

# The School Place Planning Study Update 2020

**Cabinet**

**Date: 9th September 2020**

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Author: Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for  
Commercialisation, Education and Skills  
Corporate Director Children's Services.

Wards: All

Parishes Affected: All

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## **1. Purpose and Reasons**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to identify the number of school places required to meet Swindon's long-term educational place planning needs until 2026. The report consists of the expected demographic projections, proposed housing development areas, and the need to support attainment and opportunities for young people across the Town and Borough.
- 1.2 The report brings together information from a range of sources and sets out the issues the Borough will face in meeting its statutory duties for providing school places until 2026. The strategy includes present and predicted future pupil numbers on roll, together with information about birth rates, school capacity and new housing.
- 1.3 This report supports Priority Two of the Vision to "Offer education opportunities that lead to the right skills and right jobs in the right places" and in particular pledge 7 "in addition to two new Free secondary schools, build one Secondary and 12 Primary schools to meet the needs of our increasing population".

## **2. Recommendations**

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 2.1 Approve the School Place Planning study update 2020 attached as Appendix 1.

## **3. Background**

- 3.1 It is the Local Authority's statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient school places in Swindon. Please note the numbers provided in this report relate to forms of entry, which in planning school places one form of entry (usually expressed as FE) equals 30 pupils at the initial point of entry (Reception year for Primary schools or year 7 for Secondary schools). For clarity, we have attempted to refer to FE throughout this report.
- 3.1 Cabinet has received a number of reports on additional Primary and Secondary school places in recent years and this report intends to pull together the Borough wide need for places following an update of the school place planning study, which was previously updated in 2016.

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- 3.2 The updated school place planning study identifies that by 2026 the Borough will need to provide an additional 30 FE to meet Primary Place needs, and 10 FE to meet Secondary Place needs, with potential expansions in addition.

## Overview

- 3.3 The School Place Planning Study was updated in 2011 and 2016 to identify the number of school places and a range of other educational needs, required to meet Swindon's long-term educational place planning needs until 2026.
- 3.4 Since the 2016 version of the school place planning study was published, the Swindon Local Plan has been approved and the information contained within the previous study requires updating. In addition, there have been some changes to the demographic situation and school capacity in some existing areas of the town. These are described in the Study under each area. In addition, the following changes have been made:
- 3.4.1 School Place Planning Areas
  - 3.4.2 Review of the Council's Pupil Planning Ratio (Yield)
  - 3.4.3 Reduction of the Surplus places in the Borough to 5% in line with the National Audit Commission's recommendations

## School Place Planning Areas

- 3.5 In the majority of cases the planning of school places in Swindon is based on the geographical areas defined by the secondary school catchments and feeder school aligned to them. These are the same demographic planning areas that the council is required to report on annually to the Department for Education (DfE) to inform future capital basic need allocations.
- 3.6 Place planning can be influenced by parental preference in terms of selecting a school. Applications for school places are considered in line with the relevant Admission Authority's Admission Policy and over-subscription criteria.
- 3.7 These School Planning Areas are not catchment areas. They are a helpful way of assessing the broad distribution of need in a more flexible and integrated way. Our Secondary planning areas differ slightly to our Primary ones, in that we have one additional planning area for Primary (North Central):
- 3.8 Primary Planning Areas:
- 3.8.1 North Swindon (N)
  - 3.8.2 North Central Swindon (NC)
  - 3.8.3 Central (C)

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- 3.8.4 East Swindon (E)
- 3.8.5 West Swindon and Wiltshire (W)
- 3.8.6 Rural (R)
- 3.9 Secondary Planning Areas:
  - 3.9.1 North Swindon (N)
  - 3.9.2 Central (C)
  - 3.9.3 East Swindon (E)
  - 3.9.4 West Swindon and Wiltshire (W)
  - 3.9.5 Rural (R)
- 3.10 These new areas mean that we are better placed to see the pressures and demands in these specific areas, particularly in North Swindon. The Catholic schools are now also included within each area, rather than in separate cluster. This also better reflects the position in each planning area.

## Review of the Councils Pupil Product Ratio (Pupil Yield)

- 3.11 The Council reviewed its Pupil Yield in 2017 as this has not been reviewed since 2008. It conducted a population forecasting study across four settlements in the Borough to establish a Pupil Product Ratio. This increased the Primary yield to 0.37 and 0.14 for Secondary, from 0.231 for Primary and 0.165 for Secondary. This has increased the pupil yield across all proposed housing in Swindon and has therefore increased the yield in terms of Primary and Secondary places, which is reflected in each planning area.

