

TITLE	Wokingham Borough Secondary School Strategy 2017
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on 27 July 2017
WARD	None specific
DIRECTOR	Judith Ramsden, Director Peoples Services Graham Ebers, Director Corporate Services
LEAD MEMBER	Mark Ashwell, Executive Member for Children's Services

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

That sufficient secondary school places are available to meet the needs of the Wokingham Borough community.

RECOMMENDATION

That Executive approve the Wokingham Borough Secondary School Strategy 2017 to 2020 as appended.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

The attached Wokingham Borough Secondary School Strategy 2017 to 2020 sets out an analysis of the need for school places and a strategy for the delivery of the places (if required) over that period. It takes account of the most recent changes, including the opening of the new Bohunt Wokingham School. It also considers the need for places outside of the period, to the extent that initial preparation work for delivery is required.

The period of the plan is established by the timetable for the adoption of the new Wokingham Local Plan. This may lead to fundamental changes to the size of some Wokingham communities and the total and distribution of the child population. Until this is determined there is no value in establishing a longer term plan.

The analysis underpinning the strategy indicates that taking account of the rising number of children coming through from the primary sector and the possible impact of new housing the number of surplus places is likely to fall and there is a need to prepare to deliver additional places towards the end of the period. There are though a number of factors that could lead to demand not rising to the extent that additional capacity is required, and at least in the period of the strategy it is likely that growth could be managed within surplus capacity in existing schools.

The core recommendation is that the demand may rise so it becomes necessary to agree or create additional capacity. Specifically 100 additional Year 7 places may be required in the strategy period from 2019/20 (which need not be in additional or new permanent accommodation) split between the north and south areas. This is subject to

growth being in line with the higher numbers in the strategy projections. Associated with this is a need for preparatory work to create 270 new permanent places through school expansion to begin (based on 60 places per year in permanent accommodation) to commence for delivery outside the strategy period. The growth (and therefore the scheme development) is though dependent on continuing high levels of cross border movement and the impact of housing developments.

There are good reasons to believe that any additional capacity required in this period can be delivered through use of existing premises and expansion on school sites. Longer term growth may require a new school, to be delivered in conjunction with new housing proposals in the adopted Local Plan.

Background

The Council has a duty under the Education Act 1996 to ensure there are sufficient secondary school places. Where additional capacity is required it must broker new capacity through partnerships with existing schools and supporting the creation of new schools through the Free School Presumption or Free School bid-led processes.

The most recent secondary provision strategy, the “Wokingham Secondary School Provision Strategy 2013 to 2016” (the 2013 Strategy) was adopted by Wokingham’s Executive on 28th March 2013 for the period from 2013 to the 2016/17 academic year. As the 2017 Academic year will commence shortly it is appropriate to refresh the strategy.

Under the 2013 Strategy the Council committed to deliver a new secondary school in Arborfield. This school opened in temporary premises in September 2016 as the Bohunt Wokingham School. By September 2017 it will have transferred to new permanent premises in Arborfield, creating 1,200 additional secondary places, with planning consent for growth to 1,500 place capacity. The Bohunt Education Trust have opted to offer 240 Year 7 places for 2017 and 2018 entry so the current premises are only suitable for Years 7 to 11. It is proposed to review sixth form accommodation needs during the life of this strategy.

This strategy sets out Wokingham Borough Council’s Secondary Place Strategy, for 2017 to 2020 (the 2020/21 academic year). It sets out the expected need for school places and proposed responses for the secondary sector (age 11 to 18) in the Wokingham BC area. The relatively short period covered by the Strategy is established by the need for the strategy for the period after 2019 to be consistent with the Local Plan that is currently in development.

Analysis of Issues

The cores issues the strategy considers are:

- Current school capacity
- The number of places projected to be required (as a consequence of children moving through from the primary sector).
- The number of children generated by new housing developments
- The impact of cross border movement (and factors that may lead to changed rates of movement)
- Other changes (such as Grammar Schools)

It considers needs at a borough level, at an area level (north and south areas).

Currently there is a surplus of both secondary capacity and Year 7 places. However, the number of children coming through from the primary sector is projected to increase, significantly reducing the surplus and the impact of cross border movement and new housing could lead to a need for new Year 7 places in this period.

Cross border movement rates are assumed to remain constant. There are though a number of factors that could lead to significant changes. In particular, in the north area there is a significant movement into WBC schools from the Reading area of children who do not live in the designated area of a WBC school with admissions arrangements

designed to serve a local area. If demand increases in the Wokingham areas then a likely immediate effect is that the proportion of Wokingham children in Wokingham schools will rise. Conversely a major proportion of the movement out is to schools where proximity to the school is a less important factor (e.g. Reading Grammars) or the Wokingham residents have priority under existing admissions arrangements (e.g. Edgbarrow School and Wokingham Without).

Housing completions are expected to rise sharply in this period compared to the 10 year average. Developers have planning consents for large sites and can now make up the shortfall against the new capacity that was anticipated when the Core Strategy was adopted. However, development is likely to have a greater impact initially on the number of births, pre-school and key stage 1 pupils than on secondary admissions. These children will in time (from 5 years after the completion of each annual housing delivery phase) lead to an increased need for secondary places, but the impact is delayed compared to the primary sector.

The need for Year 7 places is therefore expected to rise and at least greatly reduce the current level of surplus places. It may be that additional capacity is required, and contingency plans must be made if numbers rise in line with the projections. It is a reasonable assumption that secondary school expansion should be the first mechanism considered to provide any additional capacity required.

The revenue costs of the strategy would be met by DSG (Dedicated Schools Grant). The capital costs are provisional at this stage as the recommendation is to work up expansion schemes. If capital works are required it is currently anticipated they will be contained within the developing next iteration of the Council's 10 Year Vision.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.

The current 10 year vision includes annual budgets to continue school capacity expansion after the completion of the Bohunt School. This is a prudent provision reflecting the likelihood of additional capacity being required within and after the strategy period.

The current expectation is that spend can be contained within the following budgets:

2020/21 -	£387,000
2020/21 onwards	£980,000 per annum.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	Nil	Yes	Revenue and Capital
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	Nil	Yes	Revenue and Capital
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	Nil	Yes	Revenue and Capital

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

The revenue impact of any expansion will be on the DSG funded growth fund. The anticipated new national funding arrangements for schools will be important here as this means the growth fund will be a stand-alone pot (currently it is agreed in conjunction with the allocation of funding to schools). Any new arrangement will need a degree of flexibility and sufficient funding to enable school places to be delivered.

A funding stream has been identified in the 10 Year Vision. This would be funded from a mixture of Basic Need Capital Grant, S106, CIL and other funding sources held by WBC.

Cross-Council Implications

None

List of Background Papers

None

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Appendix A – Wokingham Borough Secondary School Strategy 2017-2020

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