

Strategic Planning of School Places

The CYPS departmental statutory responsibility for the strategic planning of school places and the statutory responsibility for promoting choice and diversity are rooted in The Education and Inspection Act 2006 which builds on previous acts including the Education Act 1996, School Standards and Framework Act 1998 and the Education Act 2002.

The responsibility for the management strategic of school places lies with the Planning and Provision team within CYPS (Planning, Provision and BSF Division).

1. Introduction

Planning of school places is an extremely complex process which depends on a large number of variables many of which are difficult to predict over the given period of time.

It is difficult to make definitive judgements on future provision given the number of factors affecting pupil numbers and choices made by parents around school provision.

There is clarity around current provision and the local authority can project pupil numbers based upon this information. These projections are based upon birth rates, census information and actual numbers of children attending schools and living in localities. They are refreshed annually for each school in Nottinghamshire. It is on the basis of this information that we currently identify needs for future provision.

When considering the prospective number of houses planned, it is accepted that a formula, based upon census information and endorsed by DCSF and the Audit Commission, can be applied. This enables the forecast of potential pupils at primary and secondary age for each housing development. Based on Nottinghamshire census information 100 dwellings will potentially yield an additional 21 primary and 16 secondary (11-16 yrs) places. There is a national review of funding and provision of post 16 places and it may be a requirement to include developer contribution for post 16 places as a result.

It should be noted that Nottinghamshire CYPS would support the integration of school provision on sites shared with other appropriate community services.

There are a number of variables that can and will affect future pupil numbers and the need for school places. Some of these variables, together or alone can impact significantly on provision and many are outside the control of the county council.

2. Variables

- Pupil projection data is produced annually based on the September census of actual numbers of pupils on roll (NOR) at each school – there may be variations year on year
- Capacity within schools as indicated on projections should only be regarded as an indicator as changes may occur which affect the surplus or deficit of school places within a 12 month period
- Projections for primary schools cover a period of six years, projections for secondary schools cover a period of ten years. This may not coincide with the projected build period of housing on specific developments
- School place planning is largely based upon allocation of catchment areas that match localities with schools, as well as awareness of school admissions policies. However, should places be available, then applications from parents living outside catchments can be successful. If parents appeal a decision around school place allocation, independent appeal panels may award places outside the usual admissions criteria. There may be further complication if parents apply to send their children to schools outside of their resident local authority
- Parents often make choices based on school performance which can fluctuate over time
- Data reflecting variations to pupil numbers relating to parental preference is evaluated annually to track changes and trends
- Pupil movements across local authority boundaries could be an important variable. Close working relationships need to exist across LA boundaries to properly construct strategic plans and understand needs in each authority
- Development of post 16 and vocational education provision will result in further development on existing school sites, which reduces the capacity to increase pupil numbers
- The legal increase in the age of pupils leaving full-time education that will be introduced in 2013 is not included in the current projection data

3. Issues and Dependencies within the Planning Process

There are issues and dependencies between several key factors that need to be recognised and understood:

- DCSF expects local authorities to consider infrastructure changes in the form of school closures, establishment of trusts and foundation schools (which can agree their own admissions policies) and the establishment of academies for secondary schools achieving 30% or less A* to C grades in English and Maths. These changes are dependent upon school performance, popularity, and the wishes of governors and the local community. They can alter the education infrastructure and provision within an area radically and quickly
- Reduction of surplus places affects parental choice and admissions
- Location of schools may not synergise with population growth
- Surplus places feature strongly in some districts and within some age ranges but this is not consistent around the county
- Buildings with poor condition/suitability are high cost to schools and LA's within a climate of reducing budgets
- Reduced funding from central government may mean more targeting of those funds reflecting national rather than local priorities
- Partnerships for Schools will require business cases and may impose different and an increase in approval mechanisms to access funding
- Less available funding means greater demand which requires better management of prioritisation, more consultation and scrutiny, better management of expectations and even more emphasis on transparency of decision making
- Transformation could be required without investment
- Local corporate asset management strategies may begin to conflict with CYPS and national policy
- School closures can adversely affect other aspects of community provision and access
- Leadership and popularity of schools change over time
- Partnership working means sharing power – and responsibility
- OFSTED reports influence parents
- Community engagement does not necessarily not mean the same as consultation
- Community engagement and consultation both require a well maintained and resourced communications strategy
- Housing development has momentarily slowed reducing access to developer contributions
- Much of the current county council school building stock is in poor condition and may necessitate investment before housing development begins.

4. Housing Development and Schools Requirements

- Through Planning and Provision, CYPS has a working relationship with each district council to provide information around the need for school places when considering housing growth in the area. CYPS also works closely with NCC Strategic Planners to ensure that there is input into the Local

Development Framework (LDF). This results in establishing the need for developer contributions to the education infrastructure in the form of Section 106 agreements. At times information is provided directly to developers in order to establish the potential for S106 contributions around a specific development.

