



CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Monday, 27 November 2024

REPORT TITLE:	PUPIL PLACE PLANNING PHASE 3
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES & EDUCATION

REPORT SUMMARY

The purpose of the report is to outline the recommendations arising out of phase 3 of the pupil place planning review.

In March 2021, this Committee endorsed the Pupil Place Planning Strategy 2021 -2026. This Strategy set out a planned framework for the review of school places in both primary and secondary mainstream schools over the next 5 years.

Phase 3 of the primary phase of the review commenced in October 2023 looking at small planning areas in and around Wallasey, specifically: North Wallasey and South Wallasey. A detailed review framework and process has been undertaken and has included information gathering, stakeholder discussion. This has culminated in the recommendations presented within the report.

Recommendations relating to schools controlled under the auspices of both the Diocese of Chester – Church of England, and the Diocese of Shrewsbury – Roman Catholic, have been presented, discussed, and approved as well as proposals relating to Academy Trusts. This has demonstrated the strength in partnership working and collaboration across the education sector which will be harnessed as the parties progress as a local education partnership.

Fundamental to the work has been adherence to the principles outlined. These are the drivers for change and are intrinsically aligned to the 'Early Help for Children and Families' theme of the Council Plan: Wirral Working Together 2023 - 27.

This is a key decision as it affects residents from two or more wards – Wallasey and Seacombe

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Children, Young People and Education Committee is recommended to approve that:

1. Mount Primary School consults on having a Published Admission Number (PAN) of 45, reducing from 50;

2. Ss Peter & Paul RC Primary School consults on having a PAN of 30, reducing from 45;
3. St Alban's RC Primary School consults on having a PAN of 45, reducing from 60;
4. Somerville Primary School consults on having a (Published Admission Number) PAN of 60, reducing from 90; and
5. Egremont Primary consults on having a PAN of 45, reducing from 57.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 It is important that the Council demonstrates its support for the work and proposals considered and agreed by the Diocese of Chester and the Diocese of Shrewsbury which are important partners in supporting education outcomes for Wirral children.
- 1.2 As the responsible authority for maintained schools, it is important that the Council is managing both surplus and demand for pupil places in line with its statutory responsibilities. It is also important that it ensures that schools can provide high quality education, are efficiency and viable and provide the best possible education support to meet children and young people's needs.
- 1.3 The recommendations outlined have been identified following a rigorous, transparent, and equitable review programme which has sought to engage stakeholders throughout. Schools have had opportunity to consider and comment on the information gathered and to have influence/views on the proposals. The principles have been adhered to and remain fundamental to guiding the development of the proposals.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 Do nothing: There is a strong case for change. Population changes and local projections are evidencing that surplus is growing in schools. This can have a detrimental impact on school viability as well as how pupils are supported in their education. Failure to understand the implications of this and set out a planned and managed programme of change may result in more significant, unanticipated financial and reputational consequences for Wirral.
- 2.2 Given this context, schools that would have a smaller pupil cohort in the medium term will be supported with appropriate financial forecasting and management until housing developments come to fruition.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Pupil Place Planning Strategy 2021-2026 was approved in March 2021 by the Children, Young People and Education Committee. This Strategy set out the vision and principles "to ensure that Wirral's children attend local schools that provide high quality education, are efficient, viable and provide the best possible educational standards to meet their needs".
- 3.2 The principles outlined are intended to guide much of the work and approach to a series of pupil place planning reviews as outlined in the Strategy. These are:
 1. We will be fair, thorough, and respectful in our approach to Pupil Place planning reviews.
 2. We will follow and adhere to all legal requirements, seeking relevant advice and guidance where this is applicable.
 3. We will work with partners and involve key stakeholders in pupil place planning where this is relevant and necessary.

