

EDUCATION, CARE & HEALTH SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Report to School Places Working Party on 13th November 2014

REVIEW OF PRIMARY SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 That the projections for primary need as set out in the report be noted**
- 2 That a margin of 5% be agreed above the GLA projection to provide for local variations in need and to meet parental preferences**
- 3 That discussions be undertaken with schools identified for expansion in the report**
- 4 Where not already in hand and in consultation with schools, feasibility studies be undertaken to assess the scope and cost of enlargement**
- 5 Where expansion is agreed, to implement through the education capital programme subject to the availability of funds**

BACKGROUND

- 1 The strategic planning of primary school places and school organisation in the Borough is driven through the Primary Schools' Development Plan (PSDP). A comprehensive review of the Plan took place in September 2013 to address the significant increase in demand for primary school places; and the outcomes from this review were reported to the Education PDS in November 2013. This is an update of the PSDP taking into account the 2014/15 admission cycle and the latest school roll projections.
- 2 The overall strategy is to meet forecast growth by a combination of existing surplus capacity, permanent expansion of existing provision, new schools and bulge classes. Major expansion would be considered where sustainable and feasible, with new schools supported in areas of greatest need. From year to year, bulge classes would be used, offering flexibility to ensure sufficient places are available from year to year, and in some cases as a step towards permanent expansion. The growth strategy should reflect parental preference and represent value for money.
- 3 London's population is forecast to grow by 1.3m between 2006 and 2031. Although overall growth in Bromley at 4.5% was one of the lowest in London between 2001 and 2011, this is forecast to rise to some 7.5% between 2011

and 2022 as the impact of population changes, new housing and other factors is felt in the area. However, as the growth is mainly in the birth rate, the numbers of 4 year olds expected in schools rises by 17% over the same period. Patterns of growth previously experienced in the inner London boroughs are now being seen in Bromley, with the greatest pressure in the north and east of the borough.

- 4 School population projections are provided by the Greater London Authority (GLA) based on figures given by the ONS, and take into account rolls in previous years, overlaid with housing growth assumptions. The projections for 2014 provide a combination of a standard and an alternate forecast (which uses development data to distribute population within the borough, but constrained within the overall GLA trend based projection for the borough as a whole). The full GLA alternate projection is shown at Appendix 6.
- 5 For the school year 2014, applicants for reception class places exceeded forecasts and it was necessary to supplement the agreed changes by a net addition of some 172 places (in consultation with schools and the Portfolio Holder) to ensure every on time applicant received a valid offer. The total number of places originally available for September 2014, 4,032 was increased to 4,204 by the addition of bulge classes in 8 schools.
- 6 The reason for the variances between the numbers above is because the growth is localised, and given the need to provide primary places within a reasonable travelling distance whilst many schools are full others, mainly in the south, still have places. In a number of cases places were offered in excess of numbers where it was known that schools have in the past experienced a high degree of movement between offer day and the start of the autumn term. Although applications continued to be received after the deadline passed, because of this 'churn' it has been possible to make reasonable offers without the need to add more places. While final numbers will not be known until the census next term, it is clear that the pressure is continuing and further action will be needed to ensure not only places are available but, so far as possible, in schools of preference.
- 7 For the 2014/15 round the number of on time applicants securing their first preference of school in Bromley was unchanged from the previous year at 76%. Although more places have come into the system, demand has also increased. As more schools become full it is increasingly difficult for parents to secure their school of preference, and for the most popular the home to school distances have fallen substantially and can be as little as 0.1 mile. These are published in the primary booklet for the last three years. However, many applicants do not specify local schools and are often disappointed when their expectations are not met. Whilst there is movement in waiting lists, the most popular schools

recruit very locally and in some cases, offers had to be made to schools not named by parents.

