

## **SECONDARY SCHOOL PROVISION IN CHESHUNT**

### Report of the Director of Education

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Local Member:- M H T Janes, A M R Searing, G D Game, R A G Thomas

Adjoining Members: J R Morton, M H O'Neill

#### **1. Purpose of Report**

To report the outcomes of consultation, and further work, on the proposals to develop secondary education provision in Cheshunt as originally considered by the Education Committee on 24<sup>th</sup> May, 2000.

#### **2. Summary**

2.1 The Education Committee of 24 May 2000 authorised consultation on a strategy seeking to develop the existing secondary schools in Cheshunt to a capacity target of 25 forms of entry (FE) by expanding Goffs, St Mary's High and Turnford Schools. The proposal was developed to respond to future demand for secondary school places in an area where further housing has recently been developed and more can be anticipated.

2.2 The strategy outlined included the relocation of St Mary's High School to the County Council-owned secondary site at Cheshunt Park through an approach involving the eventual sale of the current site to contribute capital funding for the scheme.

2.3 This report is structured in the following way:

Purpose, Summary and Conclusion (sections 1, 2, and 3 - white paper)

Background to the proposals (section 4)

Details of the consultation exercise and the response statistics (sections 5 and 6)

Summary of the issues raised (section 7)

Discussion of the issues raised (section 8):

Financial implications (sections 9 and 10)

Details of further work undertaken during the consultation period (section 11)

Suggested next steps (section 12)

Conclusion (section 13)

A set of appendices (referred to in the text), with index page.

### **3. Conclusion**

- 3.1 The consultation exercise has revealed public understanding and support for the overall educational objectives of the Cheshunt secondary schools strategy: to provide up to 25 forms-of-entry to meet current and anticipated future demand for secondary school places in an area where further housing has recently been developed and more can be anticipated.
- 3.2 There is widespread support for the expansion of Goffs, St Mary's High and Turnford Schools as the means of providing additional places. The constraints of the current St Mary's High School premises and buildings, and the need to find a realistic solution to resolving the overcrowding, have been understood although the consultation exercise reveals some concern about the move of the school. Local residents have expressed concerns about the extent of recent urban development in the Cheshunt area, the traffic and wider quality of life issues perceived to flow from that development and are reluctant to see an area of green-space developed for school purposes.
- 3.3 The report suggests undertaking further technical work in order to present the proposals in the local plan review process.
- 3.4 The report also recommends that in relation to the proposed expansions of Turnford and Goffs Schools, work should proceed on identifying and implementing priority elements of the two schemes which will enable some additional school places to become available. This initial work can be funded within the basic need capital allocation already available to the County Council.
- 3.5 The Select Committee will need to consider: -
  - (a) how to evaluate the outcome of the further technical work,
  - (b) what recommendations, if any, they should make to the Cabinet now to ensure that the proposals are taken forward.

#### **4. Background**

At their meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> May, 2000, the former Education Committee considered a report by the School Provision and Resources Panel, setting out future requirements for secondary school provision in Cheshunt and proposing a plan for developing the four schools in the area, for consultation purposes and further consideration.

The Education Committee resolved:

- (1) *That the Director of Education be authorised to consult on the proposals set out in the report to increase by one form of entry (1 f.e.) Goffs, St Mary's and Turnford Schools, and to transfer St Mary's High School to the site, held in advance of need since 1969 by the County Council for school development purposes, at Cheshunt Park.*
- (2) *That the Director of Education and the Corporate Director of People and Property, in consultation with Broxbourne Borough Council and the St Albans Diocesan Board of Education, should undertake detailed feasibility and technical assessments, including an option appraisal of potential access arrangements to the site, relating to the implementation of the proposals in resolution (1) above.*
- (3) *That the outcomes of the processes authorised in resolutions (1) and (2) above be reported back to the appropriate committee in October 2000.*
- (4) *That the Committee support the governors of Cheshunt School in seeking to dispose of part of their site in order to raise capital to invest in the school premises.*

#### **5. Consultation Exercise**

- 5.1 A consultation document was produced and 16,000 copies were circulated widely (including formal consultees), to parents of existing nursery, primary and secondary school pupils, and was available from libraries, health clinics and the local council offices. The availability of the consultation document received significant publicity in the media circulating in the area. A copy forms Appendix A to this report.
- 5.2 Public meetings were organised at which officers explained the proposals and responded to factual points. A copy of the slide presentation is attached as Appendix B for reference. Listening Panels were present, and the meetings were tape-recorded. Please contact Ben Wright (01992 555897) if you would like to access the tapes.
- 5.3 Officers have also made further informal presentations, on request, to additional parent meetings and to staff and pupil groups.
- 5.4 The proposals have been discussed with the Broxbourne Local Panel.
- 5.5 It was possible for respondents to:
  - return a Freepost proforma;
  - e.mail a response;
  - contact the Customer Services Centre to register a response

write to the Education Department.

5.6 By the end of the consultation period 1061 responses had been received. The bulk of these were response forms and letters, but there were also twenty responses via e-mail and a similar number taken by Hertfordshire County Council's Customer Service Centre. The 'Development of Secondary School Provision in Cheshunt' consultation was the first consultation exercise undertaken by the Education Planning Unit to utilise these new services.

A summary of the responses from significant people and/or organisations is given in sections 7.2 to 7.11.

