

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report advises the Cabinet of progress on the Phase 1 Area Review of secondary school places which comprises schools in the Birkenhead and Bebington areas. Following additional consultations with stakeholders, and preliminary discussions with potential sponsors for an Academy, this report puts forward further recommendations for consultation options in the Birkenhead area. It also provides an update on recent changes to school status, including the Secretary of State's decision on Birkenhead High School for Girls.

### **1.0 Background**

- 1.1 At its meeting of 29<sup>th</sup> November 2007, Cabinet instructed that Phase 1 of the Secondary Places Review should comprise schools in Birkenhead and Bebington. As in the review of primary school places, the first stage of the Review has been to conduct a process where, on a confidential basis, meetings have taken place with key stakeholders in each of the areas under review. These stakeholders included Ward Councillors as well as officers of the Diocese of Chester and Shrewsbury, headteachers and chairs of governors of schools potentially affected by the Reviews. This comprised the "pre-consultation" phase of the process.
- 1.2 The subsequent report to Cabinet of 26<sup>th</sup> June 2008 provided an update on the demographics for secondary schools in the Birkenhead and Bebington areas, based on the January Census 2008. The report and minute form Appendix A to this report.
- 1.3 Section 4 of the 26<sup>th</sup> June 2008 report raised the potential implications of the proposed new Academy at Birkenhead High School for Girls. At this time members agreed to await an independent assessment of Birkenhead secondary schools proposed by the Office of the Schools Commissioner, the outcome of the Feasibility stage of the Birkenhead High School for Girls Academy process, and more detailed information on the National Challenge programme, before recommending options to proceed to consultation in the Phase 1 area.
- 1.4 At its meeting of 6<sup>th</sup> November 2008, the outcome of the independent Gyte report was reported to Cabinet, along with recommendations for an option to proceed to consultation. This option involved the closure of Rock Ferry High and Park High Schools in order to establish a new 11 to 16 Academy in the Birkenhead area, with the Council as co-sponsor. Cabinet agreed that formal discussions with the DCSF and potential sponsors should begin, including more detailed feasibility studies on the size, location and potential impact of the new Academy on neighbouring schools. The report and minute are attached as Appendix B.

### **2.0 Implications of the initial consultation option**

- 2.1 The option approved for consultation by Cabinet on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2008 involved the closure of Rock Ferry High School and Park High School. A new 11 to 16 Academy would in the first instance open in the existing buildings, with a new building for the Academy considered a high priority for the Authority's Building Schools for the Future programme, or through funding available via the national framework for Academies set up by Partnerships for Schools (PfS) subject to the availability of a suitable site. In many cases Academies open in the existing buildings of the schools they replace. The Government's aim is that new or refurbished buildings will be provided within three years of the Academy opening, although they acknowledge that some Academies replace schools that have already been rebuilt or

refurbished.

- 2.2 Through further discussions with various local stakeholders, including school and member representatives, it became clear that this initial option would leave some key issues unresolved.

### Demographics

- 2.3 There are projected to be 24 forms of entry (FE) of pupils in 2013 (30 pupils per FE). Assuming that grammar school and Catholic high school entry continues at present levels, and that the new Birkenhead High School for Girls Academy will retain pupils who would otherwise have attended schools outside Birkenhead, it is sensible to plan for 27 FE of pupils, which allows a degree of surplus places to enable parental choice to operate.
- 2.4 Within this area, Woodchurch High School, the LA BSF One School Pathfinder, takes 9 FE of pupils, and as a newly built school can be expected to continue its long term popularity with parents. Prenton High School takes 5 FE of girls, and a conservative estimate of Birkenhead High School for Girls Academy intake is for 3 FE of girls to attend that school at age 11. This leaves 10 FE of pupils to be distributed between the remaining schools, of which 9 FE will be boys, and 1 FE girls.
- 2.5 The proposed establishment of Birkenhead High School for Girls Academy exacerbates the gender imbalance in places already present in Birkenhead, due to the presence of more single sex girls places than boys. There are currently no non-selective boys places available in Birkenhead. Existing mixed sex schools already demonstrate an imbalance in their intakes. Across all current mainstream Birkenhead schools, 52% of pupils are girls, and 48% are boys. Park High, Ridgeway High, Rock Ferry High and Woodchurch High already accommodate proportionately more boys than would be expected, a feature particularly demonstrated at Rock Ferry High where just 1 in 3 pupils are girls.