## Reduction of the Surplus places in the Borough to 5%

- 3.12 The previous study, recommended that Swindon have 6% and 8% Surplus for Primary and Secondary respectively. However, this report recommends that, despite the financial challenges associated with accommodating growth, around 5% surplus places be maintained at Secondary school level and 5% at Primary school level. This is in line with the National Audit Office. The key reasons are as follows:
  - 3.12.1 Scale of growth – Flexibility is needed within the school infrastructure as the large scale of the housing growth creates a high degree of uncertainty in predicting long-term pupil place need. In particular, flexibility is necessary in terms of predicting the peak number of pupils at any point. The numbers and ages of the pupils from a housing development will depend on the building rate and the ‘type’ of housing being built. The latter

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is tied to the general economic climate with developers choosing not to build if the houses will not be occupied.

3.12.2 The Swindon Peak – Surplus places will be extremely important in managing any possible temporary peak in school place demand associated with growth in the town. If any peak in demand is not managed the Borough may have to provide even more school places that could then become surplus in the future

## Overall Birth data

- 3.13 In order to be able to forecast the demand in terms of school places in the Borough, the LA examines the birth data for the area, which comes from the Primary Care Trust (PCT) and is based on where pupils were born. From this, the LA applies its robust forecast methodology to anticipate the Reception numbers for the forth-coming years.
- 3.14 When the 2019 data from the PCT was analysed, it showed that although the number of children at Reception age in Swindon had increased from 2013 -2016, thereafter it began to decline. The data indicated that this trend would continue to decline over the next 3 years, apart from a small predicted spike in 2021. Indeed, it showed that there could be large numbers of surplus places in certain areas of the Town and in particular at certain schools.
- 3.15 In particular, 13 Primary schools were affected across the Town and it was predicted that at these schools from 2022 there could be a significant reduction of demand for Reception places. The LA met with the schools affected and attended a meeting of Swindon Primary Head Teachers to discuss the opportunities this presented for those schools. Options included reducing the school's published admissions number (PAN's), utilising the space and capacity for other uses such as making provision to promote inclusion for children with SEND, early year's provision for 2 year olds and pre-school provision and location for early intervention services. There will be an opportunity for schools to be creative with their capacity and apply for SEND capital investment. The LA has had confirmation from some schools that they will be considering reducing their PAN for 2022 and the Admissions Team will be working with those schools.
- 3.16 It is important to note that although there is predicted to be growth from planned housing in the Swindon planning areas, the timing of this will need to be examined carefully, and until planned housing is built and occupied there is still likely to be surplus in areas. As such the LA will continue to monitor the birth data versus housing growth to enable schools to be fully informed of their forecasts and to be able to make informed decisions.

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## Borough Wide Primary Existing Pressures

- 3.17 Overall, the forecast for Primary pressures across the Borough, which includes the birth data and any migration to the Town, shows that there is enough capacity within the Town, without taking into account the impact of future growth from housing developments.

## Borough Wide Secondary Existing Pressures

- 3.18 Looking at forecast figures for secondary in Swindon overall there is estimated to be a decrease in numbers in the longer term, with a slight rise in Primary as peaks move through and up to Secondary. In 2016 there was peak in Reception numbers where the Council implemented a number of bulge classes across the Borough, and it is this peak that we will see in 2023 as these children reach Secondary school age, before the Secondary numbers are forecast to decline slightly by 2026.
- 3.19 The number of pupils going out of borough is estimated to remain broadly static at approximately 350. However, this will depend on whether there is a further decline in the numbers going to out of area schools close to the Swindon border such as Bradon Forest in Purton, Wiltshire. In addition, the effect of the opening of The Deanery in September 2019 on the number of pupils, especially from west Swindon, going to Royal Wootton Bassett Academy, is yet to be felt.

## Growth due to housing proposals

- 3.20 The Swindon Borough Local Plan 2026 outlines a strategy for long-term growth including around a further 18,690 homes. Table 1, below, outlines how the growth will be distributed and sets out the predicted impact on available school places across the town in addition to existing pressures. The house building programme will generate a need for around 33 forms-of-entry at Primary and 17.5 FE at Secondary school level across the town. A 'Form of Entry' (FE) equates to 30 pupils and there are 12 year groups from Reception in the Primary sector to Year 11 in a Secondary school.