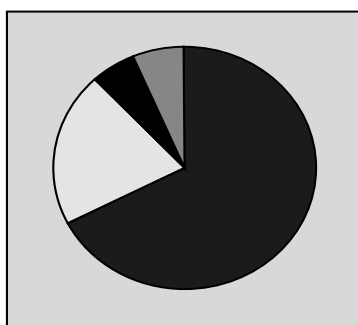
5.7 A summary of the statistical outcome of the consultation exercise is given in section 6 below. More statistical detail is given in Appendices C and D.





5.8 The issues raised in this consultation are described in section 7 below and commented on in section 8.

## 6. Response to the consultation - statistics

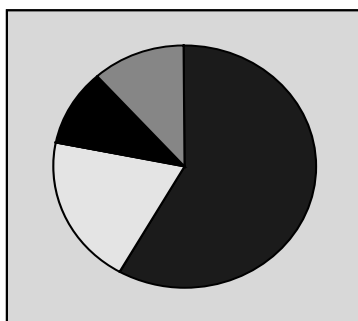
6.1 There were 1061 responses to the consultation exercise. Appendix C gives the full details of response to each of the questions. The questions and a summary of the statistics are given below:





1. Do you agree with the proposal to expand three secondary schools in Cheshunt?



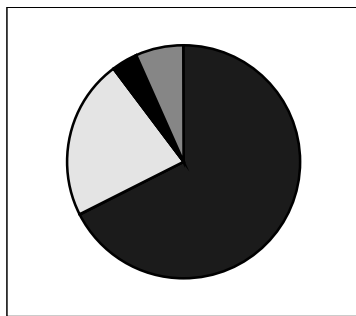
	Agree	713	67.2 %
	Disagree	220	20.7 %
	Don't Know	59	5.6 %
	Not Indicated	69	6.5 %





2. Do you agree with the expansion of Goffs School?



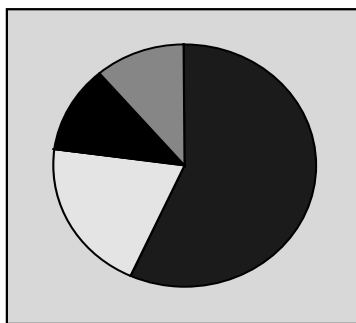
	Agree	617	58.2 %
	Disagree	210	19.8 %
	Don't Know	109	10.3 %
	Not Indicated	125	11.8 %





3. Do you agree with the expansion of St Mary’s High School?



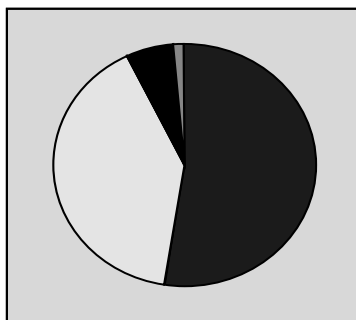
	Agree	715	67.4 %
	Disagree	236	22.2 %
	Don't Know	40	3.8 %
	Not Indicated	70	6.6 %





4. Do you agree with the expansion of Turnford School?



	Agree	662	62.4 %
	Disagree	236	12.1 %
	Don't Know	140	13.2 %
	Not Indicated	131	12.3 %

5. Do you agree in principle with the proposal to relocate St Mary’s High School to a new site at Park Lane?



	Agree	554	52.2 %
	Disagree	430	40.5 %
	Don't Know	61	5.7 %
	Not Indicated	16	1.5 %

6.2 It should be noted that 193 of these responses were from pupils and students at the secondary schools. Appendix D gives the above information for these respondents only.

## 7. Response to the consultation – Issues raised

7.1 This section of the report deals first with the responses received from ‘significant respondents’ and then with the general issues raised by people commenting on the proposals.

### 7.2 Significant Respondents

This section deals with responses from people or organisations that might be deemed

‘significant’ in that they represent a particular community interest. These responses have been attached as Appendices E to M.

### 7.3 Diocese of St Albans Board of Education (Appendix E)

The Diocese of St Albans covers all of Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire, and, as such, is responsible for the provision of Church of England schooling in the two counties. The Bishop of Bedford, as Chair of the Board of Education, responded on their behalf. He noted the following:

- there was forecast to be an increase in the number of secondary school children in the Cheshunt area;
- existing school places would be overwhelmed in the next few years;
- St Mary’s High School needed to play a full part in the development of secondary school provision in the area;
- current school building capacity was about four forms of entry (FE);
- the necessary expansion of St Mary’s High School could not be solved by the provision of additional classrooms because the core facilities would still be too small;
- the existing access arrangements to the site were inadequate and unsafe;
- a new school site was, therefore, needed;
- the Diocese planned to incorporate a chapel into the relocated school’s design to ensure that links between the school and parish continue.

The Bishop of St Albans and Reverend Brian Blackshaw of the Parish of Cheshunt echoed these sentiments. The latter also added that he had some concerns about the problems of access to a relocated school on Cheshunt Park and recognised that this issue needed due attention.

### 7.4 Governors of St Mary’s High School (Petition) (Appendix F)

The Governing Body of St Mary’s High School organised a petition in favour of the proposed expansion of the secondary schools in Cheshunt and particularly the proposed relocation of St Mary’s High School to Cheshunt Park. There were 674 signatures. In the accompanying statement the Governors said the following:

- relocation would enhance the school by providing new and modern educational facilities;
- any new development would be likely to include a Chapel on the site;
- their admissions rules could legally prioritise local children, through appropriate amendments;
- the current school buildings were operating at 100% usage, with no spare capacity;
- the school needed new and improved facilities in science, technology, sport, ICT and core areas.

