

**SECONDARY SCHOOL PLACES IN CHESHUNT AND THE LOCATION
FOR AN EXPANDED ST. MARY'S HIGH SCHOOL**

*Joint report of the Director of Children, Schools and Families and the Corporate
Director of People and Property*

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Executive Member: Robert Gordon

Local Members: M H T Janes, G D Game, D Clayton, M H O'Neill

Adjoining Members: A M R Searing, J R Morton

1. Purpose

To enable the Select Committee to consider the Cabinet's proposals for the steps necessary to progress an alternative approach towards securing the expansion of St Mary's High School, Cheshunt and to take forward the implementation of the expansion schemes for Turnford and Goffs Schools.

Cabinet Proposal

'That the proposals for the expansion of secondary school provision in Cheshunt, including the proposal to rebuild St Mary's High School on its current but expanded site, be considered by the Children, Schools and Families Select Committee on 11th July 2001 in the light of the town planning consultations referred to in the report; and that the views of the Select Committee be reported to the Cabinet and Executive Committee on 23 July 2001 for a decision to be made.'

2. Summary

- 2.1 The report proposes making alternative arrangements for providing for the expansion of St Mary's High School through entering into a programme of land sales and exchanges to secure the expansion and partial redevelopment of the current school site.
- 2.2 In order to resource the expansion of St Mary's, Goffs and Turnford Schools it is proposed that the County Council should sell part of a landholding at Jones Road, Goffs Oak.

3. Conclusion

- 3.1 Section 7 of the report sets out a series of formal actions that would now be required to implement the revised proposals for the provision of additional school places in Cheshunt and the replacement of the existing buildings of St Mary's High School through the Voluntary Aided Schools' national capital programme.
- 3.2 Given the timing of the programme of local town planning consultations, a supplementary report will be made available at the Select Committee meeting giving a summary of the outcome.

1. Background

- 1.1 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 25 forms of entry (FE) 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.
- 1.2 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.
- 1.3 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.*

- 1.4 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.*
- 1.5 A map giving the locations of the sites referred to in this report forms Appendix A.

2. **Further discussions**

- 2.1 As previously reported, work has been undertaken to examine an alternative approach which provides for the package of expansion and replacement measures to be implemented with reasonable urgency, given the current pressures on school places in the area.
- 2.2 The area of greatest concern arising from the consultation exercise was the proposed use of the reserved secondary school site at Park Lane as the site for a relocated and expanded St Mary's High School. In this context careful consideration has been given to the potential for securing the rebuilding of St Mary's High School on its existing site. For this to take place additional land would be needed in order to meet statutory requirements for playing-field provision.
- 2.3 Broxbourne Borough Council has agreed to make available the two playing-field areas to the north-west of the St Mary's current site for incorporation into the school site.
- 2.4 If the above takes place there is scope to envisage the rebuilding of the school to 6FE size. The indicative plan at Appendix B shows how that might be achieved. Dark Lane, to the west of the site, and its junction with Goffs Lane, would require traffic improvements, including the installation of a new roundabout and widening to take the increased traffic that can be anticipated.
- 2.5 It will be recalled that the funding arrangements from the original package envisaged the sale of the majority of the existing St. Mary's School site and playing-fields for development. In order to secure a local contribution towards the funding required for the rebuilding of the existing school it will be necessary to develop a smaller area of housing on the school site, as shown on the plan at Appendix B. At the completion of the scheme, including the release of land for sale for development, St Mary's School would retain sufficient site capacity for a school of 7FE.

- 2.6 By securing the additional land, the County Council would enable an application to the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) by the governing body of St Mary's School within the national framework for the capital funding of Voluntary Aided Schools at two levels:
- An improvement/replacement Major Works Scheme to replace the existing school building
 - An expansion scheme to provide a sixth form-of-entry.
- 2.7 There are LEA liabilities on both elements of the scheme. The County Council would need to be satisfied that these would be suitably covered by capital borrowing approvals in order for the scheme to proceed.
- 2.8 County Council and Diocesan officers are maintaining a close dialogue with DfEE officials about the timing and funding of the St Mary's proposal. Subject to the favourable outcome of further consultations suggested at 2.10 below, the next step would be the submission of the scheme to the DfEE, within national annual education capital bidding process in September, 2001, for a VA project development allocation.
- 2.9 Broxbourne Borough Council's current playing-fields located at Goffs Lane will need to be re-provided elsewhere in the area and it is proposed to sell to the Borough Council the Park Lane reserved secondary school site. The eastern area of the site, which does not have a wildlife designation, would be utilised for the provision of the replacement playing-fields. (See map at Appendix E).
- 2.10 Given that the original Cheshunt Secondary Strategy consultation exercise envisaged the relocation and expansion of St Mary's at a different location from that now being proposed, it is recommended that a further local consultation exercise would now be needed in relation to the proposed expansion of St Mary's School, which in statutory terms is deemed a 'significant enlargement'. Consultations in relation to town planning matters are also be a requirement in relation to the whole set of revised proposals and public exhibitions are planned for late June/early July, 2001.