	Total Places 11-18	Boys places	Girls places	Mixed places	% Boys on roll
Park High	1250			1250	53.9%
Prenton High	791		791		0%
Ridgeway High	886			886	56.4%
Rock Ferry High	1232			1232	67.0%
Woodchurch High	1396			1396	55.0%
St Anselm's College (Catholic grammar)	981	981			100%
Upton Hall School (Catholic grammar)	954		954		0%
Birkenhead High School (proposed)	700		700		0%
Total	8190	981 (12%)	2445 (30%)	4764 (58%)	

Table above shows 2008 Net Capacity divided into single sex and mixed places. Percentage of Boys in mixed sex schools is as at January 2009 Census.

- 2.6 The Authority is committed to narrowing attainment gaps; this includes performance differences between boys and girls. Teenagers who attend single-sex schools do no better or worse in exams than those in co-educational schools, according to ESRC research (2007), but

they are twice as likely to study subjects not traditionally associated with their gender, for example boys are more likely to study English and languages. However, the study showed that in terms of exam results, boys and girls do no better in single sex education once their family background and previous ability were taken into account. No overall differences were found between the performance of boys in single-sex and mixed comprehensive schools. However, more detailed investigation by NFER (2002) revealed that boys with lower prior attainment achieved better average GCSE scores in single-sex schools, while boys with higher prior attainment took slightly more science GCSEs and achieved higher total GCSE science scores in single-sex schools.

- 2.7 The establishment of an 11 to 16 mixed sex Academy would not redress the balance of terms of access for Birkenhead parents to single sex boys non-selective places. In the light of this, it is proposed to consult upon the establishment of a single sex 5 FE non-selective Boys Academy, to complement existing high quality provision for girls at Prenton High School. The equivalent Boys school to Prenton High School for Girls was originally Prenton Secondary Modern School for Boys, accommodated in the buildings of what is now Devonshire Park Primary School until 1970/71. The last all boys community secondary school, Birkenhead Institute High School in Claughton, closed in 1993.
- 2.8 The new building for the Boys Academy would ideally be located centrally within Birkenhead, close to transport links to allow access from a wide area, and preferably near to Prenton High School for Girls. This would allow future close co-operation between the two schools, possibly including potential for shared facilities, community use and teaching expertise.
- 2.9 To this end, the Authority has examined a number of provisional sites, not all of which are owned by the Council, for a new secondary school in the Birkenhead area. The most suitable in terms of size, location and access is Borough Road playing fields, near to Tranmere Rovers Football club. Shaftesbury Youth Club pavilion, built in 1971, is located off Mendip Road, Prenton, on adjacent playing fields which could also form part of the extended site of the new Academy, with scope for continued and enhanced community use of the new school and the playing fields. There are planning implications as these are UDP designated playing fields. Shaftesbury Youth Club has been supported by the Council in a bid for £1.4 million as part of the "My Place" initiative. There are strong synergies with the Academy proposal. It is recommended that discussions with Shaftesbury Youth Club now take place regarding possible use of the site and their collaboration with the project.
- 2.10 Assuming the new school is established as a 5 FE 11 to 16 boys Academy, by 2013 there are projected to be 5 FE of mixed 11 to 16 boys and girls available to attend a further secondary school in Birkenhead. Examination of where pupils live, and where they choose to go to school, indicates that those pupils who live in north and north-west Birkenhead, e.g. Bidston, Beechwood, Claughton and Noctorum who currently attend Ridgeway High School and Park High School, would be unlikely to travel to either the proposed Boys Academy or Prenton High School for Girls. These pupils would be best served by a centrally located school within Birkenhead.
- 2.11 The two potential sites for the 11 to 16 mixed sex Academy are Ridgeway High School and Park High School. Ridgeway High School's main building is in poor physical condition, and would be considered a high priority for a rebuild under Building Schools for the Future. The Council is committed to maintain Park High School's high quality, recently renovated building until 2031 under a PFI contract, or face a likely expensive buy-out from the contract unless an alternative Council use could be found in the event of the school closing.
- 2.12 Cabinet is asked to consider an amendment to the original consultation option, whereby a 5 FE 11 to 16 Boys Academy would be established near to Prenton High School for Girls, and a 5 FE 11 to 16 mixed sex Academy established at the Park High site. This would require the contemporaneous closure of not only Park High and Rock Ferry High, but also Ridgeway High School.

