Waheguru, Allah, God, Shiva, Ram, Buddha, Jehovah, etc., and that every one individual has their own unique path in getting to the supreme lord. For this reason Sikhism teaches not to discriminate against any faith as all faiths have their own just paths to the one supreme lord.
- 10) Sikhism had its origins in a multicultural and multi-faith society in India. Sikhs have always lived amongst a variety of people, be it in India, America, Canada, East Africa, Singapore, Australia or Great Britain. They believe in respecting others and getting respected. Sikhism is inclusive. It is not an exclusive faith.

Admissions Policy

- 11) Whilst priority will be given to children of the Sikh faith, we intend that the school should have an inclusive admission policy and we will designate a proportion of open places for local children. We envisage that the following proportions and pupil numbers will be designated for the admission year group:
- 80 % Sikh Pupils = 48
 - 20% Non-Sikh Pupils = 12

School Places in Slough

12) Slough has a multicultural community and this is represented within its schools. .

Table 1 – Slough Pupils according to Faith Group

| | Other Christian | Muslim | Roman Catholic | Sikh | Hindu | Other | Unclassified | Total |
|-------------------|-----------------|--------|----------------|------|-------|-------|--------------|-------|
| Primary Schools | 3048 | 2432 | 1477 | 930 | 418 | 722 | 1309 | 10336 |
| As % | 29% | 24% | 14% | 9% | 4% | 7% | 13% | |
| Secondary Schools | 1920 | 1780 | 1356 | 918 | 433 | 516 | 1057 | 7979 |
| As % | 24% | 22% | 17% | 12% | 5% | 6% | 13% | |
| Total | 4968 | 4212 | 2833 | 1848 | 851 | 1237 | 2366 | 18315 |
| As % | 27% | 23% | 15% | 10% | 5% | 7% | 13% | |

Source: Slough Borough Council

13) Within Slough there are currently a range of established schools represented.

Table 2 – Types of Denominational School in Slough

| | Non denominational | | Church of England | Roman Catholic |
|----------------------|--------------------|------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| | Community | Foundation | Voluntary Controlled | Voluntary Aided |
| Primary | | | | |
| Number of Schools | 21 | 6 | 2 | 5 |
| Percentage of Pupils | 52.1% | 27.4% | 4.7% | 15.8% |
| Secondary | | | | |
| Number of Schools | 4 | 4 | 1 | 2 |
| Percentage of Pupils | 32.0% | 42.6% | 7.0% | 18.4% |

Source: Slough School Organisation Plan 2002 - 2007

14) The number of primary pupils is not expected to change significantly over the next five years. About 10% of surplus places is expected to exist in Slough according to the Slough school organisation plan. The addition of a two form of entry school in the context of a stable population could potentially increase the level of surplus places to about 14%. However, the new school is likely to attract some pupils from outside of Slough, and it will provide places for Sikh pupils from Slough who would otherwise seek places outside the Borough. In monitoring the level of surplus places the LEA will seek to review the impact of the new school.

Table 3 -Number of primary pupils expected in future years

| | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 |
|---------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Number of Pupils | 10336 | 10336 | 10275 | 10295 | 10217 | 10103 |
| Capacity of Schools | 11344 | 11344 | 11344 | 11344 | 11344 | 11344 |

| | | | | | | |
|-----------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Occupancy | 91% | 91% | 91% | 91% | 90% | 89% |
|-----------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|

Situation in Neighbouring Boroughs

- 15) The only other Sikh faith school within a neighbouring borough is the Guru Nanak Primary and Secondary Sikh School in Hayes. Currently, this school is heavily oversubscribed and it is estimated that approximately 80 pupils from the Slough borough attend this school at a primary level.
- 16) The Hillingdon School Organisation Plan from 2002/2003 shows that the nearest primary school planning areas to the Slough Borough - Hillingdon, Uxbridge, Hayes Cranford and Harmondsworth - have need for expanding their pupil places.

The National Curriculum

- 17) The basic curriculum of the Sikh school will be based on the National Curriculum that all government funded schools in England teach. The curriculum aims to be broad, balanced and relevant to the needs of those living in contemporary society. Teacher selection will be based on teaching abilities and merits.
- 18) In addition to the National Curriculum the school will take advantage of teaching principles based on the Sikh ethos, religion and customs. This will include personal and social disciplines, traditional south Asian music (Rabab, Tubala etc.) and Sikh history. The school intends to educate its students in a range of other faiths, so that they are able to have a fair and balanced understanding of all other societies.
- 19) Provision will also be made in the time table for non-national curriculum activities. Non-Sikh pupils will be welcome to join in if their parents wish them to do so. These activities will be held outside the core school day, in the morning or in the evening. Supervision and care will be provided for pupils staying on.
- 20) Religious education will continue to be part of the curriculum. The governing body in the Sikh voluntary aided school will determine the religious education and it will be based on guidelines set by both the Sikh School Committee and the local education authority. Arrangements for worship will also meet the requirements of the Sikh School Committee and Slough Borough Council. In this way the Sikh school will continue to involve representatives from other local faiths and religions in school assemblies in order to reflect the needs of a multi-denominational school.

