

Independent Assessment
Strategic Review of School Place Provision in Cheltenham
August 2017

Introduction

This is an independent assessment report carried out by Wiltshire Council following a request by Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) to undertake an external validation of the Cheltenham area pupil place planning data to support the need for additional secondary places.

Background Documentation

The following documentation and data has been provided for review and consideration;

- Strategic Review of Primary Education Planning Areas to the Central, South & West of Cheltenham, June 2017
- Strategic Review of Secondary Need in Cheltenham, January 2017
- Current GCC Developer Multipliers for school places
- Pates School (selective) admissions data
- Primary and Secondary Census and Projections data
- Cheltenham residents studying outside District

Overview and Findings

Primary Places

In line with regional and national demographic trends, there has been a growing population since 2010 primarily driven by an increasing birth rate. Primary pupil numbers and forecasts evidence this increase and GCC has responded to the increase in demand through the provision of additional permanent and temporary primary school places at existing schools across all planning areas.

The Strategic Review indicates that primary school capacity in Cheltenham will be full by 2018/19 from existing population growth and that from 2020/21 an estimated 484 additional primary pupil places will be required from emerging housing in the Cheltenham and Tewksbury District Council areas.

Alongside this, the report highlights that there are three strategic housing developments identified in the Joint Core Strategy that will generate up to 1600 primary age pupils by 2032/33. The North Cheltenham development will include two new 3FE (630 place) primary schools to meet much of this demand, but that will still leave a shortfall of up to 340 places.

GCC is using a Developer Multiplier (for primary pupil places) of 0.2802 for larger housing developments, indicating that for every 100 dwellings the pupil product will be 28 primary children. This is considered reasonable for assessing pupil projections.

Based on the data and information provided in the reports, the summary indicates a need for one additional 2FE (420 place) primary school located in the south of Cheltenham, in addition to those being provided as part of Strategic housing developments.

Considering the pupil projections from basic need growth and the new housing development, I would consider that this is a reasonable assessment, in particular if you are trying to achieve a modest surplus.

Secondary Places

The report indicates that in 2006, some 1231 children were born in Cheltenham, however the projected Year 7 intake for 2017/18 (same cohort) is 920. This is a loss of over 300 (or 25%) children by the time they reach secondary school. Reviewing the information provided on Cheltenham residents studying outside the District, it is understood that a large percentage of children currently attend the popular Cleeve School in Bishops Cleeve, in the adjacent District but close to Cheltenham with smaller numbers attending other secondary schools outside of Cheltenham. Additionally a significant number of children attend grammar schools outside of Cheltenham and a small percentage transfer to special schools.

Consideration will need to be given as to whether there will continue to be the places available at Cleeve School to accommodate the large outflow of children from Cheltenham or whether growth in that area will take up the places available and push numbers back to Cheltenham.

The 2016 Planned Admission Number (PAN) across all the secondary schools in Cheltenham was 944 and this is expected to rise to 1004 in 2018 following an increase in capacity at Pittville School and Bournside School. There is also a proposal to increase Balcarras School PAN by 30 subject to governing body approval which would increase to overall PAN to 1034. These increases will provide an additional 2FE (possibly 3FE of secondary accommodation if Balcarras School agree to expand).

The information provided in the report indicates that there is a need for an additional 770 secondary school places (years 7-11) by 2022, to meet basic need growth only. This would require an additional 5FE, so there remains an expected shortfall of at least 3FE to meet basic need if only two of the schools above expand as reported.

The planned expansions above only relate to basic need and do not take into account the expected demand from new housing. An estimated 246 additional secondary places will be required from emerging housing in the Cheltenham and Tewksbury District Council areas which is almost 2FE. This brings the secondary shortfall to 5FE.

Alongside this, the report highlights that there are three strategic housing developments identified in the Joint Core Strategy. Using the GCC Developer Multipliers this would indicate up to 617 extra secondary children in North West Cheltenham by 2032/33. This number could increase by a further 75 to 692 with the development around Swindon Village. A new 6FE secondary school is proposed in the North West Cheltenham development which would cater for these children.

The other two strategic sites would increase secondary school place demand by a further 140-230 places dependant on the number of houses approved. These are not included in the current projections but would require at least 1FE additional secondary capacity. This brings the shortfall to 6FE.

Conclusions

Primary

Taking into account basic need projections, new housing development and the provision of two 3FE primary schools as part of the North Cheltenham development, the conclusion that a further 2FE primary school is required to meet remaining demand in Cheltenham is considered reasonable.

Secondary

The LA is using a Developer Multiplier (for secondary pupil places) of 0.1515 for larger housing developments, indicating that for every 100 dwellings the pupil product will be 15 secondary children. Based on experience elsewhere this is considered a low figure and may result in an under estimation of pupil projections. Evidence has shown in a number of LA's, a figure closer to 20 would be more realistic however local circumstances may be different in Cheltenham.

If a Developer Multiplier of 0.20 was used to calculate the secondary pupil yield from the three strategic sites then the number of secondary places (size of proposed new secondary school) expected from the North West Cheltenham development would be 923 compared to 692 above, and separately there would be a need for up to 310 additional secondary places from the other two developments, which would be another 2FE. This brings the shortfall to 8FE.

Taking into account basic need projections and all the known new housing development, including the provision of a new 6FE secondary school to serve the North West Cheltenham development, there will be a further shortfall of approx. 7-8FE (1050-1200) secondary school places dependent on the Developer Multiplier used.

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