**Education: Primary and Secondary Schools**

**Roles and Responsibilities of the Local Authority**
Cornwall Council, through its Children’s Services Local Authority (LA), has three core responsibilities to support the quality of education of children and young people in Cornwall:

1. Ensuring a sufficient supply of school places.
2. Tackling underperformance in schools and ensuring high standards.

The LA balances these responsibilities as a maintaining authority with the new demands of an evolving education system. Nationally, we are in a period of significant financial, policy and contextual change. New issues and themes are emerging, the implications of which are still not clear. These include:

- The ‘mixed economy’ of schools is changing all the time - systems and processes established need to be flexible to adapt to a more devolved system in future.
- The new Ofsted inspection framework has raised the bar - this is a test for how partners in a reconfigured education system can come together to secure rapid improvement.
- Recognising that being a ‘champion of pupils and parents’ can mean a shift in the nature of the relationship with schools.
- Particular complexities around partnership working post-16.
- The full impact of the proposed reforms to funding proposed by the Department for Education are not yet understood – in particular the implications for commissioning for vulnerable children.
- Some of the changes associated with a more autonomous education system are leading to implications for schools’ and local authority funding which have yet to be worked through, for example in relation to local authority transport costs and demands on capital.

In response to an increasingly diverse and autonomous education system, Cornwall LA is developing three broad roles to ensure it can continue to fulfil its maintaining role whilst developing new roles and skills in the context of a mixed economy of schools:

1. Convenor of partnerships – facilitating partnerships between a broad range of providers and services.
2. Maker and shaper of effective commissioning – engaging as an intelligent commissioner of schools, becoming a provider of support services and challenge, and facilitating schools and parents in making effective commissioning decisions.
3. Champion of pupils, parents and communities – which sits well alongside the LA’s broader responsibilities for developing effective, cohesive ‘places’ and the democratic mandate to ensure good outcomes for children and young people.
School place planning is a complex process, fraught with uncertainty, more so now than ever before, as previous planning assumptions about mobility, housing yield, and demographic change have very largely been invalidated by rapid shifts in economic conditions and patterns of migration. The national position varies greatly, both in the timing and the extent of changes in demand for school places. At present there are many areas with an acute shortage of primary places. There will be an inevitable follow-through into pressure on secondary places; this is equally urgent as secondary places have a longer commissioning lead time. At the same time there are also areas still suffering falling rolls or experiencing a slower growth in demand.

Planning for changes in demand for school places is an important function which can best be fulfilled locally at a level above the individual school. Whilst individual schools and academies can expand through increased admissions and can seek capital funding directly from the Department for Education, a planning mechanism with strong local knowledge is needed to ensure that public funding to secure sufficient school places is allocated efficiently and coherently.

Despite recent significant legislative change, school place planning therefore remains part of the LA’s core statutory duties. If planning is inadequate or inaccurate, it is the LA which will be held accountable. And this is not a function that relates only to education and children’s services – the whole of the local authority, and public services in the area more generally, are affected by the effectiveness of school place planning. Despite much recent change in the system, schools and parents will continue to turn to local authorities for help, advice and guidance – and to hold the LA to account where there are problems.

The LA therefore retains responsibility for ensuring that there are sufficient schools to meet the needs of an area. These may be schools maintained by the LA, academies, or other non-maintained schools. School place planning is not concerned with the type of school.

That said, Schedule 11 of the Education Act 2011 amends Part 2 of the Education Act 2006 which deals with the establishment of new schools. This means that where local authorities believe there is a need for a new school in their area, they now have a duty to seek proposals for the establishment of an academy. Any proposals are referred to the Secretary of State for him to decide if he wishes to enter into academy arrangements with the proposer and therefore the LA is not involved in the approval of any proposals.

The changes emphasise the role of the LA as a commissioner rather than a provider of school places, continuing to plan for and secure sufficient school places in its area.

It should also be noted that the free schools programme has made it easier for proposers other than local authorities to set up a new school.
The publicly available evidence base for the need for new schools in Cornwall could support proposers’ applications for the establishment of a new school, although proposals do not need to be based on a demonstrable need for pupil places in the area, only evidence of parental demand. Whilst the Government is making it easier to set up a new school, proposers are still required to go through a robust process. The Secretary of State will consider each proposal on its merits, and take into account all matters relevant to that proposal.