### **3.0 Implications of the new Option**

- 3.1 Park High School's building can become a mixed sex Academy immediately on opening. Little or no alteration would be required, but the school could be considered for further enhancement under the Academy programme. Pupils attending Rock Ferry High School and Ridgeway High School would remain in their existing buildings ahead of the construction of a new building for the Boys Academy. A strategy to minimise disruption would need to be consulted upon as part of the Feasibility Stage.
- 3.2 If all stages of the Academy process are followed smoothly and speedily, it should be possible to formally establish the two Academies from September 2010. Pupils will be educated on existing sites during a transition period.
- 3.3 The Rock Ferry site and Ridgeway site would be closed and could be considered for other uses, declared surplus to requirements or designated wholly or in part as playing field in order to offset the use of UDP playing fields elsewhere. Distribution of any potential proceeds from any future site sale would be best agreed legally with the Academy Trust during the Feasibility stage. The Sanderling unit currently based at Rock Ferry High School would be relocated to another local school, possibly the mixed Academy at Park High School. The City Learning Centre and community facilities at the Ridgeway site would be retained.

#### 4.0 Sponsorship

- 4.1 On 6<sup>th</sup> November 2008, Cabinet approved discussions with potential sponsors of new Academies in Birkenhead. The role of the sponsor in an Academy is vital, since not only is there a potential financial contribution, but the sponsor determines the ethos and vision of the Academy, including appointing the majority of governors, and appointing the first Principal.
- 4.2 The Council's Corporate Plan identifies raising the aspirations of young people, particularly those of low attainment, as one of its key objectives. This leads to priorities for improvement related to narrowing the gap in educational standards between those from poorer and more affluent backgrounds, and also increasing the proportion of poorer children transferring to further and higher education. These proposals are intended to make a significant contribution to meeting these aims. Raising the aspirations of young people is central to the philosophy of the Academy movement and the role of sponsors is regarded as a particularly significant feature. It is therefore very important that the sponsorship group for each Academy contains organizations able to make a practical contribution in this area.
- 4.3 Ideally, it is desirable that the sponsorship group for each Academy should contain:
  - A university: working with Academy to encourage progression into HE, to bring cutting edge expertise to the staff group and critically, to raise the sights of students;
  - A college: to act as a key post 16 partner to these 11 to 16 institutions, to encourage progression into post 16 education, develop 14 to 19 continuity and offer expertise in the vocational curriculum;
  - An industrial or commercial partner: to help the Academy to focus on employment skills, to provide expertise in enterprise skills and in business management;
  - Wirral Council: to ensure that the Academy remains linked to the community, close to the democratic process and also as the largest single employer in Wirral.

Initial approaches have been made to organisations in all these categories and have been positively received.

- 4.4 Sponsors are expected to jointly contribute £2 million over five years towards an endowment fund for the Academy, with £500,000 of this "up-front" at the time of the Funding Agreement. Educational establishments and the Council would be exempt from this requirement, and the size of the contribution from private sponsors would be reduced proportionately. If each proposed Academy has four sponsors, three of whom are exempt, the industrial sponsor would be liable for a quarter of the full amount, that is, £125,000 at the Funding Agreement, with the remaining £375,000 payable over five years. The proceeds of the endowment are

spent by the Academy Trust on measures to counteract the impact of deprivation on education in their local communities. Sponsors must be in place before the Expression of Interest can be approved by the Secretary of State.

