

## **Blandford Town Pupil Place Planning Statement**

The Blandford Town is divided into two catchments. One combined catchment that services Milldown and Archbishop Wake, and the other one being Blandford St. Mary.

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 has been repeated for September 2016. DCC is very concerned that if no new site is brought forward for a new school that the LA's statutory duty to provide sufficient school places could be at risk as the Milldown School could not absorb further temporary buildings to take in the existing numbers of children in the pyramid.

The Blandford Town Pupil Place Planning area has been subject to a significant increase in numbers of children at the 4+ point of entry. In 2010 this was 112 children looking for a reception place against a then capacity of 75. As this number increased an additional 15 places were made available at Archbishop Wake Primary taking them from 45 to 60 places.

For the 2014 entry point the number of children looking for a place rose to 147 then 133 in 2015 and 148 in 2016. It is anticipated that 152 children will be looking for places for September 2017.

As stated above, DCC has been managing the additional pressures through the temporary expansion of Milldown Primary. There is a limit for this unplanned expansion of the school using modular temporary buildings. The design of Archbishop Wake Primary makes it impossible to build additional accommodation within the area of the school buildings and has been ruled out for extension on the playing fields as they are remote from the school and this presents significant safeguarding issues if a school is expanded in this way.

Dorset County Council thus currently has existing demand of 30 places per year in excess of what can be managed. The projections, without taking into account further housing, suggest an additional 150 4+ catchment children per year through to 2026. Traditionally there has been 91%+ transition / take up rate.

As well as the additional 30 places that are required now, there is a need for an additional 1FE entry to accommodate the proposed housing identified within The North Dorset District Local Plan.

As stated there are considerable difficulties that at present could not be overcome to increase the town capacity by 1FE. To add an additional further 1FE of capacity can only be accommodated by a new school.

Given that an additional 2FE of capacity is required in the Town to absorb existing demographic pressures and to respond to the housing in the plan, the most efficient, appropriate and sustainable way is a new school. If additional housing comes forward

as part of the Blandford+ proposals, this will further entrench the need for the 2FE of additional capacity.

The options for a school site have been investigated:

1. To expand existing – as previously documented above, 2FE could not be added to the existing school estate on their current sites.
2. A new school on the Blandford St. Mary Development – The children from this development will be absorbed by the Blandford St. Mary Primary, and push back children that access the school from the town. The places that are required are to the north of the town where the pressures are and where a significant component of the new housing will be allocated. Indeed the Blandford+ proposals further consolidate the position for a need for provision in the north. To secure a 2FE site to the south of Blandford St. Mary will require in excess of 400 children travelling to and from Blandford Town into Blandford St. Mary each day.
3. The retail/commercial land south of Sunrise Business Park- This has now been confirmed as retail/commercial for a supermarket development and is no longer an option.
4. The sports provision site north of the Blandford By-pass – this site can provide the necessary minimum 2.1ha that are required for 2FE. It can also provide sufficient site for a 3FE should DCC want to secure some additional school provision for developments beyond the end of the current local plan. The site is to the North of Blandford and thus is sited close to where the children are currently coming from. There are already good pedestrian links into the housing provision in the northern part of the town.
5. Other sites – DCC has looked and it has been agreed locally that there are no other sites of appropriate size within the town/by-pass area.

To this end DCC is committed to securing a minimum 2FE school site in Blandford and based on the analysis to date, the site north of the bypass is the most appropriate, and the delivery of which is critical to the ability of DCC to fulfil its statutory obligation of providing school places in the town.

DCC acknowledges the proposed site sits within the Cranborne and West Wiltshire Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty but:

- a) The pressure of school places and the statutory duty of the LA to provide sufficient school places, makes the proposal an exceptional one given the lack of alternative sites within the town.
- b) There would be works to address any appropriate landscaping to minimise the impact of the development
- c) There are no appropriate sites for a 2.1ha school other than the preferred site. To have the school developed elsewhere away from the AONB (if a site was identified) will have significant impact on the school's ability to address the needs of the community locally. In addition it would significantly increase the environmental impact on the area by the additional car movements required to ensure 400 children could access the primary school safely.

Ed Denham  
School Place Sufficiency Manager  
Dorset County Council