

Secondary School Sufficiency

Portfolio: Councillor Kaur – Education and Skills

Related Portfolios:

Service: Children’s Services

Wards: All

Key decision: Yes

Forward plan: Yes

1 Aim

1.1 This report details the schemes proposed for inclusion in the secondary school expansion programme and seeks approval to implement the proposed plans, to ensure the provision of sufficient school places.

2 Summary

2.1 The Council has a statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient school places for resident children who want a school place. A local authority has a general duty, under section 14 of the Education Act 1996, to ensure that there are available, in its area, sufficient school places ‘in number, character and equipment to provide for all pupils the opportunity of an appropriate education’.

2.2 To meet its statutory responsibilities Walsall Council needs to ensure it understands where the pressures on school places will come from. These pressures include changes in the population, housing developments, and cross border migration.

2.3 The projections of future demand for school places are based on birth data sourced from the Office of National Statistics, historical pupil retention data from the school census, pupil yield from housing developments obtained from the council’s planning department and inward and outward migration data.

2.4 For mainstream pupil place planning purposes, the borough has been divided into planning areas, (see Appendix 1). These areas were drawn up taking account of ward boundaries, geographical features (such as major roads and housing developments), and patterns from historical school admissions data.

2.5 Every year each local authority completes Department of Education (DFE) statutory School Capacity (SCAP) return. Based on the forecast, and to meet local demand, further places are required across Walsall.

- 2.6 To ensure that there is sufficiency of school places in Walsall investment in additional capacity is required.
- 2.7 Capital grant funding for Basic Need from the DFE is received annually to support the cost of increasing mainstream school places where required.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 That Cabinet approve the continued cost to expand Pool Hayes Academy at £3,647,700.
- 3.2 That Cabinet approve the cost to expand West Walsall EACT Academy at £500,000.
- 3.3 That Cabinet approve a design and feasibility study to for the expansion at Ormiston Sheffield Academy at a cost of £325,000, once full financial costs are established, a further paper will be brought to Cabinet for approval.
- 3.4 That Cabinet approve a design and feasibility study for the expansion at Willenhall EACT Academy, at a cost of £325,000, once full financial costs are established, a further paper will be brought to Cabinet for approval.

4 Report detail

- 4.1 To plan pupil places effectively the Council must be open and transparent in communicating the details on the pressures on school places in each planning area. The Council must also manage expectations and avoid any adverse impact on schools regarding school development proposals. When new capacity is needed, it is important to establish guidelines to ensure that this new capacity is provided appropriately and in the right place:
- We should seek to meet demand locally to allow children a school place within a reasonable walking distance from their home.
 - Our planning of school places should reflect our school improvement strategy: we should work to make all schools good or outstanding. When seeking to expand schools, we should favour the expansion of schools where there is proven demand and well-established and successful leadership and management at a good or outstanding school.
 - We should consider the impact of any changes on the viability and standards at existing schools. Where necessary we should work with schools to provide optimum forms of entry appropriate to the capacity of the school site and the level of demand for that school. On occasions, over time, it may be appropriate to reduce the capacity of some schools as others grow in size.
 - The guidelines set out above will need to be balanced against the need to make best use of scarce capital resources and the physical practicalities of available sites.

- 4.2 The Local Authority adopts an annual cycle to school organisation and place planning, linked to the Department for Education School Capacity (SCAP) survey for mainstream schools. This survey is submitted in July each year and comprises four parts:
- capacity of schools
 - forecasts of pupil numbers per national curriculum year group by planning area
 - additional places due to be created by planning area.
 - place planning commentary by planning area of local circumstances e.g., migration, changes of school category.
- 4.3 The Admissions & Education Sufficiency Team prepares and submits this survey and its component parts, and during the yearly planning cycle updates its core data including changes to school capacity data following alterations and expansion of the school estate, planning department data on housing completions in each planning area, school census numbers and school admission application numbers and preferences.
- 4.4 The outcome of the validated and moderated submission by the DfE is an allocation of funding known as basic need funding. This capital grant is allocated to all LAs who have a forecasted demand for places above their existing capacity to help in meeting the statutory duty in making sure there are enough school places for children in our area.

