

**EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK –
IMPLICATIONS FOR PLANNING SECONDARY SCHOOL PROVISION**

To: CABINET

Date: 5 July 2010

From: Executive Director: Children and Young People's Services (CYPS)

Electoral division(s): All County Council electoral divisions falling within the East Cambridgeshire District Council area

Forward Plan ref: Yes – 2010/004 **Key decision:** Yes

Purpose: **To:**

- i) Inform Cabinet of the feedback received from the consultation process on options for the future pattern of secondary education provision in East Cambridgeshire, and the resulting preferred option that a new secondary school should be established in Littleport to serve the community of Littleport;**
- ii) Advise Cabinet of the work undertaken to assess the overall viability of this option; and**
- iii) Seek Cabinet's approval to proceed with discussions with East Cambridgeshire District Council in order to secure a site suitable for a new secondary school in Littleport within the District Council's Local Development Framework**

Recommendation: **Cabinet is asked to approve:**

- i. The proposal that a new secondary school should be established in Littleport to serve the Littleport community; and**
- ii. Work to be undertaken with East Cambridgeshire District Council to secure a suitable site for the proposed new secondary school in Littleport within the District Council's Local Development Framework.**
- iii. That the capital and revenue costs associated with the building and early operation of the new school and arising from the new housing developments are met from developer contributions and do not result in a future financial pressure on the Council's reserves.**

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. The Local Authority has the challenge of responding to the high levels of housing and population growth identified in East Cambridgeshire District Council's Local Development Framework (LDF). This anticipated growth of 10,639 houses between 2001 and 2025, of which 5531 remain to be built, will place pressure on current secondary school capacity within the District. Additional secondary school capacity, estimated at between 7 and 10 forms of entry (FE) or 1000-1500 places, will be required and all the maintained secondary schools in the area will be affected to some degree. However, the greatest impact would be felt within the current catchment area of City of Ely Community College. The combined effect of existing population needs and the proposed LDF growth will ultimately lead to demand for 13 to 15 FE or 1950 to 2250 of secondary school places.
- 1.2. Work begins on Site Specific Development (SSD) plans in the autumn of 2010 and as part of this work, the County Council will need to identify sites within the main communities of East Cambridgeshire for new primary and secondary schools.
- 1.3. In September 2009, the Children and Young People's Services Policy Development Group (CYP PDG) agreed that a strategic review of secondary education provision across East Cambridgeshire was required to ensure viable, sustainable and high quality secondary education provision. A comprehensive consultation programme was undertaken. Stage 1 took place in November 2009 and focussed upon raising awareness of the issues and developing a range of potential options. The PDG considered a report at its meeting on 19 January 2010 detailing the views expressed during the Stage 1 consultation process and identifying those options on which to consult further in Stage 2. Stage 2 of the consultation took place between January and February 2010. The outcome was reported to the PDG in March 2010. At that meeting, the option of establishing a new secondary school in Littleport, serving the existing and extended community was identified as the preferred option. However, Members asked that further work be undertaken on the viability of this option. This was presented to the PDG on 11 May 2010 and following further consideration, the PDG confirmed its support for the proposal of a new secondary school to be established in Littleport to serve the Littleport community.

2. THE CURRENT PATTERN OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PROVISION

- 2.1. There are four secondary schools in the District: City of Ely Community College, Soham Village College, Witchford Village College and Bottisham Village College. The schools provide 4761 places for 11 to 16 year olds, based on their combined assessed capacities. At present, there are 302 surplus places, representing 6.3% of the total capacity (March 2009).
- 2.2. 40% of the children attending the City of Ely Community College are from the Littleport area.

2.3 Current forecasts for pupil numbers living in each secondary catchment area show that:

- There are currently fewer places at Bottisham Village College and City of Ely Community College than there are pupils living in the catchments. In contrast, there are more places at Soham than there are pupils in the catchment. At present the number of places at Witchford Village College closely matches the number of catchment pupils.
- A modest fall in the number of pupils living in the Bottisham Village College catchment is forecast, but in the medium-term numbers are likely to remain around half a form of entry higher than the current capacity of the school.
- Numbers living in the catchment for Soham Village College are forecast to rise significantly due to recent and forecast house-building. In the medium term it is likely that the number of pupils in the catchment will match the current capacity of the school fairly closely.
- Numbers living in the catchment for Witchford Village College are forecast to rise slightly, with numbers potentially exceeding the current capacity by around half a form of entry in the medium term.
- Across these three catchments (Bottisham, Soham and Witchford), the forecast is for a close match between pupils and places, with perhaps up to one form of entry of pupils per year not able to be accommodated.
- Numbers living in the catchment for City of Ely Community College are forecast to increase significantly, with a medium-term requirement for an additional 5-6 forms of entry.

