



Hertfordshire County Council

**Children's Services report on the assessment of education need for a
new secondary school in the Harpenden Secondary Planning Area**

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 1.1 HCC has a statutory duty to ensure a school place is offered to every child within the county who needs one. As commissioner of school places Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) faces the challenge of how to fulfil its statutory duty while supporting fair access and parental choice, irrespective of boundaries. Planning school places inevitably involves risk management, balancing the use of forecasts of an uncertain future against the absolute requirement to ensure adequate places are available. The starting point to this process is an assessment of need, which the council makes and reviews on a regular basis for each appropriate local area within the county.
- 1.2 This assessment of need for the Harpenden area will form the basis of evidence for any planning application process. The assessment will set out the overall growth in secondary places for the Harpenden Secondary Planning Area and through analysis of the primary pupil place planning data identify the area of greatest need.
- 1.3 Schools in Harpenden provide high quality education for which there is great demand. Some of the demand is from neighbouring village communities. However Harpenden schools' ability to accommodate these pupils is reducing as demand in Harpenden has increased.
- 1.4 The significant increase in the primary age population in recent years and the growth in housing has precipitated an immediate and growing demand for more secondary school places in the Harpenden Secondary Planning Area.
- 1.5. The most recent forecasts for the Harpenden area project a deficit of secondary school places from 2015/16 of 2.8 form of entry (f.e.) at Year 7, increasing to 8.3 f.e. from 2019/20. Between 2020/21 and 2022/23 this deficit is on average 7.6 f.e without any surplus capacity.
- 1.6 Consideration has been given to the capacity of all existing secondary schools in the Harpenden secondary planning area to expand. The flexibility for existing schools to expand is limited by town planning or highways constraints and they have indicated that they cannot create the capacity required to meet the forecast demand.
- 1.7 St. Albans District Council is currently considering the implications of a housing target growth of 450 dwellings per annum across the District. Harpenden Town has been identified as an area of growth. This places further emphasis on the need for additional school places in this area.
- 1.8 As the existing secondary schools cannot and/or will not provide additional capacity, nor is there capacity in the neighbouring secondary planning area of St. Albans, it is concluded a new secondary school is required in the Harpenden Secondary Planning Area to meet the forecast demand.

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1. This report sets out the assessment of the need for a new secondary school in the Harpenden Secondary Planning area. It explains the role of the County Council and its statutory duties. The report also explains how the HCC fulfils these duties when planning and commissioning school places through the application of standard processes and interpretation of data.
- 2.2. It not only considers the need for places within the Harpenden Secondary Planning area as whole but also looks at smaller geographical areas in order to identify the area of greatest need.
- 2.3. Children's Services has developed four criteria (known as the Director's 4 Tests) against which any school proposal is considered. These have been used for many years. Identifying the need for additional school places, is part of this process and HCC first considers whether the existing schools can expand before determining that a new provision is required.
- 2.4. HCC has a long term strategic role in planning school places and as a public funded body an obligation to ensure value for money. Therefore when considering the size and location of a new provision, HCC must not only consider the short term need for places (0-10 years) but any data which may indicate the medium (10-20 years) and long term needs (20+ years).
- 2.5. This document sets out how in determining the need for a new secondary school in the Harpenden Secondary Planning area, HCC is working to fulfil its statutory duties by considering relevant data and applying established processes.

3. ROLE OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL

- 3.1 HCC has a duty to keep an open mind throughout the decision making process ensuring that information is reviewed prior to any final decision being made. However, HCC is also required to make timely decisions in fulfilling its statutory duties and apply judgement to often complex and challenging issues.
- 3.2 HCC, as the local authority, is subject to a number of statutory duties and responsibilities when considering the case for the provision of additional school places. The relevant statutory duties in summary are as follows:
 - promoting high standards of education
 - planning and commissioning school places in its area
 - extending diversity and choice
 - co-ordinating admissions for all maintained schools
 - resourcing shared maintenance, improvement to and provision of the built environment, and securing value for money
- 3.3. The following paragraphs set out in more detail these statutory duties.

High standards of education

- 3.4 HCC has a key role under the School Standards and Framework Act (1998) and the Education and Inspections Act 2006 to promote high educational standards. It is also the lead partner in local children's trust arrangements.
- 3.5 Hertfordshire fulfils its responsibilities through the Hertfordshire Learning Partnership which recognises that pupil performance and wellbeing go hand in hand and that world class standards will only be reached by addressing both. The Partnership is for all maintained schools and other places where learning occurs in Hertfordshire. It sets out the key principles for the way in which schools, HCC and the wider children's partnership work together to break down barriers to learning and improve outcomes for all children and young people.
- 3.6 Educational standards are high across Hertfordshire. For secondary schools, in 2013 the average percentage of pupils achieving Level 2 (5+A*-C) including English and Maths was 62.6% which is 9.7% above the national average for all schools. Comparable educational standards in the Harpenden Secondary schools are higher than the County average, Roundwood Park School 75%, Sir John Lawes 80%, and St. Georges 90%.
- 3.7 While schools themselves have an active responsibility for their improvement in standards (Academy Act 2010), and for those of other school in the system, HCC continues to hold a democratic accountability for securing outcomes for children and young people within its area by promoting high standards and the fulfilment of learning potential.

