

Blandford Pupil Place Planning Statement

The Blandford Pyramid is one that clearly emphasises the challenge of the Market Town in majority rural pyramid. In addition the pyramid has an MOD camp.

The two town schools, Milldown (30/ 1FE) and Archbishop Wake (60/ 2FE), have been subject to both an absolute increase in numbers as well as a modest increase in the 4+ transfer rate into mainstream schools. In September 2015 DCC provided an additional 15 places at Milldown Primary, raising their PAN temporarily from 30 to 45. This is likely to be repeated for 2016 given the pressures that are coming through.

Dorset County Council is planning for an additional 1FE capacity in the town to address the new housing that is identified within The North Dorset District Local Plan. In addition the Office of National Statistics projections based on migration and birthrates indicate upwards of 150 4+ children needing school places in the town come 2022. This increase in population would also require a further 1FE of school provision.

Neither of the town schools could reasonably be expected to expand permanently to take an additional 1FE, without significant design challenges and location for the additional provision being unsuitable. Blandford St. Mary's Primary is also constrained on its current site.

DCC is looking for an additional site to accommodate the rise in numbers that is already being experienced as well as the future rises that are anticipated as a result of the continuing build out of existing allocations as well as the plans for further applications.

Though temporary additional places have been made available at Milldown Primary, DCC is looking for an additional school site. At this stage it is proposed that a 1FE primary school would be built though DCC would like to secure a site area sufficient for a 2FE primary school for future flexibility to respond to future pressures as detailed above.

Given the pressures within the town, to provide additional school places to the south would only add to traffic movements to access any provision in that area. The majority of the new housing that has come on stream in recent years and that is proposed both within and outside of the Local Plan, is focused to the North of the Town and this is where the pressure is being felt.

With the 350 houses planned to the South this will fill Blandford St. Mary's Primary with its catchment children, and those children who access the school from the town will then require places back in their own catchment.

DCC is thus looking for a site in the northern part of the town to service a) the existing pressures, b) the push back from Blandford St. Mary and c) to accommodate any further housing developments. Without expanding existing schools, the only option is a 2FE site (approximately 2.1ha to be confirmed once a site is identified). The school may be built in two phases as and when the places are required.

Two sites have been proposed – the retail site south of Sunrise Business Park and the fields north of the bypass over the 'yellow bridge'. Both of these sites could be used for a 2FE school, subject to viability tests, providing good links to the bulk of the new housing and population. If further developments are also proposed in the north and north east of the town, these sites are again well placed to provide the educational infrastructure required. DCC is committed to local provision that is as far as possible accessible by foot for the majority of residents that are to be accessing the school. No other site at this stage has been identified.

In terms of secondary provision and the current primary pressures, The Blandford School will be subject to a study to look at the extent of works that need to be undertaken to raise the school from its current PAN of 210 to ensure it has capacity for the additional primary children that are coming through.

Ed Denham
School Place Sufficiency Manager
DCC