

# School Place Planning Update 2016

**Cabinet**

**Date: 10<sup>th</sup> February 2016**

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Author: Cabinet Member for Children's Services  
Head of Education

Wards: All

Locality Affected: 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 the Priority Two of the Vision to "Offer education opportunities that lead to the right skills and right jobs in the right places" and in specifically pledge 15 "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 Note the education place planning demand arising across the Borough for Primary and Secondary school places and changes to national legislation;
- 2.2 Authorise the Head of Education to conduct a consultation on the school place planning study attached at **Appendix 1** as set out from paragraph 3.10 below;
- 2.3 Approve the basic principles set out in the report below on new school provision as set out from paragraph 3.35 below;
- 2.4 In order to start meeting the demand for additional places, authorise the Head of Education to commence processes for seeking a free school for the new provision set out in paragraphs 3.7 and 3.8 and report back on progress at the next Cabinet meeting on the 16<sup>th</sup> March 2016.

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Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Gareth Cheal, Direct Dial 01793 465802, [gcheal@swindon.gov.uk](mailto:gcheal@swindon.gov.uk).

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## 3. Detail

- 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.
- 3.2 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 2011.
- 3.3 The updated school place planning study identifies that by 2026 the Borough will need to provide 23 to 25 FE to meet Primary Place needs, and 22 to 24 FE to meet Secondary Place needs, with potential expansions in addition.

### Overview

- 3.4 The School Place Planning Study was updated in 2009 and 2011 versions of the School Place Planning Study 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.
- 3.5 Since the 2011 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.
- 3.6 Further in the report these changes will be detailed in the following school place planning areas;
  - 3.6.1 North Swindon
  - 3.6.2 Central and South Swindon
  - 3.6.3 East Swindon
  - 3.6.4 West Swindon
  - 3.6.5 Catholic cluster of schools
- 3.7 The table below shows the borough wide Primary Place Needs identified within the study and estimates the expected opening date for new provision (these are subject to review as the timing of opening is directly linked to the delivery of new houses):

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| Area                 | Number of schools | School Place Planning Area | Type of Provision | FE           | Status                                       | Expected opening date (September) |
|----------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|--------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| Tadpole Farm 2       | 1                 | North                      | New build         | 2            | New (Free School bid in March 2016)          | 2018                              |
| Abbey Farm           | 1                 | North                      | New build         | 2            | New  | 2019 or 2020                      |
| Wichelstowe          | 2                 | Central & South            | New build         | 4            | New (Free School bid in March 2016)          | 2018 & 2020                       |
| Central Urban area   | 1                 | Central & South            | New build         | 2            | New  | 2020                              |
| Central urban area   | 1                 | Central and South          | Expansion         | 1            | New  | 2022                              |
| Commonhead           | 1                 | East                       | New build         | 1            | New  | 2018                              |
| South Marston        | 1                 | East                       | Expansion         | 1            | Planning due for submission in February 2016 | 2018                              |
| New Eastern Villages | 4/5               | East                       | New build         | 8/10         | New  | 2019 to 2026                      |
| Kingsdown            | 1                 | East                       | New build         | 2            | New  | 2020                              |
|                      |                   |                            | <b>Total</b>      | <b>23/25</b> |  |                                   |

3.8 The table below shows the borough wide Secondary Place Needs identified within the study:

| Area  | School Place Planning Area | Type of Provision | FE               | Status               | Expected opening date (September) |
|---|----------------------------|-------------------|------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Great Western Academy                             | North                      | New School        | 5 - 7            | Free School approved | 2018                              |
| Swindon Church of England Secondary (Wichelstowe) | Central & South            | New School        | 7                | Free School approved | 2018                              |
| New Eastern Villages                              | East                       | New School        | 10FE             | New                  | 2020 or 2021                      |
|   |                            | <b>Total</b>      | <b>22 - 24FE</b> |                      |                                   |

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- 3.9 Further detail and background behind the requirements above are set out in the School Place Planning Study 2016 attached at **Appendix 1**.