4. We will consult with schools, parents, and local communities as part of the pupil place planning process.
 5. We will utilise robust insight, intelligence, and data to underpin a robust methodology and analysis.
 6. We will always consider how our efforts will improve educational outcomes for children and young people.
 7. We will consider the efficiency and effectiveness of education provisions as part of pupil place planning.
 8. We will prioritise and focus on inclusion, ensuring that children with special educational needs and disabilities are at the forefront of considerations throughout.
- 3.3 Phase 3 of the review cycle has considered schools in and around the area of Wallasey. For primary schools, the review is organised around several small planning areas. These are North Wallasey and South Wallasey.

Review programme overview – activity so far

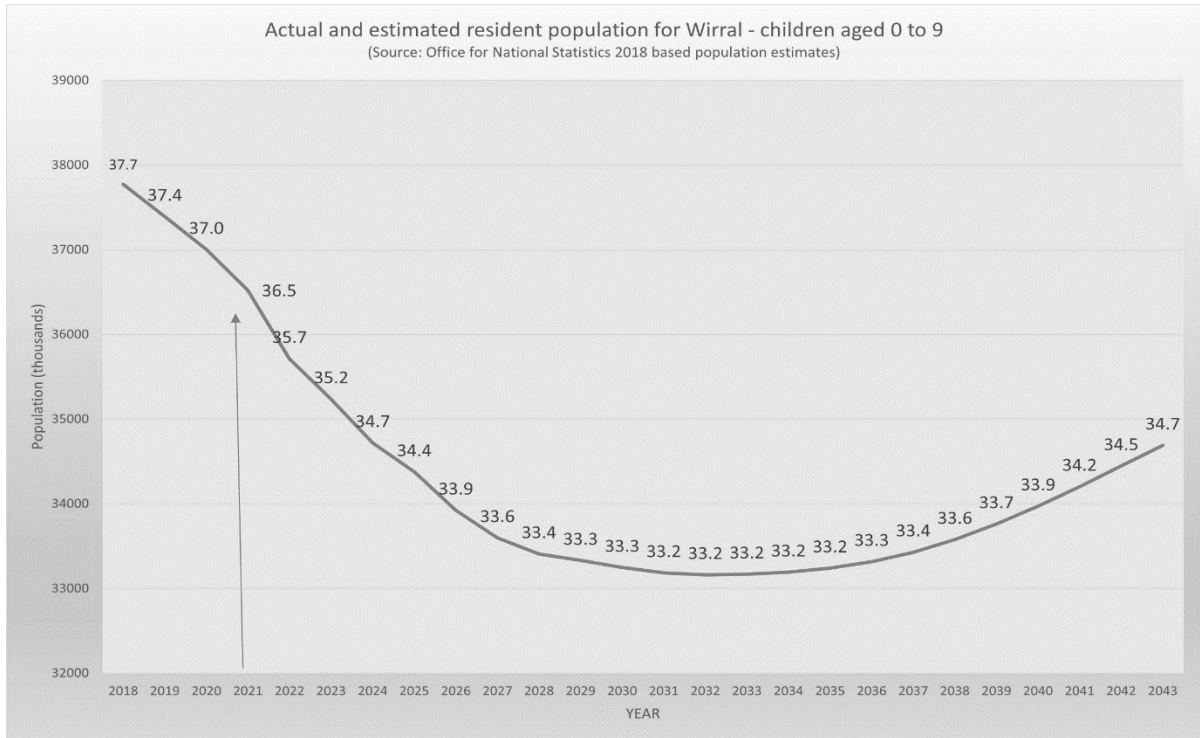
- 3.4 In October 2023 extensive evidence and information was gathered about the small planning areas and schools within those areas. A school profile presentation was compiled, allowing for the information to be shared with schools, leaders/governors, and Diocesan representatives after the autumn half term break.
- 3.5 Between January 2024 and June 2024 a series of meetings were held with schools within the review area, sharing current information for accuracy checking and the future predicted numbers for pupils at each school. Proposals relating to Diocesan schools were shared with them regarding schools within the planning area. No recommendations regarding a change in PAN were required and therefore no consultation recommendations were required for this Committee in January 2023.