Secondary School Place Demand

- 4.5 In recent years, including for September 2024 academic year intake, the pressures for pupil places have been managed by secondary schools in Walsall admitting over their Published Admission Number (PAN) and more aligned to the physical capacity of the school by creation of bulge classes. This has been of great support to the Local Authority and the local community however some schools are now no longer able to provide this continued support within the existing infrastructure in their school settings. Additional places are therefore required across the borough.
- 4.6 The current forecasting model from September 2024 onwards for Year 7 places shows the following:

Planning Area	Measure	Sep-24	Sep-25	Sep-26	Sep-27	Sep-28	Sep-29
3351001	Agreed Intake	660	660	660	660	660	660
	Projected Intake	739	702	731	739	733	707
	Surplus / Shortfall	-79	-42	-71	-79	-73	-47
3351002	Agreed Intake	1142	1142	1142	1142	1142	1142
	Projected Intake	1164	1152	1205	1175	1170	1165
	Surplus / Shortfall	-22	-10	-63	-33	-28	-23
3351003	Agreed Intake	1030	1030	1030	1030	1030	1030
	Projected Intake	1015	1037	1028	1068	1091	1033
	Surplus / Shortfall	15	-7	2	-38	-61	-3
3351004	Agreed Intake	1041	1041	1041	1041	1041	1041
	Projected Intake	1134	1145	1099	1135	1165	1098
	Surplus / Shortfall	-93	-104	-58	-94	-124	-57
Total	PAN	3873	3873	3873	3873	3873	3873
	Projected Intake	4052	4036	4063	4117	4159	4003
	Surplus / Shortfall	-179	-163	-190	-244	-286	-130
	Surplus %	-5%	-4%	-5%	-6%	-7%	-3%

- 4.7 To support places for September 2025 schools, have, where possible, agreed to admit above their published admission number where no additional expansion works are needed. Appendix 2 shows where places have been confirmed and where conversations are ongoing to support the growth through expansion proposals requiring capital investment.
- 4.8 The published admission number (PAN) is the number of pupils which can be admitted into every year group. Due to the forecasted shortfall in places, conversations are held with schools and in some cases the school will agree to 'uplift' their PAN to increase the number of places available. This uplifted PAN number can be seen in the 'agreed to admit' column in the table above.
- 4.9 Appendix 2 is colour coordinated, green shows where schools are supporting an uplift without any works being required; amber shows where schools could support with Capital funding; red is where schools are not offering support through uplift or with capital funding support.
- 4.10 To meet demand for places from September 2025, expansion schemes require works to be undertaken at various schools in Walsall. It is proposed that this will comprise of four schools. The Admissions & Education Sufficiency Team have worked closely with the schools to work through the options to expand the schools and to meet the area accommodation guidelines as set out in DfE published area guidelines - Building Bulletin 103.
- 4.11 Without the capital investment, the Local Authority will not be able to support the requirement for school places as per the projections and therefore will not meet its statutory duties.
- 4.12 Details on the schools proposed for expansion are detailed below.

Pool Hayes Academy

- 4.13 Pool Hayes Academy is an academy in planning area 4. The school was inspected by Ofsted in April 2022 and was judged as “Good.”
- 4.14 The school has been oversubscribed for many years and had fully supported the Local Authority with providing additional places to meet demand.
- 4.15 In December 2022 Cabinet approval was received to provide a temporary solution for 50 pupils in September 2023 whilst a permanent solution was agreed and secured. Funding of £695,400 was approved for this temporary support. The trust has advised that the actual cost for providing this solution was £655,400.
- 4.16 It was suggested within the December 2022 Cabinet paper that to expand Pool Hayes Academy on a permanent basis by a new modular classroom block from September 2024, works required are:
- 7 x general classroom
 - 2 x Toilet Blocks
 - 2 x offices

Pool Hayes Academy-50 pupils (250 pupils over 5 years)	£	Comments/Assumptions
Estimated cost	2,590,000	Works
Contingency and Risk	518,000	Based on 20% of works
Fees -15%	466,200	Design fees and corporate landlord oversight
FFE & ICT	73,500	£4500 one off cost Furniture*3 and £300 per pupil for next 4 years
Total	3,647,700	

- 4.17 Following Cabinet approval of feasibility funding of £639,830, a full feasibility has been completed, including full pre-construction ground and other surveys, design solutions up to RIBA stage 4 (technical design) planning application submission and procurement works. It has been determined that to undertake the works to create a permanent expansion at Pool Hayes Academy, funding of £3,647,700 would be required.
- 4.18 The identified costs from December 2022 are therefore aligned to the most recent costs following the feasibility and design works which are shown in the table below.