**Table 1 Primary and Secondary School needs from new housing development.**

Location	Housing Nos	School Place Needs Forms of Entry (FE) <u>Primary</u>	Methodology <u>Primary</u>	Methodology <u>Secondary</u>	School Place Needs Forms of Entry (FE) <u>Secondary</u>
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Swindon Urban Area (Central)	376	0.66	(376 x 0.37)/7/30	(376 x 0.14)/5/30	0.35
Highworth	516	0.91	(516 x 0.37)/7/30	(516 x 0.14)/5/30	0.48
Wroughton	608	1.07	(608 x 0.37)/7/30	(608 x 0.14)/5/30	0.57
Other Villages	152	0.27	(152 x 0.37)/7/30	(152 x 0.14)/5/30	0.14
Sites with Planning Permission (non-strategic) (Central)	2533	4.46	(2533 x 0.37)/7/30	(2533 x 0.14)/5/30	2.36
Neighbourhood Plans (non-permissioned)	42	0.07	(42 x 0.37)/7/30	(42 x 0.14)/5/30	0.04
Wichelstowe Remainder	2821	4.97	(2821 x 0.37)/7/30	(2821 x 0.14)/5/30	2.63
Commonhead/Badbury Park Remainder	427	0.75	(427 x 0.37)/7/30	(427 x 0.14)/5/30	0.40
Tadpole Garden Village Remainder	629	1.11	(629 x 0.37)/7/30	(629 x 0.14)/5/30	0.59
New Eastern Villages	8,936	15.74	(8936 x 0.37)/7/30	(8936 x 0.14)/5/30	8.34
Kingsdown	1,650	2.91	(1650 x 0.37)/7/30	(1650 x 0.14)/5/30	1.54
<b>Total Swindon Borough</b>	<b>18,690</b>	<b>32.92 FE</b>			<b>17.44 FE</b>

- 3.21 The following section of this report sets out a summary of the pressures within the individual school place planning areas and proposals to meet the demand. Further detail on each area is set out in the School Place Planning Study 2020 attached at Appendix 1.

## North Swindon

- 3.22 Primary: The planning area in North Swindon is split into two parts; North and North Central.

3.22.1 North; due to existing demands in the area and the housing growth from the remainder of the Tadpole development, Abbey Farm and Blunsdon Stadium, there is forecast to be a need for an additional 2FE. However, this need will be met by the opening of Abbey Farm Primary School in 2022

3.22.2 North Central: Despite infill building at North Star and other areas, due to the existing pressures in the area being low, there is forecast to be a slight surplus of places in this area.



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- 3.23 Secondary: From the known pressures and those from new housing (Abbey Farm, Tadpole and Blunsdon Stadium), there is forecast to be capacity in North Swindon Secondary schools to meet the demand.
- 3.24 It must also be noted that at present around 1.27FE from North Swindon attend Highworth Warneford, which is in the rural planning area, which if this continues would add additional capacity to North Swindon Secondary schools.
- 3.25 There is also a rising trend in North Swindon for parents to apply for Secondary schools in Wiltshire, with currently 3.3FE attending Bradon Forest in Purton or Royal Wootton Bassett and it is envisaged that this will continue.

## Central Swindon

- 3.26 Primary: There is substantial planned housing growth in the Central area, with 2909 houses planned. In addition, there is the remainder of the Wichelstowe development to be built which is approximately 2821 houses. This has meant that there is forecast to be a need for an additional 7.5FE of Primary school places in the Central area.
- 3.27 This will be met in part from the planned two, 2FE Primary schools in Wichelstowe; Kingfisher Primary School, which is planned to open in September 2022, and then West Wichel Primary School. The build out rate of new houses will have an impact on when and where the new schools will be built.
- 3.28 A further 4FE will need to be provided in the area with the options of exploring Lawn, Lainesmead, Mountford Manor and Robert Le Kyng Primary Schools.
- 3.29 Secondary: The growth in housing from the area will feed through to Secondary and therefore an additional 1.4FE will be required for the area. However, the Ridgeway School has, over the last 5 years, been popular as a choice from the Central area for parents. This has increased from 2FE in 2015 to 3FE of pupils attending the Ridgeway in 2019. Therefore, based on the trend it is forecast that this is likely to continue and there would be no need for any additional provision to be made in this area.
- 3.30 However, if additional capacity were needed within the Secondary schools in the Central Area, the existing schools would be best placed to expand and have the capacity to do so.