Context – statutory framework

- 3.6 The Council has a duty to secure sufficiency of school places for children and young people. This includes addressing any excess or insufficiency. Each year, the Council submits annual school capacity survey to DfE which provide pupil forecasts, and these inform capital programmes and funding.

Context - population change

- 3.7 The population of children aged 0-9 is expected to decline in Wirral over the next five years. The graph below demonstrates the actual and expected resident population for Wirral for children aged 0-9. It shows that between 2021 and 2026 (the time frame of the Strategy) there will be a decline in the number of children living in Wirral from approximately 36,500 children aged 0-9 in 2021 to 33,600.



Calculating pupil projections.

- 3.8 The pupil projections outlined are based on a robust forecast methodology which considers a range of factors including:
- Population change;
 - Planned/actual housing developments;
 - Historical changes and pupil patterns;
 - Movement of families/children in/out of areas.
- 3.9 Mandatory pupil projections are completed each year and provided to the Department for Education to inform Council funding. Historical projections have been accurate to date, giving confidence in the projections outlined as part of this review.

Phase 3 Small planning area: North Wallasey

3.10 North Wallasey small planning area consists of 7 maintained primary school: Liscard Primary School, St George’s Primary School, Greenleas Primary School, Mount Primary School, New Brighton Primary School, St Alban’s RC Primary School, Ss Peter and Paul RC Primary School. The pupil forecasts for the planning area are the same as for the schools.

	May-23			Projections 24 - 28							
	May 2023 actual	Oct 2022 unfilled places	Percentage occupancy	Jan-24	Jan-25	Jan-26	Jan-27	Jan-28	Jan 2027 unfilled places	Percentage occupancy 2027	0-5 years Local Plan yield
Total	3256	192	94%	3172	3088	3020	2938	2895	471	86.3%	87.7%

Primary aged pupils in North Wallasey Planning area. 2024 to 2028 are estimates based on current numbers on roll, birth rates and average parental preference.

Table 1

- 3.11 As Table 1 indicates the number of surplus places in this planning area will fall below 90% by January 2027.
- 3.12 There are no recommendations for this area arising out of the review for Liscard Primary School, St George's Primary School, Greenleas Primary School or New Brighton Primary School.
- 3.13 To address the surplus places, this report proposes that
- (1) Mount Primary School consults on having a Published Admission Number(PAN) of 45, reducing from 50. This would remove 35 places from the planning area.Ss Peter & Paul RC Primary School consults on having a PAN of 30, reducing from 45. This would remove 105 places from the planning area
 - (2) Ss Peter & Paul RC Primary School consults on having a PAN of 30, reducing from 45.
 - (3) St Alban's RC Primary School consults on having a PAN of 45, reducing from 60. This would remove 105 places from the small planning area
- 3.14 In total these three changes would remove 245 places from the small planning area. This would change the percentage occupancy to 93.5%. The schools identified for PAN changes have been identified as the schools that would have the highest proportion of vacant places by 2028. Other schools within the small planning area are expected to stay broadly in line with their current pupil numbers

Phase 2 Small planning area: South Wallasey

- 3.15 South Wallasey small planning area consists of 5 maintained primary schools and one academy primary school: Kingsway Primary School, Egremont Primary School, Somerville Primary School, Riverside Primary School, Park Primary School and St Joseph's RC Primary School. The pupil forecasts for the planning area are the same as for the schools.

	May-22			Projections 24 - 27							
	May 2023 actual	May 2023 unfilled places	Percentage occupancy	Jan-24	Jan-25	Jan-26	Jan-27	Jan-28	Jan 2027 unfilled places	Percentage occupancy 2027	0-5 years Local Plan yield
Total	1668	382	84.1%	1611	1564	1514	1459	1422	599	70.4%	73.8%
Primary aged pupils in South Wallasey Planning area. 2024 to 2028 are estimates based on current numbers on roll, birth rates and average parental preference.											