The main factors affecting demand for school places are birth rates, in- and out-migration from the area, changes in the housing market and housing development, armed forces deployment, parental preference, changes in private provision, rural sustainability, and the impact of welfare reforms. Many of these are subject to quite short-term uncertainty. So, for example, the housing market and associated family mobility may react quite quickly to any improvement or deterioration in the underlying economy.

In addition, key specific issues affecting the LA’s ability to plan strategically are:

- Late applications, in-year admissions, casual applications, and ‘no-shows’ all complicate planning both at school/academy and at local authority level.
- Previously well-understood trends are changing and are proving difficult to predict, including short-term tenants, mobile populations, and other changes in the housing market.
- Parental preference is having an increased effect, with some parents seeming to be more mobile in terms of willingness to transport their children to relatively distant schools.
- There seems to be a continuing increase in children with complex needs and additional needs more generally.
- As demand for primary school places increases, there are new challenges e.g. due to increase in demand, some schools are running on a much lower surplus capacity than is recommended (5-10%). Maintaining a surplus of school places is critical to allow for parental preference and demographic shift.
- At secondary level, existing surplus places need to be protected so that they will be available when they are needed, as primary growth feeds through.
- Logistics; there are difficulties when surplus places are in the wrong area either within a main town or across larger areas of the county.

While there are similar factors affecting a number of local authorities, each local authority has its own unique set of local factors to take into account. Best practice would seem to be a local bespoke analysis based on locally-determined planning areas, with a common approach to key factors such as birth rate, migration, and housing developments. In Cornwall the LA therefore seeks to identify local solutions with local partners, working explicitly with other local agencies and schools in order
to ensure that school place planning is based on the best possible information. Up-to-date objective evidence and consistent methodologies, informed by government guidance, are used to develop a detailed analysis of both short- and long-term demand for school places.

The main factors affecting potential provision of new school places are the availability of capital funding, land and premises. It is only when the demand has been evidenced that the LA can make a case for capital funding, whether that be delivered through an academy route or a maintained school route.

Future demand for school places is therefore assessed as early as possible so that adequate provision can be commissioned in a timely way in order to meet local need.

Once an increase in future demand has been evidenced, the LA has a new set of statutory procedures to follow to meet this demand, including inviting proposals for new academies or free schools, where necessary instigating competitions for new schools and academies. Since these procedures involve third parties, and may be lengthy, it is vital that future demand for school places is determined as early and as accurately as possible.

Strategic school place planning is difficult but important. Looking at what has already happened and ‘steering by the wake’ is not enough; there are so many changes in the external environment that looking forward is essential.

**School Place Planning: Bodmin**

For a number of years Bodmin has been identified as a pressure area where demand for school places has increased steadily. The LA’s 5-year pupil population forecasts predict a continuation of this trend with increasing pressure anticipated due to a rising urban primary school population both across Cornwall and nationally, and the ongoing impact of strategic housing growth.

It is estimated that the proposed housing growth target of 3,000 houses for Bodmin could generate demand for between 670 and 880 new school places in the town over the Local Plan period 2010-30. This has been calculated as follows:

The LA currently assesses the pupil yield from residential development on the basis of a countywide historical ratio of one school aged child generated by every 4.5 new houses. Although no guarantee of certainty with regard to the profile of the pupil yield that will actually materialise; for the purposes of assessing the impact on the existing schools infrastructure 50% is assumed to be primary aged and 50% assumed to be secondary aged (i.e. 1 primary and 1 secondary school aged child generated by every 9 new houses).
On this basis the pupil yield from a housing development target of 3,000 for Bodmin would be calculated at 670 children of school age with 335 being primary and 335 secondary aged.

It is noted that the 1:4.5 ratio was adopted for Cornwall in the 1990’s. A recent assumptions testing exercise indicates that this figure in fact underestimates the actual pupil yield in the county. Recent calculations based on current housing figures (excluding second homes and holiday houses) and the total number of pupils attending schools in Cornwall (including Nursery and Post-16 students) produces a pupil yield: new house ratio of 1:3.4.

On this basis the pupil yield from the proposed development of 3,000 new houses would be calculated at 880 children of school age with 440 being primary and 440 secondary aged.

There is no surplus capacity in the existing primary or secondary schools to accommodate growth on the scale proposed.