3. Expansion at Goffs and Turnford Schools

- 3.1 The Summer, 2000 consultation exercise resulted in positive support for the two schemes which provided for Goffs School to expand to 7FE and Turnford School to expand to 6FE.
- 3.2 It is proposed that both of these elements of the package are retained and should proceed as urgently as possible within the constraints of the availability of capital finance. Although £900,000 is available (as borrowing approval from the government) for the expansion programme in the Cheshunt area this is insufficient to provide for the full costs of these schemes. In addition, building costs are now rising and are forecast to increase during the period when these works programme would be undertaken. It is now estimated that the combined outturn costs of these schemes would total £6m. As set out in

section 2.5 above, a reduced amount of funding will be available from the release of the St Mary's site. It has therefore been necessary to look at the release of further County Council-owned assets in order to secure the financing of the school development package.

- 3.3 The map at Appendix C shows the site at Jones Road originally reserved for the provision of a new secondary school. On 14th April, 2000 the Director of Education, following advice from the School Provision and Resources Panel, declared the site surplus to the Education Service's requirements, judging that it was an inappropriate geographical location for a secondary school; and, it was too small of itself to allow the development of an appropriately-sized school to reflect modern-day curricular and organisational requirements. The site consists of two landholdings, separated by Silver Street. After retaining an area of land to allow for the possible future expansion of Woodside Primary School, which is located to the immediate north of the site, it is proposed to sell an area of land to the north of Silver Street for development purposes. The existing playing fields upon that land would be relocated to the land to the east of the proposed housing location and some of the land to the south of Silver Street.
- 3.4 With retention of future reserved site capacity in mind and in the light of Goffs School's current use of Broxbourne Borough Council's land to the east of Dark Lane (that would become part of the St Mary's School enlarged site if the proposals in this report are implemented) the local plan review submission (see 4.2 below) envisages the designation of third party land to the west of Goffs' site being changed to education purposes (see Appendix D).
- 3.5 At this stage the land is not in the County Council's (or school's) ownership and would require purchase at some point in the future. Detailed discussions with current users of the SAVE Sports Club that occupy part of the area have commenced with a view to offering future access to an alternative site on land at Albury Ride (see map at Appendix A). Given the current lease position it is not proposed to pursue this transfer within the immediate future and for that reason costs are excluded from the current package. Therefore if implemented funding would need to be secured, including the future Capital Programme as a probable source.

4. Timing of town planning considerations

- 4.1 The need to provide further secondary school places in Cheshunt remains urgent. Moreover, the increasing numbers at St Mary's High School place growing pressures on the school's facilities, which have been identified as priorities for replacement within the Cheshunt Secondary School strategy.
- 4.2 Since the last report was produced it is understood that the timescale for the development of the Broxbourne District Plan Second Review has had to be delayed. Adoption of the Plan is not now expected until the end of 2002 at the earliest. Against that background, consideration has therefore been given to securing the implementation of the programme through planning applications that could be submitted during the current calendar year, supported by

appropriate revised submissions within the Borough Plan Review process. Specialist advice suggests that the overall education provision priority of the new package provides sufficient justification to pursue this dual approach.

- 4.3 The sites relating to this package are all in the Green Belt as defined in the current adopted Local Plan. Within the Green Belt, there is normally a presumption against significant new built development, except in very special circumstances. The urgent need to expand secondary school capacity in Cheshunt, allied to the absence of any suitable, available, alternative sites within the urban area, is considered to represent the type of very special circumstance allowed for in Green Belt policy. The planning authorities will be required to refer all planning applications to the Secretary of State for Environment, Transport and the Regions who has powers to intervene in these circumstances. In making his decision, the results of the consultation exercise will be an important consideration.
- 4.4 In order to support the inter-related town planning package applications, public exhibitions at the schools and other local venues have been scheduled for the period of 26 June to 4 July 2001. These will be supported by an explanation leaflet which will be widely circulated in the area. Officers will also arrange meetings with local interested groups.
- 4.5 If the above approach is pursued the following indicative timescales for implementation can be envisaged assuming no intervention by the Secretary of State:

	Goffs and Turnford Schemes	St Mary's High scheme
Public consultation		Autumn Term, 2001
Statutory Notices	Late Autumn Term, 2001	Autumn Term, 2001
Consideration by School Organisation Committee (if required)	January, 2002	January, 2002
Submission to DfEE under VA programme		September, 2001
Town planning decisions	December, 2001	December, 2001
Commencement of building works on site	April/May, 2002	Late Summer, 2003
Completion	Easter, 2003	Summer 2004

- 4.6 Appendix F provides a critical path presentation showing the timescales associated with implementing the package.

