

Blandford Town Pupil Place Planning Statement

October 2018 (Updated January 2019)

The Blandford Town is divided into two catchments. One combined catchment that services Milldown and Archbishop Wake, and the other 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 Dorset County Council (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 Local Authority's (LA) 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, and then 153 in 2017. It is anticipated that 146 children will be looking for places for September 2019, with a constant projection without new housing being factored in of 147-149 every year going forward.

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.

DCC 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 a 140-150 4+ catchment children per year through to 2026. Traditionally there has been 91%+ transition/take up rate.

As well as the additional 15+ places that are required now, there is a need for an additional 1FE entry to accommodate the proposed housing identified within the adopted North Dorset District Local Plan Part 1 2011-2031 (NDLP1).

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.

North Dorset District Council (NDDC) is currently undertaking a review of the NDLP1 following a modification to it by the examiner expressing the need for an early review of the plan to take account of new evidence, including housing need, detailed in the Eastern Dorset 2015 Strategic Housing Market Assessment. The Blandford + Neighbourhood Plan (B+NP2) is currently being prepared to plan for housing growth in the B+ neighbourhood area and as part of a shared strategy with NDDC has agreed to plan for a minimum of 400 homes. The Western Dorset Economic Growth Strategy for: North Dorset, West Dorset and Weymouth & Portland 2017 to 2033 predicts a total growth for Blandford of 660 Houses and therefore any residual homes that need to be accommodated after growth accommodated in the B+NP version 2, as it will come forward prior to the completion of the Local Plan Review, will be accommodated through the Local Plan Review. Pimperne Neighbourhood Plan has recently passed its examination and includes growth of 40-45 houses.

Based on these revised housing factors to be adopted, using 660 new houses for the purposes of calculations, this would generate 161 additional children (23 per year group at primary). This in itself would require a new 1FE of capacity in addition to the 1FE already identified to accommodate the growth already committed in NDLP1.

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 to build a new school. If additional housing comes forward as part of the B+NP version 2, 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 or in the area identified as Area F – 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 B+NP version 2 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 280+ 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.

Comparison of the various models of delivery:

There are further proposals have been suggested to the south of Blandford.

Proposal/Model 1 – 400 new units and the School in area F (B+NP2 Spatial Options):

If a new 2FE provision of school places (60 per year Group) is generated in area F and that in addition to the existing allocations a further 400 houses are placed in Area F, then based on residual places in the north, and any residual amount from the Local Plan Review, approximately a further 260 units in the Pimperne parish then materialise – up to 40 children and young people per year group will be travelling from the northern residential areas to access primary education in the south.

Proposal/Model 2 – 400 new houses in the South and the school site in the North:

If the new school is developed in the north (yellow bridge site – Area A) but the same housing distribution as per Option 1 comes forward, then 12 children from the southern housing developments will have to travel north to access their primary education.

Proposal/Model 3 – 400 houses and a new school developed in the North:

Based on the same overall quantum of houses, but the 400 B+NP2 houses are developed in the north along with the school, then all the children in the southern housing developments and existing housing will be able to access the Blandford St Mary Primary School. All children in the Northern developments will be accommodated in the 3 northern schools totalling 150 place capacity.

Thus it is more efficient and appropriate to deliver the new school to the North, in area A of the B+ Spatial Options, which will provide places for the existing additional children that are to be generated by ongoing developments in the current NDLP1, as well as proposals for 400 houses in the B+NP2 in the north, and any residual amount from the Local Plan Review. Given the need for the new school to accommodate this additional capacity from the North, it is appropriate that it is placed in the North to remove the need for any child to travel from the south to the north or vice versa.

Given the likely constraints on further school site allocations, DCC has looked for a minimum 2.1ha site for a 2FE site but have also, with the developers, considered the ability of the area to provide a 3FE site (minimum 3ha). There is likely to be continued pressure from out of catchment for places at Pimperne, but this will be based on parental preference.

DCC acknowledges our preferred site sits within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) 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 and in the public interest given the lack of alternative sites within the town. Delivery of a new primary school in Blandford remains critical as existing population levels are showing an upward trend and new housing developments continue to be approved;
- 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 where the need exists in the northern part of the town. In addition it would significantly increase the environmental impact on the area by the additional car movements required to ensure 150-300 children could access the primary school safely;
- d) Site F in terms of topography is limited for development in F2 and is thus significantly less suitable than the proposed school sites in Area A. Area F1 is in the Dorset AONB;
- e) The potential traffic movements as a result of a school and housing in area F will increase significantly. The Secondary School students from the area (280) will have to travel out of the south to access the secondary. This could be added to by up to 280 children moving south to access primary education in the south in Model 1;
- f) There are significant concerns in Model 1 & 2 that the localised road network in Blandford St. Mary cannot contain this level of traffic for school movements alone.

Early Years and Secondary Provision

New developer matrices suggest that this level of development (400 houses from the B+ neighbourhood plan and the residual amount, approximately a further 260, being dealt with through the Local Plan Review) would require 55 nursery places, and these would be supplied through the new school having a dedicated integrated Early Years Provision.

Secondary demand would rise by 18 pupils per year in the Year 7-11 cohort with an additional thirty-six 6th form places being required. These would be provided through expansion of The Blandford School, though developer contributions would be required to resource this level of expansion at the school.

Funding of the new school:

The existing housing allocations will contribute based on the prevailing per pupil place costs that are in place at the time – this is currently £6094 per place for the area.

DCC is looking to revise this so that local developments, as well as contributing marginally more for primary and secondary, will also provide for nursery and Special Education Need.

Once the need is established, then the LA will be required to deliver the places and thus through the use of, probably by way of a combination, S106, Local Authority capital allocations and DFE basic need allocations the relevant budget will be allocated to the relevant project.

Timelines for securing funding and delivery of a new school

DCC would look to deliver a school for the start of an Academic Year – The first day of term in September being 'Dday'.

Based on this and assuming no abnormalities of the delivery and in-line with RIBA gateways, a generic timeline may look like the following:

Action	Weeks
Concept Design / Options Appraisal	12
Obtain Client Approval to Proceed to Feasibility	1
Feasibility	14
Commit to Design (funding Envelope Agreed)	1
Design development including Planning Permission & Tendering	46
Commit to construct (Cabinet Approval) – Final approval to finance the project	1
Construction	52
Building handed over to School/Academy for preparation of occupation (end of academic Year in previous July)	4
Opening of New School (September)	Dday

This is a total of 131 weeks to deliver a project from a standing start with the identification of the order of cost after 28 weeks with formal approval to proceed to construct and commitment of funding from the Local Authority after 75 weeks of this process. This is a generic timeline and subject to individual project variations.

There will be further variations if the project is to be delivered/funded by the Department of Education directly with other possible approval and fund commitment gateways.

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