

CABINET

17 June 2009

HAMPSHIRE SCHOOL PLACES PLAN 2009

REPORT OF HEAD OF STRATEGIC PLANNING

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RECENT REFERENCES:

None.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Hampshire County Council produces a School Places Plan annually, which considers the projected need for school places across the County and the capacity of existing and proposed schools. The City Council has been consulted on the 2009 School Places Plan and comments are invited by 3 July, after which the County Council's Executive Lead Member for Children's Services will consider and approve the Plan. The item was not included in the Forward Plan but is being brought to this meeting of Cabinet to meet the deadline for returning comments to the County Council. The Chairman of Principal Scrutiny Committee has been informed.

This report summarises the key aspects of the Plan as they affect Winchester District and sets out comments which it recommends should be agreed and submitted to the County Council.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That the recommended comments set out at Section 3 of this report be agreed and submitted to Hampshire County Council as representing this Council's comments on the 2009 Hampshire School Places Plan.
2. That the position in relation to education contributions through Section 106 obligations be noted.

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DETAIL:

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Hampshire County Council produces an annual School Places Plan, which sets out policies to guide school provision and assesses the adequacy of provision in various educational areas. It includes a summary of the capacity of schools in each area and the expected numbers on school rolls, currently and in 5 years' time. The Plan can be viewed at:
<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/schools/school-places>
- 1.2 The City Council has been consulted on the 2009 School Places Plan and comments are invited by 3 July. The County Council's Executive Lead Member for Children's Services will consider any responses received before approving the Plan.
- 1.3 This report summarises the key aspects of the Plan as they affect Winchester District and sets out comments which it recommends should be agreed and submitted to the County Council.

2 Content of the School Places Plan 2009

- 2.1 The Plan is set out in three main sections: Section A containing policies guiding decisions on school organisation; Section B on progress since the previous Plan; and Section C setting out conclusions for each area.
- 2.2 Section A clarifies that it is the County Council's policy to seek primary school provision in large new developments, within reasonable walking or cycling distance. Where new development generates a need for additional educational provision the County Council will seek developer contributions towards additional provision. This requires cooperation with the relevant local planning authority. The County Council has asked the City Council to seek developer contributions in certain locations but, other than provision within major new developments, the City Council has not currently implemented such a system. The reasons for this and the present situation are set out in Paragraph 4 below.
- 2.3 Section B deals with progress since the 2008 School Places Plan and is a short summary of school closures, additions and changes of status. The only change in Winchester District relates to the change in school category, from

community to foundation, of Perins School Alresford, with effect from 30 January 2009 (trust school).

- 2.4 Section C I of most interest for the City Council. It looks firstly at County-wide trends, which show that primary school numbers are expected to fall to a low in 2010/11, before rising almost to their 2003/4 level by 2014/15. Conversely, secondary school numbers have declined gradually since 2003/4 but are expected to continue to fall, if anything more rapidly, through to 2014/15. The major new developments being planned around the County are noted and new primary schools are proposed to deal with this, including at West of Waterlooville (2 schools) and Winchester City North (1 school). Despite the long term growth trends for housing and population (reflecting provision in the South East Plan), the long term projections show no increase in 5-15 year-olds between 2001 and 2026 (with a slight fall in the middle of this period).
- 2.5 County-wide there is a surplus of 10% in primary school places (projected to fall to 7% in 2014) and also 10% of secondary places (expected to rise to 15% by 2014). In Winchester District the only area with a surplus of more than 10% is the Bishops Waltham planning area (primary places).
- 2.6 Within Winchester District there are three main school planning areas for primary education (Winchester, Alresford and Bishops Waltham) and two for secondary schools (Winchester/Alresford and Bishops Waltham). Currently the figures for primary schools suggest a 4% surplus in Winchester, 6% in Alresford and 15% in Bishops Waltham, falling to -7%, -1% and 10% respectively by 2014. For secondary schools the current figures show a 2% surplus in Winchester and 3% in Bishops Waltham, rising to 6% and 14% respectively by 2014.
- 2.7 The commentary accompanying these figures notes the levels of development expected in conjunction with the existing and proposed planning documents for the District. It acknowledges that additional places have been provided at Wickham for the Knowle development, and that at least two additional primary schools will be needed to serve further development at Whiteley, with one at Barton Farm. The opportunity that Whiteley presents to consider the need for additional secondary places is recognised, as is the surplus of provision at Bishops Waltham and the pressures on primary provision in Winchester. The Plan states that consideration is being given to ways that these issues can be addressed. At Winchester this may include the provision of additional accommodation at one or more existing schools, in addition to the new primary school that is likely to be required to serve development at Barton Farm.
- 2.8 Appended to the Plan are details of the current surpluses/shortfalls at each school, demonstrating shortfalls at several Winchester primary schools (St Bedes -4%, St Peters -8%, Weeke -1%, Western -3%). Although these are offset by surpluses at other Winchester schools, the overall impression given by the Plan, of a surplus in provision, is potentially misleading. There are also some notable shortfalls in village schools, such as Owslebury (-21%) and

Sparsholt (-11%), while others appear to have substantial surpluses (Wickham 38%, Bishops Waltham 28%, South Wonston 26%, Micheldever 23%). At the secondary level Westgate and Kings Schools have shortfalls (8% and 2%), while Henry Beaufort has a surplus of 17% and Alresford and Swanmore have 2-3% surpluses.

