

Education assessment of spatial options for Oxford's unmet housing needs

September 2016

**High-level Assessment of the Education Infrastructure Required to Support
Spatial Options for Oxford's Unmet Housing Need
June 2016**

Introduction

This report sets out the findings from a high level assessment of the implications for the provision of primary and secondary school places of development of 36 potential spatial options for accommodating Oxford's unmet housing needs which were generated through the joint post SHMA work programme.

It is one of a number of option assessments being undertaken to help identify the most sustainable options or groups of options and which will be used to help inform a decision by the Oxfordshire Growth Board on how Oxford's unmet needs – working assumption of 15,000 homes - should be apportioned between the rural districts.

The report is structured as follows:

- Existing and projected school capacity, including new schools already planned to support growth allocated in existing and emerging local plans
- Location of the spatial options in relation to existing and already planned new capacity
- Issues impacting on planning and delivery of new schools provision
- Assumptions used in assessing the education implications of the spatial options and proposed provision
- 'RAG' assessment of the education implications of the spatial options
- An assessment of the cumulative education implications of the Green 'RAG' rated options

Existing and projected school capacity, including new schools already planned to support growth allocated in existing and emerging local plans

Oxfordshire County Council as local education authority has a statutory duty to ensure sufficient school places are available in the county for every child of school age whose parents wish them to have one.

Existing state sector provision is as follows:

- **Primary schools:** Oxfordshire has 233 mainstream schools providing primary education. Three of these also provide secondary education (all-age schools); all other primary schools provide education for children aged 4-11 years.

From a schools organisation perspective wherever possible, the preferred Oxfordshire model is one or two form entry schools ie an admission number of 30 or 60 children. This means that schools are ideally organised so as to allow admission of one full form of entry or two full forms of entry in any one year. This allows classes to be organised as multiples of 30 pupils per year group which conforms to statutory class size requirements. For financial viability, government preference is for two form entry schools.

- **Secondary Schools:** Oxfordshire has 33 mainstream schools currently providing secondary education, including a Studio School in Banbury and a University Technical College in Didcot.

The most common model of curriculum delivery is 11-18 years with a sixth form, although there are four schools currently offering 11-16 study only. Three of Oxfordshire's schools provide "all-through" primary and secondary education (as referred to above). The minimum viable size for a secondary school is judged to be around 600 pupils ie four forms of entry.

The new and emerging Studio Schools and University Technical Colleges cater for 14-19 year-olds. University Technical Colleges (UTC) specialise in subjects that need modern, technical, industry-standard equipment such as engineering and construction, teaching these disciplines alongside business skills and the use of ICT. They are sponsored by a local university and employers, and often work in partnership with FE colleges and established academy trusts. They are usually for 500-800 students. Studio Schools are small schools for 300 students. With year-round opening and a 9-5 working day, they feel more like a workplace than a school. Working closely with local employers, Studio Schools will offer a range of academic and vocational qualifications as well as paid work placements linked directly to employment opportunities in the local area.

- **Special Education Provision (SEN):** In Oxfordshire this is provided through a mixture of 14 Special Schools, a pupil Referral unit and 10 specialist resource provision units for children with a specific need, e.g. hearing impairment or autism, based on the sites of mainstream schools.

Forecasting demand for school places: This is affected by the following main factors;

- fertility and birth rates;
- migration;
- housing growth;
- troop movements in and out of the county; and
- change in the pattern of participation in state sector education.

The Oxfordshire Pupil Place Plan 2015-19 (to be updated for 2016-2020 in November 2016) shows how school provision is expected to change over the next few years and sets out the issues that are expected to impact on school place provision up to 2019 and beyond. The Pupil Place Plan shows there is little spare forecast capacity across the county now and in the future.

Not all unfilled school places can be considered "surplus". The Audit Commission advises that some margin of spare school capacity is necessary to provide some flexibility for unexpected influxes of children and expressions of parental preference. For primary school place planning purposes, the County Council applies a target of 8% unfilled places in urban areas and 12% in rural areas (Oxfordshire Primary Strategy for Change - DfE approved); for secondary school planning a target figure of 10% unfilled secondary places is applied.

Planned new schools: The County Council requires new schools to be provided where existing local schools cannot meet forecast demand from new housing, for example because they are physically incapable of expansion, or are their own admissions authorities (such as VA schools and Academies) and unwilling to increase pupil numbers.

31 new primary schools and 10 new secondary schools are currently planned for areas of significant population growth arising from new housing developments allocated in existing and emerging Local Plans. Primarily these are to be located on strategic development sites in the growth locations of Banbury, Bicester, Didcot, Wantage-Grove and Witney.

Tables 1 and 2 in Appendix 1 provide details of the new schools locations, the allocations they support, when they are expected to come on stream, costs and any potential funding and delivery issues. These schools have been planned on a scale to match local planned growth and full funding has yet to be secured; they would require even further investment and possibly additional land to accommodate additional demands from new developments elsewhere.