2.3 Forecast trends within the City of Ely Community College's catchment area show that:

- There are currently 5.4 forms of entry (FE) of pupils living in the City of Ely area; this is forecast to rise as high as 8-8.5 FE in the medium term. This is relatively close to the current capacity of Ely Community College.
- Around one form of entry of pupils is forecast in the Little Downham area.
- There are currently around 3 forms of entry living in the Littleport area; this is forecast to rise to 4-4.5 FE in the medium term.

2.4 Guidance from the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) to Local Authorities (in the Building Schools for the Future programme) recommends that 10% surplus capacity in the secondary school sector is a reasonable basis on which to plan the future pattern of provision. This is to allow for natural fluctuations in pupil numbers arising from changing birth rates and patterns of migration, both domestic and international and the operation of parental preference in line with overarching Government policies of promoting choice and diversity.

3. STAGE 1 OPTIONS AND CONSULTATION

3.1. Four broad options were identified and formed the basis of consultation with the four secondary schools and their partner primary schools:

1. Establish a new 5-8FE secondary school in Ely
2. Establish a new 5-8 FE secondary school in Littleport
3. Increase the size of City of Ely Community College to create a large 13-16FE secondary school in Ely

4. Increase the size of City of Ely Community College and the neighbouring Witchford, Soham VC and Bottisham VC to provide the new capacity required

3.2 There was a strong voice from the Littleport community in favour of establishing a secondary school in Littleport. Whilst some people accepted that closing the previous Littleport secondary school over 20 years ago was the right decision at the time, it was felt that the community had suffered greatly through the lack of a secondary school. The main issues put forward were:

- I. Littleport is a relatively deprived area and the lack of a secondary school has contributed to the low morale and low aspirations of the area;
- II. children from the Littleport area have to be bussed to Ely, thus extending their school day; this makes taking part in out-of-school activities more difficult and reinforces perceptions that they are 'outsiders' and provided little sense of belonging;
- III. that new people considering relocating to Littleport are discouraged through the lack of a secondary school.

3.3 Some consultees had reservations about the long term viability of a school in Littleport and felt that it would be better to have a medium sized school (5-7FE) rather than a smaller school (4FE). There was also some concern that a new school serving only Littleport could be at risk of quickly becoming a low-achieving school. However, others felt that this was a challenge for the management team of any new school and that the focus had to remain on developing school capacity to meet the needs of future housing growth and the current Littleport community. More information detailing the outcomes from the Stage 1 consultation meetings is included in **Appendix 1**.

3.4 Following detailed consideration of the feedback from the Stage 1 consultation, the following options were identified by the PDG to be taken forward for further consultation (Stage 2).

For the Ely / Littleport area:

- 1 A new school in north Ely to serve Littleport and the new developments in the north of Ely
- 2 a) A new school in Littleport to serve Littleport and the new developments in the north of Ely
- 2 b) A new school in Littleport to serve the Littleport Community with an expansion of some of the existing schools (City of Ely Community College and more limited expansion of Witchford Village College)

For the Soham / Bottisham area, the proposed option was to accommodate the housing growth set out in the LDF at Soham and Burwell through the expansion of existing provision at both Bottisham and Soham Village Colleges. The PDG noted that if substantial housing growth is proposed beyond that identified in the LDF it may be necessary to revisit this particular option.

3.5 These options were selected on the clear understanding of the need to increase the number of secondary school places in response to planned housing growth across the East Cambridgeshire district. In particular, while it might just about be possible to accommodate the growth anticipated in the LDF through the expansion of the

existing secondary schools in the district, this would leave no flexibility with which to respond to the higher levels of growth anticipated beyond 2025 in some of the Masterplans being developed for Ely, Soham and Littleport. At some point, an additional secondary school would be required.

