

# **Core Strategy Partial Review City Centre Action Plan**

Education Background Paper

**December 2013**



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## **Education Background Paper**

This background document accompanies the Submission Documents and outlines some background in relation to the delivery of sites and policies. This document is not on deposit for consultation and is background evidence.

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 At present there is a sufficient supply of secondary schools places within existing schools to meet the needs of the city. However, by 2025 there is projected to be a shortage of secondary school places across the city, totalling approximately 1,800-2,550 places. Much of this increased demand will arise from pressures within the central area of the city. As such, the city council has been exploring outline options for how this need can be met, ahead of securing the required level of funding for its delivery. Meanwhile, anticipated demand for primary school places will be met, following recent expansions to a number of primary schools.
- 1.2 Whilst the education department is at an early stage in considering the options available to deliver the additional secondary school places, the City Centre Action Plan (CCAP Policy AP 10) has provided a supportive policy basis which will enable the provision of any new schools within the city centre area to be delivered. Given the scarcity of detailed information on particular matters however, such as the levels of central government funding which will be available, it was not considered appropriate for the CCAP to identify and safeguard specific sites.
- 1.3 Whilst a site or potential sites have not been protected within the city centre area for a potential secondary school, consideration has nevertheless been given to the size of site which is likely to be required and discussions have taken place with the education department regarding the present availability of sites within the city.

## **2. THE IDENTIFIED EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF THE CITY**

### Primary School Places

- 2.1 The Council initiated the Primary Review: Phase 2 in 2010, with a view to meeting the pupil places need which had been brought about by recent year-on-year increases in birth rates. This resulted in a number of proposals for additional school places to meet the anticipated needs in the primary sector in the city centre (and wider city). A number of these proposals have been in the form of significant expansion projects at existing schools, some of which have already been implemented to ensure that the additional school places are in place for the anticipated spike in 2015. The city centre primary schools which have been subject to expansion are St. Johns Primary School and St. Mary's C of E Primary School.

### Secondary School Places

- 2.2 At present there is a surplus of secondary school places in the city. However, based on the increase in demand currently being experienced in the primary sector and that which is expected in 2015, the Council anticipates that in the longer term a shortage of places will emerge in the secondary sector. By 2025 the deficit will be for 1,800-2,550 places, the mid-point of which is equivalent to around 15% of the city's secondary school population. This need is likely to derive primarily from the central area of the city where there is currently only one secondary school (St Anne's, just outside the city centre).

- 2.3 Over the medium to longer term a number of alternative options for additional school place provision may arise within the city centre or elsewhere in the city. It is likely that some of the needs for secondary places can be met outside the city centre through the expansion of other existing secondary schools. An initial indication at this stage is that as much as 67-77% of the shortfall will be met by these expansion projects. However, having explored the opportunities which exist in terms of expanding existing schools, it has also been concluded that this solution in isolation will not sufficiently deliver the additional school places required in the long term.
- 2.4 The provision of secondary school facilities within the city centre has therefore been considered and it is believed that this would have benefits in terms of meeting geographical needs and promoting accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport. Following detailed discussions with existing schools and other key stakeholders, the education department have advised that the concept of an 'Annexe' school, linked to an existing school, is the preferred option for the delivery of the additional places in the city centre.
- 2.5 Taking into account the front loading of expansion projects, the education department anticipate that the best case scenario will not require the additional Annexe until 2021/2022. Meanwhile the worst case scenario anticipates that the Annexe may be required as early as 2019/20.
- 2.6 The above timescales differ because the best case scenario is contingent upon schools being willing to accept additional pupils within their existing accommodation. The later date is therefore based upon the premise that existing schools provide spaces according to their capacities, thus delaying the point at which the Annexe school would be required to 2021/22. Meanwhile, the earlier date of 2019/20 is based upon a scenario where existing schools do not offer school places according to their maximum capacities.

