

**SECONDARY SCHOOL PLACES IN CHESHUNT: PROGRESS REPORT**

*Report of the Director of Education and Corporate Director of People and Property*

Authors: Stuart Freel, Senior Education Planning Manager, 01992 555863  
Mike Roblin, Principal Planning Officer, Hertfordshire Property,  
01992 556410

Local Members: 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 explain recent technical feasibility and town planning developments which impact on the further development of the strategy for developing secondary schools in Cheshunt.

**2. Summary**

- 2.1 Further technical feasibility studies have been undertaken following consideration of the outcomes of a local consultation exercise relating to the development of secondary schools in the Cheshunt area to meet current and future and anticipated requirements.
- 2.2 Broxbourne Borough Council has now published a report relating to the second local plan review. That report raises significant issues relating to the proposed package of measures envisaged by the County Council, in the light of which further work is now needed about the scope for further developing the strategy.

**3. Conclusions**

- 3.1 Officers are now undertaking further discussions with Broxbourne Borough Council to examine a further range of elements that might be included in an alternative set of solutions to the provision of sufficient school places for current and future needs and resolve the overcrowding at St. Mary's High School. This consideration will include financial implications.

- 3.2 Whilst feasibility studies into the deployment of the currently available basic need resources have been undertaken and discussed with Turnford and Goffs Schools, actual work has not yet been authorised in view of the information in sections 5 and 6 of this report. The opportunity to secure early phases of these schemes will however be kept under review within the process of further consideration suggested by this report.
- 3.3 In turn, further technical studies will also need to be commissioned in order to further evaluate the feasibility of options packages. Further reports to the Cabinet and the need for additional public consultation can be envisaged.

## 4. Background

- 4.1 On 24 May, 2000, the former Education Committee authorised a consultation exercise relating to the development of secondary education provision in Cheshunt, which sought to provide 25FE of secondary places in the existing four schools. It sought the expansion of Goffs and Turnford Schools and to re-provide the premises of St Mary's High School, through relocation to Cheshunt Park, a County Council owned reserved secondary school site.
- 4.2 The Children, Schools and Families Select Committee (on 18 October, 2000) and the Cabinet and Executive Committees (on 23 October, 2000), received reports setting out the results of the consultation exercise. At that stage it was clear that further town planning-related investigations needed to be carried out as part of preparing the LEA's case for submission in the process that had commenced for the preparation of the Broxbourne second local plan review.
- 4.3 The report to the above Committees concluded:
- 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.*

4.4 In addition to supporting the recommendations in paragraph 3.1 to 3.4 of the report referred to above, the Executive Committee resolved:

- (2) *That an objection be lodged to the Broxbourne Local Plan in order to secure the reserved site as a school site*
- (3) *That further technical work be undertaken in order to present the proposals to the local plan review process.*
- (4) *That a further report be brought to the Children, Schools and Families Select Committee on 24 January, 2001, to include the technical work referred to in (3) above.*

4.5 A further basic need borrowing approval of £140,000 was been granted to the County Council in December, 2000 for capital funding to support the development of secondary schools in Cheshunt.

## **5. Technical studies**

The further technical studies arise from prospective town planning considerations relating to the existing and proposed future sites for St Mary's High School and other County Council landholdings in the area.

### **5.1 Highways**

The transportation appraisal completed by consultants indicates that

- both the Park Lane and current St Mary's sites could accommodate the new school in overall transportation terms subject to improvements to the highways network. For the Park Lane site the improvements would need to be substantial involving significant land acquisitions. Additionally, if Park Lane was to be used, a school travel plan would be required which would need to incorporate a substantial shift away from the use of the car linked to modifications to the school start and finish times.
- the existing St Mary's site causes the least damage to the already established pattern of journeys to school and therefore the least changes to traffic flows on the local highway network.