Bodmin Town is currently served by five primary schools with a combined capacity to accommodate 1222 pupils:

- Berrycoombe
- Robartes Junior
- St Mary’s RC Primary
- St Petroc’s CE VA
- The Beacon Infant & Nursery

Table 1:
2012/13 Numbers on Roll at Bodmin Town Primary schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figs. as at 23/11/12</th>
<th>Capacity</th>
<th>PAN</th>
<th>NOR – year groups</th>
<th>NOR</th>
<th>Surplus</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Yr1</td>
<td>Yr2</td>
<td>Yr3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Berrycoombe</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>33</td>
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<td>26</td>
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<td>Robartes Junior</td>
<td>208</td>
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<td>50</td>
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<td>St Mary’s RC</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
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<td>St Petroc’s CE</td>
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<td>60</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>59</td>
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<td>57</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Beacon Infant</td>
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<td>60</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>1222</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Bodmin College is located on the outskirts of the town and has the capacity to accommodate 1464 secondary aged pupils. Number on roll (as at 23/11/12) is 1505 i.e. a shortfall of 41 places/ 2.8% of capacity.

It is generally accepted that education provision in an area should not operate at 100% of its capacity as it is important to retain some level of surplus to facilitate parental preference and mid-year admissions, and for contingency planning. The Department for Education suggests that schools should retain up to 10% surplus and the Audit Commission document, ‘Trading Places’ (1996, updated 2002) suggests a target figure of between 5%-10% surplus places. A deficiency may thus be deemed to exist without the certainty of every local place being filled.
As outlined above, without consideration of the impact of strategic future housing growth there is an immediate and ongoing need to expand primary and secondary provision in Bodmin.

In the short- to medium-term, given immediate pressure across the schools, it is considered that expansion of one or more of the existing schools will provide the most timely, cost effective and deliverable option. This approach should also accord with parental preference as evidenced through the admissions process i.e. where practically feasible, new places will be provided to match parental demand.

It is also noted that expansion of existing - rather than provision of new – infrastructure is in line with Council policy on sustainable development; the LA will therefore adopt an approach of firstly identifying appropriate expansion opportunities within the existing urban area and schools estate before searching for a greenfield development site for a new school. This seeks to reduce the need to develop on greenfield land, due to its importance as an agricultural resource and its amenity and landscape value.

In the long-term, however, in order to ‘future proof’ provision across Bodmin town the LA will undertake further detailed analysis on potential site options for a new primary school.

**New Primary School Places: accommodating growth to the west**
The feasibility and scale of school expansion is dependent on the growth options adopted for Bodmin, which are yet to be finally determined. However, the LA has undertaken an appraisal of options for accommodating housing growth to the west of Bodmin town, including the urban site at H1: Dunmere Road (280 dwellings) and urban extension site UE3: St Lawrence’s (900 dwellings).

Although it is noted that the combination of urban extensions and the urban capacity would collectively deliver in excess of the 3000 target housing allocation, the lead in times and piecemeal delivery of the strategic sites suggests that all the sites would be required to ensure the housing target is met by 2030. The minimum requirement for the direct mitigation of housing growth sites H1 and UE3 is an additional min. 130 primary school places i.e. 4-5 classrooms and attendant infrastructure (e.g. additional hall/studio, kitchen, toilets, circulation etc) and external works (e.g. hard/soft play areas and car parking etc).

Initial high level feasibility studies have been undertaken with regard to the future development of Berrycoombe, St Mary’s RC, and Robartes/The Beacon schools which are suitably located to serve these development sites.

**Berrycoombe School**
Opportunities for expansion on the existing site are limited due to the topography of the land; the site is steeply sloping and expansion would therefore be complex and costly. Further exploratory feasibility work could
be undertaken in relation to options for expanding the site through land acquisition - without acquisition of additional land expansion is not recommended as a preferred option.

**Robartes Junior/ The Beacon Infant schools**

In July 2009 as part of the LA’s *Primary Strategy for Change* a feasibility exercise was undertaken to scope the capital implications of amalgamating the two schools. It was considered at that time that the site could comfortably potentially provide for no more than 420 pupils (including Nursery Unit). Consideration was given to connecting the two main buildings together and re-organising the main entrance and administration. Rationalisation of current duplicated space was also considered so that the amalgamated school would have one kitchen and dining facility instead of two, for example. On this basis, in order to meet the need for additional places in 2011/12 the infant school hall was converted to a general teaching classroom to enable the school to accommodate additional pupils. The two schools now share a main hall. Should the site be taken forward as a preferred option for expansion, further detailed feasibility work would need to be undertaken in relation to options for developing the site and sharing facilities.