### **3. POLICY AP 10 SUPPORTING PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION FACILITIES**

- 3.1 The provision of a secondary school in the city centre presents a number of challenges. Potential sites within the inner urban area are likely to have a number of constraints, for example in terms of size and in particular the amount of open space. The suitability of a site will be judged pragmatically in this context, and in terms of whether it is the most suitable site compared to alternatives in the city which are realistically available at the time that the need arises.
- 3.2 Depending on the site, improvements to pedestrian and cycle facilities are likely to be required and this will be assessed further for the specific site. As outlined by the policy, a school travel plan will be required.
- 3.3 The current Government guidance "Area Guidelines for Schools" acknowledges that schools in constrained environments will have reduced on site provision of playing fields, and that additional provision can be made off site.
- 3.4 As the CCAP has emerged, so has the anticipated long term need for increased secondary school provision. At the Preferred Approach stage, the CCAP had only one education related policy. The policy, which supplemented

Core Strategy Policy CS 11, intended to provide certainty for the city centre higher education establishments to enable further expansion and intensification. This policy has been carried forward into the Proposed Submission version.

- 3.5 However, following the anticipated secondary educational needs, which have only recently come to light, the Council has responded accordingly and has felt it necessary to implement a further education policy into the CCAP Proposed Submission document (Policy AP 10). A copy of the policy is included below.

**Policy AP 10 Supporting Primary and Secondary Education Facilities**

New schools will be supported in the city centre on sites:

Of a size sufficient to provide appropriate on site play / sports provision, taking into account the constraints of an inner urban area;

Which implement a school travel plan have suitable pedestrian and cycle access from surrounding residential areas and from public transport facilities, and is appropriate in terms of highway safety;

Secondary school play / sports facilities (whether indoor or outdoor) and open space will be publically available outside of school hours.

- 3.6 The above policy provides support for the provision of new schools (whether primary or secondary) within the city centre area during the plan period. The policy is worded flexibly to enable the Education department to respond to its needs as and when appropriate. In relation to the anticipated shortfall in secondary school places, the policy will support the provision of a new school or annexe, subject to specific site selection criteria.
- 3.7 Policy AP 10 was considered to provide a flexible and practical solution, as opposed to a policy which sought to prematurely safeguard a particular secondary school site for the period up until 2026. This was not considered appropriate to implement into the plan without sufficient options for the delivery of the additional places being fully explored. As part of these options, it will be necessary to consider matters such as the ability and desire of existing schools to expand and the potential scales and timescales of such expansions.
- 3.8 The above matters in turn have a significant impact on the provision of the new school / annexe, affecting the potential size of site required and the date by which the site would need to be available. Additionally, given that it is a long term requirement, there is the potential for new and more appropriate sites to come forward than available at the present time. Designating a particular site to deliver the requirement is therefore considered premature at this stage, and, in light of the availability of various types of site that the education department would consider, unnecessary.

#### **4. THE REQUIREMENT FOR A NEW SECONDARY SCHOOL**

- 4.1 As indicated at paragraph 2.4 above, following detailed discussions with key stakeholders, the preferred approach is for the identified long term need for additional places to be met by the provision of an 'Annexe' school.
- 4.2 Of the 1,800-2,550 place deficit which is anticipated by 2025, it is expected that the need which remains unmet following expansions of existing schools will result in a requirement for the annexe to provide 4-6 Forms of Entry. This would require the annexe to provide for between 600 and 900 places.
- 4.3 In terms of the physical structure of the annexe school, the education department have advised that a range of sites would be considered. Possibilities were noted to include the conversion of disused office blocks. The ability to make use of vacant office space was considered to present a number of benefits and support would be given for utilising older office stock for this purpose. In this context, there are numerous opportunities within the city centre area to provide for a school site which falls close to existing transport links. The Council will support the provision of a new annexe school, provided that a suitable site, which is fit for this purpose, is identified.
- 4.4 The potential lack of open space will be a matter for consideration with a city centre site and this restriction has already been outlined by Policy AP 10. A solution to this issue is the ability for the annexe school to utilise the Civil Service Sports Ground on Malmesbury Road which is approximately 2.4 miles from the city centre (driving distance), equivalent to an 8 minute drive. This facility is owned by Southampton City Council and is covenanted to remain available for continued recreational use. Improvements to the facility are also currently underway. There is an established connection with the facility being used by schools, with St. Mark's C of E Primary School regularly using the facility, having very little on-site open space, characteristic of a constrained city centre school site.

