

**Meeting date:** 30 November 2020  
**Report to:** Cabinet Member for Children, Education & Skills  
**Subject/report title:** School Organisation Plan 2020/21  
**Report from:** Director of Children's Services and Skills  
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**Wards affected:**

All Wards

**Public/private report:** Public

**Exempt by virtue of paragraph:** N/A

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**1. Purpose of Report**

1.1 To update the Cabinet Member on demographic issues in Solihull and to seek approval for the School Organisation Plan 2020/21

**2. Decision(s) recommended**

2.1 Approve the School Organisation Plan 2020/21.

**3. Matters for Consideration**

- 3.1 The School Organisation Plan provides a detailed analysis of pupil numbers and sets out forecasting methodology and housing developments for the Borough. The plan outlines the areas within the Borough that require additional school places and a process for working in partnership with schools, academies and the Regional Schools Commissioner to deliver the additional school places.
- 3.2 The data within the School Organisation Plan 2020/21 has been updated to reflect the January 2020 pupil census, health data and admissions data and a new version of the Plan is attached at Appendix A. The revised plan pulls together the progress on delivering additional school places and future requirements.
- 3.3 Over the last 5 years, there has been a particular focus on the provision of additional primary school places to meet the rising demand from an increasing birth rate. 1,349 permanent primary school places have been added with a further 210 planned at Cheswick Green Primary School to meet the demand from the housing development at Blythe Valley.

- 3.4 Cabinet Member approved consultation on the proposal to expand Cheswick Green School in October and the consultation process has now begun. It is anticipated that the outcome of this consultation process will be considered by the Cabinet Member early in 2021 before a decision is made about whether to move forward with a statutory process or not.
- 3.5 The increasing birth rate has now levelled out so it is expected that any further increases in primary places will be directly linked to housing developments. Birth data is reviewed annually and will continue to be monitored to ensure sufficiency of places to meet any adhoc growth in specific planning areas, but on the whole it is anticipated that there are sufficient primary school places in the Borough to meet demand.
- 3.6 In January 2020, 1,043 (6%) secondary school places were empty and 35% of the pupils on roll live outside of Solihull. On a Borough wide basis there are more secondary places than are required to meet the Solihull demand, so all Solihull resident pupils can be offered a place.
- 3.7 The number of empty places in our secondary schools is falling year on year as growth moves through from the primary phase. Over the next 7 years secondary school rolls are forecast to rise by 6% to just under 17,000. A significant proportion of this growth will be accommodated within existing school capacity, reducing both the levels of empty places and the number of pupils from outside of Solihull accessing a place.
- 3.8 Fluctuating growth between secondary school catchment areas will see pressure on Year 7 places in specific schools, in specific intake years. This pressure may result in the potential for a limited number of catchment area pupils and/or siblings not to be offered a place, at their preferred school, on national offer day. Forecasts indicate particular pressure in South Solihull in September 2023 and in North Solihull in September 2024 and 2025, in particular around Grace Academy. The School Admissions Team will be able to provide advice around pressure on places each year, which will enable parents to make informed preferences when applying for a place.
- 3.9 450 secondary school places have already been added. 300 places at Arden School from September 2016 and 150 places at Tudor Grange Academy Solihull from September 2018. These expansions have been linked to strategic housing sites falling within the school's catchment area. Feasibility work is underway with Alderbrook School to provide a further 150 places to meet the demand from the significant housing developments within this planning area. However, there are no firm proposals for this expansion at present.
- 3.10 In the next 3 years all Solihull secondary schools are expected to fill at Year 7. This will mean that there will be pressure on places from families moving into the area outside of the normal admissions process. Migration into the Borough will need to be kept under careful review so ensure sufficiency of secondary places and where necessary bulge classes may be needed to meet one off demand.
- 3.11 There remains a need to increase the number of primary and secondary Catholic School places in South Solihull to meet both existing and future demand, in particular from the draft Solihull Local Plan. The statutory proposal to expand St Augustine's Catholic Primary School was withdrawn as the planning application to provide the

necessary expansion to the school building was refused. Officers continue to work in partnership with the Catholic Diocese to consider how the demand for primary and secondary Catholic School places can be met.