Staffing

- 21) Teaching and non-teaching staff will comprise Sikhs, and non-Sikhs who support the Sikh ethos, who are in a position to be models to their pupils both in word and deed. Staff of high academic, moral and religious character will be selected. The quality of teaching staff will be a major factor in the school's success. The arrangements for the employment of teaching and support staff will be substantially the same as in foundation and voluntary aided schools.

Governing Body

- 22) The School will be run by a Governing Body made up of Parents, Teachers/staff Local Education and lay Governors, in a similar way as any other school in the Borough.
- 23) Governing bodies of voluntary aided schools have similar responsibilities and independence to foundation schools. As well as responsibility for the direction of the curriculum, for managing the budget, for reporting to parents and for raising levels of achievement - which all governing bodies have - voluntary aided school governors have responsibilities for admissions, for the employment of teaching and support staff and for the building.
- 24) The majority of the members of a voluntary aided school governing body are appointed by the school's promoters, in this case it will be the Sikh School Committee. By law some foundation governors must be parents of pupils attending the school. Generally voluntary aided foundation governors bring wide and valuable experience to the role.

Support

- 25) Slough Sikh Primary School will work in close collaboration with Guru Nanak Sikh Primary and Secondary Schools in Hayes for mutual help. It will also work closely with all schools in Slough, and the Local Education Authority, to promote community cohesion and to ensure that children from different cultural backgrounds have an opportunity to meet and better understand each other.

Buildings and grounds

- 26) Governors, supported by the Sikh School Committee, will be responsible for the external maintenance and the provision of new buildings. They will have to meet 10% of the capital costs of the initial build and any subsequent improvement, enlargement or major maintenance projects. The remaining 90% of the cost of approved projects would be funded by central government.
- 27) Though the Sikh community in Slough and the UK, and the parents of pupils, will be involved in fund-raising, as they are in most schools, they will not be asked to make regular contributions to the costs of building improvements and maintenance.

The consultation process

- 28) A summary of this document has been distributed to:
- Parents of children who may wish their children to attend the Sikh School in Slough
 - Slough residents (via libraries, community centres)
 - Slough schools
 - Other local community, foundation and church schools
 - Other interested parties.

The document will also be made available on the web at the following address:

<http://www.sloughsikhschool.org>; <http://www.slough.gov.uk>

29) Local Authority Planning Approval

The proposal will be subject to the local authority planning approval which will include a separate consultation process at a later date.

30) A public consultation meeting has been arranged as stated in the beginning of this document. At the meeting there will be a short presentation on the proposals, an opportunity to ask questions and the chance to express opinions. Views will be recorded and taken into account in deciding whether to proceed.

31) In addition to the form provided written views are also welcome. They should be sent to:
The General Secretary
Slough Sikh Educational Gurmat Trust
PO Box 2050
Slough PDO, Berkshire, SL1 3FS

31) All comments should be returned by 18th April 2003 at the latest.

Consultation Reply

Please return this reply sheet by 18th April 2003 to:

The General Secretary
Slough Sikh Educational Gurmat Trust
PO Box 2050
Slough PDO, Berkshire, SL1 3FS

1) Please indicate, by ticking the appropriate box, whether or not you support the proposal set out below to:

- Open a new Sikh Primary School with a standard number of 360 full time equivalent pupils from September 2005.

Please tick one of the following box:

I/we support the proposal

I/we do not support the proposal

1) Please answer the following questions about yourself:

Your Name:

Your School(s)/Organisation:
(if you are associated with one or more)

Your residential post code:

| | | | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | | | | | | |
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Your faith/Belief:
(Please tick one only)

| | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Sikh |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Protestant |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Catholic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Muslim |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Jewish |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Hindu |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Buddhist |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Jehovah Witness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Atheist |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Other (please Specify below) |

Please also help us to collate peoples views by stating if you are one or more of the following:

- School governor Please specify school:
- Member of school staff Please specify school:
- Parent or guardian of pupil Please specify at which school:
- Resident of Slough
- Local Elected member Please specify group/organisation:
- Member of local community group Please specify group/organisation:
- School Diocesan Authorisation Please specify:
- Other Please specify:

Signed: Date:

YOU ARE INVITED TO MAKE COMMENTS OVERLEAF