4. STAGE 2 CONSULTATION AND CONCLUSIONS REACHED

- 4.1. Stage 2 of the consultation focussed on testing each of the identified options.
- 4.2. The consultation included a series of stakeholder events with breakout discussion groups to allow the attendees free time to debate the issues in detail. The overwhelming feedback from these groups was that Littleport was the most suitable location for a new school. In addition to these groups, leaflets summarising the key issues were distributed to parents of pupils on roll at the primary schools within each secondary school's catchment area asking for their views through a response reply slip.
- 4.3. Amongst the responses received, Option 2b was the most popular. 35 responses were received to the consultation leaflet with 19 respondents expressing a first preference for Option 2b, 14 for option 2a and two for Option 1. Taking support for Options 2a and 2b together 33 of the 35 respondents favoured establishing a new secondary school in Littleport as opposed to two respondents favouring Ely. The reasons, where stated by respondents, were that:
 - with recent and future growth, Littleport is now of a size that it warrants its own secondary school;
 - a new secondary school would play a crucial role in counteracting the real and perceived deprivation within this area providing a community resource that could play an important part in promoting community cohesion;
 - a new school would have an important role in raising the aspirations and ambitions of the people within the community;
 - Extended services delivered through a new secondary school would have a significant role in supporting the whole population, not just the school-age population;
 - there would be real benefits for pupils being able to access secondary education locally;
 - transporting pupils to Ely results in high transport costs, lengthy school days and can make it difficult to sustain friendship groups and after school activities; and that
 - it would free capacity at the City of Ely Community College enabling it to respond to the increased demand for secondary school places from within the City
- 4.4. Option 2b was also supported by the East Cambridgeshire Local Strategic Partnership and the East Cambridgeshire District Council's External Partnership Review Committee, culminating in them both making the following recommendations to full Council:
 - (i) The Council [East Cambridgeshire District Council] strongly supports the establishment of a new secondary school in Littleport;
 - (ii) The Council requests that the County Council give consideration to a post-16 establishment for Ely;

(iii) The Council requests a review of post-16 provision in the District.

- 4.5. For the Soham/Bottisham area, the option of accommodating the housing growth proposed in the LDF for Soham and Burwell through the expansion of existing provision at both Bottisham and Soham Village Colleges was accepted by those who expressed a view.
- 4.6 Two other pieces of work were undertaken with pupils during the consultation which provided views on the current provision for secondary aged pupils living in Littleport.
1. A Parental Responsiveness trial was undertaken on behalf of the Department for Children Schools and Families aimed at finding out parents' views about the choice of secondary school available to them in their local area. This revealed a high level of satisfaction with Ely/Littleport parents with their secondary school, the City of Ely, amongst those parents who responded to this survey. It is important to note that this was a small sample and parents were not asked this question in the light of having a choice of a Littleport secondary school option.
 2. A Pupil Voice workshop undertaken by the Standards and Effectiveness team who asked Year 6, 10 and 11 pupils, who live in Littleport and attend the City of Ely, about their experiences of travelling to Ely, attending the school and what impact this had on their school day and social life. The pupils were also asked for their opinions on a school in Littleport and if they would prefer to attend a more local school. The majority view expressed was that whilst there was a degree of inconvenience in travelling to Ely, the pupils enjoyed this experience and saw it as a way of maturing and becoming more independent and making new friends. They did not feel that it impacted adversely on friendship groups or on out-of-school activities.
- 4.7 The clear majority view from the two stage consultation process was in favour of pursuing Option 2b '*A new school in Littleport to serve the Littleport Community with an expansion of some of the existing schools (City of Ely Community College and more limited expansion of Witchford Village College)*'. This option provides for a new secondary school to be established in the catchment area with the highest levels of housing growth. It is also the only option which achieves this and does not require children from either Ely or Littleport to attend a school outside their own community.
- 4.8 However, many people felt that if a new secondary school were established in Littleport it should be larger than 4FE in order to secure viability and deliver a broad curriculum. Having experienced the closure of Littleport's secondary school in the 1990s, they wanted to guard against the potential of this happening again.
- 4.9 A 4FE (600 places) school is at the bottom end of the Council's preferred size range for secondary schools. In the light of this, at its meeting in March 2010 the CYP PDG requested officers to undertake a series of viability tests and report the results to the next meeting of the PDG on 11 May 2010.

5. VIABILITY TESTING AND CONCLUSIONS REACHED

5.1 The viability of a new school is dependent on a range of factors, not only its potential size or number of pupils. As requested by the PDG, officers identified a range of criteria, against which to assess the viability of the preferred option. The criteria were:

- Demography
- Financial Health
- Educational Effectiveness and Standards
- Community Cohesion
- Environmental Sustainability and Transport
- Policy Compliance

A summary of the viability testing is included in **Appendix 2**.

5.2 After careful consideration of the viability testing, the conclusion reached is that a new secondary school in Littleport to serve the Littleport community could be sustained providing that it is popular and successful and retains its in-catchment pupils. In the medium-term, around 4-4.5FE of secondary pupils are forecast to be living in Littleport. In planning the implementation of the new school, the Council will need to undertake the following:

1. Financial modelling so that appropriate support to both the new school in Littleport and any planned changes to the neighbouring City of Ely Community College can be properly managed.