Planning for and commissioning school places in its area

- 3.8 The role of HCC in ensuring a sufficient supply of suitable school places is now that of a commissioner rather than as a direct provider of school places. HCC has a duty to secure sufficient school places in its area and to allocate those places to the children of all parents who want one.
- 3.9 HCC fulfils these planning responsibilities by forecasting the demand for school places in order to ensure an appropriate balance between supply and demand within the maintained sector. It negotiates the right number of places on an annual basis and undertakes longer term strategic planning.
- 3.10 HCC produces bespoke local forecasts of the demand for secondary school places to anticipate a shortfall or surplus of places by Education Planning Areas (EPAs). Pupil numbers are forecast taking into account:
- historic pupil numbers in each school year group
 - 0-5 year olds registered with general practitioners
 - primary pupils moving on to secondary school

- additional pupils arising from new housing developments
- pupil movement patterns, taking account of cross-area flows both within planning areas within Hertfordshire and in and out of the county, as well as from the independent sector.

3.11 Secondary school forecasts are based on actual children, both in schools and registered with general practitioners, for 12 years ahead together with a calculation of additional pupils arising from new housing developments. Beyond 2024/25, pupil projections inevitably are less certain as those children who will require a secondary place are not yet born.

3.12 Nationally, there has been a substantial increase in the demand for school places. This challenging trend was first identified in Hertfordshire in 2009. HCC published a strategy document “Meeting Raising Demand for School Places”. This strategy document focused largely on primary provision (where increase in demand generally is being experienced first) but also recognised the rising demand for secondary places too, including a growing need in Harpenden.

3.13 As a commissioner, HCC manages this increase in numbers by negotiating additional places in existing schools wherever possible. In recent years more schools have acquired autonomy through conversion to Academy status. This means that individual academies may choose not to expand to meet the rising demand for places and HCC does not have the powers to instruct or publish proposals for these schools. This can create additional complexity for HCC when seeking to fulfil its statutory duty to secure sufficient school places.

3.14 Should a new school be required there is a legal presumption that it will be either an academy or free school, not a community school (promoted by the local authority). Therefore, where forecasts indicate that a new school is required; HCC would seek promoters of a new school and/or liaise with sponsors to initiate that provision.

3.15 To ensure that any pupil place planning proposal is developed and within the legal framework summarised in paragraph 3.4 above, Children’s Services has developed and applies four criteria (known as the Director’s 4 Tests) against which any school re-organisation is considered. Applying these tests is part of the process when considering changes to the education provision across Hertfordshire. These Tests are:

- 1 - Does the option provide places where they are needed?
- 2 Does the option promote and not undermine education achievement?
- 3 - Is the option sustainable in terms of deliverability and cost?
- 4 - What are the transitional arrangements?

3.16 The four criteria align with the statutory obligations as follows:

Criteria(Director's 4 Tests)	Statutory Obligations
1. Does the option provide places where they are needed	Planning/commissioning of school places Co-ordinating admissions for all maintained schools Extending Diversity and Choice
2. Does the option promote and not undermine education achievement	Promoting high standards
3. Is the option sustainable in terms of deliverability and cost	Resourcing shared maintenance, improvement to and provision of the built environment and securing value for money
4. What are the transitional arrangements	Promoting high standards of education Securing value for money

3.17 The tests are applied incrementally; the first two at an early stage by Children's Services, test 3 includes the Town Planning Appraisal process and test 4 if and when transitional arrangements are required.

3.18 Further information on the interpretation and application of the Director's 4 Tests is set out below:

Test 1 – Ensuring that provision is as well located as possible to meet the greatest demand for school places. Pupil place planning data is utilised in the application of this criteria.

Test 2 - Educational considerations are taken into account in the application of this criteria in particular considering whether the option promotes and does not undermine education achievement.

In relation to the size of the school this means, wherever possible, creating a school of a size that HCC believes would be educationally and financially sustainable and less vulnerable to changing pupil numbers in the long term. For secondary schools HCC has a preference for secondary schools of 6-10 f.e. for this reason and to establish a pattern of provision/local network of successful schools which is well placed to respond the potential for fluctuating pupil numbers in the future.

Test 3 – Considers the technical deliverability of a school site in terms of town planning, for example: affordability/design. This test is often the most restrictive.