Location of the spatial options in relation to existing and already planned new capacity

Existing primary schools where they exist close to the spatial options for unmet need do not currently have sufficient spare capacity to accommodate additional pupils and most have physical or operational constraints on expansion.

Only three of the 31 already planned new primary schools for Oxfordshire would be located in the vicinity of a spatial option for unmet need and potentially could be built at a larger scale to offer some additional capacity, subject to funding:

Spatial option	Already Planned New School Location	Potential additional capacity
Wick Farm	Barton Park	1.5FE school on 2FE site - scope for minor expansion
Land north of Old Headington	Barton Park	1.5FE school on 2FE site – scope for minor expansion
North Abingdon	North Abingdon local plan allocation	1.5FE school on 2FE site – scope for minor expansion
West of Downs Road	West Witney local plan allocation	1.5FE school on 2FE site – scope for minor expansion

All three primary schools are planned to be 1.5FE; expansion to a 2FE would require further investment and still would be unlikely to fully meet demand from the nearby spatial option(s).

The already planned new secondary schools offer some limited possibilities for accommodating growth in demand for places from the unmet need spatial options:

Spatial option	Already Planned New Secondary School and Potential Additional Capacity
All Cherwell spatial options	New Bicester schools may attract pupils back to Bicester from Gosford Hill (Kidlington) and Marlborough School (Woodstock) thereby releasing capacity in those schools for a limited number of pupils from the Cherwell spatial options
All options within Oxford, land north of Oxford and land at Thornhill	Swan Free School is expected to open in Oxford in 2017 with a total of 1200 places but a site has yet to be confirmed
All options at Witney and possibly Eynsham Park	West Witney (local plan allocation)

Issues impacting on planning and delivery of future new schools provision

- **Government policy:** Legislation has a significant impact on the role of the local education authority as the strategic commissioner of school places in terms of responsibilities and powers to plan and deliver new schools.

The Education Act 2011 determined that, where a local education authority considers there is a need for a new school, it must seek proposals to establish an academy/free school. All new academy/free school proposals require the Secretary of State's approval. However, the local education authority is responsible for providing the site for the new school and meeting associated capital and pre-/post-opening costs.

An academy is run by a charitable trust which is responsible for every aspect of managing the school and is responsible for setting their own admission number, and thus capacity, with the agreement of the Secretary of State. The County Council can encourage but has no power to require an academy to expand and amend their admissions policy to accommodate children generated by local housing growth.

In addition to schools promoted by the county council, independent organisations can submit proposals to the Department for Education to set up Free Schools, University Technical Colleges, or Studio Schools, through annual bidding rounds. Although the county council is consulted on these, the decision whether to approve them is made by the Secretary of State. Three Free Schools have so far opened in Oxfordshire: Europa School in 2012, and Tyndale Community School and Heyford Park Free School in 2013. Proposals are also being developed for a secondary school in Oxford. Free Schools, University Technical Colleges and Studio Schools are all classed as academies.

- **Funding for New Schools:** Where a development is large enough to require a new primary or secondary school of its own, land and funding will normally be sought from developer contributions via a Section 106 agreement.

A number of large scale housing developments may cumulatively trigger the need for a new secondary school in an area, funding of which may be sought from developer contributions via Community Infrastructure Levy. District Councils are responsible for collecting CIL and deciding how it is spent; collaborative working between county councils and charging authorities is essential to ensure that sufficient funding is provided to ensure strategic infrastructure such as secondary schools can be delivered when they are needed.

There is already a funding gap for current planned schools which has yet to be filled; although s106 and CIL will be contribute, it is unlikely to meet the shortfall fully and other funding sources will need to be found. It is important that the options for accommodating Oxford's unmet housing need do not require costly education infrastructure which is not capable of being **fully funded** from development.

Assumptions used in assessing the education implications of the spatial options and proposed provision

The overall pupil generation expected of the 36 spatial options has been assessed using a generic pupil generation rate of 25 primary children and 25 secondary children (11-16years) per 100 new dwellings as shown in Tables 3 and 4. A more detailed assessment of pupil generation, reflecting housing mix and phasing, would need to be undertaken if an option were to be taken forward in a local plan or planning application.

Tables 3 and 4 in Appendix 2 set out the education infrastructure required to be put in place to meet the demand for places generated by the spatial options together with its phasing: short term (2016-21), medium term (2022-31) or long term (post 2031) where development build out continues beyond 2031.

Primary school costs are price based to 2015 (Q3) and are for low carbon schools including FF&E (fixtures, fittings and equipment), ICT provision, fees and school start-up costs. Secondary school costs are also priced base to 2015 (Q3).

