

Report to the Cabinet

Meeting to be held on Thursday, 6 October 2022

Report of the Director of Strategy and Performance

Part I

Electoral Division affected:
(All Divisions);

Corporate Priorities:
Caring for the vulnerable;

School Place Planning Delivery Programme 2023-25

(Appendix 'A' refers)

Contact for further information:

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Brief Summary

This report sets out the draft School Place Planning Delivery Programme for 2023-25, detailing a series of projects which aim to provide additional places in existing schools, and proposals to consult on the establishment of two new primary schools and a new secondary school in Preston.

This is deemed to be a Key Decision and the provisions of Standing Order C19 have been complied with.

Recommendation

Cabinet is asked to:

- (i) Approve the School Place Planning Delivery Programme 2023-25 set out at Appendix 'A'.
- (ii) Agree that statutory consultations be conducted on sufficiency projects in the following school planning areas:
 - a. Establishment of a new primary school in Goosnargh & Grimsargh with Longridge.
 - b. Establishment of a new primary school in Preston Rural, North, West.
 - c. Establishment of a new secondary school in Preston.



- d. Significant alteration projects in Brierfield; Goosnargh & Grimsargh with Longridge; Preston Rural, North, West; Chorley and South Ribble; Ribble Valley East and West.

Detail

As the education authority for Lancashire, the county council has a range of statutory duties to fulfil. The county council's ambition to provide good access, quality and outcomes in education are set out in the Lancashire Education Strategy 2022-2025.

One of the seven pillars of the Education Strategy is the School Planning Strategy 2022-25, which delivers on this ambition, with the aim to provide 'the right number of school places, in the right areas, at the right time to meet need'. The strategy sets out a series of priorities for improvement, areas of growth and reduction in the need for school places, and areas for future action.

The annual forecast of school place demand across Lancashire has identified several school planning areas where additional places are needed. This is an update to the areas of growth and reduction set out in the School Planning Strategy 2022-25. The areas where additional places are needed will require a range of building projects and consultations to deliver, as set out in the School Place Planning Delivery Programme 2023-25 set out at Appendix 'A'.

Whilst some additional places in primary phase are needed, the growth in places is most needed in the secondary phase, due to rising cumulative births, peak population in primary schools, housing development and migration. The School Place Planning Delivery Programme 2023-25 includes projects to provide additional primary places in:

- Brierfield (Pendle);
- Kirkham (Fylde);
- Goosnargh & Grimsargh with Longridge (Preston & Ribble Valley West); and
- Preston Rural, North, West (Preston).

Secondary place projects are proposed in:

- Burnley;
- Chorley & South Ribble;
- Preston;
- Ribble Valley East and West; and
- Wyre.

Assessment Framework for the Establishment of New Schools

Where a Local Authority considers that a new school needs to be established in their area, section 6A of Education and Inspections Act 2006 places the Local Authority under a duty to seek proposals to establish an academy/free school, also known as the 'presumption' route. The type of new school to be delivered would be determined in consultation with Education and Children's Services, as part of the development of



the specification for the new school. Potential academy trust sponsors would need to evidence that they meet the school specification via their application to operate the new school, which would provide part of the information against which the proposals would be judged.

Processes and Timescales

Commissioning a new school and the selection process for a sponsor may take up to 12 months, from the identification of need to the final decision by the Secretary of State for Education.

It is anticipated that it will take approximately three years from confirming the need for a new school to opening a new establishment. This is an ambitious proposal and, to date, Lancashire has not commissioned a new school via the presumption route. Set out below is an indicative timescale:

Milestone	Timescale
Cabinet approval to commence consultation on new school proposals	October 2022
Submit New School Expression of Interest to the Regional Schools Commissioner	November 2022
Public Consultation	January to February 2023
Competition	February to June 2023
Decision Making	September 2023
Capital Build	Two years
Completion	Summer 2025
School Opening	2025-26

Decision Making

The Secretary of State will make the final determination in respect of the successful proposer to operate a new school. However, the local authority has a critical role to play in operating the assessment and selection process that will generate a recommendation from Cabinet to the Secretary of State for consideration.

Delivery

It is proposed that, should a decision be made to start the commissioning process for a new school, it may be necessary to provide temporary additional places in existing schools in the relevant planning areas for 2024, pending completion of the process to establish new schools which are ready to open in September 2025. Whilst each new primary school would be commissioned with capacity for 210 pupils (one form entry), where possible and subject to site conditions, the build design for the school will allow for a subsequent expansion project, should local growth generate the need. For new schools, sites are usually secured through the local planning regime.



New primary school: Goosnargh & Grimsargh with Longridge

The Goosnargh & Grimsargh planning area is being considered in conjunction with neighbouring Longridge, due to the areas becoming increasingly connected through housing development. Longridge is also on the border with Preston district, where Preston City Council is considering planning applications for large developments along the border, which has the potential to enlarge the town and create additional demand for school places within five years.

The School Place Planning Delivery Programme identifies the need for one additional form of entry in 2023, and a further one form of entry in 2025. It is anticipated that the places for 2023 can be provided through school expansion and the establishment of a new school is expected to provide the additional form of entry from 2025.