Test 4 – Analyses impact on new and/or existing pupils during the transitional stage.

Extending Diversity and Choice

- 3.19 HCC also has a duty to 'secure diversity in the provision of schools and increase opportunities for parental choice' (Education and Inspections Act 2006). Hertfordshire has a rich diversity of provision including every category of school provision, many of which are faith or single sex schools. HCC celebrates this diversity and is keen to ensure that parents continue to have a choice of good quality school provision for which they can express a preference under determined admission arrangements. It takes diversity and choice into account when proposing or considering changes to school provision.
- 3.20 Where schools are popular and therefore over-subscribed, HCC also has a duty to encourage these schools to expand (Education and Inspections Act 2006).

Co-ordinating admissions and ensuring fair access

- 3.21. It is a statutory requirement that HCC co-ordinates the allocation of school places on behalf of all admissions authorities in its area, in accordance with their determined admission criteria. HCC is the admissions authority for all community and voluntary-controlled schools whereas foundation, trust, voluntary-aided schools, academies and 'free' schools are their own admission authority and responsible for setting their own admission criteria. The current School Admissions Code requires all admitting authorities to determine their admission arrangements by 15th April in the previous academic year (i.e. April 2014 for admission in September 2015). This determination includes the number of places to be available in the relevant admission year (Published Admission Number or PAN) and the criteria order by which such places are to be allocated.
- 3.22 Admissions arrangements can affect the likelihood of local children accessing local school places. Many schools, such as foundation, voluntary-aided schools and academies, have responsibility for determining their own admission arrangements, including oversubscription criteria, in accordance with the requirements of the School Admissions Code. Local Authorities have an overarching duty to report on the compliance of school admission arrangements with the Code, and must refer arrangements to the Schools Adjudicator if they believe them to be unlawful. However, local authorities cannot decide the admission arrangements for own admission authority schools and academies. Therefore, in areas where most or all schools are academies, voluntary aided or foundation schools, the local authority cannot ensure that admission arrangements will prioritise the most local pupils.

Resourcing shared maintenance, improvement to and provision of the built environment and securing value for money

- 3.23 The supply of funding for school places is limited and currently includes central government grants, and developers' contributions to the infrastructure requirements arising from new housing development proposals.
- 3.24 HCC receives formulaic basic need capital allocations from the Department for Education (DfE) to support the expansion of school places.

- 3.25 Historically Local authorities have been invited by the Department for Education (DfE) to bid for funding through the Targeted Basic Need Programme, which has included expansion projects.
- 3.26 Central government also retains some capital funding for academies and free schools, building maintenance and potential expansion. This funding may be accessible in the future, depending upon the delivery mechanism for a new school.
- 3.27 While HCC has financial responsibilities for the maintenance of existing community and foundation school premises, academies and free Schools bid directly to the Education Funding Agency (EFA) for their financial support.

4. THE NEED FOR A NEW SECONDARY SCHOOL

Background

- 4.1. The Harpenden Secondary Planning Area is drawn to broadly align with parish council boundaries and to reflect the area within which historically pupils attend secondary schools. Most pupils in this area attend Harpenden schools and are reasonably accessible. There are currently three secondary schools in the Harpenden Secondary Planning area. St. George's, Sir John Lawes and Roundwood Park Schools. In 2009 these schools had a total year 7 capacity of 542 places.
- 4.2. As referenced in paragraph 3.12. HCC first identified the growing pressure for school places in the 'Meeting the Rising Demand' document, which was presented to its cabinet in 2009.
- 4.3. In 2010, St Albans published a draft core strategy document for comment, which outlined projected housing targets and potential areas of search for housing developments across the district. At that time, the forecast across the Harpenden and St Albans secondary planning areas indicated a deficit of places, up to 11 f.e.
- 4.4. Given the significant forecast deficit of places in the area, it was considered necessary to respond robustly to the draft core strategy in relation to education requirements across the planned period. As these two secondary planning areas largely cover the St. Albans District Council area, HCC appointed a specialist Town Planning Consultant, Vincent and Goring, to carry out a Town Planning Appraisal for both these areas. This report was commissioned in 2010 and required the Consultants not only to look for new sites but to also assess whether the existing schools had capacity to expand. It was intended that this report would be presented to St. Albans District Council to support the identification of new education sites through the local development framework.
- 4.5. The rationale for determining the area for the site search for consultant's review was primarily based on the premise that any new provision would need to meet the Director's 4 Tests. It was considered reasonable to concentrate the search in the

area of greatest need and adjacent to the largest settlements in that area i.e. the settlements of Harpenden and St. Albans for the following reasons:

- St. Albans District Council's consultation 'Shaping our community - the Core Strategy' identified areas of search for future housing growth in the largest conurbations in the District. This meant that the greatest pupil yield from new housing would be seen in the District's city/towns, including Harpenden, over the planned period..
- Previous experience of small secondary schools in semi-rural, village locations (Wheathampstead and Redbourn) is that they are particularly vulnerable to varying and reducing pupil numbers and changeable parental preference. Small secondary schools in Redbourn, Langleybury and Wheathampstead had to close due to reduction in pupil numbers.
- No single village in the Harpenden Secondary Planning Area had a sufficient base population to sustain a secondary school of 6-10 f.e.
- The total first preferences for each of the Harpenden Secondary schools exceeded the number places available. This showed that Harpenden schools were a popular choice for parents, indicating a preference for those schools.