All school costs are currently under review and are subject to change; updated costs would be used to assess new schools required to support development proposed in future planning applications.

In costing new schools it is assumed that school land is provided at no charge to the Education authority.

A note is included on any issues/uncertainties which might impact on the identified education solution.

'RAG' assessment of the education implications of the spatial options

The criteria used as the basis of the assessment are described in Tables 5a and 5b.

Table 5a: Primary Schools RAG Assessment Criteria

RAG Rating	Criteria
Green	Option is of sufficient scale to support an on-site school of a viable size as preferred by government ie 2FE or larger Low risk
Amber	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Option is of sufficient scale to support an on-site school (1FE or 1.5FE) but school size is potentially not viable; or Option is of insufficient scale to support a whole on-site school but could do so when combined with other local housing growth which would be a local benefit Medium risk
Red	Option is of insufficient scale to support a whole on-site school High Risk

Table 5b: Secondary School RAG Assessment Criteria

RAG Rating	Criteria
Green	Option is of sufficient size to support a viable on-site school ie 600 places or more. Low risk
Amber	<p>Option is of insufficient scale to support an on-site school but there is potential for additional capacity to be created/released in nearby existing schools to accommodate demand; or</p> <p>Option is of insufficient scale to support an on-site school but there is potential capacity in planned new schools nearby, subject to resolution of delivery issues; or</p> <p>Option is of sufficient size to support a viable on-site school but there are potential deliverability issues which impact on development viability.</p> Medium Risk
Red	Option is of insufficient scale to generate an on-site school and existing nearby school does not have site capacity to expand sufficiently to take the number of pupils generated. Would require cumulative growth from a number of options to make a new secondary school viable. High Risk

Tables 3 and 4 contain a Red/Amber/Green assessment of the primary and secondary education implications relating to each of the 36 options. The tables show for each site how sustainable each option is in educational infrastructure terms and indicate where a more sustainable education solution may be found by clustering options.

These assessments will help filter out options which would lead to infrastructure carrying a higher risk of being financially unviable, undeliverable due to reliance on other sites coming forward and/or of rendering development unviable due to cost per dwelling.

Assessment of the Cumulative Education Implications of the Green 'RAG' rated Spatial Options

Table 6 in Appendix 3 sets out the cumulative education implications of the Green 'RAG' rated options. As a start point, it is assumed that the Enhanced Growth Scenario of c.2,000 homes for Oxford will come forward and the new primary and secondary school capacity required to support this scale of growth will be provided.

Primary School Provision

For reasons of financial viability, the government's preferred size of school is two forms of entry. The majority of spatial options are of a scale that would require on-site provision of a new 2FE primary school(s) which would be fully funded by development and financially sustainable in the longer term.

Where spatial options are not of a scale to support a 2FE school the County Council would look to build a 2FE on the basis of combining the demands from the spatial option with demands for places from other growth, either from another spatial option or from already planned local housing growth. Building a 2FE school to support two or more spatial options would require provision of land on one option and funding from all options. Another solution could involve the expansion and relocation of an existing school on to a spatial option but funding may be an issue.

The provision of new schools of 1FE carries the risk of not being financially viable.

Secondary School Provision

The model for secondary school planning is evolving and becoming more complicated. Unless the spatial options are of a sufficient scale to support a school in their own right, new secondary schools will need to be planned to cater for demands for places from a number of development sites coming on stream at different times and sometimes in two or more district areas. Demands for places are also impacted by parental choice; provision of additional capacity at a new or existing popular school may attract pupils from a wide area.

Applying the generic pupil generation rate of 25 pupils per 100 homes, the 12 green RAG rated options would generate some 3,700 pupils by 2031 and a total of 6,560 when the sites full capacity was realised.

In assessing the education implications of this additional scale of additional demand for places, account has been taken of the demand for places arising from already planned growth in local plans and unimplemented planning permissions and the capacity which is to be provided by proposed new secondary schools, including the Swan School, Oxford. Spatial options have been considered together and solutions proposed for sites in combination where it makes sense in pupil planning terms.

If possible, additional places will be created by expanding existing secondary schools in the vicinity of certain spatial options – Matthew Arnold School, Botley and Bartholemew School, Eynsham (see table 6 in Appendix 3).

However, the anticipated pupil growth will also require provision of three new schools (in addition to the Swan School) located:

- To the north east of Oxford to cater for pupils from the spatial options in Cherwell, north of Headington in Oxford and those within South Oxfordshire at Wick Farm and land adjacent to Thornhill P&R
- Land at Grenoble Road
- In the vicinity of Abingdon where it would also contribute to dealing with various pressures in the wider area

Pupil place planning is a function which crosses local authority borders. The solutions proposed will require close working between the authorities to secure school sites and the necessary funding to ensure timely school delivery, particularly where the new schools will support a number of spatial options across two or three districts.

Oxfordshire County Council
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