## East Swindon

- 3.31 The New Eastern Villages (NEV) expansion brings significant growth to East Swindon, with 8936 houses being built. The development alone will require 17FE of Primary school places, and its own 10 FE Secondary school with sixth Form. The proposed Primary and Secondary school building programme is needed and justified as the housing developments are geographically dispersed with major

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road infrastructure dividing communities. The major roads form natural barriers to the movement of children. The Borough has a 'local children to local schools' policy and will therefore build Primary schools at the centre of the new communities.

3.32 In addition to the NEV, there is also forecast to be 1650 houses built at Kingsdown, along with the remainder of the houses to be built at Badbury Park.

3.33 Primary: This large-scale housing growth in the East has inevitably led to the need for additional 19.2 FE of Primary provision. This will be met by:

3.33.1 Seven new Primary schools will be provided in the New Easter Villages, 5 x 2FE and 2 x 3FE.

3.33.2 South Marston Primary school will be expanded by 1FE

3.33.3 A new 3FE Primary school will be provided at the Kingsdown housing development.

Secondary: The growth from the housing will follow through into Secondary, and overall in the area, there will be a need for 8FE of provision. However, as the NEV is a separate geographical area, it is the policy that the NEV should serve its own community and therefore the requirement is for a 10FE in the NEV to meet the need directly from that housing area. The timing of the building and opening of the proposed new school will depend on the build out rate of the developments. Existing schools Dorcan and Kingsdown Schools will be needed to assist in managing the pressure in the short-term, either may have to be expanded if necessary.

## West Swindon

3.34 Primary: There is no major housing developments planned in this area, with only 35 houses due to be built at the Windmill Hill site, which equates 0.062 FE for Primary. This means that overall in the West, there is sufficient capacity at Primary level.

3.35 Secondary: As above, there is little housing growth in the area, with the 35 new houses at Windmill Hill only equating to 0.3FE for Secondary.

3.36 Due to historic links with Wiltshire schools, parents in the West tend to also select schools in the Wiltshire area. This amounted to 2FE going to Bradon Forest and Royal Wootton Bassett in September 2020. The long-term pressure for this area is the knock on effect of the housing developments adjacent to Swindon and Wiltshire and the potential impact if the parental choice for Bradon Forest or Wootton Bassett Secondary schools changes.



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- 3.37 If this does happen and those pupils return to the Swindon network, there may not be enough places to accommodate them. A potential expansion would be needed to manage this pressure

## Rural Swindon

- 3.38 For the purposes of the Rural Planning area, there are two distinct areas of the Ridgeway Cluster and the Highworth Warneford Cluster, and although the planning area is considered as a whole, it is also important to examine each cluster in terms of capacity for school places.
- 3.39 Highworth Primary Cluster: There is planned housing due to be built within the Highworth area amounting to 558 houses which equates to 0.98FE. The predicted housing in Highworth brings the required FE to the capacity in the area, or just over, and due to this; the LA will investigate schools in the area concerning going over their PAN, to put in place bulge classes when they are necessary, or to re-opening Northview if necessary. These options will need to be thoroughly examined and the timing of the house building will need to be taken into account as not all the houses will be built at once, and when they are built the birth rate may be lower allowing for the 0.98FE the houses will generate, negating the need to add capacity.
- 3.40 Ridgeway Primary Cluster: In The Ridgeway cluster there are 608 houses planned in Wroughton, which equates to 1.1FE, and then 152 in the clusters villages, which equates to 0.3 FE. This is against a capacity of 5.3FE. The housing growth in the Ridgeway cluster shows that there could be a need for an additional 0.4 FE in the area. In order to meet this the LA would have individual discussions with schools in the cluster to meet that demand by adjusting the PANs of schools.
- 3.41 Highworth Secondary Cluster: The planned housing in Highworth amounts to 0.52 FE for Secondary against a capacity of 6FE. This will lead to Highworth Warneford being at capacity if they maintain their current PAN. Currently, around 1FE of children from North Swindon choose to attend Warneford (September 2019). If it were necessary, Warneford School would be able to increase their PAN, which is something they have done previously.
- 3.42 Ridgeway Secondary Cluster: The houses at Wroughton and the surrounding villages equates to 0.71FE for Secondary, and along with the existing pressure in the area, it is forecast that the total demand for places will total 9.2FE against a capacity of 9FE. However, it must be noted that the Ridgeway School has, over the last 5 years, been popular, as a choice from the Central area. This has increased from 2FE in 2015 to 3FE of pupils from the Central area attending in 2019. Therefore, it is forecast that there will be capacity in this area at Secondary, as the school would instead admit more pupils from its own cluster, rather than the Central area.