- 2.9 Although the Plan suggests that the overall situation in Winchester is one of a surplus of primary places, current experience is that there are shortfalls in some locations which are leading to children being placed in schools some distance from their homes. The tendency of the Plan to aggregate provision in an area disguises the shortfalls and implies that the situation is adequate, when in practice this may be far from the situation. There is an urgent need for the shortfalls to be addressed, which the Plan fails to recognise - in fact, rather than being a plan for acting on the issues raised it simply identifies the need for 'consideration' of these matters.

3 Recommended Comments

- 3.1 It is recommended that the City Council raises the concerns above with the County Council by submitting the following comments:
- a) The City Council objects to the presentation of aggregated figures for school provision as this disguises some serious local shortfalls in provision which should be highlighted, along with proposals to resolve them;
 - b) The City Council is disappointed that the School Places Plan 2009, like its predecessors, misses the opportunity to set out and consult on a plan of action for dealing with the issues and problems identified, such as shortfalls in primary provision at several Winchester schools. The Council objects to references to 'giving consideration' to these as this is an inadequate response to the issues identified;
 - c) The City Council objects to the references to future provision in association with new development as these are not sufficiently strong, especially given the need to identify infrastructure requirements in more detail in LDF Core Strategies and other Development Plan Documents. Unless proposals for future provision are established quickly opportunities for provision in conjunction with new development may be missed.

4 Developer Contributions for Education Provision

- 4.1 It is legitimate for a planning authority to seek contributions from developers towards educational provision in certain circumstances. In simple terms, the test for all planning obligations set out in Circular 05/05 is whether the obligation is necessary to make an application acceptable when otherwise it would not be. Essentially this means determining whether the proposed development would place a strain on the existing infrastructure that cannot be met without a contribution, in cash or through direct development, to create

additional infrastructure. Contributions are not a tax; they can only be sought to meet a need created, or made worse, by the development.

- 4.2 With large scale developments, such as West of Waterlooville, there is no issue over provision. Developers and the local authorities expect new primary school places to be created on site through new school provision. Careful calculation of the required number of places is essential, and can go wrong, but the principle is well established. Secondary school place requirements rarely generate the requirement for a new school even on large sites – although this will happen eventually in the PUSH area – and developers make a contribution to the additional cost of accommodating children in local secondary schools.
- 4.3 The situation with smaller scale development is more complex. The availability of school places could be a material consideration in determining a relevant planning application. School places allocation is a matter for the County Council and which school children are required to go to is not generally a material planning consideration if the County Council is satisfied with the arrangements. However, if there are no places available anywhere within a reasonable distance then the development might be considered to be unsustainable and therefore unacceptable. This would justify the requirement for contributions to be sought to create new school places more locally.
- 4.4 The County Council therefore has a policy to ask local planning authorities to seek contributions on a tariff based approach from development in areas where the School Places Plan demonstrates that there is a shortfall in school places. It cannot do so where there is not a shortfall because, by definition, the infrastructure already exists to meet local needs. Until recently there was never any need to consider contributions in Winchester District as school places were available in all locations. However, as indicated above, there are now areas where contributions might be considered reasonable as there is an apparent short fall of places.
- 4.5 However, to meet the requirements of 05/05 it is necessary to demonstrate not just that there is a problem with existing infrastructure, but also what is proposed to be done about it. In other words, how the money to be collected will be spent to reduce or eliminate the problem.
- 4.6 As yet the County Council has not gone beyond the analysis of the problem in the School Places Plan to produce a schedule or set of proposals to address the anticipated shortage of places. Developers cannot, therefore, be given any indication of what specifically their contributions will be spent on. The County Council has been advised that in the absence of such a schedule it is not possible for the City Council to operate a contributions policy other than on an ad hoc, large site basis.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

5 SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND CORPORATE BUSINESS PLAN (RELEVANCE TO):

5.1 The Sustainable Community Strategy has an outcome which seeks to ensure that 'children and young people enjoy healthy, fulfilling and active lives'.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

6.1 None directly for Winchester City Council.

7 RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

7.1 None directly for Winchester City Council.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Hampshire School Places Plan 2009 <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/schools/school-places>

APPENDICES:

None.