

Date: 21<sup>st</sup> September  
Enquiries to: Robert Feakes  
Tel: 01473 260454  
Email: [robert.feakes@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:robert.feakes@suffolk.gov.uk)

Elmswell Neighbourhood Plan Group  
c/o Cllr Sarah Mansel  
Ashcroft House  
Ashfield Road  
Elmswell  
IP30 9HJ

Dear Councillor Mansel,

### **Options for Primary School Provision in Elmswell**

Further to our meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> June, colleagues in the Schools Infrastructure Team have considered several different notional levels of housing growth in Elmswell and options for providing sufficient primary school places to mitigate the growth.

This letter is intended to support further discussion with relevant parties, including the Neighbourhood Plan Group, Parish Council and the primary school itself. It does not consider provision of early education (ages 2 – 5) and secondary education (ages 11 – 18), but clearly these matters must also be given proper consideration as the neighbourhood plan is progressed.

As agreed, we have tested the following scenarios, to assist the Parish Council in bringing forward a neighbourhood plan and to assist pre-application discussions with developers as they bring sites forward.

Housing growth of:

- 100 dwellings,
- 300 dwellings,
- 700 dwellings and
- 1,000 dwellings.

In each case, we have used the latest (January 2015) forecast rolls for Elmswell Primary School and made calculations of minimum additional pupils on the basis of standard Suffolk County Council pupil yield multipliers, set out in the adopted 'Developers Guide to Infrastructure Contributions in Suffolk'.<sup>1</sup>

For clarity, the current forecast includes an assumption of the delivery of the permitted housing on the former Harris Bacon Factory site.

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<sup>1</sup> See the 'Education Provision' topic paper, available from this page: <http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/planning-and-environment/planning-and-development-advice/section-106-planning-obligations/>

Pupil Admission Number (PAN)	Total Capacity	Forecast peak age group sizes				
		2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
45	315	268	292	309	322	341
<b>Absolute Surplus/Deficit:</b>		47	23	6	-7	-26
<b>Available Surplus/Deficit:*</b>		31	7	-10	-23	-42

Additional Dwellings:	Additional Pupils:	Total Pupils on Roll, 2019/20:**	Notional 'available capacity', 2019/20:***
<b>Scenario 1:</b>	100	366	-67
<b>Scenario 2:</b>	300	416	-117
<b>Scenario 3:</b>	700	516	-217
<b>Scenario 4:</b>	1000	591	-292

The table above shows an increasing pupil roll for Elmswell Primary School. By 2017/18, the school will be over its notional capacity and by 2018/19 it is forecast to have exceeded its absolute capacity.

It was on the basis of similar information from a previous forecast that developer contributions were secured from the Former Harris Bacon Factory development, through a Section 106 agreement, to be spent on mitigating the impact of that site.

Education officers believe that, based on the current site (including the woodland area) and Government guidelines on school site areas, it would be possible to expand the school to a 60 PAN/420-place school.

This is expected to be challenging, but not impossible.

The strategies proposed for discussion are as follows:

#### *Scenario 1 – 100 dwellings*

Under this scenario, the total number of pupils on roll would increase to 366. The most logical strategy would be to expand Elmswell Primary School to 420 places.

\* Surplus/Deficit assumes the development of the Former Harris Bacon Site and all other new dwellings from sites of more than 10 units, permitted within the school catchment before January 2015 and expected to be occupied before the end of 2019/20

Calculations of surplus/deficit assumes that the school reaches 'capacity' when 95% of places are taken. This reflects good practice and enables mid-year fluctuations in pupil numbers to be managed more successfully

\*\* Assumes that the dwellings from each scenario are delivered during 2019/20, and adds the estimated additional pupils into that year's forecast.

\*\*\* Calculates available places, assuming that the school reaches capacity when 95% of places are taken up.

### *Scenario 2 – 300 dwellings*

With a total of 416 pupils forecast, there is potential to expand the school to 420 places, though this option would restrict choices in future years, with the school at capacity and unable to develop further. Sites allocated in future plans, or windfall sites coming forward outside of allocations, would be challenging to mitigate unless they were of a scale to justify an entirely new school in themselves.

### *Scenario 3 – 700 dwellings*

700 dwellings would bring the total number of pupil places needed to 516.

The Neighbourhood Plan Group has suggested relocation of the Primary School under this scenario, to rebuild it as a larger school. In this situation, a 525 – place school would be the ideal size. However, it is likely that the County Council would need to identify funds to re-provide the 315 – places already in existence. There is no identified funding for this project, and it would be an unusually large school for a rural setting.

An alternative is to develop a new (i.e. additional) 210 – place school, using the contribution from the permitted Bacon Factory site and contributions from other allocations. Under this option, the County Council would retain flexibility, in that the existing school could be expanded in future years and the new school could be located on a site which enabled expansion of that school too.

Providing two schools would open up the potential for collaboration and sharing of resources between the schools, and would offer choice to parents.

### *Scenario 4 – 1,000 dwellings*

Were 591 primary pupil places to be required in Elmswell, it would not be possible to make sufficient provision on the current site.

One 630 – place school would be sufficient, but as above it would require investment to re-provide existing places. It would be a very large school for a rural location. Schools of this size are common in major cities, rare in Suffolk's towns and do not yet exist in Suffolk's villages.

The alternative is to provide a new (i.e. additional) 315 – place school. This offers greater flexibility than one large school, would not require funding to re-provide existing places and would offer choice to parents.

## **Summary and Conclusions**

Without the benefit of consultation with the community, the school or local politicians, it would appear that the provision of a second school is preferable to the provision of a relocated larger school. It is expected to cost more than £5 million to re-provide the places which already exist, and would not provide as many options as would exist were two schools to be provided.

But this is dependent on certainty over the scale of growth. The Neighbourhood Plan would be very helpful in setting a direction for the overall scale of growth in Elmswell, in order that long term decisions can be made in respect of the education strategy.

The next step is to discuss these options with relevant parties, as part of the development of the neighbourhood plan.

I hope that these comments are helpful. Please contact me via the details above, if you would like to discuss this letter with my colleagues and I.

Yours sincerely,

Robert Feakes  
Planning Officer (Policy)  
Resource Management Directorate