#### **5. SIZE REQUIREMENTS**

- 5.1 The education department are forecasting a city wide need for 1,800-2,550 secondary places, equivalent to an additional 12-17 Forms of Entry (FE). However, it would be both unfeasible and undesirable to locate all of this provision in the city centre. Taking into account planned expansions to existing schools and the desire to fully explore and utilise the existing capacities which exist within certain schools, it is expected that a new school / annexe delivering in the range of 4 to 6 FE (600-900 places) would be appropriate for this location.
- 5.2 Most of the emerging need has been noted to relate to a central strip of the city (running from Bargate to Bassett). These places do not need to all be provided in one school, but the minimum size of school should cater for 600 places.
- 5.3 The Government issues guidelines on the appropriate size of secondary schools (buildings and playing fields), relative to their number of pupils on roll. These are guidelines, not absolute requirements. It is for the Council to determine what is appropriate and to undertake the necessary discussions with Sport England. Despite this, it is important to note that this issue is only one of a number which will have to be taken into account and the Council will

be keen to ensure an appropriate balance between all the options is achieved. Clearly, if a final decision is reached to provide an Annexe facility linked to an existing school, the proximity to and facilities of the main school will also need to be taken into account.

- 5.4 It is also worth noting that, due to space restrictions, none of the city's secondary schools currently meet the national guidelines for full on site provision.
- 5.5 One way around the problem of lack of on-site playing fields that is supported by the national guidelines, is for secondary school children to be transported to an alternative site for playing pitch provision (for example the Civil Service sports ground). This facility is already used by existing schools and improvements to the facility are currently underway.
- 5.6 The national guidelines also indicate the appropriate size of a secondary school on a 'constrained' site (which would include a city centre site). It is important to note that these figures are based on the provision of a whole new school, rather than an Annexe facility. In this context, provided there was off site provision of sports pitches, an appropriate size of site for a main school would be as follows:

	<b>600 place secondary school</b>	<b>900 place secondary school</b>
<b>Building footprint (assuming 2 – 3 storey)</b>	2,348 sq m	3,152 sq m
<b>Minimum site area (eg pitches, informal social, courts, etc)</b>	7000 sq m	8500 sq m
<b>Total Space Requirement</b>	9,348 sq m	11,652 sq m
<b>Approximate size of site required in hectares</b>	0.95 hectares	1.2 hectares

- 5.7 The range of school size anticipated would therefore ideally include on site open space of around 0.7ha – 0.85ha. As a 'reality check' this compares favourably to:
- A sample of inner London (Lambeth) schools, which have on site open space provision of 0.2 – 0.7 hectares (see Appendix 2).
  - A full sized football league pitch, which is about 0.7 hectares.
- 5.8 The ability of a site to include this level of provision will however ultimately depend on the type of site which is brought forward. For example, the conversion of an existing office space may need to rely on a solely off-site open space provision.

## **6. POTENTIAL SITES**

- 6.1 At present, the education department is preparing to have an outline plan agreed with existing schools by the end of December 2013. Once an informal decision is made with the key stakeholders to progress with a new school / annexe of a particular scale, the feasibility of site options will be considered. In due course, this information will then be used as the basis for a public consultation process, with the total process (from inception to decision) taking approximately 10 months. With the need having been identified well in advance, it is considered important for all options to be fully explored and consulted on, to enable the best solution to be achieved.
- 6.2 A review of potential sites which are currently available has been undertaken to demonstrate the types of options which exist within the city centre area. Possible types of site include conversion of existing office space (which the Education Department considers a good opportunity) or the redevelopment of industrial sites. Appendix 1 lists a range of office and industrial areas in the city centre and provides an indication of how these relate to the national guidelines for new schools. It does not indicate a Council view on appropriate sites.
- 6.3 With the CCAP supporting the provision of additional office space, there is also the possibility for an Annexe school to be delivered as part of a new build programme, if a developer was to provide flexible accommodation which could revert to office space. Equally, the conversion of existing office space could be reversed in the future.