Establishment	Temp/Perm Places	Overall No. of places	Estimated Cost £	Cost per place £	National Average per place
Pool Hayes Academy	Temporary & Permanent	250	4,303,100	£17,217.40	£21,235

- 4.19 The cost per place of £17,212.40 is significantly lower than the national average as shown in the table above.
- 4.20 Each year, the Educational Building and Development Officers Group (EBDOG) complete a national benchmarking study which analyses the capital cost of building new school places across the country, comparing the like for like cost of school buildings delivered by local authorities and the DfE. They then publish the average cost per pupil place which can be used as a benchmark when considering a programmes value for money.’
- 4.21 To support the Local Authority, Pool Hayes Academy have agreed to admit 50 additional pupils in September 2024, it is recognised that all additional pupils to date have been accommodated within the existing provision and by further using the temporary solution. The Academy however do not have sufficient accommodation for this to continue without the permanent solution.
- 4.22 It is proposed that the permanent expansion project at Pool Hayes Academy is approved – recommendation 3.2 seeks to approve this funding.

Ormiston Sheffield Academy

- 4.23 Ormiston Sheffield Academy is an academy in planning area one, the school was last inspected by Ofsted in January 2023 and was judged “Good.”
- 4.24 The school has been oversubscribed for a number of years and has fully supported the Local Authority with providing additional places to meet demand.
- 4.25 Ormiston Sheffield Academy has provided 30 additional places for the last academic year and for September 2024 within their current accommodation, however the space within school will not allow for further accommodation.
- 4.26 To ensure sufficiency of provision, Ormiston Sheffield Academy are proposing to permanently expand the capacity of the school with effect from September 2025. The PAN would increase from 240 to 270 which would provide an additional 30 Year 7 places from September 2025 and 150 permanent places in total (Years 7-11) by September 2027.
- 4.27 For the school to take a further 30 mainstream pupils across the next 5 years (150 pupils total) works required as follows:
- Five additional classrooms
 - Staff toilets
 - Pupil toilets
 - Office space
 - Common room
 - Internal remodelling of other spaces
- 4.28 The creation of the space within Ormiston Sheffield Academy would also enable the school to create a satellite provision to support children with Social,

Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs as part of the SEN expansion programme across the borough.

The satellite solution as a part of Shepwell School would support some of our most vulnerable pupils with Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs) to continue to be educated within a mainstream school environment but with access to specialist areas for parts of their education.

- 4.29 For Shepwell School to provide a satellite provision at Ormiston Sheffield the works required include:
- Remodelling of areas to create separate student areas in classrooms
 - Door access controls and secure access to the provision
 - Support intervention spaces
 - Storage, FFE and ICT provision
- 4.30 Based on the national benchmark rates, a project that provides 150 additional mainstream places and 30 specialist SEN places would equate to circa £6m of funding. However, due to the collaborative approach between the LA, Ormiston Sheffield and Shepwell School, a reduction in accommodation is proposed which would significantly reduce the project costs to circa £4m.
- 4.31 For the LA and the academy to move forward with plans to expand the provision, approval for a design and feasibility study is required at a cost of £350,000 – recommendation 3.4 seeks to approve this funding.

Willenhall EACT Academy

- 4.32 Willenhall EACT is an academy in planning area four, the school was last inspected by Ofsted in December 2022 and judged “Requires Improvement.” Since the last inspection, the school has seen a change in leadership and a recent monitoring inspection in June 2024 confirmed that leaders have made progress to improve the school.
- 4.33 The school have supported the Local Authority for the last three years providing an additional 150 places due to an increased demand from parents. The school has accommodated pupils in their existing infrastructure but would not be able to continue to offer additional places without capital funding to support the school.
- 4.34 The school has advised that with capital investment they could create up to three forms of entry over a staggered period. This would be an increase of 90 pupils per year group, and 450 places across all year groups over a period of years.
- 4.35 For the LA and the academy to move forward with plans to expand the provision, approval for a design and feasibility study is required at a cost of £300,000 – recommendation 3.4 seeks to approve this funding.

West Walsall EACT Academy

- 4.36 West Walsall EACT is an academy in planning area three, the school was last inspected by Ofsted in January 2023 and judged “Good.”
- 4.37 The school have supported the Local Authority for the last four years providing 20 additional places each year within school. The school has accommodated pupils in their existing infrastructure but would not be able to continue to offer additional places without capital funding to support the school.
- 4.38 The school has advised that with capital investment they could create an additional 20 places per year group, and 100 places across all year groups over a period of years.
- 4.39 For the school to admit the additional pupils they have identified an underused area previously used for Post 16 social space and is currently used for KS3/4 teaching.
- 4.40 The space consists of a large open plan area of approx. 99m², one teaching space of approx. 99m² with a storage area of approx. 24m² and two rooms formed with folding partitions off the main open plan area of approx. 48m² and 45m².
- 4.41 The proposal would convert the above space to become six or seven teaching spaces with corridor access.
- 4.42 For the school to provide the additional 100 places, a contribution from the Local Authority of £500,000 would be required. This is an estimated cost of the project including contingency & risk, fees, FFE and ICT.