4.6. Vincent and Gorbing produced their report in 2011 and this evidence was submitted to St. Albans District Council (SADC) in the expectation that the report would have been reviewed and, following a consultation, SADC would have allocated sites for education purposes, including one at Harpenden. This would have enabled the identified site(s) to be removed from the Green Belt. This is consistent with the approach taken by other Local Authorities as part of their special planning process.

CURRENT REVIEW OF THE NEED

4.7 In the absence of an updated St. Alban's District Plan and the pressing timescale to deliver a new school to meet demand, HCC considers that an alternative route to securing a planning permission is required and that preparation for a Special Circumstances Case is the only way forward.

4.8 Furthermore, as a number of years had passed since the need was originally identified, Children's Services has reviewed the most recent pupil place planning data to ensure that the location and quantum of education need has not significantly changed.

4.9. The Director's 4 Test approach was taken for the review with a focus on Test 1 and 2. A range of pupil place planning data sets were analysed for Test 1. For Test 2, comment was sought from The Hertfordshire Learning Partnership.

TEST 1:

4.10. The current total PAN in the Harpenden secondary planning area is 572.compared to 542 in 2009. This increase which reflects the minor changes in capacity that the schools were prepared to make without, in their view, impacting on educational standards, in order to assist in meeting the rising demand for places. The following table shows each school’s PAN in 2009 and 2014.

School	PAN as at 2009	PAN as at 2014
St. George’s	180*	180*
Roundwood Park	182	196
Sir John Lawes	180	196
TOTAL	542	572

** Included in the places available are 20 boarding places at St. Georges School, these pupils do not necessarily reside in the immediate area.*

4.11 The potential for the existing schools to permanently expand was considered. As set out in paragraph 3.13, all of the existing schools are academies. HCC does not have the power to instruct or publish proposals for these schools but it did approach all three schools to seek their views on their willingness to expand.

4.12 As all three schools have confirmed that they are unwilling or unable to expand the only option available to the County is to create the additional places in a new school on a new site. Even if all the schools had indicated a willingness to permanently expand the maximum number of additional places created at the existing schools would not meet the forecast demand.

4.13. The most recent forecast (produced July 2014) compared with the places available (PAN 2014/15) is shown in the following table:

HARPENDEN SECONDARY PLANNING AREA

Year	Places Available (PAN 2014/15)	Forecast	% of Places Available	FE
2014/15	572	606	-5.9%	-1.1
2015/16	572	656	-14.7%	-2.8
2016/17	572	649	-13.5%	-2.6
2017/18	572	692	-21.0%	-4.0
2018/19	572	737	-28.8%	-5.5
2019/20	572	820	-43.4%	-8.3
2020/21	572	796	-39.2%	-7.5
2021/22	572	819	-43.2%	-8.2
2022/23	572	788	-37.8%	-7.2

- 4.14 For 2014/15 and beyond that there will be a deficit of 1.1 f.e. in the Harpenden planning area, increasing to 4.0 f.e. from 2017/18 and to 8.3 f.e. in 2019/20. Between 2020/21 and 2022/23 this deficit is on average 7.6 f.e without any surplus capacity.
- 4.15 There is public support for the provision of a new secondary school. HCC has received a petition from the Harpenden Parents Group with over 1,400 signatures indicating support for a new secondary school in Harpenden.
- 4.16. **This demonstrates that there is a significant need for additional places in the Harpenden Secondary Planning Area to meet the forecast demand and that these additional places will need to be provided in a new school.**

Additional information relating to need in the Harpenden Secondary Planning area

- 4.17 For school place planning purposes the Harpenden Secondary Planning area is broken down into smaller Primary Planning Areas (PPAs). As such, it is appropriate to use these established PPAs (and therefore established data sets) to identify whether there is a specific smaller geographical area of greatest need within the wider secondary planning area. This is particularly relevant as there is a direct relationship between the primary and secondary planning areas for forecasting purposes.
- 4.18 To demonstrate how and where the increase in demand in each of the Primary Planning Areas has been met, a comparison can be made between the 2009/10 and 2014/15 PANs. This is set out in the following table. A full list of the primary schools in the areas and the individual school PAN's is available as appendix C.