4.5 Cabinet is asked to approve the principle of sponsors being drawn from the categories listed in 4.3, and to endorse Wirral Council's position as a co-sponsor for each Academy. Further, Cabinet is asked to give the Director all necessary authority to move to formal agreements with one or more of these co-sponsors to proceed to draw up the Expression of Interest (see 5.2 below).

## 5.0 **Next steps**

5.1 This is not a decision-making report, but one which begins the formal process of establishing the nature and feasibility, including consultation, on potential Academies in Birkenhead. Cabinet has already given approval for a consultation on changes to secondary school provision in Birkenhead, including the establishment of an Academy. As a Sponsor, the Council would need to formally sign the Expression of Interest, which would be the subject of a further report to Cabinet.

5.2 These Academy proposals are currently in the Brokering Phase, where potential sponsors and projects are identified. The Office of the Schools Commissioner (OSC) when notified by the Authority following Cabinet's decision, will then send a Statement of Intent letter which allows the OSC to appoint consultants to work with the Authority and other sponsors on an Expression of Interest.

5.3 The Expression of Interest document (EOI) sets out the proposed vision for the Academy, including the Academy's ethos, specialism, proposed size, age range, location and information about predecessor schools. The EOI must be signed by the sponsors, and by the Local Authority before submission to the Secretary of State for approval to proceed to the Feasibility Phase. The EOI usually takes around 3 months to complete, however in this instance it is hoped to complete the EOI within 2 months.

5.4 Under Feasibility, the Council then undertakes formal consultations with schools and other interested parties on the proposals for change, including closure of the predecessor schools. Simultaneously, the DCSF appointed and funded project management consultants will work with the Authority to manage the Feasibility study for the two Academies. The key decision maker is the Project Steering Group, chaired by the lead Sponsor. This will include consultations with Shaftesbury Youth Club about land, and the nature of their association with the project.

5.5 Feasibility studies typically take between 6 and 12 months to reach a legally binding Funding Agreement between the Academy Trust and the Secretary of State. If the process runs smoothly and takes nearer 6 months, Principal(s) Designate could be appointed by the end of 2009, with a view to closing the predecessor schools from August 2010 and opening the new Academies in September 2010. Pupils would, however, continue to be educated at their existing sites for some time in order to minimise disruption and allow time for various complex factors to be worked out.

5.6 Guidance indicates that there is at least two terms' work for a Principal Designate preparing for the opening of an Academy, and the Authority would recommend that the Sponsor appoint a Principal Designate at least one term prior to opening. Complexities include:

- Establishing two new institutions, including further development and implementation of the vision, curriculum, admission policy and staffing arrangements designed at the Feasibility stage. These are matters for the Academy Trust in partnership with the Principal Designate.
- Establishing a boys school and a mixed school from the pupil population of 3 mixed schools. Paragraph 3.2 above indicates an intended transition pattern.

- Maintaining parental confidence and avoiding adverse pupil movement during transition.
- For the Boys Academy, co-ordinating a build programme with the organisational changes.

5.7 In the event that the Principal Designate is appointed prior to the Funding Agreement being signed, the DCSF has prepared an interim fixed-term contract designed to bridge the gap until the Funding Agreement is signed and a permanent contract can be issued.

## 6.0 Foundation and Trust school status update

6.1 At its meeting of 13<sup>th</sup> March 2008, Cabinet was provided with information regarding different categories of schools. Appendix A to that report provided a list of secondary phase schools that had either published proposals to change status or indicated an intention to consider a change of status at the time of compiling the report.

6.2 At that time, three school governing bodies had approved a change from community to Foundation, with three more indicating an intention to consider a change of status.

6.3 Appendix C to this report provides an update on this table. A further two schools have approved a change from Community to Foundation, one from Community to Trust. An existing Foundation school, Calday Grange Grammar School for Boys, has now moved from Foundation to Trust.