Establishment	Temp/Perm Places	Overall No of places	Estimated Cost £	Cost per place £	National Average per place
West Walsall EACT Academy	Permanent	100	500,000	£5,000	£21,235

- 4.43 The cost per place of approximately £5,000 is significantly over than the national average as shown in the table above.
- 4.44 E-ACT Trust would be delivering the project, and the funding would be provided from the council via a Grant Agreement.
- 4.45 For the LA and the academy to move forward with plans to expand the provision, £500,000 is required – recommendation 3.3 seeks to approve this funding.

Swift Free School

- 4.46 The Swift Free School (Windsor Academy Trust) was a Wave 12 Free School, which moved to ‘pre-opening’ stage in April 2017. It is a mainstream secondary phase free school with a proposed capacity of 1150 pupils (900

secondary places in years 7-11 – 180 children per year, plus 250 places in post 16).

- 4.47 Despite a number of false starts, mainly due to site availability, the project moved to the formal position of DfE 'sign off' to proceed in 2021 when through an intensive conversation, the LA evidenced the forecasted demand through SCAP projections and were able to put forward a range of LA sites that the DfE could consider its location.
- 4.48 The DfE are still conducting due diligence and site investigations in advance of completing a feasibility study.
- 4.49 The project is currently scheduled to deliver the new school in its permanent accommodation in time for September 2027 intake, this date has however been revised on many occasions.
- 4.50 The creation of the Free School would not alone be enough to support the growing need for places within Walsall. The additional capacity the school will create is planned to meet the additional demand for places from September 2027. If the free school did not proceed, the LA would need to consider additional expansion projects at other schools in the borough as a response to forecasted need for additional places.

Evaluation of alternative options

- 4.51 Representatives of the local authority have attended various Walsall Associated Head Teachers (WASH) meetings and discussed with all secondary head teachers the rising demand for school places within Walsall. Some schools have been able to meet demand for places by strategically adapting their timetabling within school, this has allowed them to create additional space and admit more students on roll per year group. Schools have done this now for a number of years with little to no funding and the ability to support further is in short measure.
- 4.52 All secondary schools were offered opportunities within the WASH meeting to have further conversation with the Local Authority to expand and aid in developing additional school places.
- 4.53 The permanent expansion of the four schemes would allow more families the opportunity to attend a preferred school and the ensure the Council's statutory duty can be fulfilled.
- 4.54 The four schemes would create an additional 190 places in year 7, equating to 950 places within five years.
- 4.55 The creation of additional capacity would reduce the number of admissions appeals for places, increase parental preference for school places and reduce the number of Fair Access placements within schools above their admission numbers.

Council Plan priorities

- 4.56 Providing sufficient secondary school places in the borough is in line with the council corporate plans, to ensure children and young people have access to high quality education and training opportunities and that schools are more inclusive.

Risk management

- 4.57 The provision of additional places will enable the Council to meet its statutory duty to ensure that there are sufficient school places to meet the increasing demand for secondary places in the area and will create a greater opportunity for children to attend a local school.

Financial implications

- 4.58 The estimated build/alteration costs for the proposed Secondary School expansions are to be funded from the Basic Need Grant.
- 4.59 Basic Need is a non-ringfenced capital external grant given under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003, by the Department for Education (DfE) to Local Authorities (LAs). The purpose of the funding is to support LAs in the creation of mainstream places through the expansion / remodelling of existing schools.
- 4.60 The total grant funding for Basic Need is summarised in the table below.

Allocations	Basic Need
Carry Forward of Grant Allocation 2021/22	£17,001,046
Confirmed Grant Allocation 2025/26	£6,846,409
Total Funding Available	£23,847,455

Note: Funding beyond 2025/26 will be dependent on the commitment from central government to provide mainstream places and has not been confirmed.

- 4.61 Current basic needs balance after accounting for approved future expansion commitments from previous cabinet reports stands at £17m and external basic needs capital grant allocation of £6.8m for 2025/26 has been confirmed.
- 4.62 Historically there have been significant risks associated with increased costs for existing school expansions. It is therefore prudent to put an additional 20% contingency budget into the expected costs to account for the risk of increased prices given the current inflationary pressures, increased cost of labour and material and other economic challenges.
- 4.63 The contingency level for Walsall is currently set at 20% of the estimated costs and will be monitored as each scheme progresses.