Primary Planning Area	PAN 2009/10	PAN 2014/15	Increase in PAN
Redbourn	60	60	0
Harpenden	412	517*	105 (3.5 f.e)
Wheathampstead	70	90	20 (0.7 f.e.)
The Waldens	62	62	0
Hemel Rural North	45	45**	0

* Includes Harpenden Free School temporarily located Redbourn until September 2015 at which time it will move to its permanent premises in Harpenden town centre. As a free school it has its own admission rules which are not distance based and therefore draws from a wider area.

**Markyate School PAN will increase by 15 places from 2015/16, bringing the total PAN in Hemel Hempstead North to 60.

- 4.19 The following table provides further information on which schools in the PPAs have been expanded either on a temporary or permanent basis since 2010/11.

PRIMARY PLANNING AREA	YEAR	SCHOOL	TEMPORARY (f.e)	PERMANENT (f.e)
Redbourn	2012/13	Redbourn Infants	1	
Permanent places Redbourn total				0
Harpenden	2010/11	The Grove Infants	0.5	
	2011/12	The Grove Infants	0.5	
		St Dominic's	1	
		The Lea	1	
	2012/13	The Grove Infants	1	
		St. Dominic's	1	
		Wood End	1	
		Manland	1	
		Harpenden Free School		2
	2013/14	The Grove Infants and Junior		0.5
		High Beeches		1
Permanent places Harpenden total				3.5
Hemel Rural North	2013/14	Markyate School	0.4	
	2014/15		0.5	
	2015/16			0.5
Permanent places HRN total				0.5
Wheathampstead		Beech Hyde	1	
		St Helens		0.7
Permanent places Wheathampstead total				0.7

Admissions Considerations

4.20 Although the pupil place data demonstrates where places are needed, it is also important to consider the implications of parental preference. In order to understand the implications in this area, information has been sought from the Admissions and Transport team, especially as admissions and transport arrangements can influence parental preference. The following commentary has been provided by the Children Services Admissions and Transport Team.

4.21. All three existing secondary schools in Harpenden are academies and are therefore responsible for deciding and implementing their own admission arrangements.

- Sir John Lawes and Roundwood Park Schools have adopted similar arrangements to those determined by the county council, and use a priority area naming Harpenden, St Albans & surrounding villages (Wheathampstead, Kimpton, St Paul's Walden, Flamstead & Markyate etc) which was established over 10 years ago.

- St Georges is a denominational school that prioritises children living with a parent or parents with a Christian commitment shown by membership of a Christian Church who live in the parishes of Harpenden (80%) and surrounding villages (20%) Ayot St Lawrence, Flamstead, Harpenden Rural, Kimpton, Kings Walden, Markyate, Redbourn, St Paul's Walden and Wheathampstead.

- 4.22. The Harpenden Secondary Schools remain popular, for example in September 2014 the three Harpenden secondary schools received 670 first preference applications; 597 from within the priority area for Roundwood Park and Sir John Lawes. Overall the schools received 3,022 ranked preferences this year. The popularity of the existing schools can further be demonstrated through scrutiny of the allocations made to each school in recent years, for example for 2014 both Roundwood Park and Sir John Lawes Schools (after the application of higher oversubscription criteria, e.g. siblings) only admitted children who lived in the priority area for whom the school was "nearest".
- 4.23. All three schools therefore prioritise children from a broadly similar area: Harpenden and the surrounding villages to the North, East and West. Whilst the existing schools could propose changes to their admission arrangements through a formal consultation process, it would be difficult for schools to justify changes to long standing arrangements. The existing schools are therefore not proposing to amend their admission arrangements.
- 4.24 As the majority of rising pupil demand will come from Harpenden town, (refer to pupil place planning data) it argues for a secondary school site within or on the borders of the town itself.

Transport

- 4.25 The County Council is obliged to provide free home to school transport to those children who have a statutory entitlement. Very few children qualify for assistance with transport under this policy and it is therefore important to consider how parents/carers would be able to access any potential new school sites.
- 4.26 Harpenden town is well served by a number of council-run, commercial and public bus/coach routes, which allow pupils from the surrounding villages easy access to the three existing secondary schools in the town. Currently, HCC provides 4 education routes (serving the villages of Cockernhoe, Kimpton, Breachwood Green and Whitwell) that transport 158 pupils to Harpenden secondary schools. In addition, there are 4 public bus routes (run by Uno) serving the villages of Flamstead, Redbourn, Wheathampstead and Markyate, used by pupils attending school in Harpenden. Most of these routes run close to or past one or more of the sites (identified by Vincent and Goring) on the perimeter of the town which have been identified as potential school sites and could be used to enable easy and sustainable access to a new school.
- 4.27. Should a new school be located outside of Harpenden, access would not be as easy for village families. If new school was located in a village to the east of Harpenden, for example, and the Harpenden Schools filled up with Harpenden

Town pupils it could potentially leave children in the villages to the west of Harpenden with a significant journey.