6.4 Four further schools have indicated an intention to consider a change of status, three of these from Community to Trust. Members' attention is drawn to a pattern emerging – of the eight PFI secondary schools, four are now or will shortly become Foundation or Trust schools, with a further two schools indicating an intention to consider a change of status. At the end of the PFI term in 2031, the buildings and land which under Community status would previously have reverted to the Local Authority, under Foundation or Trust status will be signed over to the Governing body without any payment or compensation to the Authority. A high impact risk is that if a school were to close during the PFI term, the Council would be liable for the full unitary charge, and if a suitable alternative purpose could not be found for the building, may incur significant penalty costs to release the Council from the PFI agreement.

6.5 Members' attention is also drawn to the advised intention of Wirral Hospital School to consult on a change from Community to Foundation status, the first Wirral special school to do so. All schools, primary, secondary and special, have the option to investigate Foundation status. If carried through, this means that the Hospital school's governing body would become the employer of the school staff, and would take ownership of the school's land and assets. As in mainstream schools, the governing body would become the legally responsible admission authority for the school. However, as a special school in reality there would be little change to the way pupils are placed, either full-time by the Authority via a statement or part-time under negotiation with the pupil's mainstream school, and no possibility for the Governing body to amend the existing admission policy.

## 7.0 Birkenhead High School for Girls Academy update

7.1 Following the report to Cabinet of 15<sup>th</sup> January 2009, "Proposal to establish an Academy at Birkenhead High School for Girls", Cabinet's views were sought on the response to the consultation on this proposal. The relevant portion of the Cabinet minute is attached as Appendix D (item 329).

7.2 Point (2) of the Cabinet resolution relates to Cabinet's view that if approved, close partnership working between Birkenhead High School for Girls Academy and Prenton High School for Girls would be desirable.

7.3 Appendix E is a letter from Barbara Harrison, Chief Executive of the Girls Day School Trust (GDST). In this letter, the GDST state that their priority is to establish the Birkenhead High

School for Girls Academy as an institution and allow it to “bed down”, whilst not ruling out a partnership working arrangement with Prenton High School in the long term.

7.4 Following the closure of the consultation, the Authority was asked to confirm that consultation had taken place, and did so prior to 13<sup>th</sup> February 2009. At the time of writing, the Department has not officially been informed of the Secretary of State’s decision on this proposal, however a press release from the GDST indicates that the legally binding Funding Agreement has now been signed by the Secretary of State and the GDST in order to establish a 3 to 18 all-ability state funded Birkenhead High Academy for Girls from September 2009.

7.5 There are substantial and wide-ranging implications to the Authority, not only in terms of school place planning and data sharing with the new Birkenhead High Academy, but in terms of financial and staffing implications of the Authority’s involvement with the procurement and delivery of £11 million of capital works at the Birkenhead High Academy sites. These will form the subject of a further report to Cabinet in Summer 2009.

## 8.0 **Building Schools for the Future (BSF)**

8.1 As reported to Cabinet on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2008, a revised Expression of Interest for early entry to BSF was submitted to the DCSF at the end of November 2008.

8.2 The outcome of this Expression of Interest and revised national time scales is expected in March 2009. Preliminary indications released by the DCSF indicate that based on prioritisation by GCSE attainment and deprivation, in terms of initial projects, Wirral is ranked 26<sup>th</sup> out of the 70 local authorities for phase 1 initial projects in those authorities which have not yet begun BSF. The next stage in the process will be for the Authority to discuss readiness to deliver with Partnerships for Schools.

## 9.0 **Financial Implications**

9.1 There are none arising directly as a result of this report, though the proposed changes do have very significant implications.

9.2 Establishment of Academies would result in an on-going impact on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). The Academies would be funded via an adjustment to the DSG through replication of the local formula, in addition, funding would also be removed based on the level of central expenditure within the schools budget. This funding adjustment would require the LA to cut central expenditure in line with the reduction in funding. Due to fixed costs, economies of scale and varying support provided for individual schools the budget reduction is unlikely to match the cost reductions achievable by no longer providing certain services to an Academy.