- 8 In 2014/15 two new free schools opened, –Harris Shortlands and La Fontaine, formerly known as the Bromley Bilingual School, both providing 2 forms of entry (60 places). Being in the area of highest pressure, these schools should not only alleviate demand but also act to improve parental preference. Both schools opened in temporary buildings but recruited as if they were in their final location. Harris Beckenham free school is now likely to open in the following year after the resolution of planning issues.
- 9 Primary free school applications are being considered by a number of other providers for submission to the DfE with the expectation of opening in 2015 and beyond. An application for a 2FE primary school in the Crystal Palace area was approved in 2014, which may have some impact on Bromley depending upon its final location. A reapplication is proposed by Langley Boys and Girls Schools to provide a 2FE primary school on their grounds to serve both Planning Areas 2 and 3. As schools move towards Academy status there is scope to change their permanent admission limits by a shorter process than maintained schools.
- 10 Despite the use of the higher GLA projections with a 2% uplift for 2014/5, as agreed by the Working Party at its last meeting, the forecasts made for 2014/15 fell short of actual demand. Furthermore, the GLA projections for 2015/16 would suggest a reduction in pressure in some parts of the borough. In the light of the evidence from the previous year of higher demand than forecast, it is proposed to make provision for higher numbers so far as that can be achieved within existing resources until the pattern is clear. The GLA forecasts are based on the actual rolls in schools in January 2014 and could not therefore take account of the late surge in applications for September 2014. Nevertheless, it is considered that these underestimate the demand and it would therefore be prudent to plan on the basis of a continuing high level of demand.
- 11 The revised GLA forecasts for Planning Areas 1, 4, 5 and 7 are lower than the previous year, despite reception rolls having shown significant growth. Questions have been raised with the GLA about the methodology which has given rise to these apparently conflicting trends. The forecasts take into account the local birth rate, (shown separately in Appendix 8 for all London boroughs) underlying changes in population, the popularity of schools and changes in the dwelling stock. For this reason, both the 2013 and 2014 GLA projections are shown for each primary planning area. In each case, a judgement has to be made about the accuracy of the forecast in the light of local knowledge and experience. However, it is likely that the forecasts will take

account of the increased popularity of schools in the next round when the higher roll figures are included. At the same time, experience from other areas of London does suggest that the growth in rolls can alter quite significantly from year to year. At this stage, therefore, it is recommended that planning for growth continues unless a trend becomes established to the contrary.

- 12 Although the main focus has been the growth in demand at reception, there is increasing pressure on in-year admissions, especially with families arriving in the borough with children of different ages. Whereas in the past it has been possible to accommodate older children more easily as numbers have traditionally fallen in the higher age groups, this is becoming more difficult as the schools become more full. If no place is available in a chosen schools, an in year applicant would then be directed to a suitable school, i.e., within reasonable travelling distance. Otherwise the child would have to be placed through Fair Access, by which schools would agree to vary their admission numbers. However, class size regulations have an impact in KS1 although in some circumstances it is possible to operate larger classes with additional classrooms assistants.
- 13 Some parents choose to send their children to independent schools but also apply for a place at a mainstream school. If parents then opt for the independent sector, places are released for other applicants. Independent school rolls since 1996 are shown at Appendix 7. Overall numbers in independent primary schools since 2009 have risen by some 3% mostly in KS2, but are still 20% less than the peak in 2003.
- 14 Even if space is available, schools find it financially difficult to open new classes for a small number of pupils in year because the revenue generated is insufficient to meet the additional staffing and other costs. In may be possible in some circumstances for classes to be split and operated as two or more smaller units. Consideration may need to be given to bulge classes in higher year groups. More analysis would have to be carried out to establish the extent of the problem, the possible solutions and costs.
- 15 In the attached presentation, a factor of 5% has been added to each planning area projection to provide both a planning margin and to meet a higher degree of parental preference. This compares to levels of tolerance used across the country. In areas where there has been significant growth, particularly with late applications, consideration is also given to where bulge classes might be held in reserve until needed to ensure that the needs can be met. With this degree of uncertainty some bulge classes have initially recruited smaller numbers than expected, although these have filled up due to the number of late applications still coming forward for placement. Schools have been given the full allocation

of revenue funding in the first year to ensure that they have sufficient resources to meet the costs of the new class.

- 16 In the primary phase as a whole, for 2014 Bromley is a small net importer (431 out of a population of 25,101) from other authorities. 94.6% of Bromley resident children attended a local school with the remaining 4.5% in other London boroughs and 0.9% outside. In terms of children in Bromley schools, the picture shows 93% Bromley residents, with 6.2% from other LAs and 0.7% outside. Most of the movement is near to the borough boundary although other admission criteria may come into play in some cases.
- 17 The planning principles for primary school provision remain as follows, i.e. ,
- to accommodate children in schools in the locality in which they live;
 - to expand existing provision wherever possible;
 - to consolidate at whole-forms of entry (FE) where possible;
 - to consider options at maintained and state funded schools equally
 - to expand good or outstanding schools where possible
 - seek to amalgamate infant and junior schools whenever the opportunity arises.
- 18 A key responsibility of the LA, allied to the provision of sufficient school places to children, is the delivery of high quality education and the efficient use of resources. The Primary School Development Plan focuses on the supply of places, but the quality of education provided by those places and the efficient use of resources are also major considerations. When schools are being considered for reorganisation, the impact on standards should be considered which may influence the nature or timing of a decision.