Consideration of locating the new school in one of the Villages

- 4.28 Although the greatest increased demand is in the Harpenden Primary planning area consideration has been given to locating the new provision outside Harpenden in one of the villages, which could in turn reduce pressure on the Harpenden Town Schools. One option would be to locate in Wheathampstead as of the 3 villages, this is the village with the greatest increased growth. However, this is not the preferred option because:
- a. The primary pupil numbers in Wheathampstead have been variable over the past four years which does not provide a sound basis for projections going forward.
 - b. The combined total of planned admission numbers (PAN) of the Wheathampstead and The Waldens Primary planning areas is 152, which is just less than a 6 f.e school and therefore any volatility in numbers may mean the school may not fill
 - c. Although the combined total of potential pupils in Wheathampstead and other villages to the north and east equates to around 5 f.e. this assumes that all parents/carers would indicate this school as their preference. It is unlikely that this will be the case given parental preference for single sex, faith and other provision.
 - d. Indications from St. Albans District Council are that housing growth will be focussed around larger settlements not the villages, therefore in the longer term it is unlikely that pupils arising from housing growth would attend the school.
 - e. A secondary school in Wheathampstead previously had to close due to fluctuating numbers.
 - f. The creation of a new school provision in proximity to existing and successful secondary schools would create a pattern of provision which could enable a strong network, well placed as a group to respond to any future changes in demographics across the area as a whole.
- 4.29 Furthermore, to extend the site search now would incur additional costs and extend the programme by 6-12 months which, given immediacy of the need for a new school and the factors outlined above, does not demonstrate value for money and increases the probability of pupils being without a school place.

The Strategic Planning Role

- 4.30 As set out in paragraph 2.4 HCC has a strategic school place planning role. Therefore in addition to the current pupil place planning data, consideration has also been given to the likely longer term need for a new secondary school and the impact of housing growth.

- 4.31 SADC is currently considering the impact of a housing growth target of 450. It will be necessary to calculate and refine the child yield calculation arising from this growth as further information is provided by SADC.
- 4.32 St. Albans District Council has also commissioned a review of green belt sites and boundary studies. That report was presented to St. Albans District Council in January 2014. It identified a number of sites around Harpenden Town that are currently in green belt as potential housing development sites. It has not identified any of these 'strategic sub areas' in any of the villages within the planning area. This continues to indicate that pupil place growth associated with new larger new housing developments will be in and around and the larger settlements, not the villages.
- 4.33 As such, all current information from the local planning authority continues to support the need to secure a site for an 8 f.e. school, in order to ensure adequate flexibility over the planned period.

4.34 **To summarise, Test 1 demonstrates that:**

- (1) there is an immediate and growing need for additional school places in the Harpenden Secondary Planning Area, and that the additional places will need to be provided within in a new school;**
- (2) within the Harpenden Secondary Planning Area, Harpenden Town is the area of greatest need;**
- (3) for the reasons set out in paragraph 4.28 siting a school in a village is not the preferred option;**
- (4) given the likely housing growth target, it is reasonable to conclude that that a new school in Harpenden can be sustained; and**
- (5) for long term planning a site which can accommodate an 8 f.e. school is required.**

TEST 2

- 4.35. Test 2 asks "Does the option promote and not undermine education achievement?"
- 4.36. As explained in paragraph 3.2. HCC fulfils its statutory obligations through Hertfordshire Learning Partnership (HLP). The following commentary has been submitted by HLP.
- 4.37 "The principles applied to measure this criteria are: current and recent educational standards, matched against future standards, ability of current schools to engage in school-to-school, system led leadership, popularity of existing schools, continued 4the Alban Teaching School Alliance.
- 4.38 Harpenden is currently served by three schools that are currently judged as 'outstanding' under the new Ofsted framework. In addition, all of the three schools are high-performing schools in terms of standards of attainment and achievement. These schools all currently work closely together, in partnership with the 'Alban Teaching School Alliance', to ensure educational excellence across the district.

Creating a new school, that would be part of this highly successful collaboration, is clearly the best way of ensuring that any new provision is delivered to the same high standard. The opening of a new school within the area, supported by these existing schools, would give the community every confidence that it would be well-managed, and have an extremely high probability of being an outstanding and successful school.

