

Greater Thetford Development Partnership Board

Update regarding the growth proposals for schools in Thetford.

The following extract is taken from the Local Growth and Investment Plan that is reported to Members at Children's Services Committee in January 2018. Clearly this is a snapshot in time and things do change. The Reserved Matters application has now been submitted (Latest Assessment of Growth Section) but all other comments currently remain the same. As soon as we are in a position to provide further details regarding the timescales for a new school I will bring another update to the Board.

Sustainable Urban Extension (SUE) of 5000 new dwellings

CURRENT LOCAL PROVISION – capacity and organisation

Existing primary phase provision in Thetford remains a mix of infant/junior and all-through primary. There are currently 12 forms of entry (360 places) at reception with just a few spare places in the September 2017 admissions round. Pupil forecasts indicate some stability in pupil numbers over the next few years until new housing begins to yield pupils.

There is a range of academy providers – Inspiration Trust, Eastern Multi Academy Trust and Diocese of Norwich Academy Trust (DNEAT) as well as Local Authority Maintained schools. Pursuing NCC's policy of moving to all-through primary schools would be achievable in Thetford and we are considering options when related to growth infrastructure.

At secondary phase a single high school serves the Town with capacity to accept additional forms of entry until the SUE is well under way. The high school is capable of expansion on its existing site when additional places are required.

LATEST ASSESSMENT OF GROWTH

Sites for three new 420 place primary schools have been secured. It is expected that a Reserved Matters application for the first sub-phase of 300+ homes which includes the site for the first primary school will be submitted shortly. Children's Services have been working with the land promoters and agreed the new school position on the site and the infrastructure requirements. The Children's Services capital budget will need to underwrite the cost of this first school until developer contributions come through.

CURRENT PRESSURES ON PUPIL NUMBERS

Without the impact of further housing, pupil numbers are stable and places are available across the town for local children.

IMPACT OF HOUSING GROWTH

The first phasing of housing will impact immediately on primary pupil places. Discussions with local schools/Trusts is underway and our initial findings are that places are available.

SHORT TERM RESPONSE

Continue to work with the land promoters towards the transfer of the first new school site to NCC. A presumption route to decide who will run this school will be the next step. Diversity of provision and school organisation must be considered.

MEDIUM/LONGER TERM RESPONSE

Longer term, the three new 420 place primary schools for Thetford will meet the need in the current Local Plan to 2026. Timescales for these schools depend entirely on the progress rate of the new housing in Thetford.

Places will be monitored at Thetford Academy as additional land has already been provided to allow for future expansion and S106 contributions have been secured.

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