In addition to this petition, most of the Governing Body of St Mary’s High School responded individually, adding support to many of the points given above.

#### 7.5 Acting Headteacher of St Mary's High School (Appendix G)

The Acting Headteacher wrote in support of all the proposals for the area, stating that these would provide excellent educational facilities for all four secondary schools in Cheshunt. The following points were made:

- the present site cannot be developed further to provide the necessary facilities;
- a 6 FE school would be better equipped to deliver the demands of the national curriculum;
- the new site would still be in the parish of St Mary's;
- relocation would bring school places closer to the recent housing developments in the area;
- the geographical distribution of schools would be improved – this would also help the traffic situation in the current Churchgate area;
- locating the school in Cheshunt Park would bring community facilities to that area which could be enjoyed by the local residents and St Paul's Catholic Primary School;
- although there might potentially be traffic problems in Park Lane, less than a third of current pupils travelled to the school by car.
- the school could be sympathetically designed to conserve wildlife in the park.

#### 7.6 Chair of Governors of Turnford School (Appendix H)

Responding on behalf of the Governing Body of Turnford School, the Chair of Governors indicated support for the entire package of proposals, noting specifically that Turnford School was a popular and successful school deserving of the proposed major building work.

#### 7.7 Chair of Governors of Goffs School (Appendix I)

The Chair of Governors at Goffs School responded on behalf of the Governing Body in favour of the proposals for the development of secondary school provision in Cheshunt. It was noted that Goffs School suffered from heavy over-subscription every year and that the proposals would help ease the pressure on the school.

#### 7.8 The Friends of Cheshunt Park (Appendix J)

The Friends of Cheshunt Park are a well-organised group of Cheshunt residents who have previously protested against development proposals for the park. Their website can be viewed at [www.friends-of-cheshunt-park.org.uk](http://www.friends-of-cheshunt-park.org.uk). They have made clear that they are not opposed to the development of education in the Borough, but that they object to the use of land on Cheshunt Park to achieve this. Their response to the consultation, accompanied by a petition with over 1,900 signatures, made the following points:

- there is a great deal of local opposition to the use of a local recreation space for a school, and considerable concern about the continued urbanisation of the area;

- traffic system already under strain would collapse under the increased pressure resulting from a new secondary school and the possible expansion of the Brookfield Farm shopping complex;
- wildlife in the park would be devastated as 5% of the quality wildlife land in the Borough of Broxbourne would be lost;
- the geographical spread of secondary school places would not be improved;
- the land at St Mary's High School is designated green-belt land and so it should not be sold for housing;
- Hertfordshire County Council did not appear to be investigating any alternative options.

#### 7.9 Council for the Protection of Rural England (Appendix K)

The Council for the Protection of Rural England expressed their disappointment that Hertfordshire County Council's preferred option was the development of a green-belt site. They noted that Cheshunt Park had been identified as a Wildlife Site, and that, in addition, it had been used for recreational purposes by local people for a considerable length of time. There was also concern at the extra traffic that could potentially result from the proposals

#### 7.10 Goffs Oak Community Association (Appendix L)

The Goffs Oak Community Association stated that they understood the need for additional school places, and questioned the wisdom of closing the old Cheshunt School site on Windmill Lane. They were concerned, however, that the proposals would result in the loss of an area of parkland and that access to the site was inadequate to cater for a secondary school. It was felt that the alternative of expanding all of the secondary schools on their current sites should be pursued.

#### 7.11 Marion Roe MP for Broxbourne (Appendix M)

Mrs Marion Roe, the MP for Broxbourne, has received a large number of letters concerning the proposed changes to secondary provision in the area. The majority of these letters were against the relocation of St Mary's High School to Cheshunt Park. Marion Roe stated that she appreciated the need for more school places in the area, but that she also communicated the concerns her constituents had expressed regarding increased traffic, lack of access to the site and the loss of parkland. Having considered the proposals Marion Roe asked that Hertfordshire County Council reconsiders its plans and look at other alternatives to increase secondary school places in Cheshunt.

#### 7.12 **Staff Responses**

##### 7.13 Turnford and Goffs

A small number of staff from Turnford and Goffs responded to the consultation exercise. One member of staff from Turnford commented that the proposals were to be supported if they brought improved facilities to the school. The Goffs staff were evenly split between those who approved the expansion of the school as building on the current academic success there and those who thought that Goffs shouldn't expand any further. It was commented that previous building work constructed whilst the school was grant-maintained, had caused disruption at the school.

#### 7.14 St Mary's High School

There were a significant number of responses from members of staff at St Mary's High School. All of these were in favour of the relocation and their responses give a damning indictment of the current facilities at the school. It was stated that:

- St Mary's High School cannot be patched up;
- The current overcrowding of the school site meant that there was a possibility that Health and Safety regulations are being infringed;
- Core facilities are inadequate – the hall, for instance, cannot hold the entire school;
- PE facilities are 'a disgrace';
- Technology is taught in three separate buildings;
- Drama and English classes are taught in science labs, where there are no relevant resources;
- Many of the classrooms are small;
- Access to the school is dangerous, because of the inadequate separation of pedestrians and motor vehicles;
- If the school does not move there is the risk that the staff will become demoralised.