**St Mary’s RC School**

The school on its present site is limited and landlocked; there is little scope for expansion although re-location of the Council’s Barn Lane offices might provide an opportunity for site rationalisation. Current forecasts predict that St Mary’s RC will continue to be oversubscribed and the school has expressed an interest in re-locating to a new, larger site should an opportunity be presented through the Bodmin town masterplanning process. However, this option (requiring replacement of an existing school and effectively doubling its size to accommodate future growth) would be costly.

**New Primary School Places: accommodating growth to the east**

As above, the feasibility and scale of school expansion is dependent on the growth options adopted for Bodmin, which are yet to be finally determined. However, the LA has undertaken an appraisal of options for accommodating housing growth to the east of Bodmin town, including the urban site at M1: Castle Street (150-200 dwellings) and urban extension sites UE1: Priory Road (600-650 dwellings), UE2: Halgavor (700 dwellings), UE4: Callywith Village (600 dwellings).

As stated above, although it is noted that the combination of urban extensions and the urban capacity would collectively deliver in excess of the 3000 target housing allocation, the lead in times and piecemeal delivery of the strategic sites suggests that all the sites would be required to ensure the housing target is met by 2030. The minimum requirement for the direct mitigation of housing growth sites M1, UE1, UE2 and UE4 is an additional min. 240 primary school places i.e. 7-8 classrooms and attendant infrastructure (e.g. additional hall/studio, kitchen, toilets, circulation etc) and external works (e.g. hard/soft play areas and car parking etc).
Initial high level feasibility studies have been undertaken with regard to the future development of St Petroc's CE school which is suitably located to serve these development sites.

**St Petroc’s CE School**
The school currently operates two forms of entry (420 places) in 14 classes. Demand across the town last year necessitated provision of an additional reception class at the school for September 2012, which means the school currently operates 15 classes. In addition, an additional classroom will be provided for September 2013 through reconfiguration of office space to ensure that current intake levels can be sustained, which means the school will operate 16 classes for 2013/14. Current forecasts predict that St Petroc’s CE will continue to be oversubscribed.

As stated above, the minimum requirement for the direct mitigation of housing growth from expansion sites located to the east of the town is for an additional 240 primary school places. The LA and the school have therefore jointly commissioned a detailed feasibility study to identify how the school can be expanded to three forms of entry (630 places) on its existing site in order to accommodate current increased numbers on roll plus the short- to medium-term impact of significant housing growth.

An opportunity is also presented to incorporate improved access, traffic management and car parking within the development plan for the school as part of the Transportation Strategy for Bodmin (Priory Park Link Road scheme) as outlined in this document. A number of options are currently being explored to ensure that the maximum benefit in terms of delivering both education and transport objectives can be achieved.

**New Primary School**
In the long-term, in order to ‘future proof’ primary provision in Bodmin and to provide a fall back option should the St Petroc’s scheme either prove to be undeliverable or the demand for school places in Bodmin exceed current expectations, the LA will need to undertake further detailed analysis on potential site options for a new min. 7-class primary school. Given the number of major development sites to the east of the town it is likely that a site would be sought to the east rather than the west of Bodmin, potentially as part of the masterplan for one of the urban extension sites.

There are a number of significant caveats attached to this option; not least being that a new school could not be commissioned and delivered to meet immediate and short-term need across Bodmin. The Council would therefore need to invest in an interim option at one or more of the existing schools prior to completion of the new school. In addition, even if a suitable site could be earmarked, the capital cost of constructing a new school could prove prohibitive to its delivery within the current Local Plan period.

**New Secondary School Places**
Bodmin College represents the town’s only provider of secondary education,. It is estimated that the planned growth for Bodmin up to 2030
will generate demand for a minimum 335 additional secondary school places. This additional demand is not sufficient to warrant the development of an additional secondary school, which means Bodmin College will need to expand.

The current site is restrictive and not conducive to expansion. The sloping site has resulted in a range of buildings terracing down the site with a mix of single and two-storey accommodation. Some ‘slack’ is currently provided through the lease of 8 units at the industrial estate for provision of vocational courses.

As part of the Authority’s Building Schools for the Future Pathfinder submission in 2003 a scheme to expand the College to provide an additional 10,000m² of new build was proposed. This centred around construction of a new building on the western side of the existing Hard Play Area, with reprovision of HPA to the west of the new building. Other high level options will need to be explored with the College, which might include re-location of the whole or part of the College to a new site (to be identified). Partial re-location options might, for example, involve re-location of the sixth form or the vocational elements of the College.

It is recognised that expansion will be difficult to achieve without land acquisition. Land to facilitate expansion of the College should therefore be planned for as part of the development of the Halgavor Urban Expansion (UE2).