9.3 With regard to Foundation and Trust status, paragraph 5.11 of the 13<sup>th</sup> March 2008 report says the following: “If a PFI school opts for Foundation with a Trust status, the governing body will inherit all the contractual benefits and obligations of the PFI contract. Consequently, PFI Trust schools may not fully benefit from ownership of their assets or changes to the employment of service staff until the end of the PFI contract. The Authority remains liable for paying the unitary charge, and any governing body contribution remains the same.”

9.4 There are likely be cost implications to the Council for alterations to leasing and contractual arrangements when schools involved in the PFI scheme approve a change of status to Foundation or Foundation with a Trust.

9.5 At the end of the PFI term in 2031, the buildings and land which under Community status would previously have reverted to the Local Authority, under Foundation or Trust status will be signed over to the Governing body without any payment or compensation to the Authority. A high impact risk is that if a school were to close during the PFI term, the Council would be liable for the full unitary charge, and if a suitable alternative purpose could not be found for the building, may incur significant penalty costs to release the Council from the PFI agreement.

9.6 Academies that open in the predecessor school buildings may be entitled to a small additional capital grant to cover costs such as renewed signage and other small capital projects required to open the school as an academy.

9.7 Financial and staffing implications of the procurement of capital works at Birkenhead High Academy will be the subject of a further report to Cabinet.

## **10.0 Staffing Implications**

10.1 There are none arising directly as a result of this report. There are, however, important implications arising out of the proposals and these will be set out in a further report as proposals become more specific.

10.2 The staffing implications for the Authority of entering Building Schools for the Future will be significant. Again, this will be the subject of a future report.

10.3 In relation to Foundation and Trust schools status, since the Governing body of the school will become the employer of the school's staff, they will acquire additional employment responsibilities and legal commitments, for example, for Health and Safety. In Foundation or Trust PFI schools, the governing body will not be able to directly employ staff providing services under the PFI contract until the end of the contract.

## **11.0 Equal Opportunities Implications**

11.1 It is essential to plan school provision across the Authority so that it is both efficient and effective in the interests of all pupils. Consultation will need to address very carefully the impact of any preferred options on pupils which are served by the schools concerned. The consultation option would improve the balance between boys and girls secondary school places in this area, as discussed in section 2 above.

## **12.0 Community Safety Implications**

12.1 Rationalisation and refurbishment of schools allow the most vulnerable accommodation to be removed and other security improvements carried out.

## **13.0 Local Agenda 21 Statement**

13.1 The provision of efficient and effective education is a vital part of serving local communities; inefficient use of resources is wasteful both in educational and physical resource terms.

13.2 New school buildings and extensions are required to achieve a minimum standard of BREEAM energy rating of "Very Good". In order to achieve this, the design of a new Academy building would follow as far as possible the DETR/DCSF guidelines in BB87 for "Energy efficient design of new buildings and extensions for schools and colleges". This includes items such as low-energy electrical fittings, water saving devices and the use of sustainably sourced timber.

## **14.0 Planning Implications**

14.1 The relationship between housing development policy and school place provision is a factor in considering surplus place removal. The major regeneration drivers in Birkenhead are the Housing Market Renewal Initiative, with redevelopment proposals in Rock Ferry (Fiveways), Tranmere (Church Road) and North Birkenhead (currently the area to the west of the Laird Street Bus Depot), and Wirral Waters. Although the Wirral Waters proposals aim to provide a significant number of new dwellings in North Birkenhead, this is to be phased over 30-50 years and the annual output of new dwellings from the scheme is projected to peak at 650 in any one year. The Audit Commission says that 100 new houses generates approximately 4 pupils per year group and the Children and Young People's Department believe that this number can be accommodated in the existing and planned provision. Although new house building and conversion in the last 5 years has ranged from 511 (2005/06) to 771 (2007/08) gross across the Borough, the effect of demolitions has reduced this to between 102



(2004/05) and 515 (2007/08) net new dwellings, with no additional demand for new secondary school places. Over this period, when new housing development has been increasingly focused on the east of the Borough in Wallasey and Birkenhead, secondary school rolls have continued to fall due to the decrease in births.

