

A New School for Winchester

Response to the Consultation from the

County Councillors Phrynette Dickens, Brian Collin, Charlotte Bailey and Jackie Porter

These are our comments following our review of the Consultation document:

We welcome the County's proposal to build additional Local Authority places in central Winchester. We are disappointed that our pleas over the last few years have gone unheeded until this year, despite schools indicating the pressure on places, and regret that so many places are having to be provided in temporary accommodation, ***but looking forward, urge the City Council and County to work together to provide capital and land for future requirements to 2026.***

We also ask you to look carefully at the places available at outer schools as these communities grow too, again with more family homes.

Capacity of primary schools in Winchester

Even in a recession, historical evidence shows that the rate of house building in Winchester can probably be considered at around 150-200 houses per year for the foreseeable future. Many of these are for family homes as the city is a good environment for families, with good access to health care, schools, jobs etc. We have 'doorstep evidence' that new couples move into the area to 'create' families too. The City Council has aspirations to build up to 300 affordable homes every year too: an added pressure on local school places.

Therefore we believe that even with another two form entry school for Winchester's central area, there will continue to be a shortfall in provision to 2026, and additional land must be identified for education, particularly at Primary level.

The relatively poor performance of two schools relative to the others creates demand elsewhere. We believe that the County council could put more financial resource into these schools to improve results, improve parent confidence and fill the spaces. This would be good value long term.

Educated as locally as possible

Although we know there are many reasons why parents choose a school, we would like children to have the opportunity to be educated at primary stage as close to their home as possible.

Therefore we would like to see a map of the LCP area with children and locations marked for each age group. (One, two, three and four year olds –can this be done by academic year, rather than age?) We would also like to know the ***current children breakdown by school, and catchment.*** We believe this data is available for each school, again by age and location.

Other Site Options

We do not think that the range of other sites was adequate to make a realistic choice.

The other sites which should be considered are:

- St Matthews Field, Weeke-this could aid the possible expansion of Weeke school.
- The ACE site in Stoney Lane
- Erskine Road
- Chilbolton Avenue
- Cattle Market
- Courtney Road
- Leisure Centre area

Use of the Western/Westgate/Rotherley site

Although the Western/Westgate site seems a good one, with good **economic** base for the building of a new school on the Rotherly site, ***we would advocate a better use of the total site.***

(This could be done by bringing the playing fields down onto the currently sloping ground, including the old Rotherly site into Westgate area, and then creating an infant and junior school closer to the Chilbolton Avenue end of the site. Suggested road schemes include making Chilbolton Avenue 30mph: there are crossing points along this road already, and children could enter safely. Additional strip style parking could even be provided for staff/parents) alongside the main carriageway.

A school for 4-16 or linking the new places to Western?

We understand the reasons for 'adding' this new facility to the current ones, but would suggest that the proposal could create tension between secondary heads, and not be in the interest of children.

We would like you to consider the creation of an infant and junior school. The junior school could be on the current Rotherly nursery and boarding site, and the infant school and day nursery on the current Western school site, or better still, closer to Chilbolton Avenue to relieve pressure around the 'Poets' roads. The two primary phase schools could be federated, but with two heads, and linked by catchment (as they are at Sun Hill, Alresford) This keeps the schools on a human scale but offers opportunities for a large number of children to be educated in the centre of the community.

Alternatively, (but not our preference) just the Junior School could be linked to the Westgate school- easier for parents to envisage as the children grow bigger.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these and the other options in more detail, and would like to speak with the department before the first Public meeting.

Signed: County Councillors Dickens, Collin, Bailey, Porter

11th April 2012.