## APPENDIX 1: POTENTIAL SITES

This is a 'desk top' physical capacity assessment of possible sites for a school undertaken by planning policy officers. It does not constitute a Council view on the suitability of sites for a school:

	Site Size	% of site taken for a worst case 900 place secondary school (based on national guidelines for a full school)	Land ownership
<b>Town Depot</b>	4.1 ha	29%	SCC freehold; no leasehold.
This site is fully within the Council's control. It is well related to significant areas of housing. The school's open space (particularly if opened to the public) would enhance the waterfront. However, the Council's plans are for mixed use residential / marine employment uses.			
<b>City Industrial Estate</b> (south of West Quay Rd, near Southern Rd junction)	4.4 ha	27%	SCC freehold; long lease to pension fund; short term leases expire in about 10 years.
The key land interest belongs to a pension fund. The Council would need to purchase this interest at alternative use value. The school would be detached from residential areas (pupils would need to traverse commercial areas and cross the busy West Quay Road).			
<b>West Quay Industrial Estate</b> (south of West Quay Rd opposite IKEA) (excluding Royal Pier site)	4 ha	30%	SCC freehold; Understood to be a range of long leases
As City Industrial Estate.			
<b>Central Trading Estate</b> (south of football stadium)	4.4 ha	27%	Private
The Council would need to purchase this interest at alternative use value. The school would be reasonably well related to significant areas of housing (footbridges across the railway might need improving).			
<b>Dukes Keep / College Street</b>	4.4 ha	27%	Mixed
The College Street car park is owned by the Council. It is 0.5 hectares so could meet most of the on site pitch requirement for a 750 space school. However re-provision of the car park on a multi-storey format is likely to be needed. The school buildings would only take 7% of the remaining area. The older office blocks are believed to have a high vacancy rate. The Council would need to purchase at an alternative use			

value.			
<b>City Commerce Centre</b>	0.8 ha	Site may not be large enough to accommodate 900 place school	Private
The City Commerce Centre is privately owned and is located in the east of the city. The site may not be large enough to accommodate the worst case 900 place school, but it may be large enough to accommodate an Annexe in the region of 600 places. The Council's plans are to safeguard the site for light industrial, general industrial, storage and distribution uses.			
<b>East Park Terrace (University Expansion Land)</b>	1.1 ha	Site may not be large enough to accommodate 900 place school	
This site is in a prominent position on the edge of East Park. Whilst the site does not meet the requirements for a 900 place new school, it may be large enough to accommodate an Annexe school with that number of places. The Council's plans are to support the expansion of the Southampton Solent University on this site. Additionally, the Council will also support a number of alternative uses including secondary school provision (as listed within CCAP Policy AP 33), if all or part of the site is not in fact needed for the university's expansion.			
<b>Conversion of office blocks</b>			
There are a number of vacant office blocks in the city centre. A 750 place school requires a total floorspace of 6,875 sq m. By way of comparison the whole of Frobisher House / Nelson Gate next to the station is 7,200 sq m. There would be no on site open space provision.			

#### Off-Site Open Space Provision

In terms of proximity to off site open space provision, sites in the west of the city centre would be reasonably close to the Civil Service Sports Ground. Sites in the east of the city centre would be close to the St Mary's primary school playing field or Hoglands Park (if these facilities could be shared).

## **APPENDIX 2 – OPEN SPACE PROVISION EXAMPLES – TO BE REVIEWED**

### Lord's Hill Academy

-900 pupils  
-3,750 sq m building footprint (0.4ha) (approx 9,375 sq m total)  
-3.45ha site area

### Lambeth Schools

The Elmgreen School  
Football pitch = 0.3ha  
Multi use pitch = 0.2ha  
Total = 0.5ha

Stockwell Park School  
Football pitch = 0.3ha  
Plaza = 0.4ha  
Total = 0.7ha

Lambeth Academy  
Tennis Courts = 0.35ha

Archbishop Tenison's School  
Playing fields = 0.1ha  
School yard = 0.1ha  
Total = 0.2ha

Full sized football pitch (eg Old Trafford) = 0.7ha

So minimum size of buildings + pitches = 1ha