- 15.2 Any proposals after the consultation and decision making process for school re-organisation would be subject to the usual planning processes. Policy L1 of the North West of England Plan – Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021 (RSS) requires local authorities to take account of the views of the local community (including service users) and carry out an assessment of demographic, sporting, recreational, cultural, educational, skills and training and health needs in local communities. Furthermore, they should ensure that accessibility by public transport, walking and cycling is a central consideration.
- 15.3 The development of land designated in the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) as a playing field or the removal of playing fields from community use may be required by these proposals. This could be offset by designating all or part of one of the existing school sites as green space/playing field, and/or by intensifying the use of existing playing fields through improvements.

### **The Shaftesbury Playing Field**

- 15.4 The Shaftesbury Playing Field site (including the pavilion, Shaftesbury Youth Club and sports hall) is shown on the Council's adopted Unitary Development Plan as a sports ground under Proposal RE6/18, whilst the adjoining Borough Road Playing Field is shown as RE6/17. Within the UDP these two sites were subject to Policy RE5, but this has now been deleted and development proposals on all playing fields are now subject to national planning policy for playing fields in Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG17, July 2002). This requires consultation with Sport England on developments that affect land used as playing fields and states that local authorities should give very careful consideration to any planning application involving development on playing fields.
- 15.5 PPG17 states that planning permission for such development that involves playing fields should not be allowed unless:
- (i) the proposed development is ancillary to the use of the site as a playing field (e.g. new changing rooms) and does not adversely affect the quantity or quality of pitches and their use;
  - (ii) the proposed development only affects land which is incapable of forming a playing pitch (or part of one);
  - (iii) the playing fields that would be lost as a result of the proposed development would be replaced by a playing field or fields of equivalent or better quantity or quality and in a suitable location; or
  - (iv) the proposed development is for an outdoor or indoor sports facility of sufficient benefit to the development of sport to outweigh the loss of the playing field.
- 15.6 Development of the Shaftesbury Playing Field for a new school would impact strongly on the integrity of the playing field and any proposal should be subject to criterion (iii) above in that the lost playing field should be replaced in another suitable location. PPG17 defines suitable location and equivalent benefit as;

*“At least as accessible to current and potential new users, and at least equivalent in terms of size, usefulness, attractiveness and quality. Wherever possible, the aim should be to achieve qualitative improvements to open spaces, sports and recreational facilities.”*

Criterion (iv) of PPG17 may be addressed if existing facilities are improved so as to provide for more intensive use to compensate for the loss of the original facilities. This approach would be subject to consultation with Sport England and should be carefully considered, particularly if it would involve development (such as floodlighting) which might be detrimental

to the amenities of adjoining residents.

- 15.7 PPG17 recommends that local authorities prepare an assessment of need for open space, sport and recreation (including playing fields). Whilst a study was carried out in support of the UDP, this pre-dated PPG17 and requires updating to take account of changes in population structure and the quality of existing provision. The Shaftesbury Playing Field is shown as within an area of open space deficiency in the UDP.