### **The Draft Solihull Local Plan – Submission version**

- 3.12 On 1 October 2020, Cabinet approved the submission version of the draft Solihull Local Plan, this was subsequently considered and endorsed by Full Council on 6 October 2020. This version of the draft Local Plan provides the most up to date information on proposed new housing developments within Solihull over the plan period 2020 – 2036.
- 3.13 A full review of the latest site and dwellings information has been undertaken and the updated Appendix B of the School Organisation Plan contains the latest analysis of the potential impact on school places, by each planning area.
- 3.14 Early on in the draft Local Plan development, it had been identified that there would be a need for four new primary schools linked to strategic sites in Balsall Common, Knowle, Shirley and the UK Central HS2 interchange. These four new schools would be planned to include early years provision and specialist places through accommodation for an additionally resourced provision.
- 3.15 The numbers of dwellings being proposed in the submission version of the draft Local Plan continues to support this thinking. However, dwelling numbers for sites proposed in the Knowle and Dorridge planning area are significantly lower than originally proposed in earlier iterations of the draft Local Plan. The latest version of the draft Local Plan acknowledges the implications of this and seeks to provide the potential for a phased delivery of school places.
- 3.16 It is envisaged that the new school, in this area, will be designed and built with capacity for 2 FE (420 places) but would initially open as 1 FE (210 places) until such time as demand for places warrant the need to open the second phase of the school. This approach will seek to provide a level of future-proofing for the area to cater for higher than anticipated pupil yield or further development through windfall sites whilst controlling the delivery of places to ensure there is no over-provision of places which may impact on existing schools in the area.
- 3.17 As already identified at paragraph 3.6, there is currently capacity in our existing secondary schools to accommodate significant growth. It is expected that a proportion of the planned housing will not be delivered in the next 5 years, by which time the bulk of the forecast growth moving through from primary schools will have been accommodated. This will free up capacity for schools to meet the demand from dwellings coming forward in the later phases of the Local Plan.
- 3.18 However, the latest version of the draft Local Plan shows an increase in potential dwelling numbers for the Balsall Common area, which is likely to result in the need for additional secondary school places.
- 3.19 In addition, the development at the HS2 interchange will need to be kept under review. If dwelling numbers increase significantly beyond this plan period, then this development may require secondary school places in the longer term.

3.20 Appendix B of the School Organisation Plan 2020/21 gives a detailed response, by planning area, to the latest proposals in the draft local plan. These findings will be subject to review if any further changes are made to the Local Plan before its final approval.

**4. What options have been considered and what is the evidence telling us about them?**

4.1 The evaluation of options will be considered when determining how and where additional mainstream places will be located.

**5. Reasons for recommending preferred option**

5.1 If approved the Plan will be used as a basis for working with schools to identify the most appropriate way to add school places.

**6. Implications and Considerations**

6.1 State how the proposals in this report contribute to the priorities in the [Council Plan](#):

| Priority:   | Contribution:   |
|---|---|
| <p>Economy:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Revitalising our towns and local centres.</li> <li>2. UK Central (UKC) and maximising the opportunities of HS2.</li> <li>3. Increase the supply of housing, especially affordable and social housing.</li> </ol>                                    | <p>The school organisation plan outlines how additional school places will be provided to meet the needs of families moving into Solihull in particular where new housing development is proposed and specifically in response to the draft Solihull Local Plan</p>   |
| <p>Environment:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Enhance Solihull's natural environment.</li> <li>5. Improve Solihull's air quality.</li> <li>6. Reduce Solihull's net carbon emissions.</li> </ol>  | <p>Where possible new schools will be planned as part of strategic housing developments to maximise the potential for children to walk to school, which is not always possible for school expansions where an expansion is predicated on an existing school site.</p> |
| <p>People and Communities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Take action to improve life chances in our most disadvantaged communities.</li> <li>8. Enable communities to thrive.</li> <li>9. Sustainable, quality, affordable provision for adults &amp; children with complex needs.</li> </ol> | <p>Additional school places are created in good or outstanding schools to maximise access for local communities. Where new schools are proposed these should be run by Trusts with a proven track record.</p>   |

6.2 Consultation and Scrutiny:

6.2.1 Specific school organisation proposals are subject to pre-statutory consultation before statutory proposals are approved.

### 6.3 Financial implications:

- 6.3.1 There are no financial implications as a direct consequence of this report. However, when proposals for specific school proposals are required then there will be capital and revenue implications and these will be outlined as part of the proposal. The DfE allocates Basic Need Capital to the Council to enable additional school places to be added. The investment has been incorporated into the Asset Management Plan as an overarching capital strategy.
- 6.3.2 Officers will continue to seek S106 monies from housing developments in accordance with the policy at Appendix A of the updated plan. Primary School places are included under the Council's CIL charging arrangements.
- 6.3.3 Schools' Forum has approved growth criteria to identify additional revenue funding for those schools experiencing growth in pupil numbers. The growth criteria are included at Appendix H of the School Organisation Plan. The revenue cost of additional pupils is funded entirely from increases in Dedicated Schools Grant (Schools Block).

### 6.4 Legal implications:

- 6.4.1 The Council has a legal duty to ensure there are sufficient school places to meet the needs of Solihull children.
- 6.4.2 Specific school organisation proposals will be subject to all appropriate statutory processes.

### 6.5 Risk implications:

- 6.5.1 The key risk is that additional school places cannot be added in time to meet the growth in demand. This will be properly assessed as part of the specific proposals for each school identified as requiring additional school places. There are other risks such as the proposed costs of individual expansions exceeding the resources available. However, these risks as managed at an individual project level and mitigations put in place where necessary.

### 6.6 Equality implications:

- 6.6.1 Equality implications are considered as part of the statutory process for specific school organisation proposals.

## **7. List of appendices referred to**

- 7.1 Appendix A – School Organisation Plan 2020/21

## **8. Background papers used to compile this report**

- 8.1 None

## **9. List of other relevant documents**

- 9.1 None