Table 2

- 3.16 As Table 2 indicates the number of surplus places in this planning area will be significant at 70.4%, rising to 73.8% when considering the local plan.
- 3.17 There are no recommendations for this area arising out of the review for Kingsway Primary School, Riverside Primary School, Park Primary School and St Joseph's RC Primary School.

- 3.18 To address the surplus places, it proposed that
- Somerville Primary School consults on having a (Published Admission Number) PAN of 60, reducing from 90. This would remove 210 places from the planning area.
 - Egremont Primary consults on having a PAN of 45, reducing from 57. This would remove 84 places from the planning area.
- 3.19 In total these two changes would remove 294 places from the small planning area. This would change the percentage occupancy to 82.5%, when considering the local plan this would be 85.9%
- 3.20 The two schools identified for PAN changes have been identified as the schools that would have the highest proportion of vacant places by 2028. Other schools within the small planning area are expected to stay broadly in line with their current pupil numbers.
- 3.21 In addition, while the local plan identifies 3.4% growth in pupils numbers, albeit this projection will need to be reviewed in due course, having regard to the planned regeneration along the Seacombe corridor

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 At this time there are no financial implications, the proposals outlined will allow the schools with PAN changes to plan accordingly.
- 4.2 Schools where they have significant surplus places can struggle to manage financially, greater clarity on pupil numbers allow for the correct finances to be planned for.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Council has a legal duty to ensure sufficiency of school places for children. Statutory guidance sets out formal process for consultation and approval of significant decisions such as to make prescribed changes to maintained schools or to close/open schools. These will guide the activity and approval of the proposals. The proposed PAN changes can be consulted next autumn to consideration go be given to them with any resulted formal changes coming into effect from September 2027.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 Recommendations relating to Diocesan or Academy Trusts will be implemented within their own resources. However, the Council will continue to offer support and guidance in relation to delivery of agreed recommendations. Given the recommendations outlined, no resource implications are expected.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 There is a risk that the proposals in relation to housing developments in the Seacombe corridor may not come to fruition in the time period expected. With this in mind, if the any of the developments expected to occur within the South Wallasey small planning area are delayed, a re-assessment of school sufficiency will be implemented if appropriate.
- 7.2 There is a risk that the projections may not be accurate and that pupil numbers could increase/decrease in schools. This risk is mitigated because the forecasts are generated each year and tested giving confidence in the forecasts outlined.
- 7.3 There is a risk that not adjusting pupil capacity accordingly can lead to surplus places within a locality, this can lead to inappropriate use of resources and needs to be addressed under the Council's statutory responsibilities in relation to school place sufficiency.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 As outlined in the Strategy, stakeholder engagement has been intrinsic at every stage of the review process. In summary, the following activity has been carried out:
- early consultation with Headteachers, officers and elected members on the scope and purpose of the overarching Pupil Place Planning Strategy;
 - clear scope and terms of reference for the School Sufficiency working group and agreement;
 - School profile presentations shared with individual school Headteachers and Governors;
 - Summary of small planning areas shared with education JCC members;
 - Summary school profile information shared with Diocese of Chester and Diocese of Shrewsbury;
 - Options development shared with;
 - officers and senior managers;
 - wider corporate colleagues e.g. HR;
 - individual schools and governors;
 - Diocesan; and
 - Unions

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for the Pupil Place Planning Strategy 2021-2026. The EIA can be found via the following link:

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/files/equality-impact-assessment-pupil-place-planning-january-2021.pdf/download?inline>

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are no significant environment and climate implications arising out of the report.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no significant community wealth implications arising out of this report.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

Pupil Place Planning Strategy 2021-2026

TERMS OF REFERENCE

This report is being considered by the Children, Young People and Education Committee in accordance with section a of its Terms of Reference:

(a) exercising management, oversight, and delivery of services to children and young people in relation to their care, wellbeing, education, or health, with the exception of any powers reserved to full Council.

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Children's, Education and Family committee	31st October 2023
	12th October 2022
	10th March 2022
	11th March 2021