### **Rock Ferry High School**

- 15.8 The consultation option proposes that Rock Ferry High School would cease to be maintained. The site of the buildings of Rock Ferry High School is shown as within the Primarily Residential Area on the UDP and in principle, if no other factors were to be considered, residential redevelopment would be appropriate. The site lies within the priority area for new development identified in the Council's Interim Planning Policy for New Housing. It is also in the area subject to Policy LCR3 of RSS, which supports new house building, stating that the quality and choice of housing should be expanded, in line with the approach set out in Policy L4 of RSS.
- 15.9 However, subject to the assessment of playing field need and the views of Sport England, it may be necessary to form additional playing fields to compensate for those lost at Shaftesbury Playing Field. The existing Rock Ferry High School playing fields were shown in the UDP as being subject to Policy RE7, although that is now deleted and national policy in PPG17 applies. The assessment of compensatory provision required by PPG17 might suggest the use of the entire existing site of Rock Ferry High School as a replacement for playing space lost at Shaftesbury. Only if an assessment concluded that it was unnecessary to use the site of the existing buildings at Rock Ferry for compensatory provision of playing space, then it may be possible to consider other uses for the built area of the Rock Ferry site. The assessment should also consider whether the existing playing fields adjacent to Rock Ferry High School alone might have the potential to compensate for the Shaftesbury Playing Field. Currently, Rock Ferry High School is not shown as being within an area of open space deficiency in the UDP.

### **Ridgeway High School**

- 15.10 Ridgeway High School was shown as a School Playing Field subject to Policy RE7 on the UDP, but this policy has now been deleted and the site is subject to the same national planning policy as the Shaftesbury Playing Field site. Therefore redevelopment outside the existing building envelope that would impact on the playing fields is subject to national policy in PPG17 and notification to Sport England. The Ridgeway site is outside the priority area set out in the Council's Interim Planning Policy for New Housing. The site of Ridgeway High School is not within an area of open space deficiency in the UDP. In any change to the status of Ridgeway High School, the Council would expect to retain usage of the building housing the City Learning Centre.

### **16.0 Anti-Poverty Implications**

- 16.1 The redistribution of funding released by school reorganisation, in combination with the Authority's intention to realign the schools budget to give higher levels of funding to schools with high levels of deprivation, as well as improved accommodation, goes towards raising aspirations and narrowing the attainment gap for vulnerable groups.

### **17.0 Social Inclusion Implications**

- 17.1 School re-organisation and transforming accommodation through the forthcoming Building Schools for the Future programme and other schemes, provides opportunities to promote joint agency work to promote co-ordinated solutions for pupils and their families. There is scope for community participation in the design process of any new school buildings, raising the school's profile within the community.

### **18.0 Local Member Support Implications**

18.1 School re-organisation and change of status has implications for all Wards.

18.2 The three secondary schools in the Phase 1 review area named in relation to the consultation option in this report, Birkenhead High School for Girls and the Wards in which these schools are situated, which are Claughton, Oxtan and Rock Ferry.

## 19.0 Background Papers

Pupil and Capacity data held by the LA

DCSF prospectus for Sponsors and Local Authorities - 400 Academies

Spielhofer, T., O'Donnell, L., Benton, T., Schagen, S. and Schagen, I. (2002). The Impact of School Size and Single-Sex Education on Performance (LGA Research Report 33). Slough: NFER

Leonard, D (2007). Single-sex and co-educational secondary schooling: life course consequences?: Full Research Report. ESRC End of Award Report, RES-000-22-1085. Swindon: ESRC

## 20.0 Recommendations

The Director of Children's Services recommends that:

- (1) Cabinet confirms that the option for consultation on secondary school re-organisation in Birkenhead will comprise the establishment of two 5 form of entry 11 to 16 Academies – one a single sex Academy for boys on a site to be confirmed, and the other a mixed sex Academy on the site of Park High School.
- (2) Discussions take place with Shaftesbury Youth Club regarding possible use of the Shaftesbury Playing Field site and their collaboration with the project.
- (3) The Director is given all necessary authority to formalise agreements with potential sponsors, and to co-operate with OSC and DSCF appointed consultants in relation to the Statement of Intent and Expression of Interest phases of Academy development.
- (4) The Director is authorised to take all necessary steps to ensure the prescribed procedures are followed, including consultations on the closure of predecessor schools, in furtherance of the two Academy option.
- (5) A report including the Expression of Interest is brought to Cabinet in Summer 2009.
- (6) The recent changes of school status are noted.
- (7) A report on the implications of the establishment of the Birkenhead High Academy for Girls from September 2009 is brought to Cabinet in Summer 2009.

**Howard Cooper**

**Director of Children's Services**