#### 7.15 **Issues raised by other respondents**

The majority of the responses received were from parents of children at schools in the area, from local residents and from pupils and students. They raised a very wide range of issues and concerns, which are detailed in the following sections.

#### 7.16 **Comments on the County Council's strategy**

##### 7.17 Need for more Secondary School places

As suggested by the response given to Question 1 on the consultation form, there was a wide recognition that more secondary school places were needed in Cheshunt and Waltham Cross. As mentioned above, this sentiment was shared by 'The Friends of Cheshunt Park' and other organisations opposed to specific strands of the proposals. This need for more secondary school places was also reflected in comments concerning the need for more parental choice in the area and disillusionment with the admissions system. There were, however, some doubts as to whether the proposals would provide enough school places for the future.

##### 7.18 Town planning in the area had been poor

There was a widespread feeling that earlier town planning in the area had been poor. A significant number of respondents said that there had been far too much housing development in the area, especially in Hammond Street. This increase in housing had not, some felt, been complemented by an increase in local amenities. This lack of forward planning meant that Hertfordshire County Council was now reacting to the increase in demand for school places in the area, rather than having provision already in place as part of the new developments. A large number of people thought that land should be purchased near Hammond Street and would be

more appropriate for a secondary school because it would be closer to the new demand.

7.19 Accuracy of the school forecasts

Some respondents questioned the accuracy of the school forecasts, especially in view of the fact that the Queen Eleanor School and the Windmill Lane school site were closed on the grounds that there was forecast to be a future lack of demand for secondary school places. Some people, therefore, expressed doubt that the current forecasts could be relied on as an accurate justification for the proposals.

7.20 Children from outside Hertfordshire should not be admitted to schools in Cheshunt

The response to the consultation exercise revealed some hostility to the numbers of children admitted to secondary schools in Cheshunt from places over the county border, including, it is suggested, Tottenham, Edmonton and Enfield. Some respondents felt that St Mary's High School's admission policy was partly to blame, and also that there shouldn't be any expansion programmes at schools that were in any way 'selective'.

Conversely, however, some residents from outside Hertfordshire were concerned that the move of St Mary's High School to the north and the possible change in their admissions rules being envisaged by the governors to give priority to Hertfordshire children would jeopardise any chance of them getting their children into the school.

7.21 Bigger schools are not better

A number of people questioned Hertfordshire County Council's assertion that bigger schools were better. These respondents fell into two groups. The first group, in relation to St Mary's High School, did not favour enlargement as they feared that it might jeopardise the ethos of the school – the caring atmosphere would be lost in a larger, 'anonymous' school. The second group opposed enlargement on the grounds that the area needed an entirely new school. Their reasons for wanting a new school ranged from avoiding the need for St Mary's High School to move, a belief that Hertfordshire County Council's scheme would not provide sufficient places for the forecast demand, and a desire for schools in areas that did not currently have them.

7.22 The proposed geographical spread of schools is not right

Aside from those respondents not wanting a school on Cheshunt Park, but wanting it nearer to the Hammond Street development, there were a number of respondents in favour of a new school for Waltham Cross. The land at Cedar Park Plaza was suggested as a possible site. Other people mentioned that there needed to be another school to the east of the A10 as that area was not felt to be properly provided for.

7.23 The County Council is motivated by the desire for profit

There was some cynicism about the motives of Hertfordshire County Council in bringing these proposals forward. It was alleged that the whole scheme was for profit, and also stated that the money raised from the sale of the Queen Eleanor and Windmill Lane school sites should be used to fund the expansion proposals. This would avoid the need for selling the current St Mary's High School site for housing.

## **7.24 Comments about specific aspects of the proposals**

### **7.25 Comments concerning the proposals for Turnford School**

Only a very small number of comments received concerned the proposals for Turnford School. There was a feeling that the school would benefit from the expansion, and also that it was important that the school got the additional facilities, especially if Goffs was also the subject of investment.

### **7.26 Comments concerning the proposals for Goffs School**

There were only a small number of comments relating directly to the proposals at Goffs School. These people opposed further expansion of Goffs School for one of two reasons; firstly, that Goffs School was already too big/big enough. Any further expansion would lead to a reduction in standards at the school or risk disruption by creating new building works on site. The second reason for opposing expansion at Goffs School was the perception that the school had already received a significant share of funding and new building projects in the past, and that those resources would have been better directed towards one of the other schools in the area.

### **7.27 Comments concerning Cheshunt School**

Whilst none of the proposals for the development of secondary school places in Cheshunt specifically involved changes at Cheshunt School, there were many comments referring to the school. The majority of these indicated that Cheshunt School could be used to address the forecast shortage of school places in the area. There was marked opposition to the selling of any of their land, as many thought that this land could be used to further expand this school and meet the shortfall of places. It was noted that the school had a large site with good transport links, and that any further development of the site would not adversely affect local residents.

There was also concern that the school was under-resourced and that it was unfair that the proposals should not seek to improve the school.