- District councils have different approaches to collecting S106 contributions for school places, depending on other types of infrastructure need within areas. However, a more consistent approach is developing across the county. CYPs ensure that the funding per school place is that which is recommended for our area by DCSF. There can be a difference between the amount of funding which can be collected from developers and actual build costs. In previous years this funding gap has been breached by contributions from NCC's capital programme.
- Developer contributions are only required where there is a proven deficit of school places
- Generally the majority of schools serving primary age pupils are primary schools (ages 5 – 11) although there are also separate infant schools (ages 5 - 7) and junior schools (ages 7-11) which are linked as Primary School provision for 5 – 11yrs. Currently all new school provision at primary level is through the provision of a new through primary school. Separate Infant and Junior Schools are not considered.
- The Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) only allows inclusion of pupil numbers in the projections where planning permission has already been granted and it is therefore vital that District Councils inform the County Council at the earliest opportunity once planning permission has been granted. NB School projection data for secondary provision is based on a ten year forecast, and for primary provision, is based on six year forecast. This may not coincide with the potential build period of proposed housing. Phasing of any proposed housing development is critical in determining need. Types of housing may influence the yield of pupils

The Pupil Projection figures used to determine the school requirement is as follows:

Primary School

- For every 100 mixed tenure dwellings, 21 primary pupil spaces are estimated to be required. The minimum size for a viable primary school is 120 pupils. This equating to approximate one primary school for every 571 dwellings. There is no maximum size although 420 pupils (2FE) is the norm for larger schools equating to 2000 mixed dwellings.

Secondary School

- For every 100 mixed tenure dwellings, 16 secondary school spaces are estimated to be required. The minimum size for a viable secondary school is 750 pupils. This equates to approximately one new secondary school for every 4688 dwellings. There is no maximum size for a secondary school although 1800 pupils (12FE) is the norm for larger schools, equating to 11,250 dwellings.

NB This methodology is approved by both the DCSF and Audit Commission as a basis for determining provision of school places in Nottinghamshire

The following table demonstrates how the pupil projections are used to determine how many pupils will be derived from a given number of dwellings and gives examples of the sizes of schools required to accommodate them. It also uses the areas of land required for schools based on current DCSF guidance.

	Primary School			Secondary School		
	21 pupils / 100 dwellings			16 pupils / 100 dwellings		
	120 Pupils	210 Pupils	420 Pupils	600 pupils	1,200 pupils	1,800 Pupils
No of dwellings	571	1,000	2,000	3,750	7,500	11250
Net Land Area m2	5,840	8,720	15,440	41,200	69,400	97,600
Gross Area m2	7,300	10,900	19,300	51,400	86,800	122,200
Playing field m2	2,400	4,200	8,400	31,000	52,000	73,000

5. Funding for additional places

It is an expectation of the DCSF that where new housing growth leads to a demand for additional school places Section 106 contributions will be collected and used along with any other capital allocation from central government that may be available in order to provide those places. This will inevitably be affected by the current economic situation and the Comprehensive Spending Review in 2010 which will determine capital allocations from central sources from 2011. Early indications are that capital funding from central government will be extremely limited.

6. Pupil Place Planning Influences and Drivers – National and Local

- Parental Choice/Preference

The expression of a choice or preference for a school by parents impacts directly on the ability to accurately predict the need for school places within a local or county area. Parental choice is affected by a number of factors: school performance, location, charismatic leadership, school publicity, local perceptions, number of pupils in a class, age and condition of buildings, availability of facilities. All these are subject to change and can therefore impact considerably upon the perception of local need and on short and long term strategic planning.

- Expanding popular schools

This is government policy and needs to be part of the strategic planning of school places. However, the popularity of a school is linked to many differing factors like school performance, charismatic leadership, forward thinking staff, excellent governance, new or improved physical environments, school status, admissions policies, which are all subject to change. The effect of expanding popular schools can lead to an imbalance of school places within a given locality and in some cases impact negatively upon choice and diversity rather than promote it.

- Supporting rural schools

This links with key corporate policy and objectives and ensures equity of access for rural communities to council services. Supporting small rural primary and secondary schools within Nottinghamshire is expensive and can contribute to the number of surplus places within rural districts as it mitigates against rationalisation of provision. There is a growing inclination towards federating small schools in rural localities, rather than advocating closure and removing schools from the heart of their communities. This also fits with the policy of extending the use of school sites and integrating other services which can be delivered from or adjacent to them.

- School Performance and pupil achievement

These are the national criteria against which many policies are measured and capital funding streams are triggered. The impact of this is that high deprivation and low achievement are always the key factors to accessing funding for schools and their development. There is consequently a negative impact upon schools which, through geographical or local situations have perceived advantages of medium or low deprivation and medium or high achievement as measured by the school performance. Contextual value added measures are not used as national criteria. Thus, certain areas within Nottinghamshire never fall within the criteria for national capital funding eg Rushcliffe and parts of other districts. The needs of these areas have to be met through local funding mechanisms or achieve a low priority in resource allocation decisions. This makes it difficult to achieve some of the strategic change and development of integrated services within these areas.