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## Overall Borough Place Planning demand

- 3.43 The table below sets out how the Borough will meet the long term Primary School place need.

**Table 2 Meeting Primary needs**

School	Number of Schools	Planning area	Type of Provision	Forms of Entry
Abbey Farm	1	North	New build	2
Kingfisher Primary	1	Central	New build	2
West Wichel primary	1	Central	New build	2
Central urban area	4	Central	Expansions	4
South Marston	1	East	Expansion	1
New Eastern Villages	7	East	New build	16
Kingsdown	1	East	New build	3
			<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>

- 3.44 The table below sets out the how the Borough will meet the long term Secondary school place needs

**Table 3 Meeting Secondary Place needs**

School	Number of School	Planning area	Type of Provision	Forms of Entry
New Eastern Villages	1	East	New build	10
			<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>

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- 3.45 It is important to note that no decisions have yet been made regarding the strategy or site options outlined in this report. Where this report identifies site options they remain subject to detailed Option Appraisals, feasibility studies, funding and planning.

## Basic Principles for new school provision

- 3.46 Since the approval of the Swindon Local Plan setting out the strategic areas for housing development to 2026, planning applications have been submitted for large parts of the plan. In order to aid negotiation with land owners and developers it is useful to establish a basic set of principles for school provision in order to manage expectations.

## Minimum and maximum school size

- 3.47 All new schools in the borough will be a minimum of 2FE with Nursery provision and room to expand if necessary. This is in order to ensure a school is financially viable in the future as a stand-alone entity.
- 3.48 The upcoming New Eastern Villages expansion will require a Secondary school in the North Eastern part of town. It is recommended that the optimum size for this school is 10FE with a 300 place 6th Form.
- 3.49 Early year's provision will also be required at each of our new Primary schools. This will help meet the increase in demand as a result of the government's plans to increase 3 and 4-year-old entitlement from 15 to 30 hours for working parents in September 2017.

## Timing of new sites

- 3.50 In new housing developments as a starting point, early access to the sites from occupation of the first new home will be requested. This will enable the Local Authority to work with education providers to deliver school provision and provide the greatest degree of flexibility to assess existing capacity with future demand.

## **4. Alternative Options**

- 4.1 Alternative options for school provision have been considered with the School Place Planning Study and the intention is to assess those options through wide consultation.
- 4.2 In some new areas, the location of a new school will be determined through negotiation with the relevant landowner or developer.

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## **5. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management**

### Financial and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications as a result of the recommendations contained within this report.
- 5.2 Schools are typically funded from Government Grant or Developers S106 contributions, although some are procured and funded directly through the Free Schools programme. Any schools that are required to be procured and constructed directly by the Council would be subject to a further approval process in which funding sources and other financial implications would be identified as part of that report.

### Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 5.3 The Council has a responsibility to ensure that there are sufficient school places available. The Education Act 1996, as amended requires Local Authorities to promote choice and diversity when carrying out their strategic duties in relation to the provision of new school places.
- 5.4 Legal and Human Rights considerations have been taken into account fully in compiling this report. It is considered that the recommendations of this report are compatible with Convention rights.

### Climate Change Impact

- 5.5 Officers will work through the requirements to mitigate any adverse carbon impact and bring back proposals for the Cabinet Member to consider.
- 5.6 The Council is also pursuing the Passive Haus standards with its school buildings, which ensures that a sustainable design solution can be realised, reflecting the most up to date building regulations.

### All Other Implications (including Staff, Sustainability, Health, Rural, Crime and Disorder)

- 5.7 None

### Diversity Impact Assessment

- 5.8 A Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA) has been completed. No adverse or other significant issues were found. A copy of the DIA can be obtained from the report author.

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## Risk Management

- 5.9 In terms of place planning one risk, which is important to note, is that although the LA has the statutory duty to ensure there is sufficient school places in the Borough, it is not responsible for setting the published admissions number for Academies. Once a school is an Academy, they become their own admitting authority and as such are responsible for setting their own Pan with their admissions policy. This poses a significant risk to the LA's duty to ensure their sufficient school places in the Borough.

## **6. Consultees**

- 6.1 The Corporate Director of Finance and Assets (s151 officer) and Chief Legal Officer (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.

## **7. Background Papers**

- 7.1 None.

## **8. Appendices**

- 8.1 Appendix 1 School Place Planning Study 2020.

## **9. Key Decision/Decision in Cabinet Work Programme and Forward Plan**

- 9.1 This is a Key Decision and is included in the Cabinet Work Programme and Forward Plan for September 2020.