In the longer term, there is potential for an additional 270+ houses in the vicinity, which may yield approximately 46 to 103 additional pupils beyond 2026.

New primary school: Preston Rural, North, and West

Pupil numbers are also rising in Preston Rural, driven by City Deal housing growth and the popularity of existing schools, which is generating a proportionate increase in the number of preferences for admissions.

Preston West, North and Rural school planning areas are being considered together, as housing growth is expected to impact upon all three of these areas. Migration is impacting later year groups, as the reception cohorts move through the schools.

The School Place Planning Delivery Programme identifies the need for a one form entry (30 places) temporary expansion from September 2023, and a one form entry permanent expansion from September 2024. The establishment of a new school is expected to provide the additional form of entry from 2025.

In the longer term, there is potential for a further 647+ houses to yield approximately 110 to 246 additional pupils beyond 2026.

New secondary school: Preston

Increased numbers from primary phase have started to move through to the secondary phase, with additional places needed from 2023-24 onwards. Discussions are ongoing with Preston secondary schools to secure plans to increase the number of places available. Many of the Preston secondaries are working at the lower end of the net capacity for their buildings, therefore there may be space within existing schools to accommodate more pupils, which forms the basis of current discussions.

The School Place Planning Delivery Programme identifies the need for a one additional permanent form of entry in September 2023, three additional temporary forms of entry in September 2024 and four additional permanent forms of entry in September 2025. It is anticipated that the additional form of entry for 2023 and 2024 can be provided through school expansion, and the establishment of a new school is expected to provide the additional forms of entry from 2025.



In the longer term, there is potential for a further 2,954+ houses to yield approximately 266 to 443 additional pupils beyond 2026.

Consultations

It will be for the county council to decide how to consult on the proposed new school and with whom (e.g., potential providers, other schools, academies, the wider community, diocese, and any others affected by the proposals). The county council should be clear about the type, age range, gender, and capacity of the new academy/free school they wish to see established, and the expected cost.

Where an expansion project constitutes a significant change, the county council must follow Department for Education Guidance in managing the project, which will also incorporate a public consultation.

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Risk management

If additional school places are not created, there is a risk that the county council would fail in its statutory responsibility, to make sure that a maintained school place is available to all Lancashire children of the appropriate age range who want one.

Providing additional places increases the overall capacity in the area and, if projected pupil numbers fail to materialise as expected, there may be surplus places created by the proposals. In these circumstances, the authority proposes to work with the group of schools within the School Planning Area, to ensure that there is a strategic approach to managing the sufficiency of school places available.

Equality and Cohesion

The proposed Basic Need Delivery Plan will impact most protected characteristics groups but will have its greatest impact children and young people (age). It is anticipated that the programme will contribute positively towards the Public Sector Equality Duty's general aims of advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between protected characteristics groups.

Legal

The county council is under a statutory obligation to ensure the sufficiency of school places in its area. Where an expansion project constitutes a significant change, the council must follow Department for Education Guidance in managing the project. Guidance is set out in: [Making significant changes \('prescribed alterations'\) to maintained schools \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

['The Free School Presumption'](#) (Department for Education, November 2019) provides guidance to local authorities in commissioning new schools. This sets out model templates for the School Specification (Annex A); Application Form for potential sponsors (Annex B) and Model Assessment criteria (Annex C).



In June 2020, Cabinet approved adoption of the Department for Education framework for the establishment of new schools in Lancashire. This and any subsequent guidance will be considered in developing each proposal for a new school.

Finance

Subject to Cabinet approval, the School Place Planning Delivery Programme will form the basis of subsequent reports to Cabinet, setting out the capital cost estimates for each project to be funded in the first instance through the Department for Education Basic Need Grant and developer contributions for education infrastructure.

Local authorities are responsible for the start-up costs for new schools. The details of these costs, as they relate to capital project and which elements are to be funded from revenue budgets, need to be established.

The county council will need to consult with the Schools Forum to determine the criteria and forum policy to be applied in relation to the start-up costs that are to be funded from the Schools Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant. The Schools Forum should also be consulted on the total sum to be top sliced from the Dedicated Schools Grant, and the local authority will need to provide the Schools Forum with regular updates on the use of the funding.

If after opening a new school, the pupil numbers are below the school's financial 'break-even' number, the local authority and successful sponsor will need to provide reassurance to the Department for Education as to how the school will be viable. The local authority is expected to have in place clear plans and solutions with the successful sponsor on pupil numbers and financial plans to minimise the authority's risks and liabilities.

The commissioning of a new school should therefore only be approved where there is a high degree of certainty on financial viability. Should a school prove not to be financially viable, then in the short term the Dedicated School Grant may underwrite initial financial risks. However, in the medium term, the liabilities could significantly accumulate that would then impact on the authority's finances.

Property Asset Management

The approval of a school expansion that requires a build project that will extend the footprint of the building will be subject to obtaining relevant planning permission, and Section 77(3) consent for the change of use of the land (or meeting the terms of The School Playing Fields General Disposal and Change of Use Consent (No 5) 2014.)

Should the commissioning of a new school be approved, then there is an expectation that the site be made available free, or on a peppercorn basis, by the local authority to the academy trust operating the school.



List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
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None

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A