- 4.39 When considering the relevance, or not, of the geographical location of a new school, it would seem logical to consider sites that respond to the geographical demand for greatest need and ideally located in order that any new facility would supplement, and complement, the existing resources/facilities. For example developing state of the art specialist teaching accommodation, sharing of high quality staff resources, exploring collaborative timetabling, thereby benefiting not only the pupils at the new school but all the secondary pupils in the Harpenden Secondary Planning area.”
- 4.40 HCC’s preferred secondary school size is between 6-10 f.e This size of school is considered to have the most efficient operating model as with the funding available it enables the school to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum, with appropriate levels of staffing and resources.
- 4.41 All publicly funded schools receive a revenue allocation predominately based on the number of pupils at a school. It is therefore imperative year on year for any school to attract and retain pupils as this has a direct impact on its funding. The level of funding a school receives greatly influences its ability to maintain a good standard of education for its pupils and build up reserves which will enable it to smooth the impact of fluctuating pupil numbers.
- 4.42 To summarise, Test 2 concludes that creating a new school, that would be part of a highly successful collaboration, is the best way to ensure that any new provision is delivered to the same high standard as existing provision in the area. HCC’s preferred secondary school size is between 6-10 f.e as this is considered to be financially and educationally viable in the long term.**

TEST 3

- 4.43 Test 3 asks “ Is the option sustainable in terms of deliverability and cost”. This test focuses on the site and built environment.
- 4.44 HCC has adopted the Department for Education’s Building Bulletin 98 guidelines. Highlights from this Building Bulletin for a 6 f.e. school are as follows:
- 12-15 Hectares (c.4 ha will be built and include hard play and parking areas)
 - Sustainably located/well located to area of demand
 - Flat
 - Accessible to pedestrians, vehicles and public transport
 - Free from site constraints (if possible)
 - Deliverable

- Whole i.e. -not subdivided by vehicular access or the need for detached playing fields

- 4.45. For long term planning purposes a site that can accommodate an 8 f.e. school is required. It is within this framework of preferred size of school and site area that the Vincent and Gorbing undertook their Town Planning feasibility work in 2010.
- 4.46. The Vincent and Gorbing 2011 feasibility report relates to Test 3, however, further detailed feasibility work needs to take place.

Test 3 concludes that further feasibility work is required to identify a preferred site which can accommodate an 8 f.e. school