There will, however, be a revenue cost attributable to the opening of a new secondary school in Littleport as numbers of pupils start low and gradually build towards the capacity of the school. The revenue funding received by a school through the schools funding formula will not cover all of the school's fixed costs. Although this funding gap or 'subsidy' can be managed through the schools' funding formula, it will impact on the overall amount of funding available to other secondary schools, as the funding 'pot' would become more diluted.

The County Council has had some recent success in negotiating revenue contributions from developers towards the cost of establishing new schools to serve some of the major developments in the Cambridge Sub-Region. This approach will be adopted when negotiating developer contributions for the major housing sites in East Cambridgeshire. Any revenue contributions secured would reduce the impact of opening a new secondary school upon the amount of funding available to the other Cambridgeshire secondary schools.

2. Ongoing monitoring of demographic projections and housing completion rates so that the new school is opened and provision made at the optimum time.
3. Continued focus on improvement of pupil attainment levels in Littleport through the Standards and Effectiveness Team working with the individual schools.
4. An approach from the Council to commissioning a new school that encourages a number of providers to enter any competition which the Authority may be required to hold in order to secure a proposal that is attractive to both education leaders and the local community.

5. Consider options for increasing the size of the proposed Littleport secondary school by increasing its catchment area beyond the town of Littleport. This review would need to balance the benefit of a larger school in Littleport with the impact of disruption to existing transition arrangements and patterns. If the communities of Ely and Littleport are not to be split in terms of where the children attend school then Little Downham is the only other significant community within the current catchment area of City of Ely Community College. Pupil forecasts for Little Downham remain steady throughout at around 1FE (150) of secondary age pupils. Any future proposal to change catchment areas would have to be subject to a full and separate consultation with primary schools, parents and the local community.
- 6 Work with East Cambridgeshire District Council on its planning obligations strategy to ensure that all housing growth within the District contributes to the increase in secondary school capacity required. Such an approach is required to ensure that 100% of the capital funding required for the school is secured through the planning process.

Any shortfall between the capital cost of the new secondary school would have to be funded within the capital resources available to the CYPS capital programme. A shortfall in the level of developer contributions achieved would require a re-prioritisation or re-phasing of schemes within the programme.

6. NEXT STEPS

- 6.1 Now that a preferred option has been identified that is considered, with appropriate risk mitigation, to be viable, Cabinet is asked to support the request for land for a secondary school to be secured within Littleport.
- 6.2 Cabinet's decision will form the basis on which the Council will seek the provision of a secondary school site and appropriate levels of planning contributions through East Cambridgeshire District Council's LDF. The District Council will commence work on its Site Specific Development plans in the autumn of 2010 and will need to know the preferred location for a new secondary school at this time. Work on the LDF is expected to continue until early 2011.
- 6.3 When further information about development proposals becomes available, work will begin on the Implementation Strategy to determine the size and nature of the new school; the likely opening date; a possible review of catchment areas and the approach to any requisite competition process.
- 6.4 Officers have begun work on a statement of principles and entitlement for Cambridgeshire students to post-16 education and learning. This will form the basis of a report to the CYP PDG on 19 July 2010.

7. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Resources and Performance

The failure to secure the sites for any new schools through the planning process would severely limit the Council's ability to provide sufficient school places in response to the planned housing development. A clear strategy for secondary

school provision supported by a Cabinet decision gives the Council a stronger position from which to secure, through legal agreement, the level of developer planning obligations required whether that is through Section 106 funding or the District Council's Planning Obligations Strategy which is anticipating the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). The risk of some of the additional capital expenditure required becoming a potential liability upon the Council, is therefore reduced.

If school numbers can be sustained above 4FE, the need for additional revenue support can be mitigated. The new school would need to retain a high percentage of its in-catchment pupils and there are opportunities to attract pupils from outside of its catchment area or to serve a wider catchment area to mitigate the potential revenue impacts further.

7.2 Statutory Requirements and Partnership Working

The Council has a statutory requirement to provide school places for all those children in its area of responsibility requiring a maintained school place. An inability to provide sufficient school places in an area would result in the Council having to utilise spare capacity elsewhere, provide transport and incur the associated on-going revenue costs. The unplanned expansion of existing schools can also cause disruption to both the schools and the communities concerned.