## **7.28 Comments concerning the proposals for St Mary's High School**

Unsurprisingly, the majority of the comments received related in some way to the proposals to relocate St Mary's High School to Cheshunt Park. About a quarter of the responses specifically commented that they did not want the school to relocate to the park. There were a number of very specific reasons why, as given below:

### **7.29 Cheshunt Park is a valuable local amenity**

Cheshunt Park is an open space in an area that is becoming increasingly urbanised. Many people wrote that they and their children used the park for recreational purposes, and that they were upset at the possibility that this land would be lost to future generations. There was also concern that the park was green-belt land and a feeling that the County Council should be seeking a brownfield site.

7.30 Cheshunt Park is of historical importance

Some people noted that the park was of historical importance because of the Second World War Pillboxes and the Roman Road that runs through the site.

7.31 Cheshunt Park is an important wildlife site

A significant number of respondents stated that the proposals would have an adverse effect on the wildlife of the park. It was felt that there was a particularly rich diversity of species on the site, some of them rare, such as the Stag Beetle, which needed to be protected. This was not only for the sake of the habitat itself, but also for the sake of future generations of people in Cheshunt. The importance of parts of Cheshunt Park in terms of wildlife was also supported by the response from the Council for the Protection of Rural England (see section 8.9 above), and by the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust.

7.32 Cheshunt Park was bequeathed to the people of Cheshunt

The County Council was challenged to prove that it had the legal right to use the land at Cheshunt Park to build a secondary school. The basis of this complaint was a popular misconception that the land had been bequeathed to the people of Cheshunt by the Debenham family.

7.33 Relocation of St Mary's High School to Cheshunt Park would bring traffic chaos

By far the most frequent comment was that the siting of a secondary school in Cheshunt Park would massively increase the amount of traffic in the area. It was noted that there were already three primary schools in close proximity to the site, and that more traffic could bring gridlock to the area. Many people said that Park Lane was a country road unsuited to the current levels of traffic, and that the risk of accidents was unacceptably high. There was some fear that emergency services would not be able to access the area if there was more traffic. Additional traffic would also bring more noise and pollution, and block access to their homes.

Some people expressed their disbelief that the road system could be redesigned to cope with the expected rise in traffic levels, especially if the proposed expansion of the Brookfield Farm shopping complex also went ahead. There were suggestions that a road to the site could be built directly from the A10.

7.34 Alternative plans should be pursued

As an alternative to using Cheshunt Park, many people came up with one of two alternatives. The first was that St Mary's High School should expand on its existing site. It was noted that there was a large area of land adjacent to the school that could be used to expand the existing site. Some people suggested that a land swap could be arranged with Broxbourne Borough Council. The second alternative was that the school could be relocated on a different site, either nearer Hammond Street, to the east of the A10 or in Waltham Cross. Other alternatives included an Upper and Lower school scheme, utilising land at Cheshunt School. Some people did question whether it was sensible to spend such large sums of money on knocking one school down and building another.

7.35 The current St Mary's High School site should not be developed for housing

Many people stated that they did not want houses to be built onto the current St Mary's High School site. The reasons they gave were as follows:

- A housing development on the site would increase the traffic, noise and pollution in the area;
- the historically important moat on the St Mary's site would be endangered by any such a development;
- there were already too many houses in the area;
- more houses meant more children. Where would these children go to school?

7.36 St Mary's School would benefit from relocation

A significant number of respondents were in favour of the proposed relocation because of the benefits that this would bring the school community. There was a strong feeling that current facilities were not adequate, with the following points being the most frequent:

- the current site is overcrowded;
- St Mary's School is a successful school which deserves better facilities, in line with other schools in the area;
- as one of the only church secondary schools in the area it was important that the school be allowed to flourish. This could only happen if the school was relocated to a new site;
- unless St Mary's High School got improved facilities it would not be able to recruit the best teachers in the future.

The issues raised about the actual facilities at the current St Mary's High School site have already been addressed in section 8.14 above.

7.37 There were however, a number of concerns expressed by parents of children at the school, and not all of them were in favour of the proposed relocation. Some parents felt that they should have been told about the proposed relocation before they had applied for a place at the school, because this may have affected their preference of school. Other points included:

7.38 St Mary's High School needed a strong church link

A significant number of people, both for and against the proposal, said that St Mary's High School needed to maintain the strong link with St Mary's church. Some people feared that this would be lost if the school moved away from the area. Others, however, sought reassurance that this link would not be jeopardised.

7.39 Transport arrangements to the proposed new site needed to be adequate

Some people noted that if the school relocated to Cheshunt Park, their children would have further to travel to get to school. This was especially felt by those families living in Waltham Cross. Current public transport in the area was criticised, and there were calls for improved bus links.

## **7.40 Responses from pupils and students**

7.41 A large number of the responses to the consultation exercise were from pupils and students at St Mary's High School. The overwhelming majority of these were in favour of the proposed relocation of the school to Cheshunt Park, although there were some dissenting voices. Those in favour of the move cited the overcrowded corridors, small and infrequent toilets, small hall and dining room and inadequate sports facilities. Those that opposed the move did so on the same general grounds as already mentioned, including the potential for hazardous levels of traffic and the loss of wildlife in the park.

## **7.42 Other school governing bodies**

### 7.43 Board of Governors of St Paul's RC JMI School (Appendix P)

The Governors of St Paul's RC JMI School, which is immediately adjacent to the proposed site for the relocated St Mary's High School, commented that any traffic scheme in the area would need to take full account of their needs. They also noted that their future plans for a nursery school on the St Paul's site would need to be taken into account.