5. Capital financial implications summary

5.1 St Mary's High School scheme

This scheme relates to a Voluntary Aided school. Governors' costs will be met from the income from the release of part of the site and from the income from the sale of the former reserved site at Jones Road, Goffs Oak and grant

from DFEE. LEA liabilities will require DfEE credit cover, as set out in section 2.7, above.

Consideration is being given nationally to amending and simplifying the liabilities split on VA Schools and uprating the level of grant payable by the Secretary of State (from 85% to 90%). DfEE issued a consultation document about the proposals which envisages changes coming into effect on 1 April, 2002. It is not felt at this stage, that progress on the funding of the St Mary's scheme will be inhibited by what is envisaged by the consultation proposals.

5.2 Goffs and Turnford Schools

Appendix G sets out the financial structure of the projects in this package, including current estimates. At this stage of planning the estimates are at either A or B category. It is intended that those elements which have a direct consequence from the County Council would move to Category C prior to authorisation to proceed. The gantt chart at Appendix F shows further detail of timescales involved.

The costs of these schemes, currently estimated at £6m in total will be met from DfEE basic need credit cover and income from the sale of part of the current site of St Mary's School and the land at Jones Road, Goffs Oak.

The governing body of Goffs School, which is in the Foundation category, will be responsible for implementing the building works required for expansion purposes, which will be grant aided by the County Council to a cash-limited level to be set once the scheme is finalised.

6. **Implementation**

- 6.1 Member representatives from the County Council and Broxbourne Borough Council have been meeting to provide oversight for this work. The Members involved were:

Joint Member Steering Group

For Hertfordshire County Council

Robert Ellis (Leader)

Derrick Ashley (Deputy Leader)

Keith Emsall (Executive Member for Children Schools and Families – Schools)

David Beatty (Executive Member for Resources)

Gerald Game (Chair of Broxbourne Local Panel and Member for Cheshunt West)

For Broxbourne Borough Council

Liz Clayton (Leader)
Don Smith (Mayor)
Norman Ames (Chairman of Planning)
Edna Lazzari (Chairman of Leisure)

For the Diocese

Jon Reynolds (Diocese's Director of Education and co-opted member of Hertfordshire County Council's Children, Schools & Families Select Committee)

The Officers involved in joint meetings were:

For Hertfordshire County Council

Dick Bowler (Head of Corporate Estate)
Stuart Freel (CSF Area Planning Manager – East)
Mike Roblin (Principal Planning Officer)
James Odling-Smee, Head of Corporate Communications

For Broxbourne Borough Council

Mike Walker (Chief Executive)
Gary Hirsch (Director of Environment)
Andre Sestini (Local Plans)
Jane Osborn (Planning consultant)
David Bond (Property Manager)

For the Diocese

Ronnie Taylor (Buildings Officer)

7. Next steps

7.1 The following specific authorisations will need to be determined by the Cabinet and Executive Committees on 23 July, 2001:

Director of Children, Schools and Families:

- publication of statutory notice for the expansion of Turnford School
- authority to respond to statutory notices relating to the expansions of Goffs and St Mary's High Schools
- authority to submit objections received, and comments upon them, to the School Organisation Committee

- authority to support the submission of the proposed scheme for St Mary's High School to DfEE for inclusion within the VA Major Works programme as a high priority and to request an initial project development grant
- authority to make submissions to the DfEE in relation to the application of the proceeds of the sale of an agreed part of the St Mary's site towards the proposed redevelopment of the school site and buildings under the terms of the arrangements for the sale of land associated with former grant maintained schools;
- authority to submit town planning applications as departures from the green belt and submissions in relation to the development of school playing fields (jointly with Corporate Director of People and Property).

Corporate Director of People and Property (with support of County Secretary)

- to enter into agreements with Broxbourne Borough Council to exchange land in order to secure the implementation of this package, as set out in the report;
- to make available to the governors of St Mary's High School land to the north-west of their current site for playing-field purposes, subject to the County Council retaining ownership;
- to enter into land exchanges, acquisitions, sales and related agreements in order to secure the implementation of this package;
- to make applications for planning permission, including those departing from the green belt regulations.

7.2 It is suggested that this report should be considered by the Children, Schools & Families Select Committee on 11 July and there be a further report to Cabinet/Executive Committee on 23 July, 2001.

CHESHUNT SECONDARY SCHOOLS STRATEGY – FUNDING STRUCTURE

Turnford and Goffs Package

OUTGOINGS			FUNDING		
B	Works at Jones Road/Silver Street	950	H	Disposal of new Silver Street Playing-fields	250
D	Goffs Scheme	2700	J	Disposal of residential site	5800
E	Turnford Scheme	3400	N	Basic Need	940
			L	Contribution – Park Plaza Playing-fields	60
	TOTAL	7050		TOTAL	7050