The identification of the need for a new school currently triggers the requirement for a school competition. For a new secondary school on a site currently not in the Council's ownership, the lead-in time would be around five years: a year for the competition process, two years for design and two years for building based on traditional methods of construction. The expansion of existing schools may also require a formal statutory process depending upon the number of places to be created at the schools concerned. Ongoing work with ECDC is required to secure a site for the new secondary school in the LDF, the statutory development plan for the area

A decision now to plan to establish a new school would allow the District Council to identify a site when it commences work on its Site Specific Development (SSD) plans in the summer of 2010 as part of its LDF preparation. This opportunity to secure a site for a secondary school would not present itself again for some time.

7.3 Climate Change

In identifying the need for additional school places, officers will be guided by the following policy recommendations approved by Cabinet in September 2007:

- Schools should be sited as centrally to the communities they will serve as possible, unless location is dictated by physical constraints and/or the opportunity to reduce land take by providing playing fields within the green belt or green corridors.
- Where possible, secondary schools should be sited so that the maximum journey distance for a young person is less than three miles, the statutory walking distance for children of this age.
- Schools should be located close to public transport links, and be served by a

good network of walking and cycling routes. The Council's School Transport and Sustainable Travel Strategy actively promotes a reduction in car usage and an increase in the number of children and young people walking and cycling to school. However, it may still be necessary to provide transport for some children. The effect of this in terms of carbon emissions is impossible to quantify at this stage.

A secondary school in Littleport would reduce transport costs and the associated carbon emissions and also have the benefit of releasing capacity at City of Ely Community College, allowing it to accommodate growth from within the rest of the current catchment area.

The Council currently adopts the BREEAM Very Good standard and has an aspiration to achieve an Excellent rating for all its new school buildings. Any school buildings provided after 2016 will have to meet the Government target of zero carbon standard.

7.4 Access and Inclusion

The inability to make proper provision to meet the needs of new developments at local schools may have the greatest impact upon those with special educational needs (SEN) or those that are economically disadvantaged and without access to their own private transport. In January 2010, the PDG supported a proposed specification for new schools that enabled them to make appropriate provision for children with SEN. Any new school will need to meet these requirements. Further dialogue with the Head of Commissioning Enhanced Services is needed regarding available capacity for the additional high-level needs children.

7.5 Engagement and Consultation

The wider community interest in the expansion of secondary school provision in the Ely/Littleport area has been recognised and all options have been subject to full, local consultation. Under the provisions of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 the Council would be required to run a competition to invite proposals from potential promoters of any new school. This process requires full consultation with the community. The LDF Site Specific Development Plan for Littleport, the vehicle for identifying a site for a new secondary school in that community, will itself be subject to a full consultation.

Source Documents	Location
<p>East Cambridgeshire School Forecasts – 27/11/08</p> <p>Presentation slides for East Cambridgeshire Member Seminar On 9/10/08</p> <p>County Council response to Draft Core Strategy – July 2008</p> <p>Audit Commission Report “Crunch Time” December 2008</p> <p>Report to Growth and Environment Policy Development Group on 24/6/08 on Draft Core Strategy – Level 2 Confidentiality Status for Internal Distribution only</p> <p>Letter from Councillor Peter Moakes (East Cambs DC) to CCC Head of Infrastructure dated 15.10.08</p> <p>Cambridge Evening News Article (page 13) 8/10/08</p> <p>PDG Report September 2009</p> <p>Background Report – Planning for the Future of Secondary School Education in East Cambridgeshire January 2010</p> <p>PDG report 19 January 2010</p> <p>File of Consultation Responses 24/2/2010</p> <p>PDG report 8 March 2010</p> <p>PDG report 11 May 2010</p>	<p><i>Alison Cook</i> <i>B202,</i> <i>Castle Court,</i> <i>Cambridge</i> <i>CB3 0AP</i></p> <p><i>01223 699783</i></p>

Appendix 1 – Outcomes from the Stage 1 Consultation

Although the majority of the new housing growth is taking place in the north of Ely, some consultees believed that a second school in Ely would inevitably lead to judgements relating to which was the stronger school and, as a consequence, one school could become more popular than the other. Other consultees welcomed local competition and believed this would raise standards over the longer-term. Others welcomed a new school in Ely but wanted to see more collaborative ways of delivering it, perhaps through all-through 0-19 schools, a federation, or a 'split site single-school' approach.

Most consultees agreed that there was enough evidence to warrant a new school in the north Ely/Littleport area. However, in the current economic climate, there was some scepticism about the timescales and build rates for the new housing developments and the availability of S106 or other funding to build a new school. This led some people to conclude that provision of a new school may need to remain a longer-term aspiration.