## **8. Discussion of the issues raised**

### **8.1 Educational Provision Issues**

#### 8.2 Response to the strategy

The majority of responses received support the expansion of the three schools and the overall strategy as a whole.

#### 8.3 Secondary school size

In terms of school size, explanations were given at the public meetings about the desirability of moving towards a pattern of larger schools in order to provide breadth of curricular opportunities particularly post-16. The statutory Hertfordshire School Organisation Plan, in relation to school size issues, states:

*At secondary level, former policies were to provide secondary schools that were typically smaller than the national average. Recent secondary school reorganisations have moved away from this policy and have sought to provide larger secondary schools ranging, from 6 to 10 forms-of-entry, in order to strengthen the scope for achieving breath and balance in the curriculum.*

#### 8.4 Earlier school provision decisions/forecasts

8.4.1 The set of decisions taken by the County Council during the Secondary Review Programme in the 1980's sought to respond to significant falling rolls in a number of areas of County, including Cheshunt. Schools with very low numbers were at that time closed and indeed, one school (Cheshunt Secondary) was relocated east-to-west across the A10 to its current site to better premises. It is not the Authority's approach to keep open schools where there are significant surplus places because this is not conducive to the provision of cost-effective, high quality education. The County Council's approach has, therefore, been to rationalise schools, recycling

the value of their assets to invest in improved service delivery infrastructure. The current strategy seeks to address not only current pressures for places but also anticipates the likely impact of the Broxbourne Borough Council area revised housing target, which is integral to the Borough Local Plan Review, and a forecast increase in pupil numbers during the next decade. The LEA is responsible for planning school provision to reflect prevailing and anticipated future demands.

8.4.2 This approach is consistent with Audit Commission's national advice to local education authorities in their work on the supply of school places and guidance from the Department of Education and Employment on action relating to surplus places.

#### 8.5 Geographical spread of schools

In terms of the geographical spread of schools, it is accepted that the current arrangements "bunch" three schools, in close proximity. As the map in the consultation document (see Appendix A) shows, relocating St Mary's School to the Park Lane site achieves a favourable distribution of locally accessible schools in the area and also retains St Mary's in a relatively central location to serve the Cheshunt-wide catchment area.

#### 8.6 Admission of out-county pupils

Since the "Greenwich" judgement, it has been illegal for admissions authorities to use the county boundary itself as a discriminator when determining priority for school admission in the event of over-subscription. However, it is legitimate for denominational schools to utilise ecclesiastical boundaries in this way and the St Mary's School governors are proposing to give priority to children living in the Archdeaconry of Hertford to reflect the high priority Hertfordshire County Council are giving to responding to their future development needs. Similar measures have been taken by the Church of England School in Enfield (Bishop's Stotfold) to increased local priority for admissions. The two governing bodies' approaches, therefore, complement each other.

#### **8.8 Issues relating to the Cheshunt Park site**

##### 8.9 Ownership

The County Secretary holds the deeds of this site, which clearly show that it was purchased in 1969, from the executors of the Debenham family. The deeds state that the site was bought by the County Council using powers in section 90 of the Education Act, 1944 as a "site for primary and secondary schools", with the approval of the Ministry of Education. In line with the process for the production by Broxbourne Borough Council of a revised Local Plan, submissions have now been made seeking to have the site designated for educational purposes.

##### 8.10 Archaeological Issues

An independent archaeological assessment indicates that the north-western part of the site has medium potential for the discovery of Roman remains with the remainder having low to medium potential. Evaluation trenching will be required, but as the remains are considered unlikely to be significant, the County Council are advised that this can be secured through planning permission condition.

### 8.11 Traffic Issues

As explained in sections 11.1.2 to 11.1.8 below, external consultants have devised a traffic scheme for further discussion. The scheme will subsequently be submitted as part of any Town Planning application should it be decided to pursue the relocation of the school.

### 8.12 Ecological Issues

It is understood that parts of the site are eligible for classification as a wildlife site, primarily in relation to grassland species. The area indicated for potential school buildings to the south-east of the site is indicated in the initial survey as being of a lesser quality. Further technical work on these issues will be needed should it be determined to pursue development, as part of the process for supporting a re-designation of the site and seeking planning permission.

### 8.13 Cheshunt School Land Sale

Supported by the County Council, Cheshunt School have made a submission, as part of the district plan review process to release the area of land to the east of their main buildings. During the consultation meeting, it has been explained that this land does not contribute to the playing field area of the school and its release would not inhibit the potential future development of the school up to 8 FE capacity. It will be recalled that, as part of promoting parity of esteem between the four schools serving this area, the strategy was seeking to provide four schools of roughly the same size (although one is proposed for 7 FE and three for 6 FE to provide 25 FE in total). In that situation, retaining St Mary's at its current size and expanding some of the other schools that are currently 6 FE could lead to significant imbalances in school sizes if that approach were to be pursued. It might, of course, in future years, be necessary to seek to expand beyond 25 FE in the area and at that stage expansion of Cheshunt School could be envisaged.

### 8.14 Goffs School Expansion

Detailed architectural advice has been obtained about the need for further works at Goffs School should it expand to 7 FE, based on the DfEE's published curriculum analysis model. It is clear that the scheme proposed, which has been discussed with parents and staff, could only be implemented in a carefully phased manner to prevent operational disruption to the school. The school's governors and management are clear that the scheme, on that basis, could reasonably be provided.