## Consultation

- 3.10 In February 2014, the Council adopted a Consultation Policy to clearly set out the Council's commitment to effective and efficient public consultation and set the expectation that this commitment will be consistently applied, particularly in relation to the Council's key decisions.
- 3.11 The Policy sets out a commitment to consultation, which meets the Council's legal requirement and adheres to a local standard of ten principles that will help ensure that consultation is effectively undertaken in a timely manner, at an appropriate stage in the decision making process and that results are used to inform policy development and service delivery.
- 3.12 In terms of the specific proposals outlined in this report, there are a number of consultation programmes that will be required.
- 3.13 On the 10<sup>th</sup> November 2015, the Local Authority hosted an event at the University Technical College Swindon to advertise to potential academy and free school sponsors the characteristics of Swindon, the education strategy and our place planning pressures. The event was attended by about 40 providers and representatives from the Regional Schools Commissioners office.
- 3.14 An informal drop in consultation session was also held on 10<sup>th</sup> November, for Head's, Governors, and members to come and give some initial comments on the draft study.
- 3.15 It is proposed to conduct a 6-week consultation, which will run from Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> February to Friday 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016. Consultation on the School Place Planning Study will initially involve headteachers, governors and neighbouring Local Authorities. There will also be formal internal consultation with planning, property and highways officers.
- 3.16 In addition, there will be an online consultation via the School Place Planning section on the Swindon.Gov website which will heavily advertised via social media and Schools online. The Swindon Schools Traded services will be another means of seeking comments on the report.

## Summary of School Places

- 3.17 The following section of this report sets out a summary of the pressures within the individual school place planning areas set out in paragraph 3.6 above and proposals to meet the demand. Further detail on each area is set out in the School Place Planning Study 2016 attached at **Appendix 1**.

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## North

- 3.18 There are already pressures for Primary and Secondary places in North Swindon, caused by a rise in cohort size. Further growth at Tadpole and Abbey Farm will add to this existing pressure. A 2FE primary school has been provided at Tadpole Farm and expansions have increased both Orchid Vale and Haydonleigh by an additional 1FE. A further 2FE primary school will be needed by September 2018 to manage the pressure from additional housing at Tadpole Farm. In addition a further 2FE school will be needed at Abbey Farm to accommodate the cumulative impact of infill developments around Blunsdon from September 2019 or September 2020.
- 3.19 As of September 2015, there were surplus places across the town in the secondary sector, however there will be an increase in demand once the larger cohorts already in the Primary schools feed into the secondary sector. This will be apparent from the continued house building programme at Tadpole Farm. A new 5FE to 7FE secondary free school is scheduled and needed in this area. The Department of Education has approved the opening of The Great Western Academy by 2018.
- 3.20 Historically the north planning area loses approximately 3.6FE out of the Borough to neighbouring Wiltshire schools through pupil and parental choice. This is envisaged to continue.

## Central South

- 3.21 There are existing pressures on Primary and Secondary places in Central Swindon caused by a rise in cohort size from demographic trends.
- 3.22 Large-scale housing developments, such as Wichelstowe, have been started and will continue in this area. In addition to this, the birth rate in this area continues to increase in the short term.
- 3.23 These pressures will transfer to secondary school in due course. The Wichelstowe development will significantly increase demand for places, and the build out rate of these houses will determine where and when the new school will be built.
- 3.24 Two new primary schools opened in 2012 and 2014 reliving some immediate pressure and Even Swindon Primary School was expanded by 1FE in 2012. However, two further 2FE Primary Schools will need to be provided at the Wichelstowe site. The remaining pressure in the existing urban area will need to be met by 1 new 2FE school and expanding an existing school.
- 3.25 A new 7FE Church of England Secondary School will be built at Wichelstowe for September 2018. This will significantly relieve the future pressure for secondary school places.
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## East

- 3.26 There are both surplus Primary and Secondary places in this part of town at present. However, additional schools will need to be built to accommodate the young people that the planned housing developments at North Eastern Villages, Commonhead, and Kingsdown will produce.
- 3.27 These will comprise of a new 1FE Primary school to be built at Commonhead. South Marston Primary School will be expanded from 0.5FE to 1.5FE, a further four to five 2FE Primary schools will be built in the New Eastern Villages, and a new 2FE Primary school in Kingsdown development area.
- 3.28 There is currently a small surplus of places in the secondary schools in this area, however, these will not be nearly enough to cope with the demand for places once the three major developments areas have been built. A new 8 to 10FE secondary school will be built in the East of Swindon development. The timing of this building and opening will depend on the build rates 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