Many consultees noted the potential for further development beyond the period of the LDF to 2025 as outlined in the Masterplans and Visions for the market towns within East Cambridgeshire to 2030 and beyond. Therefore, any plan which relied on the expansion of existing schools could not deliver either sufficient capacity or locally-based provision beyond the LDF period. Expansion of current provision was seen as an appropriate response to more limited growth in the short-term but once major developments came forward a new school would be required.

There is housing growth proposed within Soham and Burwell in the LDF, but this is not of sufficient scale to justify a second new secondary school within East Cambridgeshire. However, there was support for both Bottisham and Soham Village Colleges being considered as a part of the response to housing growth. In doing so, there was a need to look at growth across the catchment areas of both schools and limited expansion of each and/or rebalancing of the demand for places through possible catchment area changes. Part of Bottisham Village College's catchment area is within South Cambridgeshire. Any housing growth proposed within communities such as Fulbourn would also need to be taken into account in the planning of places.

The role of Witchford Village College was considered to be limited as none of the substantial housing growth was located within its catchment area or natural community.

A number of consultees considered that the review should also include post-16 education provision. There was a perception that the District was not well served by the current pattern of provision both in terms of the breadth of the offer to post-16 students or its accessibility because of travel distances and the availability of transport. The provision of additional secondary school capacity provided an opportunity to also look at the future of post-16 provision.

Appendix 2 – Viability Testing

Demography

In January 2010, there were 4,355 secondary pupils living in the catchments for the four East Cambridgeshire secondary schools, against a total capacity of 4,500 places. Therefore, a notional capacity for 145 pupils if all pupils attended their catchment school. This is just 3% spare capacity. Under the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme, 10% spare capacity is considered a reasonable planning assumption to allow flexibility in responding to fluctuations in the demand for places and parental preference.

Demographic forecasts show that the number of secondary pupils is expected to rise over the next ten years with 500 more pupils forecast to be living in these catchment areas than there is capacity at the schools. The 2019/20 Year 7 intake would require an additional 7 FE (210 places) compared to the current combined Year 7 intake figure of 30FE (900 places) based on the schools' published admission numbers (PAN).

In the longer term, numbers are expected to peak at around 5,500 pupils (37 FE) or an additional 1,145 pupils above current numbers. The extent to which this peak is sustained will depend on further levels of house-building and on the fertility rate of families living in the district, both of which are difficult to predict. It would not be prudent to expect a continued rise in numbers significantly beyond 5,500, although it would be reasonable to allow for a limited amount of surplus capacity and contingency. This means that planning an additional 7-10 forms of entry across the district is broadly appropriate when incorporating the 10% figure for anticipated spare capacity.

The catchment forecasts are consistent with planned levels of house-building across East Cambridgeshire over the next ten years. There are 5531 houses remaining to be built under the current LDF. Using the pupil number multiplier of between 18-25 secondary school pupils for every 100 new houses built, this equates to an additional 1050-1459 new places or 7-10FE. In general, annual rates of planned house-building are expected to be similar to or lower than seen in the last three years. At present, low levels of building are planned beyond the next ten years, although it is likely that there will be additional growth in the longer term.

If the school were to be sited in Littleport and serve only Littleport, it would initially have two partner primary schools, Littleport Primary and Millfield Primary. Currently, Littleport Primary provides 420 places (2FE) and Millfield currently provides 300 places. However, the Authority plans to expand the school's Reception Year intake to 2FE from September 2010 in response to the demand which already exists for places in the primary schools within Littleport.. Housing growth will add to this pressure for places and the need for a further primary school in Littleport is identified in the County Council's response to East Cambridgeshire District Council's LDF. The viability test established that there is a requirement in the medium term for between 4 and 4.5 FE (600 - 675 places) to meet the needs of secondary school pupils living in Littleport. This is either at, or above, the County Council's minimum preferred size for a secondary school.

In addition, it may be possible to review catchment areas and include pupils from Little Downham within the catchment area for the proposed new school. The City of Ely Community College is currently the catchment secondary school for Little Downham pupils. Enabling these pupils to attend a new school in Littleport would help the long term

sustainability of this new school and free capacity at the City of Ely Community College for all of the children forecast to be living in Ely.

To ensure its success as the school would need to retain a high proportion of its in-catchment children to remain viable.