### 8.15 Pupil transport

Respondents have raised concerns relating to the highways infrastructure in Cheshunt and the difficulties of accessing some schools from their traditional catchment areas. It has been suggested that the County Council might seek to provide subsidised school-time buses to discourage the use of the car. Such an arrangement goes beyond statutory home-to-school transport requirements but would assist in moving the balance of journeys to non-car use, potentially assisting in the reduction of congestion.

In agreeing the reorganisation of the schools in Borehamwood, a subsidised pupil transport scheme has been implemented. It is too early to fully assess the impact of this scheme because the Borehamwood reorganisation scheme is not yet fully implemented but it is suggested that

further thought might be given to a local approach in Cheshunt. As part of developing such a proposal, the County Council would need to carefully consider the revenue implications that would be implied by a subsidy.

## 9. Financial implications – capital funding

9.1 The estimated capital costs and receipts are such that the scheme is projected to generate a significant net capital receipt, and as such is considered to represent a very cost effective means of providing the necessary additional places.

9.2 The projected financing deficits until a capital receipt is projected to be received in 2004/05 are as follows:-

Financial Year	Net Expenditure	Cumulative Shortfall
	£000s (*2)	£000s
01/02	600 (*1)	600
02/03	1400	2000
03/04	1348	3348
04/05	-	-

(\*1) assumes use of Basic Need Approval of £800,000

(\*2) the overall financing of the St Mary's School relocation is dependent upon forecast levels of support from Government Grant and borrowing approval which will require Ministerial approval.

9.3 However, it is recognised that the assessment of the feasibility of this option will be dependent upon the overall position within the capital programme immediately prior to expenditure being incurred (i.e. it is too early to commit to forward funding this particular scheme).

9.4 In terms of expenditure incurred in advance of receiving capital receipts, one of the options available is to fund by utilising the Authority's reserves. This would be the preferred option for financing this scheme given the overall cost effectiveness.

9.5 Alternative arrangements, if this option does not turn out to be feasible, would consist of:-

9.5.1 resourcing the net expenditure in 2001/02 from revenue underspends in the budget;

9.5.2 resourcing the expenditure in 2002/03 and 2003/04 from the Children, School and Families component of the capital programme, or in exceptional circumstances, via a contribution from the Authority's Repairs and Maintenance programme.

9.6 If it transpires that it is necessary to adopt either of the arrangements in 9.5 above, there will be an issue about whether the resources would be restored in the appropriate budgets as and when the capital receipt is secured.

9.7 All of the estimates in this section of the report are Category B estimates (in accordance with the Authority's guidelines). Part of any further work on this set of proposals would consist of enhancing these estimates to Category C status, resourced from the Basic Need Allocation. This projected scheduling of work would also need to be reviewed so that a revised financial statement can inform further discussions.

## **10. Financial implications - revenue**

- 10.1 Section 8.15 of the report suggests that if the scheme were to proceed consideration will need to be given to subsidising pupil transport arrangements beyond statutory requirements. This could have significant revenue consequences for the County Council and would need to be considered alongside other emerging priorities for additional resources following further studies of the options available.
- 10.2 Increasing the size of schools will generate the need to fund additional places, and premises-related components, which will need to be included in subsequent years' revenue budget development.

## **11. Further work undertaken during the consultation period**

### **11.1 In relation to the Cheshunt Park site**

- 11.1.1 The Corporate Director of People and Property in liaison with the Diocese of St Albans has commissioned external consultants to produce submissions, as part of the development of the local plan process, seeking the designation of the Park Lane site for educational purposes (and in relation to the prospective land release at Cheshunt Foundation School). These have been presented to Broxbourne Borough Council. Further work is now needed, focussed on the options for the further development of St Mary's in order for the County Council, Diocese and Governors to be able to present that case at the local plan enquiry.
- 11.1.2 A detailed traffic study has also been commissioned, seeking to reflect the traffic issues that might flow from the relocated secondary school but also to work towards resolving some of the on-street parking generated at school start and finish times by parents of pupils at St Paul's RC Primary School, which occupies the south-east corner of the Park Lane site. St Paul's school governors have agreed to support new site access arrangements, integrated with the new road system that will be needed to serve the relocated secondary school and the adjoining leisure facilities.
- 11.1.3 The highways proposals will need to be the subject of much further local discussion and consultation but an outline summary of the proposed arrangements in the area near the site are at Appendix N of this report. The approach has been discussed at an informal level at this stage with the Transportation Planning and Policy Unit of the Environment Department. They have not yet been able to make any firm recommendations either in support of or against the proposed school relocation, but have offered the following comments on the proposals currently available.
- 11.1.4 A national database (of a limited sample) of traffic movements associated with secondary schools indicates that a school of 1500 pupils is likely to generate around 180 vehicle movements to the school in the morning period before school start time half of which would remain on site. Those vehicles which remain on school site would be mainly staff vehicles.
- 11.1.5 It is likely that the majority of the vehicle movements to the school (at Cheshunt Park) would approach from the south along Flamstead End Road. Similarly, of those which do not stay on site, the majority would return south along Flamstead End Road. That road is already congested at peak times of day with progress through the junctions with Brookfield Lane, Church Lane and, further south at the junction of Goffs Lane with Churchgate and Churchgate Road hampered by

the volumes of traffic trying to negotiate those junctions. The addition of 180 and 90 (or more) vehicle movements northbound and southbound respectively through that area must inevitably increase the congestion. A particular problem may arise at the junction of Longfield Lane with Park Lane where the large increase in vehicles which would make a right turn could cause delays and safety concerns. Fuller assessments will clarify the scale of these potential problems.

