

People Scrutiny Commission

14th December 2020



Report of: Alison Hurley – Director, Education and Skills

Title: Temple Quarter – Free School Update

Ward: All

Officer Presenting Report: Alison Hurley

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Recommendation:

That the Commission note the report

The significant issues in the report are:

Update on the progress for the proposed new secondary provision as part of the wider Silverthorne Lane development plan.

Clarification on the arrangements for meeting Year 7 sufficiency in 2021



1. Summary

The planned development of the third secondary free school at Temple Quarter continues to experience delays and will not be opening in temporary accommodation for September 2021. The ongoing issues with the general planning approval of Silverthorne Lane, which the school is also subject to, means that the Department for Education (DfE) is unable to progress until planning consent is fully approved.

The decision in August 2020, by Bristol City Council (BCC), to approve the planning application was a positive step, however, an objection from the Environment Agency resulted in an “Article 31 Holding Direction” being issued, which means the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) needs more time to consider the case and could potentially ‘call in’ the scheme, which could result in a lengthy Public Inquiry.

The DfE confirmed on 17th September that it can only pursue opening the new school in temporary accommodation once there is certainty of delivery for the permanent scheme and planning permission has been secured. As planning permission has not yet been secured, a provisional opening date has not been confirmed for Oasis Academy Temple Quarter.

Although BCC is not the responsible body for the development or opening of new free schools, it does retain the statutory duty to provide sufficient school places. There is an estimated shortfall of 170 Year 7 places for the East Central area for September 2021.

Due to increased demand in Year 7 places in previous years, there is no capacity in 2021 to expand or provide ‘bulge’ provision, without creating temporary accommodation on the sites of existing secondary schools in the area. Therefore, the proposal is to relocate the majority of Post 16 students from Bristol Brunel Academy (BBA) and John Cabot Academy (JCA) into an existing CLF academy in South Gloucestershire. This move would enable approximately 138 additional Year 7 places to be made available in September 2021 and make a significant contribution to the current shortfall.

CLF’s strategic ambition is to create a permanent Post 16 offering within BS5, and the temporary arrangements for 2021-22 would support this development, using the £4.5m as an investment in a permanent solution as opposed to temporary. This proposal was approved by Cabinet on 1st December 2020.

2. Context

Background

Bristol City Council’s ‘Integrated Education and Capital Strategy (2015-2019)’ identified the urgent future need for secondary places. Pupil projections and admissions data in 2015 showed a number of key factors that influenced the secondary sector capital strategy. The growth in births between 2005 and 2012 (12% rise) and the year-on-year success of secondary provision in the city, meant more students were attracted to Bristol’s schools.

Projections at the time showed the numbers of year 7 children would peak by 2023 (at 4,927 students) and thereafter was projected to reduce. Modelling demonstrated that potentially 35 additional forms of entry at Year 7 would be required by 2023.

Funding for new school places is provided to LAs through the allocation of Basic Need Grant. This takes account of the available places across all school year groups and the projected demand. In recent years the Government established the Free School programme with capital costs of schools being met directly by Government. The contribution of places from these schools, reduce the requirement under Basic Need. Applications and approvals are in 'waves'. An alternative route to a new Free School is where an LA has capital available from, for instance, developer contributions from large housing developments. This is known as the 'presumption' route. Although there has been extensive housing development, this has been smaller apartments that do not generate large contributions for Education.

'Basic Need' allocations are calculated on individual years and a standard allocation per pupil place required. Unless these can be saved over a number of years, they are insufficient to fund whole new secondary school developments, particularly where land and other costs are high. The allocations for Bristol were limited due to space in higher year groups and were used to fund the expansion of existing schools to meet the immediate need for places, with an expectation that new schools would be approved under the Free School programme for future requirements.

The Wave 12 Free School Application process commenced in 2016, with Academy Trusts applying to establish the three new secondary provisions across the city. This was the only viable option to provide the 3 new schools required in the Integrated Education and Capital Strategy.

Sufficiency

The Local Authority has a statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient school places within Bristol (Education Act 1996 Section 14(1)). The city previously experienced a dramatic rise in primary school pupil numbers which is now impacting on secondary schools. A number of schools have been expanded and the new Trinity Academy free school opened in 2019. Further free schools were approved by the Department for Education (DfE) to serve the East Central and South areas.

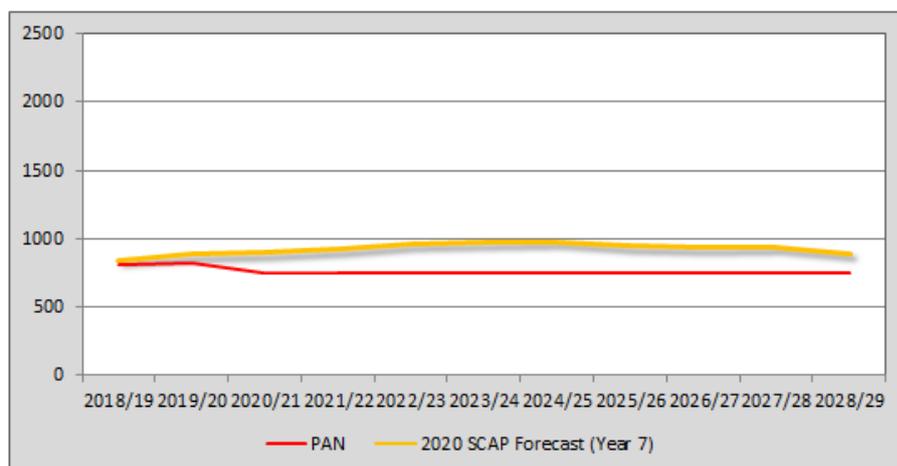
The East Central area has already seen a large increase in demand for secondary school places and delays in delivering Oasis Academy Temple Quarter mean that there have been more pupils seeking a place than places available for the past 3 to 4 years. In order to allow the LA to fulfil the statutory duty to provide places, existing schools have agreed to take more pupils than their Published Admissions Number (PAN). The main 3 schools serving East Central are Bristol Brunel Academy (BBA), Bristol Metropolitan Academy (BMA) and City Academy. Fairfield High and Cotham also admit significant numbers of pupils living in East

Central, although they are located in North. Bristol Cathedral Choir School, Colston’s Girls’ School, and St Mary Redcliffe and Temple School have admissions policies which mean some pupils are admitted from East Central.

Secondary Sufficiency – East Central

8010015	PAN	2020 SCAP Forecast (Year 7)
2018/19	808	841
2019/20	824	878
2020/21	747	890
2021/22	747	917
2022/23	747	956
2023/24	747	966
2024/25	747	974
2025/26	747	938
2026/27	747	928

BCC School Place Planning Sept 2020



Establishment	PAN 2019/2020	PAN 2020/2021	PAN 2021/2022	NOR Jan 2019	NOR Jan 2020
Avanti Garden's Academy Bristol	52	0	0	45	15
The City Academy Bristol	195	195	195	197	215
Bristol Brunel Academy	232	232	232	232	260
Colston's Girls' School	165	140	140	168	167
Bristol Metropolitan Academy	180	180	180	199	221
Total	824	747	747	841	878

3. Free School Guidance and Policy

The Government guidance and policy for free schools is published by the Department of education, available at the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/free-school-application-guide>

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Background Papers:

- Integrated Education and Capital Strategy (2015-2019)