Financial Health

.Funding for new schools is based on agreed pupil numbers for the first few years of opening, rather than on actual numbers. This is to enable the school to cover the unavoidable higher proportion of fixed costs associated with operating a school with very low numbers at the outset. Modeling work undertaken for starting new schools in the major development areas elsewhere in the County, such as Trumpington (5FE) in the Cambridge Southern Fringe, suggest that the revenue “subsidy” required over a five year period following the opening of a new secondary school is in the region of £4m. The level of “subsidy” represents the cost of running the school, less the funding the school would receive distributed through the Council’s schools’ funding formula. While the need to provide for a new secondary school can be managed through the schools’ funding formula, it will impact on the overall amount of funding available to other secondary schools, as the funding ‘pot’ would become more diluted.

Small secondary schools have historically had difficulties operating within budget where pupil numbers have fallen, as small reductions have a disproportionate impact upon budgets compared with those of larger schools. However, if pupil numbers can be sustained and the correct structures put in place, there should not be any significant budget issues. The Council’s schools’ funding formula also gives small secondary schools additional protection through the small school curriculum protection factor which provides additional funding for schools with fewer than 120 pupils per year group. The arrangement formally recognises the impact on budgets and viability when numbers fall in a small school.

The impact on surrounding schools, such as City of Ely Community College, would need to be considered as a proportion of the pupils who would usually attend this school would, in time, be expected to attend a new Littleport secondary school in Littleport when established. The local formula does provide protection for schools with falling rolls but a planned change of this magnitude might require a one-off arrangement. The level of support required for the City of Ely Community College would be dependent on when and how a new school in Littleport was opened and the pace of housing growth within the City of Ely catchment which would generate the pupil numbers to replace those children ‘lost’ to the new school. Again, any transitional funding would have to come from the overall funding pot for secondary schools.

In terms of a new school in Littleport, the option which would have the least impact on City of Ely Community College would be to open the proposed new school with an intake in Year 7 only and then grow the school from the bottom up as each year group moves through the school. A financial model, identifying the level of additional support required, could then be developed with some degree of certainty for both the new school and the school being required to downsize (City of Ely Community College), albeit temporarily, in order to minimise the potential disruption that might occur and identify the optimum time for opening any new school.

Good financial planning and control and a sound management base within a new school of this size would be required but there should not be any fundamental reason for the school not being financially viable..

Educational Effectiveness and Standards

The recruitment of senior school leaders for any school is increasingly difficult and this problem may be compounded in recruiting to a small school facing the social, economic and educational challenges faced by the Littleport community. The nature of the challenge and how it is implemented through the Council's commissioning strategy, could provide the exciting opportunity that would be attractive to education leaders and potential promoters. This will require consideration of:

- the education model; perhaps a 0-16 all-through school as additional primary school provision is required in Littleport;
- its specialism and how this can raise aspirations and contribute to economic and community development;
- how it would provide for pupils at risk of exclusion in the locality;
- the ethos of the school and its relationship with the local community.

The attainment of primary age pupils in Littleport is currently below the national and the Cambridgeshire average reflecting the community and local context in which they operate. Overall contextual value added for all pupils over a three year period is significantly below national average. These factors will represent a challenge to a new Littleport secondary school which will need to perform well, add value and achieve the performance standards required by OfSTED (Office of Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) if it is to establish itself as a successful new school. This reinforces the need for a proposal that will attract the quality of head teacher and leadership team required.

A school of 4FE to 4.5FE is less able to offer the same breadth of curriculum than a school with higher numbers. While there is a collective desire for an improvement in attainment levels in advance of any new secondary school being provided, there is a risk that children at a new secondary school may have lower levels of educational attainment at KS2. The effect upon the secondary school curriculum could be:

- The school curriculum may be costly to run as there is a need to provide additional support for pupils with literacy and numeracy problems;
- The curriculum may need to offer more vocational courses but at the same time also offer a full range of GCSE options for a smaller number of pupils. This can be expensive to deliver as there may be only small numbers of pupils opting for these subjects

The curriculum offer required could add to the revenue pressure that a small secondary school could encounter and reinforces the need for quality leadership of the school and the need to retain a high percentage of pupils from within its catchment area.

There will be a corresponding need to manage the potential fall in numbers at City of Ely Village College before this school begins to see pupil numbers rise again in response to new housing developments in Ely. This will place a pressure on the leadership of the school. It is impossible, currently, to predict or quantify the impact and effect of such a transition without further information on the pattern of new housing development, including build rates. The Council will need to support the school's planning by monitoring development and ensuring the City of Ely Community College is fully involved in the

implementation planning process that will accompany the opening of the proposed new school.