- 11.1.6 The transfer of the school away from its current location would remove existing congestion on Churchgate caused by setting down and picking up of pupils around school start and finishing times. It is understood that any new housing on the existing school site would have its access onto Dark Lane which in turn links to Goffs Lane (B156). An improvement of the junction of those two roads may be needed. The main impact of traffic generated by the housing would be at peak times at the junctions mentioned at paragraph 6.3.1. Enlarging the existing school on its present site would clearly lead to a worsening of traffic conditions on Churchgate, Churchgate Road and the junctions with Goffs Lane and Church Lane.
- 11.1.7 The proposed means of access to the Cheshunt Park school site has some merit because it would have priority over traffic travelling south on Park Lane. The access road would also give access to a new rear entrance to St Paul's RC Primary school and to Cheshunt Park. The facilities for parking and setting down at the new St Mary's High School location will need to be adequate to ensure that congestion does not occur on the approach road and on Park Lane.
- 11.1.8 Regardless of whether the school expands on its current site or is re-sited, and if it is, which site is selected, it will be essential that the school prepares and actively promote a School Transport Plan with the aim of minimising motor vehicle movements.
- 11.1.9 The Area Planning Manager, the Diocesan Education Officer and representatives of the governors and senior management of St Mary's School have met on two occasions with the Committee of the Friends of Cheshunt Park, a group which has been established to represent the interests of the local community concerned about the environmental impact of the proposed relocation scheme. The meetings were able to explore the wide range of issues involved, information was exchanged and a commitment to further meetings given, in order to provide a channel for dialogue and clarification should the scheme proceed further. Specific discussions were had regarding traffic and highways issues which were particularly helpful in obtaining a local perspective.

## 11.2 Concerning other alternatives

During the consultation exercise further work was commissioned from outside consultants relating to various alternative locations and strategies relating to the development of St Mary's School. The outcome of this work is summarised in Appendix O. Criteria used in the assessment of suitable sites include:

- Size
- Location in relation to catchment area
- Availability (including current tenure arrangements)
- Town planning considerations, including access and highways matters.

The analysis concludes that the remaining viable options relate to developing on the school's current site through acquisition of adjoining Borough Council land or relocation to Cheshunt Park. Further work is now needed to test the ultimate potential of these options.

### 11.3 Concerning finance

Officers of the Education Department and the St Albans Diocesan Board of Education have discussed the financial arrangements of the proposed package with officials of the Department for Education and Employment, in relation to the Secretary of State's role in providing governors' grant aid and LEA borrowing approvals to support the scheme but also issues relating to the application of the proceeds from the release of the current St Mary's site, were the scheme to proceed.

## **12. Next Steps**

- 12.1 In respect of the proposal to move St Mary's School, there is now a need for further work on highways, town-planning, archaeological and biodiversity issues upon which useful progress has already been made, but not completed.
- 12.2 Some basic need resources (£0.8m) are available now to the County Council for additional secondary school places in the area and these funds need to be deployed to best effect to create some extra school places for the area to contribute towards the possible full implementation of the Turnford and Goffs Schools schemes in due course.
- 12.3 Following further work, as suggested in 12.1, it will be possible to make a further assessment of the balance of risks associated in implementing the Turnford and Goffs schemes, in relation to the town planning case for the relocation of St Mary's High School either at Park Lane or on its current, but expanded, site

## **13. Conclusion**

- 13.1 The consultation exercise has revealed public understanding and support for the overall educational objectives of the Cheshunt secondary schools strategy: to provide up to 25 forms-of-entry to meet current and anticipated future demand for secondary school places in an area where further housing has recently been developed and more can be anticipated.
- 13.2 There is widespread support for the expansion of Goffs, St Mary's High and Turnford Schools as the means of providing additional places. The constraints of the current St Mary's High School premises and buildings and the need to find a realistic solution to resolve the overcrowding have been understood, although the consultation reveals some concern about the move of the school. Local residents have expressing personal concerns about the extent of recent urban development in the Cheshunt area, and the traffic and wider quality of life issues perceived to flow from that development, are reluctant to see an area of cherished green-space developed for school purposes.
- 13.3 The report suggests undertaking further technical work in order to present the proposals in the local plan review process.

- 13.4 The report also recommends that in relation to the proposed expansions of Turnford and Goffs Schools, work should proceed on identifying and implementing priority elements of the two schemes which will enable some additional school places to become available. This initial work can be funded within the basic need capital allocation already available to the County Council.
- 13.5 Given the identified need for further technical assessments, there will be a need for another opportunity for the Select Committee (and the Cabinet and Executive Committees subsequently) to evaluate the outcome of that work and determine further recommendations at that stage. It is suggested that the Select Committee agree to a special meeting, if required.

*Background information referred to by the author whilst compiling this report*

Audit Commission : Trading Places, 1996

Management Handbook 1997

Report and minutes of the Education Committee held on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2000.

If you wish to know more about the issues covered in this report please contact Stuart Freel, telephone no. 01992 555863