19 INITIAL OUTCOMES FROM ANALYSIS

The Working Party made recommendations to the PDS Committee for the pattern of provision in 2014/15 and these are reviewed below, under the section dealing with individual primary planning areas along with recommendations for 2015/16 and beyond.

- 20 The number of reception pupils in Bromley schools has risen from 3,165 in January 2007 to 3,780 in January 2014. The total number placed in September 2014 is equivalent to the 2013 GLA forecast for 2021/22, some seven years ahead. According to the latest forecast, numbers are now projected to rise to 4,041 by 2018 and to remain at that level to 2031. With a 5% uplift that would rise to 4,264 by 2022 and 4,351 by 2031. A full

presentation of the forecasts by planning area is shown in Appendix 2, and in graphic form at Appendix 3 .

- 21 Appendix 5 has been updated with the autumn term 2014 school census data now available. Although the number of reception children recorded in Appendix 5 of 3,982 has fallen back from the number originally places, late admissions have continued and it is likely that the spring term 2015 figure will be higher. This is the figure used by the GLA for the forecasting model. An exercise to update school capacities will take place once the current pattern of expansions has been implemented.
- 22 The analysis below identifies by planning areas some of the issues to be considered by the working party. A map of planning areas is shown at Appendix 1 with the school by school analysis, with individual forecasts, at Appendix 2. Appendix 4 shows the history of published admission numbers since 2000/1.
- 23 Appendix 2 shows the effect of existing planned changes, such as enlargements already agreed in principle and approved free schools, and illustrates the current margin before recommendations take effect.
- 24 Whereas some deficits do remain, the overall picture shows that without any other changes there is sufficient capacity to meet the forecast number across the borough with a margin of around 2FE, falling to under 1FE by 2031. It does not include the opening of schools not yet approved. However, this masks local pressures which are considered in the area by area analysis below. Some recommendations are made as to how local needs might be addressed, for further consideration.

ANALYSIS BY PLANNING AREA

PLANNING AREA (PA) 1

Wards: Crystal Palace, Penge and Cator, Clock House

This area remains one of the most volatile area in terms of rising demand for places. The numbers of 4 year olds in this area remains about 2FE above the total number of available places. Given the location near to the boundary with Lewisham, Southwark, Lambeth and Croydon there is significant cross boundary migration especially for parents whose nearest school may lie in a different borough. There is also some migration to schools in the neighbouring PA 2. This is one of the areas where the GLA forecast is between 34 and 82 places lower (before uplift) than the previous year. This runs counter to the most recent experience.

In additional to places already planned for 2014, bulge classes were added at James Dixon and Stewart Fleming to meet the demand, and were fully subscribed. The base provision now includes both Churchfields and Harris Crystal Palace permanently expanded to 2FE. Proposals to expand James Dixon permanently to 3FE will now be brought forward as a matter of urgency. Harris Kent House also has the potential for enlargement in the medium term after improvement measures have taken effect. A proposal to expand Stewart Fleming permanently from 2 to 3FE is being considered with feasibility work under way, although the site is quite constrained. When PA1 is taken with the neighbouring PA2, and with PAs 1-4 (as they lie together) the position improves as capacity can be used to meet PA1 needs within a reasonable travelling distance for many applicants. The new free school opening in Crystal Palace should provide some additional capacity here as well as in neighbouring boroughs, depending upon its ultimate location. It proposes to recruit by ballot within a defined circle area around the school of approximately 1.5 miles in diameter. This was originally centred on the junction of Crystal Palace Parade and Westow Hill, but consultation has opened on a proposal to locate it on part of the redeveloped National Sports Centre. If confirmed, that would include Bromley residents in Penge, Anerley and Sydenham although near to the boundary with Croydon, Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham.

Issues for consideration

- James Dixon: consider potential for permanent expansion to 3FE, subject to feasibility
- Stewart Fleming Primary School: Continuation of bulge class and potential expansion to 3FE subject to feasibility and future demand for places
- Consider scope for other schools to expand following consultation and feasibility studies

PLANNING AREA 2

Wards: Copers Cope, Kelsey and Eden Park

GLA projections indicate an increase in demand in this planning area compared with the previous year. In the current year the available places are being taken up with late applications such that it is likely all schools will be full. The opening of Harris Beckenham is now scheduled for 2015, providing additional places and widening parental preference. The permanent expansion Clare House to 2 FE is now agreed, and bulge class at Unicorn ensured that sufficient places were available to meet the current level of demand as well as making a contribution to the needs in PA1 above. The expansion of Worsley Bridge to 3FE is also agreed and a scheme is set to proceed. The Langley Park proposal for a new free primary school is being resubmitted in October 2014, and if approved would expect to open in 2016. The impact of both Harris Beckenham and Langley Park is shown, and taking them together there would be sufficient capacity to meet the needs of PA1 above and PA2, on the basis of a 5% planning margin.