Choice and Diversity

Deloitte had been contracted to work with local authorities to stimulate the market and encourage potential promoters to consider becoming promoters for new schools. Deloitte indicated that they were confident that several potential providers would be very interested in promoting a new secondary school in Littleport. Their contract terminates on 15 July 2010. There is no further information at this time regarding the future of the school competition process.

Community Cohesion

There remains a distinct feeling within the Littleport community that Littleport has suffered because of the closure of their secondary school in the 1980s and that a new school will be seen as a replacement. Established members of the community feel passionately that a new school is essential to the long term prosperity of Littleport. However, some feedback from pupils and those working with them acknowledge the benefits that come from travelling outside Littleport. There is a general consensus that for any new school to succeed, it needs to have a distinctive and wide-ranging appeal to the whole community.

A local secondary school that can act as a community hub with co-located facilities for adults and families could better engage children and parents, some of whom will have had a poor experience of education themselves. Littleport has a high percentage of vulnerable children and a local secondary school and community hub, working very closely with a small number of feeder primary schools, could enable a more seamless provision of children's services and a better managed transition between the primary and secondary phases of education.

A new school in Littleport would have a significant number of pupils from the Traveller community. Existing evidence shows that participation in education among this community declines after primary school and the need to currently undertake a bus journey to a different community (Ely) could exacerbate this trend.

OfSTED also requires all schools to engage with their surrounding community and will measure schools against community cohesion criteria to ensure schools know their local community, are engaging with them and can respond in an appropriate way to the opportunities and challenges this presents. A school serving a distinct local community should be well placed to discharge this duty.

Environmental Sustainability and Transport

The County Council's Sustainable School Travel Strategy (2007-2012) seeks to establish new schools that are built on sites which are central to the communities they will serve, and to which the majority of children and young people are able to walk or cycle. New secondary schools should be located, wherever possible, within a three miles radius for most of the population who are expected to attend it. All new schools should also have good cycle routes and safe walking routes to encourage sustainable travel. These aims are readily achievable if the proposed new school serves the community of Littleport.

Locating the new school in Littleport will be less expensive, in transport terms, than bussing Littleport children to Ely (the current catchment choice and alternative location for the new school). The cost of one bus from Littleport to the City of Ely Community College is almost £35,000 per year. Currently there are 384 secondary pupils being transported from Littleport to City of Ely Community College and nine post-16 students. They are transported on eight contracted buses at a total annual cost of £277,371.

Policy Compliance

The Council policies relating to the provision of new schools can be found in the September 2007 Cabinet report *New Schools – Competition Arrangements, Policy and Decision-Making Process*. A summary of the key policies which a new school in Littleport needs to be considered against are:

- **Opening Date:** A new secondary school is expected to open in September at the beginning of an academic year. However, in order to ensure there is sufficient school provision for pupils moving into a new community, schools may need to be open at the beginning of the spring and summer terms. New secondary schools should be planned to open when there are around 150 pupils; this is deemed to be a sufficient cohort size to offer a range of curriculum subjects.
- **Capital Costs:** The costs for the new secondary school would be expected to be met through S106 contributions from the developer.
- **Provision for Special Educational Needs (SEN):** In 2001, the County Council published its SEN strategy. This states that all new schools will be designed to promote the inclusion of children and young people with SEN.
- **Catchment areas:** All new schools will operate on defined catchment areas informed by the County Council's Sustainable School Travel Strategy which promotes cycling and walking.
- **Extended Services:** All new schools are expected to be a focal point for their community and play an active part in their identified school cluster.
- **Location:** Schools are situated on suitable sites that can provide playing fields and good transport links. They should be sited as centrally as possible to the communities they serve, within a maximum of three miles walking distance for the majority of pupils, where possible, and close to good, local transport links and safe walking and cycling routes.
- **Number of places:** Council policy is that only in exceptional circumstances should the Council consider establishing a school smaller than 4FE (600 places) or larger than 11FE in order to provide a broad curriculum and a financially viable school. Schools should promote diversity and reflect local circumstances and should be built in no more than two phases.
- **Age range:** All new secondary schools will have an age range of 11-16 years and have the flexibility to support the implementation of the 14-19 diploma programme. A Cabinet decision approving a change to current policy would be required before a 0-16 all-through school, or any other variation to phased education, could be considered for Littleport,

The preferred option will comply with all of the existing policies except that, given the slow build up of pupil numbers and a medium term forecast of between 4 and 4.5FE, it is unlikely that a new school in Littleport will open with a cohort in Year 7 of 150 pupils. However, in the medium term the school will be expected to be above the Councils preferred minimum size of 600 pupils.