- 3.29 There are currently no Primary surplus places in West Swindon, and a complex picture of secondary pupils moving towards Wiltshire schools. There are no major housing developments planned within the Borough boundaries in this area either.
- 3.30 This area has seen a slight rise in birth rate in recent years in the next few years this will have an impact on the lack of surplus places. There may be a need for some temporary solutions in the short term to further increase primary pupil numbers.
- 3.31 At present 3FE from West Swindon apply to be educated in Wiltshire each year. 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.
- 3.32 If this does happen and those pupils return to the Swindon network there would not be enough places to accommodate them. A potential expansion would be needed to manage this pressure.

## Catholic Provision

- 3.33 Swindon has five Catholic primary schools and one Catholic Secondary school. The number of parents choosing Catholic education for their children is increasing. The Local Authority has worked with the Catholic Diocese and

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School to increase the Primary school provision within the Borough through the expansion of Holy Cross and Holy Rood Schools.

- 3.34 There is a concern that if the provision of Catholic education continues to grow as predicted then St Joseph's Catholic College will lack capacity, and will potentially need to be extended by 2022. The Local Authority will work closely with the Diocese and school should this happen.

## Basic principles for new school provision

- 3.35 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

- 3.36 All new schools in the borough (with the exception of Commonhead, which has been previously set at 1FE) 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. It is expected that a smaller school will need to be included in a larger Multi-Academy Trust.
- 3.37 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 8FE to 10FE with a 300 place 6<sup>th</sup> Form.
- 3.38 Early Years provision will be required at each of our new primary schools. This will help meet the increase 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

- 3.39 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 land owner or developer.



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

### Financial and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 Government capital grant allocations for capital spending on schools have been significantly reduced in recent years and are highly unlikely to be sufficient to meet the needs of existing schools and the requirement to fund new ones. Any shortfall will result in the Council entering into additional borrowing to support identified needs as has been the case over recent years.
- 5.2 Levels of overall debt have increased considerably over the last few years to fund capital investment, with overall Council general fund debt currently £89m (although an underlying borrowing requirement is £261m) and net debt charges of £9.7m pa. Options for expansion of schools should, therefore, consider all possible options in order to try to minimise the effect on the revenue budget of increased debt.
- 5.3 All capital proposals will affect the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) although DfE are recognising pupil growth in annual grant settlements albeit on a lagged basis for mainstream pupils. This means that the LA has to top slice the DSG each year in relation to “pre-opening start-up costs”, “trigger” funding (the increased revenue funding provided to schools that have an in-year increase in pupil numbers over a certain threshold) and “set-up” costs (the provision of furniture and equipment for additional classrooms). As the number of new and growing schools increase, the amount of growth funding required increases and reduces the amount of funding that is available to be distributed to established schools.
- 5.4 As a consequence of the DfE’s school funding reform programme, the Local Authority need to consult formally with each sector of the Schools Forum to seek agreement to the policies by which funding is allocated and the levels of funding proposed in advance of each financial year.

### Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 5.5 The Council has a responsibility to ensure that there are sufficient school places available. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 requires Local Authorities to promote choice and diversity when carrying out their strategic duties in relation to the provision of new school places.
- 5.6 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.

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

- 5.7 Implications relating to sustainability and health are included within the school site selection criteria.

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## Diversity Impact Assessment

- 5.8 A DIA for the School Place Planning Strategy was attached to the July 2011 Cabinet report, and this is applicable to the proposals in this report. A copy of the report is available on request from the report author. No implications have been identified, but the proposal is for a consultation on the school place planning study and any implications will be assessed via an updated DIA following the process.

## **6. Consultees**

- 6.1 The Board Director, Resources (Section 151 Officer) and Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.

## **7. Background Papers**

- 7.1 Cambridge Education Associates School Place Planning Study 2009  
7.2 Swindon School Place Planning Study Update 2011

## **8. Appendices**

- 8.1 Appendix 1 - School Place Planning Study update September 2015

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

- 9.1 This is / is not a Key Decision and is included in the Cabinet Work Programme and Forward Plan for Month Year.