Issues for consideration:

- Await outcome of free school submission proposed by Langley Boys/Girls

PLANNING AREA 3

Wards: Shortlands, West Wickham, Hayes and Coney Hall

The projections for PA show a small increase on those for 2013. The opening of Harris Shortlands free school in 2014 provided an additional 60 places and this ensured sufficient provision to meet the needs of the area. In the past there had been a close match of places to demand, and although there is now a forecast margin from 2014 onwards this is likely to be taken up by demand from neighbouring planning areas, as the proposed site of Harris Shortlands, from which recruitment is calculated, is very close to the border with both PA2 and PA4. The anticipated growth in rolls would eliminate the available capacity by 2031. A proposal to expand St. Marks from 2 to 3FE is on hold for the present.

Issues for consideration:

- Keep area under review and consider medium term options for enlargements
- Consider St. Marks for enlargement by 1FE to meet needs in the medium term

PLANNING AREA 4

Wards: Bromley Town, Plaistow and Sundridge, Bickley

In this planning area the GLA forecast showed a reduction in demand although this would not be borne out by experience on the ground. There is a crude deficit of between 2 and 3 forms of entry just within this planning area, taking into account the 5% uplift. However, as has been shown there is considerable movement to schools in neighbouring planning areas, and when PA3 and PA4 are taken together there is broad balance between supply and demand until 2019/20. The expansion of Parish from 2 to 3FE is now under way. A further bulge class was added at Scotts Park and detailed design work is now going on with a view to permanent expansion to 3FE. A half class was added at St. George's Bickley CE, taking the school from 45 to 60, and there is scope for permanent enlargement on this basis.

Issues for consideration

- To confirm the permanent increase of Scotts Park from 60 to 90.
- To consider the feasibility of enlargement of St George's CE to 2FE

PLANNING AREAS 1-4

The opening of La Fontaine free school in 2014 provided a further 60 places although that was expected to recruit more widely given its more specialist nature. It is also located temporarily on the Princes Plain site. For this reason it not shown in a planning area but offset against the demand in PAs 1-4 where its permanent site is expected to be located. As the school becomes established its pattern of demand will be clearer to determine. In practice it will also recruit from other planning areas in the borough as well as outside. When La Fontaine is taken into account, with other planned changes, there is a current sufficiency of places across PAs 1-4 although this will gradually be taken up, and there is scope for La Fontaine to expand should it be required. In practice this will vary from year to year and at this stage the projections, and the potential degree of variation is too great to drawn firm conclusions until patterns of demand for the new schools have settled.

PLANNING AREA 5

Wards: Bromley Common and Keston, Petts Wood and Knoll, Farnborough and Crofton

PA5 is another area where the GLA forecast has reduced for 2014. The major change in this planning area for 2014 has been the expansion of Princes Plain towards 4FE, with a further 1FE offered compared to the previous year. Although some places remain available in 2014, the forecast growth in the area is strong and

it is expected that these would be taken up, with the area moving into potential deficit after 2017/8 when the 5% uplift is taken into account, indicating that between 1 and 2 FE of places may be required in the medium term.

Issues for consideration

- Consider options to provide more places after 2017/8, e.g. Farnborough or Southborough

PLANNING AREA 6

Wards: Chislehurst, Mottingham, Chislehurst North

This area shows an increase from the 2013 projection which may reflect the major residential development on the site of the Ravensbourne College of Art and Design. Chislehurst CE and the Diocese of Rochester have been in discussions with the Local Authority concerning the feasibility of relocating and expanding the school to a new site in Chislehurst providing an additional form of entry. There are two 'stand alone' infant schools in this planning area, Mead Road and Dorset Road and at present the admission arrangements provide for some of these children to move to Red Hill Primary School and Mottingham Primary School respectively. These are considered unsustainable in the medium term as rolls have risen. Some children are not provided for, and there is uncertainty from year to year about how many children the receiving schools will have in year 3. Alternative proposals are being considered to ensure that more assurance can be given to parents in Dorset Road and Mead Road about the year 3 transfer process, and to allow Red Hill and Mottingham to focus on all through status. Options are being considered for the expansion of Edgebury to 2FE from 2016. The current projections including 5% would suggest that both the expansion of Chislehurst St. Nicholas and Edgebury can be sustained within the overall level of demand.