- 4.64 The contingency level for Walsall is currently set at 20% using the estimated costs as a basis and would be monitored as each scheme progresses.
- 4.65 If the estimated costs do not increase further, a level of Basic Need funding would remain uncommitted, at the end of each project. This funding would then be carried forward to support the creation of school places in future years.
- 4.66 The capital needed to provide the additional places at Pool Hayes Academy is £3,647,700, this is after the initial funding was agreed for the temporary funding.
- 4.67 The capital needed to provide the additional places at West Walsall EACT Academy is £500,000.
- 4.68 The capital needed for a design and feasibility study to for the permanent expansion at Ormiston Sheffield Academy and Willenhall EACT Academy at a cost of £650,000. Once full financial costs are established, a further paper will be brought to Cabinet for approval.

Secondary schools/academies expenditure	No of places	Basic Need
Pool Hayes Academy	250	£3,647,700
West Walsall	100	£500,000
Feasibility work for Ormiston Sheffield academy and Willenhall academy	n/a	£650,000
Total Funding Available		£4,797,700

- 4.69 Should the academies or Schools' project not go ahead into permanent construction phase or the site may be deemed unsuitable, the feasibility cost would be treated as aborted cost.
- 4.70 The on-going increase in revenue funding for the schools will be met from the Dedicated Schools Grant, whereby funding is allocated to the academies to support increases or decreases in line with pupil numbers at each school. Therefore, if there is growth in overall pupil numbers, this will attract more Dedicated Schools Grant funding which will then fund the additional places being created.
- 4.71 Value for money – Total cost per pupil place: In the latest Education Building and Development Officers Group (EBDOG) survey (published November 2023) which benchmarks the cost of school expansions, the average cost per place for a secondary school place is £21,235. The costs for the two expansions listed below would fall within this benchmark and represent value for money.

Establishment	Temp/Perm Places	Overall No. of places	Estimated Cost £	Cost per place £	National Average per place
Pool Hayes Academy	Temporary & Permanent	250	4,303,100	£17,217.40	£21,235
West Walsall EACT Academy	Permanent	100	500,000	£5,000	£21,235

Legal implications

- 4.72 Failure to provide places would cause a breach of statutory duty.
- 4.73 Where a provision is provided to a non-maintained school/s additional grant agreements and potentially variation to leases, Academy, will be required.
- 4.74 If Cabinet approves the Recommendations of this report, legal advice will be taken about educational and planning issues and consents arising together with the contractual arrangements for any subsequent design and build work, plus any related supplies of goods and services as part of the full feasibility study.

Procurement Implications/Social Value

- 4.75 There are no direct procurement implications from this report as the contracts will be let by the relevant academy who will be responsible for compliance with the Public Contracts Regulations.

Property implications

- 4.76 In accordance with any well-planned construction programme, it will be important to undertake pre-construction feasibility activity and site surveys to inform all necessary consents, as well as construction costs, and future maintenance responsibilities. Such consents will need to include planning and building regulations in addition to any specific requirements of other statutory bodies/ undertakers.

Health and wellbeing implications

- 4.77 In relation to the Marmot principles the most relevant principles in line with pupil place planning with school builds is that enabling all children and young people to maximise their capabilities and to have control over their lives.

Reducing Inequalities

- 4.78 It is of crucial importance to the Council's strategic objectives that the young People of Walsall can access the right provision to meet their need to achieve the appropriate qualifications, progressing to employment and / or training and to make a positive contribution within the Borough in the future.

Staffing implications

- 4.79 There may be a requirement for schools to employ additional staff to accommodate the larger numbers of pupils, there will be no redundancies from this scheme.

Climate Impact

- 4.80 Corporate Landlord will review each scheme to reduce the carbon footprint which may include renewable heating solutions, natural ventilation systems avoiding air-conditioning sourcing carbon natural materials where possible.

Consultation

- 4.81 This paper has been brought to Cabinet following internal consultation with Council representatives, directors and the portfolio holder for Children's Services, wider consultation is not required.

5 Decide

- 5.1 The increase of places at schools is necessary for the Local authority to meet its statutory duties of providing sufficient school places for all Y7 Walsall residents.

6 Respond

- 6.1 Subject to approval, works will begin to undertake the necessary requirements to enable the schools to admit the pupils from September 2025.

7 Review

- 7.1 Annual reviews of the pupil projections are undertaken by Walsall Council in conversation with the DFE as part of the School Capacity (SCAP) survey which is submitted every July.

Background papers

None

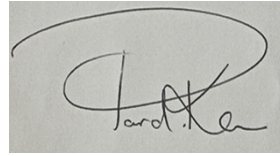
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