

Note on School Places in Trowbridge Community Area for Wiltshire Housing Sites
Examination April 2019

Position set out by Mr Hill at the hearing session 3rd April 2019

1. During the hearing session, Mr Hill stated that Southwick and North Bradley Primary Schools are at capacity, leading to the potential risk of shortfalls over the remaining plan period. This observation was made in relation to comments on whether the proposed site allocations – H2.4, H2.5 and H2.6 were capable of accessing a range of local services and facilities, including schools.
2. Mr Hill's comments were predicated on data he had received. The base date for the data is October 2015 and includes the capacity of primary schools and the forecast pupil numbers on roll from 2016-2020.
3. This data has now been superseded with more up to date evidence based upon revised demographics relating to birth rates at Trowbridge.

Latest Education Position

Birth Rates

4. Data held by Mr Hill was put together in 2016 by Wiltshire Council and uses pupil forecasts based on the 2015 birth and projected pupil numbers on roll.
5. The Council receives annual data from the Health Authority on the number of children aged under 5 registered with a doctor, along with their date of birth and postcode. This data is analysed by the Council and used to forecast school age cohorts and catchment areas.
6. A summary of this data for the Trowbridge Community Area and just Trowbridge town is below:

Table 1: Trowbridge Community Area 0 to 4 year olds

	Age as at 1st September within the school year (1 st September-31 st August)					
	0	1	2	3	4	Total
2015	666	666	665	666	732	3395
2016	600	705	705	695	689	3394
2017	589	625	689	709	685	3297
2018	585	595	635	697	716	3228

Table 2: Trowbridge Town (only) 0 to 4year olds

	Age as at 1st September within the school year (1 st September-31 st August)					
Sept	0	1	2	3	4	Total
2015	536	514	530	527	553	2660
2016	463	549	537	546	533	2628
2017	464	488	537	540	541	2570

2018	464	469	489	541	541	2504
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7. It can be seen that the birth rate has reduced significantly since 2015. In the town, the birth rate has dropped by an average of 72 pupils per cohort.

8. The 2018 data for all schools in the Trowbridge community area is broken down further by school in Table 3.

Table 3: 0 to 4 year olds by school by catchment area (2018 data)

	Ages as at 1 st September within the school year (1 st September-31 st August)				
	0	1	2	3	4
Bellefield Primary	69	74	73	83	89
Castle Mead Primary	53	55	56	63	64
Grove Primary, Trowbridge	37	42	41	49	50
Holbrook Primary, Trowbridge	47	54	32	40	48
Newtown Community Primary	51	41	49	50	42
Paxcroft Primary, Trowbridge	48	44	53	52	60
St John's Catholic School*	0	0	0	0	0
Studley Green Primary	30	44	36	53	39
The Mead (both sites)	77	58	76	94	87
Oasis Academy Longmeadow	43	35	55	42	46
Walwayne Court School	9	22	18	15	16
Hilperton C of E VC	13	15	11	18	23
Holt VC Primary	13	17	16	20	19
Keevil C of E Primary	13	13	15	14	14
North Bradley C of E Primary	18	21	20	22	20
Southwick C of E Primary	24	13	24	23	25
Staverton C of E VC Primary	30	37	48	45	48
West Ashton C of E VA	4	2	6	4	7
Westwood-with-Iford School	6	8	6	10	19
Total	585	595	635	697	716

* Catholic schools do not have specific catchment areas and admit pupils from across the wider area.

9. For most schools, the numbers above show a reduction in births over the last three years. The Council will issue reception place offers for September 2019 shortly. An analysis of applications shows that the September 2019 intake will be less than in any of the preceding five years. The reduction will be more significant from September 2020. This will be counterbalanced by new housing provided it starts soon enough.
10. The data provided to Mr Hill in 2016 was based on 2015 birth data, prior to the reduction in the birth rate which could not have been foreseen.

School Capacities

11. Since 2016, Castle Mead Primary School has been expanded from 210 places to 420 places. Bellefield Primary School is also currently expanding and will have an additional 30 places from September 2019. Therefore there are now more school places available than in 2016.

Assessment of Need

12. The Council updates its pupil forecasts annually to reflect, *inter alia*: the latest birth data, numbers on roll, school popularity and historical intake percentages. The forecasts are then compared to school capacities to calculate the number of surplus/deficit places. In addition, the likely number of additional pupils arising from housing developments are calculated in accordance with the Cabinet approved methodology for calculating the pupil yield from new housing developments in Wiltshire.
13. The most recent calculation (which included the potential housing that would come forward in the proposed housing allocations) shows a forecast deficit of places across the Trowbridge area. Due to the decreasing birth rates there are now a number of options to meet this deficit and a new school is no longer required in the Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations Plan.
14. The Council is planning two new 2FE primary schools as part of the Ashton Park (15/04736/OUT) development which will provide 840 new places in the town.
15. There are also a range of options to provide additional places that could arise from the proposed housing allocations through modest expansions to existing schools, including the following:
 - One additional class at Hilperton Primary School to increase them from 6 to 7 classes (1FE)
(Both of the above will enable the schools to run individual year group classes rather than mixing year groups)
 - Four additional classes (120 places) at Walwayne Court Primary School to increase the school to 2FE. A feasibility study has already been completed which determines that this expansion is achievable on the current site and would also enable a larger school hall to be created.
 - Studley Green Primary School is on a large site which has potential for expansion, although this may require rationalisation and improvement of the existing buildings.

- Other schools in the town have also indicated that they would prefer to expand than see a third new primary school provided. Further feasibility work will be required to investigate the potential for expansion on those sites, should they be needed.

16. These options would enable the delivery of the school places required across the town and wider area in a timely way.

School Transport

17. Most schools include in their admissions policies a priority of entry for pupils who live closest or in the catchment area. Parents can however express a preference for any school and not just their closest or catchment school/s. If parents/carers choose to send their child to a school other than the nearest designated school, parents/carers must take full responsibility for the cost and arrangements of their child's travel to and from school.

18. If the Council is unable to offer a place at one of the parent/carers preferred schools, then a place will be offered at the closest available school. This is usually a school within a statutory safe walking distance to the home address. If the child is under eight, this is two miles, for children eight or over this distance increases to three miles.

19. In a small minority of cases it is not possible to find a reasonable alternative school within walking distance, in these circumstances the child would be entitled to free transport to the closest alternative school.

20. The Council met with Mr Hill on the 15th April and discussed the contents of this note which has now been agreed by both parties.