- Community Use/Community Learning

This is a growing ambition on the national and local political landscape and combines integrating services with greater access to learning opportunities at any age. Usually capital is required to ensure that facilities are accessible and located appropriately within communities. There is a need to marry up different financial funding streams within the department, the council and with partners in order to maximise any and all opportunities to ensure provision. This responsibility for promoting and ensuring synergy between capital funding streams is an expectation by national government and is new to the service. It needs to be expanded and developed.

- Local investment through national programmes

Capital funding for schools and other CYPS service areas is becoming more centralised within national programmes which have very specific focuses and criteria. This may not impact positively or equally throughout the county, dependent upon the criteria used for entry into the programme, or for establishing the level of funding available. It can therefore be difficult to ensure equality of investment across districts and the delivery of some policies like integration can be piecemeal in their roll out, rather than delivered in a managed way. It can also be difficult to guarantee timescales for the delivery of investment in the public domain.

- Impact of the national and global financial situation

Currently the “credit crunch” is impacting through the availability of capital (eg reduced capital receipts and the ability to fund borrowing), the buoyancy of the local economy and increasing the needs relating to some services. This will continue to impact upon the work of the Planning and Provision Service in different ways. An immediate impact is the government accelerating the current capital funding streams which could affect the authority meeting its spending targets. A long term impact will be on the continuing availability of capital funding for the national programmes of Primary Capital Funding and BSF.

7. Review of Primary School Places in Rushcliffe/ West Bridgford

There is a review underway to evaluate the situation with regard to primary school places available across Rushcliffe and specifically in West Bridgford. This will be presented to senior officers and members in the form of a draft paper/report with an outline of current need; projected need to 2012/13; possible options outlined against each school and summarised across the West Bridgford district; and references to implications including capital investment.

The paper will be available to members of Children's Service Leadership Team by mid March who will then direct further work/actions to be undertaken.

Interim findings are that, outside the growth predicted around new housing, there is a current deficit of primary school places (around 1 form of entry – 210 places). Between now and 2012/13 this is projected to increase to 2 forms of entry (420 places).

Currently pupils are being provided with school places by exceeding the net capacities of several schools. This strategy has been agreed and implemented with the support Head Teachers, but cannot be continued, hence the need to identify other options quickly and thoroughly investigate all possibilities against implications and investment requirement.

There is an excellent working relationship between CYPS, NCC Strategic Planning and colleagues in Rushcliffe Borough Council re school place requirement and developer contributions (Section 106 contributions) will be collected to ensure sufficient primary and secondary provision within Rushcliffe/West Bridgford where proposals for housing development are given planning approval.

Appendix: Role of CYPS Planning and Provision

Key Functions

- Ensuring that there is strategic planning of school places and facilities across Nottinghamshire eg Secondary Estate Strategy, area plans
- Promoting choice and diversity throughout the school estate
- Working with schools and across the CYPS departmental services to ensure that opportunities to provide facilities to support integrated services are fully exploited
- Ensuring that Nottinghamshire receives its full allocation of DCSF funding for providing school places and upgrading quality of provision
- Ensuring that developer contributions to providing school places are secured and maximised
- Undertaking the client role in delivering the CYPS Capital Programme
- Contributing to the delivery of national programmes – Primary Capital Programme and Building Schools for the Future, with respect to developing strategies for change and supporting primary and secondary schools inside and outside the programme

Specific Tasks

- Work with schools, departmental colleagues and partners to ensure that there are sufficient diverse and quality school places in the appropriate locations in Nottinghamshire which support improvements to learning and achievement at all ages
- Oversee the equality of provision of school places and all CYPS provision across the county in terms of condition, suitability and sufficiency
- Ensure that schools have regular area reviews to understand school development planning and how they are contributing to the departmental vision
- Prepare the Nottinghamshire Primary Strategy for Change and oversee the delivery of the Primary Capital Programme
- Contribute to the preparation of Nottinghamshire's BSF Strategy for Change Parts 1, and 2 and Outline Business Case
- Support schools in change management according to the primary and secondary strategies for change
- Work with partners in CYPS to ensure awareness of their needs for integration, with special reference to district councils
- Support all parts of the CYPS department in making bids for funding to support the delivery of facilities for integrated services
- Support schools and their partners in integrating services on school sites with particular reference to joint use sites
- Prepare and recommend priorities for the Schools' Capital Programme and ensure that it is effectively delivered

Long term Objectives

- Ensure agile and accurate planning mechanisms for the planning of school places through the development of area plans and an estate strategy
- Reduce surplus places in schools
- Ensure adequate provision for integrated service delivery from or adjacent to schools sites as appropriate
- Become more connected to other parts of CYPS in terms of understanding and supporting integration
- Ensure synergy with relevant corporate property, investment and asset management plans