Issues for consideration

- Feasibility of relocation and permanent expansion of Chislehurst CE from 1 to 2FE
- Feasibility of expanding Edgebury from 1 to 2FE

PLANNING AREA 7

Wards: Cray Valley West and Cray Valley East

PA7 is another area where forecast rolls are lower than the previous year. Although the projections in the previous year were for steady growth, there was a need to provide additional places in order to meet the demand in April 2014 and

subsequently with late applications. Midfield is being expanded permanently to 60, and a bulge class was added at Leasons and feasibility work is now under way on a proposal to enlarge the school permanently from 1 to 2FE. In common with a number of other schools in the area, this was built at 1.5FE, reduced to 1FE when rolls were lower and can now be expanded at relatively modest cost.. A similar approach is being taken at St Paul's Cray Primary, where expansion to 60 is now agreed. Poverest likewise was first expanded in 2013/14 and took a further bulge class in 2014. Discussions on permanent enlargement are pending the outcome of a feasibility study. In the same St. Mary Cray is a candidate for permanent expansion, where places were first added in 2012/13. There is a history of mobility between schools in this area, partly accounted for by the significant resident Traveller population.

Issues for consideration:

- Expansion of Leasons to 60
- Expansion of Poverest to 60
- Expansion of St. Mary Cray to 60

PLANNING AREA 8

Wards: Orpington, Chelsfield and Pratts Bottom

Although again in the this area the GLA forecast is lower than the previous year, the experience on the ground meant that additional places were required at a late stage to meet the demand. A bulge class was added at Blenheim in response to the need for places but in the event some who had accepted a place did not enrol in September 2014. Since that time, the bulge class has filled up with late applicants although it is symptomatic of the degree of uncertainty that exists in place planning. In the same way as schools in PA7, Blenheim was built for 1.5FE so can be expanded relatively easily to 2FE as needed, pending the outcome of a feasibility study currently in hand. Permanent enlargement would be considered in the light of the numbers recruited and the scope for this to be continued in the medium term.

Issues for consideration:

- Potential expansion of Blenheim to 2FE on a permanent basis
- Continue to monitor demand and consider other temporary expansion if required.

PLANNING AREA 9

Wards: Biggin Hill and Darwin

Demand in this planning area is greater than forecast in 2013 although reception rolls have shown a slight fall. Nevertheless there is an ongoing surplus which is forecast to remain until the mid 2020s on the basis of 5% uplift. No action is proposed at present.

Issues for consideration:

- That there should be no current change to school organisation or size in this planning area.

All Planning Areas

The Council's strategy is to meet the sustained demand for growth by new schools and major expansion of existing provision, supplemented by bulge classes. The degree of variation from one year to another still makes for some uncertainty, and it is the ability to open bulge classes, whether planned in advance or at relatively short notice, which gives the flexibility needed to address the demand for places. Where demand appears to be sustained, and there is the scope to expand, bulge classes can be the prelude to permanent expansion. Otherwise they would be implemented from year to year in different schools as required, and as resources allow.

The three new schools – Harris Beckenham, Harris Shortlands and La Fontaine all have outstanding site and buildings issues which are likely to be resolved in the course of the next year. Until these have been settled, and the schools are open in their permanent buildings parent will still retain some uncertainties. The same will be true of the Crystal Palace Primary which is likely to offer some additional places to benefit Bromley residents. If the Langley Park application is successful, site issues will again need to be resolved before it opens in a permanent building. All these new schools will to some extent change the established patterns of demand and travel in their areas, whereas the incremental expansion of existing schools, often starting with bulge classes, is more gradual.

The Council is grateful to all those schools who have agreed to take additional pupils whether in bulge classes or by permanent expansion. Whether maintained schools, free schools or academies officers will work with their managements and governing bodies to ensure that the process of change is as smooth as possible.

The summary position for the borough as a whole is that there is forecast to be a continuing surplus of reception class places although these are concentrated mainly in the south of the borough. Most schools are full and late applicants have to be

placed into spaces as and when they appear, very often at more distant or less preferred schools. Nevertheless, the Council's statutory duty continues to be met, with more than three quarters of parents securing their first preference of school.

Issues for consideration

- To identify potential sites suitable for education provision across the Borough.
- To encourage potential free school proposers to locate in areas with the greatest need
- To keep under review the impact of additional places on parental preference

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Primary School Development Plan

Evidence and Background Papers

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