
SCHOOL PLACE PLANNING ARRANGEMENTS: BASIC NEED FUNDING

**Responsible Cabinet Member – Councillor Cyndi Hughes,
Children and Young People Portfolio
Responsible Director – Murray Rose, Director of People**

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek Members' agreement to the creation of additional school places in the current area of highest need.

Summary

2. Since 2008 the authority has been experiencing a shortage of primary school places across the Borough with particular hot spots in certain areas of the town. The Primary Capital Programme directed funding to address some of these areas of concern at the time, but other areas of the town are now becoming a priority.
3. The Local Authority was allocated £2,417,374 Basic Need funding in 2011-12 to support the need for additional school places across the Authority. Cabinet agreed the release of £27,800 of this funding in July to enable feasibility work to be undertaken in considering the most appropriate schools in which to provide additional places. The feasibility work has commenced and this report recommends that Mowden Infant and Junior School Federation is prioritised for expansion. A further cabinet report will be presented in due course which will seek the release of the capital funding specific to this project, once detailed costs have been developed.
4. The allocation of Basic Need funding for 2012/13 has recently been announced. Officers are developing an overarching School Organisation Plan which will review and outline future areas of demand and how the local authority intends to meet its statutory duty in the supply of school places.

Recommendations

5. It is recommended that Members approve the identification of Mowden Infant and Junior school for future expansion to meet a demand for school places in the area.

Reasons

6. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons:-

- (a) Expansion of the school will enable the creation of additional primary places which will help to meet the Authority's statutory requirement to provide a school place for all children of school age in its area and enable parents to express a choice of a local school.
- (b) Cabinet approval to expand Mowden Infant and Junior School will enable the feasibility work to continue, public consultation to begin and the more detailed design stage of the project to commence.
- (c) To address the challenge from the Office of the Schools Adjudicator.

Murray Rose,
Director of Services for People

Background Papers

Rachel Jones: Extension 2026

S17 Crime and Disorder	No recommendations from this report
Health and Well Being	Provide facilities that enhance children's life chances and opportunities to thrive.
Sustainability	All work undertaken will be designed and constructed with the highest regard to sustainability and aim to reduce the carbon footprint and reuse energy and environmental resources.
Diversity	All projects will add to the diversity of buildings and technology available in Darlington
Wards Affected	Although the schools affected are in Mowden Wards there is potential for many other wards to be affected through the provision of school places.
Groups Affected	Children and young people aged 5 to 11 in full time education.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not recommend a change to the budget and policy framework.
Key Decision	This is a key decision because the provision of additional school places affects all schools in the Borough.
Urgent Decision	For the purpose of the 'call-in' procedure this does not represent an urgent matter.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	The Capital Programme is consistent with Aspiring Darlington: providing high quality facilities that support modern approaches to education in schools and for lifelong learning.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

Pupil Projections

7. Since 2008 a need has been identified across the Borough for the expansion of primary schools to meet an increasing demand for additional school places.
8. Significant investment through the Primary Capital Programme has seen the recent expansion of both West Park Academy (previously known as Alderman Leach Primary School) and Harrowgate Hill Primary School to meet demand created through new housing developments and an increasing population moving into the town from out of the borough. A total of 210 additional places have already been provided through these projects.
9. Pupil projections for coming years continue to show a high level of need for primary school places. There are currently 8,579 primary school places available across all of Darlington's primary schools and in the 2010-11 academic year there were 8,080 pupils on roll, leaving a surplus of 499 places (5.8%) across the whole of the primary school age range.
10. Data shows, however, that by 2014 projected numbers of children requiring a primary school place within the Borough of Darlington will exceed the available places within our primary schools. By 2015, the number of pupils on roll is projected to rise to almost 8,800 and is projected to continue rising to peak at almost 9,000 by 2020.
11. The current situation in Reception age classes means that there are only just enough places currently for the number of new children applying to our primary schools each year, but the limit on availability places a restriction on the level of parental choice available. By 2014 there is predicted to be a shortfall of almost 50 places in reception classes with this deficit increasing to 85 places in reception by 2015.
12. The projections demonstrate there is an immediate need for places at reception stage, as well as an overall need for places across the whole of the primary phase.

School Place Planning

13. The projections data used by the Local Authority are calculated and provided by the Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit which uses 'live' housing data from the Council's Planning Department to ensure accurate projections are provided in line with the developments taking place across the Borough.
14. When reviewing future housing developments it is clear that consideration will need to be given to the proposed Central Park Development which is due to commence next year with the potential for 600 new homes. Also the proposed development at Lingfield Point which is due to commence in 2012 with a phased construction of 1200 new homes.
15. Officers are currently preparing a School Organisation Plan which will review the long term supply and demand for school places across the Borough and will identify how the Local Authority intends to continue to meet its statutory duty in the provision of school places.

The Plan will be consulted upon widely and will be presented to cabinet at a future meeting.

Feasibility Study

16. In July 2011 Cabinet approved the release of £27,800 from the Basic Need funding pot allocated by the Department for Education. This release of funding has facilitated a feasibility study into how the immediate need for school places can be met using the remaining 2011/12 capital funding allocation available to the Council.
17. The feasibility work has concluded that current pupil projections and demand for places clearly identify an immediate need for school places in the west end of Darlington. The schools in this locality, Mowden Infant and Junior School Federation and The Federation of Abbey Schools are both heavily oversubscribed each year due to their popularity and demand for places from parents living in the immediate area.
18. The feasibility work has also taken into consideration that the Local Authority was challenged on its admission criteria from the Office of the Schools Adjudicator for the 2011/12 admission arrangements. The challenge centred on unsuccessful applications from parents living in rural locations who were unable to obtain a place at any of their preferred local schools. As a result of the investigation, a number of schools on the fringe of the town have been named as the most appropriate alternative school should a rural family not be able to gain a place in their local village school. Mowden Infant and Junior School Federation have been named as the appropriate school to take children from the rural approaches to the west of the town, particularly from the Merrybent/High Coniscliffe area. This admission requirement places additional pressures on places which are already in demand in this area of the town.
19. In conclusion and for the reasons outlined above, it has been identified that there is an immediate need to consider options to expand a school in the west side of the town. Having considered size of existing schools, the size of available sites and suitable locations to meet the challenge set by the Office of the Schools Adjudicator, the study identified Mowden Infant and Junior School Federation as most suitable for the initial focus of expansion.
20. The report seeks Members' approval for this school to be identified as the most suitable option for expansion. This approval will give certainty around the allocation of capital funding for the project. It will also enable the site investigations and option appraisal work to commence, but most importantly it will enable officers to begin a full consultation programme with the staff, pupils and parents of Mowden Infant and Junior School Federation, Ward Councillors for the area and local residents.
21. Once the consultation process and investigation work has been completed the detailed design stage will provide full costs and a programme of work which will be presented to Cabinet for approval. At this stage the report will seek release of the relevant proportion of capital funding from the 2011/12 Basic Need allocation pot.

Conclusion

22. Members are asked to consider approving a capital project for the expansion of the Federation of Mowden Schools to meet the need for primary school places in the highest

priority area of the town. Provision for additional school places will meet the Local Authority's statutory duty to provide a school place for every child in its area.