TEST 4

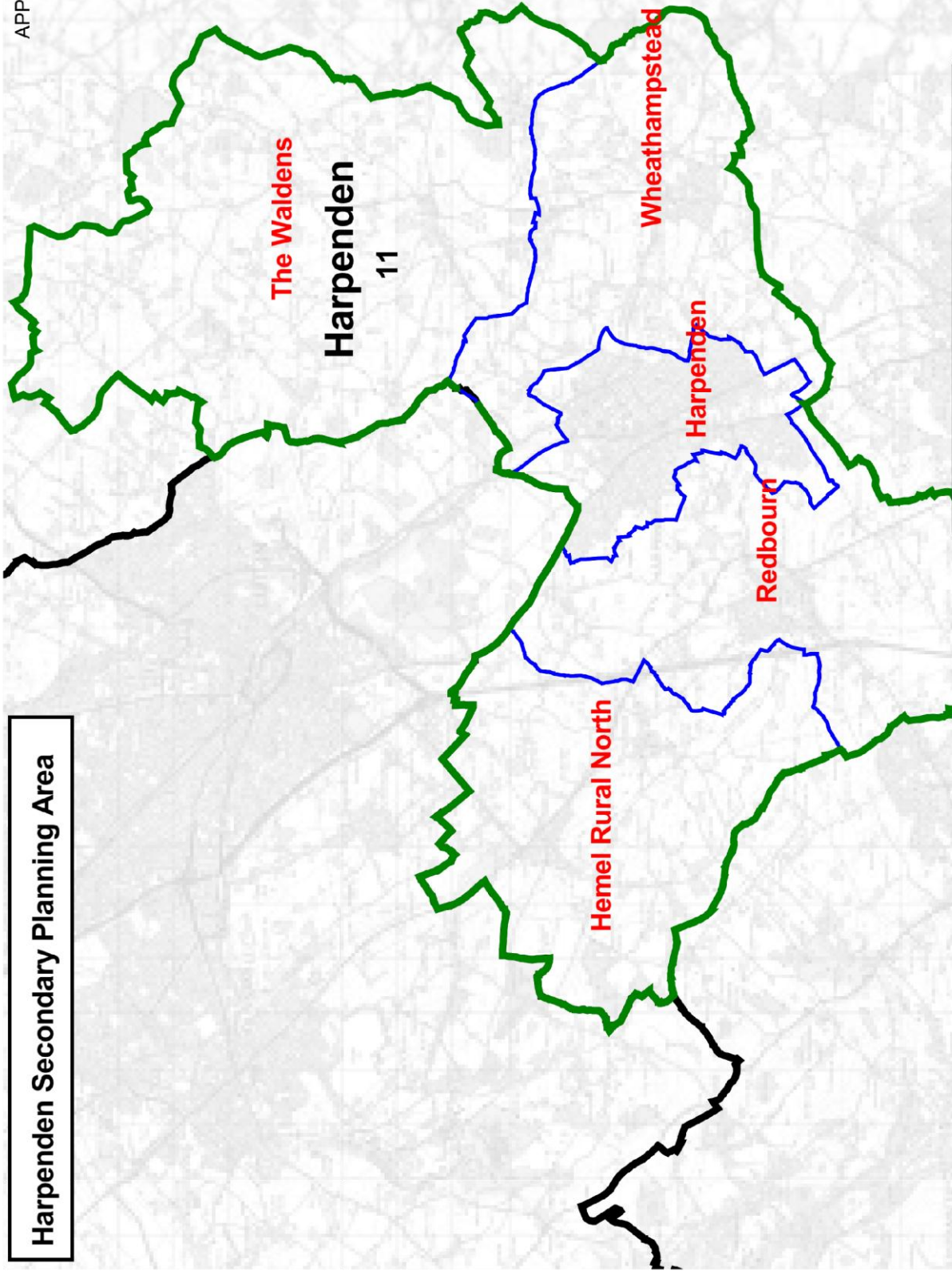
- 4.47 Test 4 asks “What are the transitional arrangements?”
- 4.48 As a permanent proposal has yet to be finalised, but there is and will continue to be pressure on places in the Harpenden Secondary Planning area, consideration has been given to what arrangements can be put in place for pupils whilst the final solution is being developed and delivered.
- 4.49 The three existing schools have indicated that they do not have the capacity to expand. Therefore as demand in Harpenden Town has increased the geographical area from which the Harpenden Schools admit pupils has reduced and pupils outside Harpenden Town will year on year be less likely to be allocated a place at an existing Harpenden School. This is predominantly impacting on pupils from Wheathampstead at this stage.
- 4.50 Consideration has therefore been given to whether any of the schools in the Neighbouring Secondary Planning Area of St. Albans have spare places or can increase their capacity. In 2013 an approach was made to Sandringham School, to increase its PAN to 210 from 2015/16 as it is the next nearest school for Wheathampstead pupils. Sandringham School has subsequently amended its admissions rules to make specific reference to include 25 children from Wheathampstead parish. This will not only have a positive impact for the pupils in Wheathampstead, but will reduce demand on the Harpenden schools in the short term. Should a new school be provided in the Harpenden Planning Area the Wheathampstead children will be able to look to this school in the longer term.
- 4.51. Although pressure on places in the St. Albans Secondary Planning Area is growing, the current forecast indicates that there will be at least 121 spare places available until 2016/17, meaning there is capacity across the two planning areas.
- 4.52. Test 4 concludes that in the short term additional 25 places at Sandringham School for Wheathampstead pupils will assist in reducing the pressure on places for Harpenden and that overall St. Albans Secondary Planning Area has some spare capacity until 2019/20.**

4.53. The forecasts are refreshed twice a year, the next forecast is due in June 2014 at which time the pupil place planning data for the Harpenden Secondary Planning area will be refined as part of the preparation for the planning application.

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1. There is strong evidence of an immediate and growing need for additional secondary school places in the Harpenden Secondary Planning Area
- 5.2. Existing schools in Harpenden have indicated that they do not have the capacity to meet the forecast demand and therefore a new school is required to meet this need
- 5.3. Within the Harpenden Secondary Planning Area, Harpenden town is the area with the greatest increase in demand for places
- 5.4. That the preferred location for a new school is in or around Harpenden town and not a village for the reasons set out in paragraph 4.28
- 5.4. Given the likely housing growth target, it is reasonable to conclude that that the demand for places in Harpenden is likely to be sustained
- 5.5. For long term planning a site which can accommodate an 8 f.e. school is required.

Harpden Secondary Planning Area



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APPENDIX B

Information about secondary providers in Harpenden Secondary Planning Areas

Name	Category	Type	PAN 2014/15
St. George's School	Outstanding	Academy	180
Sir John Lawes	Outstanding	Academy	196
Roundwood Park	Outstanding	Academy	196

APPENDIX C

PRIMARY PLANNING AREA	SCHOOL	PAN 2014/15
Redbourn	Redbourn Infant and Junior	60
Harpenden	The Lea Primary	30
	Manland Primary	30
	St. Nicholas C of E Primary	22
	High Beeches Primary	60
	Sauncey Wood Primary	30
	Roundwood Primary	45
	Grove Infant and Junior	90
	Wood End	60
	St. Dominic RC	30
	Harpenden Free School	60
	Crabtree Infant and Junior	30
Wheathampstead	St. Helen's	40
	Beech Hyde Primary	30
The Waldens	Kimpton Primary	30
	St. Paul's Walden	17
	Breachwood Green	15
Hemel Rural North	Markyate	30
	Flamstead	15