### **5.2 Archaeology**

#### **5.2.1 EXISTING ST. MARY'S SITE**

A three stage approach is required in relation to the archaeological studies. At St Mary's current site the initial desk study indicates a high archaeological potential for medieval and post medieval remains. This, together with the presence of the moat, a Scheduled Ancient Monument, means that remains

worthy of preservation in situ could be present. Therefore a geophysical study has been undertaken and that has been used to determine the locations for actual physical investigations which are now agreed with the County Archaeologist. The physical ‘trenching’ works were undertaken in early January and have not revealed any significant finds that require further investigation.

#### 5.2.2 PARK LANE

The desk-based assessment concludes that the area of the site with the highest potential for Roman remains is proposed as playing fields for the new school, but it is considered unlikely that remains worthy of preservation in situ will be discovered.

#### 5.3 Ecology

The western element of the Park Lane site has been identified as a wildlife site under the terms of policies included within the County Structure Plan. In view of the time of year, the balance of the site where the school buildings might potentially be located will be investigated in the spring when new vegetation growth is apparent. At that stage consultants will evaluate the scope for appropriate mitigating measures should the site be developed as envisaged.

The case for developing the school in this location would need to outweigh the environmental and ecological issues relating to the prospective loss of the current managed grassland.

### **6. Broxbourne Local Plan Second Review**

6.1 In line with the published timetable and as previously reported, the County Council has made a submission to Broxbourne Borough Council in relation to the designation of the Park Lane site for education purposes and the St Mary’s High current site for housing. Cheshunt School governors, with County Council support, have also made a submission in support of development of spare land to the east of the current range of buildings on the site.

6.2 The Borough Council, which met on 13 December, 2000, have considered the text and land allocations within the revised Local Plan. In summary it:

- Recognises the needs set out by the County Council for the development of secondary education facilities;
- Does not yet encompass the County Council’s wish to designate the Park Lane site for education purposes, particularly in relation to sustainability and transport implications;
- Does not envisage the development of the existing St Mary’s site for housing purposes
- Indicates a recognition of the future needs of Goffs School

- Indicates that the Borough Council will continue to work with the County Council in seeking the most sustainable solution, particularly one which minimises the impact on the surrounding environment.

6.3 The emerging revised Plan does not currently seek to bring forwards any green belt land for housing.

6.4 Given the need for further substantial discussions with Broxbourne Council in their role as local planning authority and given their declared willingness to work towards finding an acceptable solution an objection is not being prepared at this stage. The opportunity to object remains available during the subsequent consultation stages of the local plan review.

6.5 In relation to Cheshunt School's submission, the document proposes revision to the Green Belt boundary, to facilitate the release of the land to the east of the current buildings in order to support expansion of the school's facilities.

## **7. Access to Park Lane site**

7.1 Broxbourne Borough Council's Leisure Services Committee, at its meeting on 28 November, 2000, considered a report relating to issues at Cheshunt Park and Golf Course, and resolved not to support grant of access over the Borough Council's land in relation to the secondary school relocation proposals.

## **8. Conclusion**

8.1 Officers are now undertaking further discussions with Broxbourne Borough Council to examine a further range of elements that might be included in an alternative set of solutions to the provision of sufficient school places for current and future needs and resolve the overcrowding at St. Mary's High School. This consideration will include financial implications.

8.2 Whilst feasibility studies into the deployment of the currently available basic need resources have been undertaken and discussed with Turnford and Goffs Schools, actual work has not yet been authorised in view of the information in sections 5 and 6 of this report. The opportunity to secure early phases of these schemes will however be kept under review within the process of further consideration suggested by this report.

8.3 In turn, further technical studies will also need to be commissioned in order to further evaluate the feasibility of options packages.

*Background information referred to by the authors whilst compiling this report:*

Broxbourne Borough Council – agenda and minutes of meeting of Leisure Services Committee (28.11.00)

Broxbourne Borough Council – agenda and minutes of meeting of Planning and Development Committee (6.12.00)

Hertfordshire County Council – Agenda and Minutes for Education Committee (24.5.00)

Children, Schools and Families Select Committee (18.10.00)

If you wish to know more about the issues covered in this report please contact:

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT:	Stuart Freel (01992 555863)
HERTFORDSHIRE PROPERTY	Mike Roblin (01992 556410)