

## **Overview of School Place Planning in Gloucestershire**

- 1        The County Council has a statutory duty to plan the provision of school places and to ensure there are sufficient, appropriately located places for all 4 to 16 year old young people in the County. This includes the commissioning of suitable school accommodation to support the promotion of high-quality educational standards and to ensure vulnerable learners get fair access to educational opportunities. The County Council manages the impact of rising and declining pupil numbers and helps to create a diverse community of schools.
- 2        The County Council is in the process of preparing a draft *Gloucestershire School Places Strategy 2018 – 2023*, which provides the context for pupil place planning across the county and focusses on the short, medium and longer term plans for ensuring sufficient school places to meet the demand arising from demographic growth, migration and new housing. An extract from the Strategy states that “The fundamental aim in planning school places is to provide places near to where children live, in order to meet parental preferences as far as possible, to place schools at the heart of their communities and to minimise travel to school distances.”
- 3        The planning and organisation of school places in the Local Authority is a complex task, not least because of the size and diversity of the County.

## **Pupil Place Planning**

- 4        Gloucestershire is a predominantly rural County. It has a population of 628,139 (2017), however nearly 40% of the population live in the urban areas of Gloucester and Cheltenham.
- 5        Pupil projections are reviewed and updated annually as part of the school planning process and in order to inform the annual Schools Capacity Survey (SCAP) provided to the Department for Education. There are two key data sources that inform future projections:
  - (a)        Anonymised birth and population data, relating to pre-school children, based on GP patient registers and provided by NHS Digital
  - (b)        Pupil Numbers from the DfE School Census
- 6        The County Council produces pupil projections for individual schools across both the primary and secondary school phases. Bespoke automated systems generate figures in the early stages of the process. To inform the process of forecasting primary

school numbers, the County Council uses the health data to track the numbers of births and location of pre-school age children across the county.

- 7 The pre-school age population is projected into primary school rolls according to trend- based intake patterns at each school.
- 8 Secondary school forecasts are calculated by projecting forward the Year 6 cohort, also according to trend-based intake patterns. If the size of the Year 6 cohort is forecast to rise, the projected Year 7 cohort size at Secondary schools will also be forecast to rise.
- 9 Pupil forecasts are compared with school capacities to give the projected surplus or deficit places. It is important to note that where a deficit is identified within the next few years, work will already be underway to address the situation.
- 10 The forecasting process is trend-based, which means that relative popularity and intake patterns from the previous five years are assumed to continue throughout the forecasting period. The annual refresh offers an opportunity to take account of recent changes in these trends.
- 11 The County Council receives information from the six District Councils in its area; Tewkesbury, Stroud, Cheltenham, Gloucester City, Forest of Dean and Cotswold District Councils', about expected levels of new housing through the yearly Housing Audits and local Core Strategies. This is the most accurate reflection of short, medium and long term housing trajectories at a local level. Where a large development is expected, compared with little or no previous housing-building in the area, a manual adjustment to the forecasts may be required to reflect the likely growth in pupil numbers more accurately.
- 12 Forecasting future demand for school places can never be absolutely accurate given the broad assumptions which have to be made about movements in and out of any given locality, the pace of individual developments, patterns of occupation and not least the parental preference for places at individual schools. This will be a function of geography, school reputation, past and present achievement levels and the availability of alternative provision, hence the need to review on an annual basis.
- 13 In areas where pupil numbers are increasing the County Council will identify where additional places may be required, either by expanding existing schools or by commissioning new schools on new sites within the community.

- 14 The County Council will, in all cases, consult with the head teacher, staff, governors, Academy trustees, the relevant Diocesan Authority (where appropriate) and the local community where any major re-organisation, expansion or closure of provision is proposed. Such factors as the number of available and required places, school performance, the condition and suitability of the school buildings as well as parental choice, community issues and resources available will be considered in respect of both general and specific place planning.

#### **Data Processing – an explanation**

- 15 The organisation of school places across Gloucestershire is broken down into 44 school planning areas.
- 16 Primary school Reception intake figures – notional catchment areas have been drawn up around each primary school and the pre-school population data based on postcodes, is aggregated by individual year groups within each of those catchment areas.
- 17 The County Council uses the current pupils on roll at each school to establish a proportion of pupils in successive years who have been drawn from the catchment in the past, and other patterns of inflow from outside the catchment (this could be due to a number of factors e.g. parental preference, school popularity, school capacity etc.,).
- 18 Age group cohorts are monitored as they progress through the school system e.g. the number of 5 year olds in 2016 would be compared with the number of 6 year olds in 2017.
- 19 The growth/outflow rates are monitored for each year group from Reception to Year 6 over a 5 year period (the outflow being the number of children moving out of a school/area each year). The actual growth/outflow rate applied to each age group in the forecast model is then reviewed each year to ensure it is as accurate as possible. The current model predicts year group changes using 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 year averages.
- 20 New Housing - in order to gauge the impact upon the local education infrastructure of any proposed housing development and its need for school places, the County Council's assessment methodology is based upon the capacities and pupil number projections of the schools that serve the local community and those within the statutory safe walking distance. Details of other known housing within the areas will also be taken into account, which are revised on an annual basis.

Assessments use current data when a planning application is submitted, in order to reflect the most up-to-date position in the catchment area schools.

21 To forecast the expected additional numbers of pupils from housing developments at planning area level, we use data from Housing Land Supply reports and the Joint Core Strategy housing trajectory produced by each of the local District Councils. These identify planned housing developments which are then linked to the most appropriate school planning area.

22 The latest reports identify a total housing supply across Gloucestershire Joint Core Strategy over the next 5 years of 14,695 new dwellings.

23 The pupil projections include an assumption that all planned new houses will be built within the published housing trajectory period. This can be updated if future information indicates a different housing build out rate; and a formula is applied based on previous (and regularly reviewed) research, which calculates the number of additional pupils expected to be produced from new housing developments.

24 The Pupil Product Ratios (PPR) used to inform projections in the area, and across the County in 2015, were

|               |           |  |
|---------------|-----------|--|
| <u>Ratios</u> | Primary   | 25 primary pupils per 100 dwellings (25/100)   |
|               | Secondary | 15 secondary pupils per 100 dwellings (15/100) |

25 The County Council has recently commissioned a detailed survey to assess the number of children arising from new housing developments in its area which included new developments in both the Cheltenham and Gloucester areas. That research has identified that the actual PPRs arising from developments across the county are significantly higher. There is no one specific reason as to why the number of children has increased so dramatically, other than there has been a substantial increase in the birth rate and inward migration. The nature of developments has been designed with families more in mind, there is a higher number of children arising from affordable/housing association housing and new housing tends to be located in an area that is ideal commuting distance from a number of key employment areas.

26 The latest survey of the new housing in the south of Gloucester planning areas, completed in August 2018 indicates unweighted PPRs as shown below (unweighted means that these are the actual numbers of children, and have not been amended to reflect any percentage of alternative school provision e.g. private or home education.

|               |           |                                       |
|---------------|-----------|---------------------------------------|
| <u>Ratios</u> | Primary   | 59 primary pupils per 100 dwellings   |
|               | Secondary | 23 secondary pupils per 100 dwellings |

This means that the actual numbers of children arising from these housing developments is significantly higher (more than double) than that forecast in 2015, creating further additional demand, and a subsequent shortfall of places in primary schools. The pupil numbers identified in Cheltenham developments indicated lower PPR's than in the south of Gloucester, but still substantially higher than those previously used to assess and calculate projections. Therefore the projections from housing are considered to be on the light side.