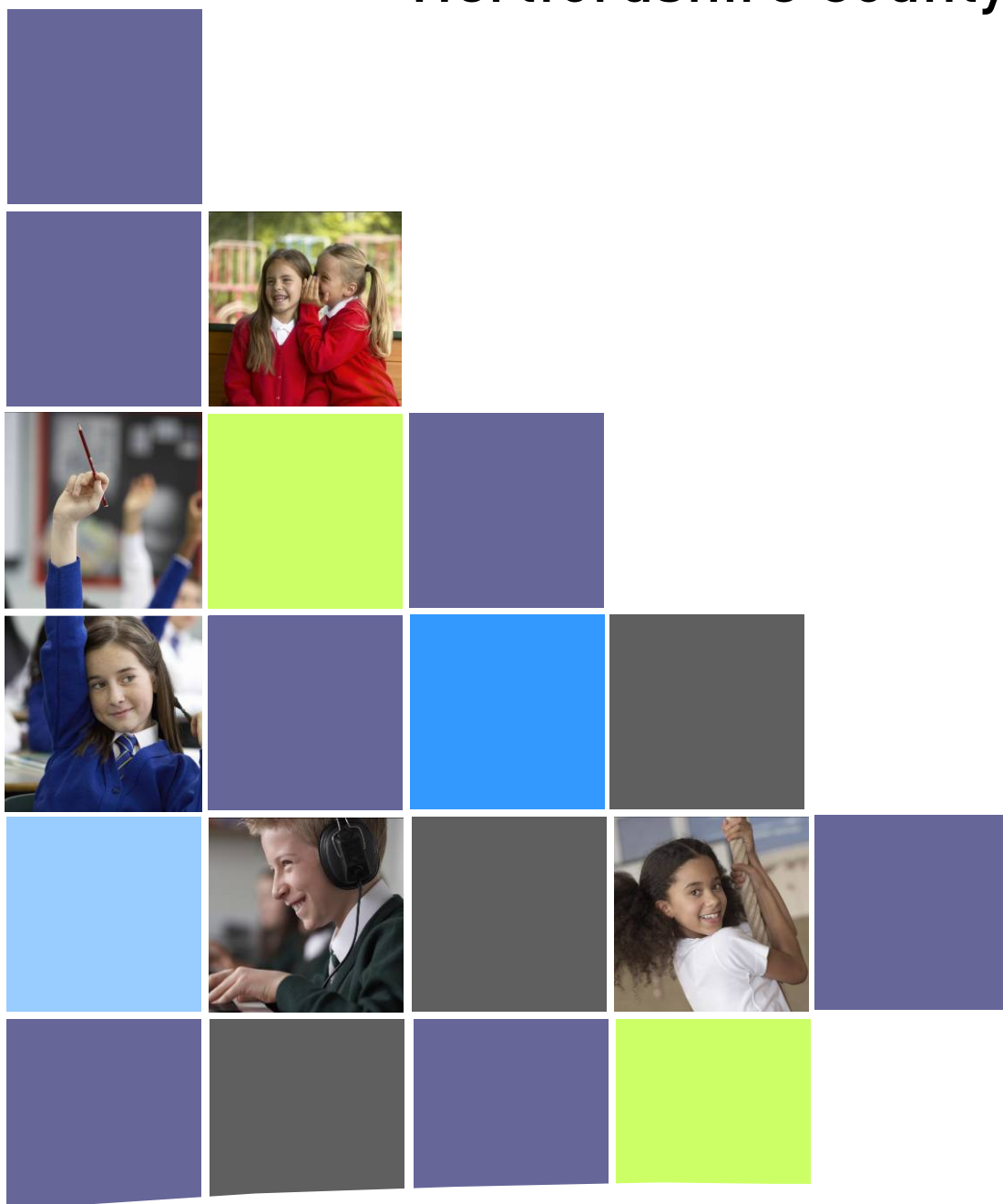


Meeting the rising demand for school places

Hertfordshire County Council



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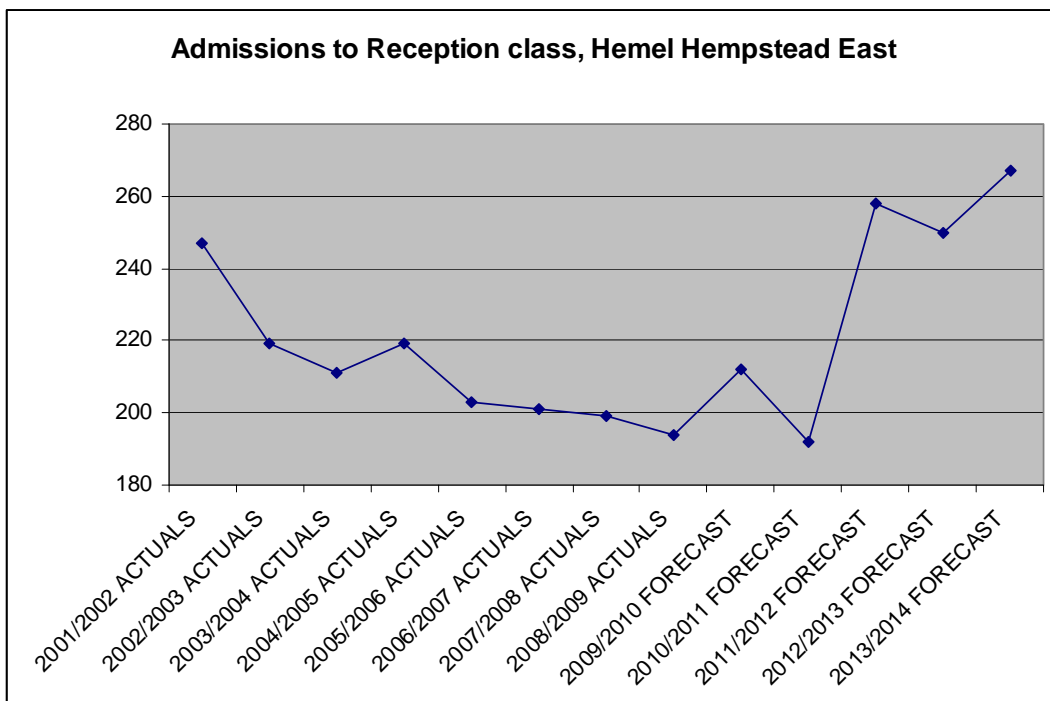
1. INTRODUCTION

One of the most challenging roles for a local authority is to ensure that there is always sufficient and suitable education provision for all of its children and young people.

Hertfordshire has a good record meeting this challenge – actively planning school places and changing the supply in line with forecast demand. The planning cycle – the process of forecasting, review and change - is a continual one.

In line with national trends, Hertfordshire experienced a period of falling demand for primary school places between 2000 and 2007 during which this county and many other authorities reduced provision in line with [Audit Commission](#) guidance. Hertfordshire has actively managed this process to ensure that schools are best placed to maintain standards. Places, and sometimes schools have been removed, where this has been necessary to protect standards and the quality of education. Some school sites and buildings have been retained to facilitate the council's response to future changes in demand.

The national and local situation has now changed. Demand for places has increased and will increase further. We forecast that demand for Reception places will rise by 8% county-wide over the next three years. This growth is not consistent across the county and in individual local areas changes can be rapid, substantial and unpredictable. An example of this volatility in actual and forecast demand over just a short period of years is apparent in the Hemel Hempstead East area, as the graph below illustrates. It is an immensely complex challenge to develop plans in response to such rapid changes in demographics.



Making changes to provision in time to meet growing demand for Reception places is extremely challenging in circumstances where:

- information about numbers of children born can be received up to nine months after the event, and children can move into primary planning areas at any time before Reception age
- forecasts then need to be prepared taking into account how many of those children may be expected to want a place in a maintained school
- analysis needs to take place of where places can be added, if necessary
- even a simple expansion proposal can take eight or nine months after that if it requires statutory consultation of parents and schools about additional accommodation. If a new school is needed, requiring a “school competition”, a much longer lead-in time is required, especially if a new site has to be identified and acquired
- and lastly, two years or so can be required to design and construct permanent expansions to buildings if these are required.



But as well as simply meeting demand for places the county council must also support and raise educational standards and never lose sight of the goal to improve outcomes for all children and young people. School places and standards cannot be considered in isolation. New and

additional provision opens the opportunities to make schools better environments in which to learn, to expand successful schools, and to make them more accessible to more parents and pupils.

This document sets out Hertfordshire’s strategy for meeting the challenge of planning for rising rolls, explains the action which has been taken to date, and the broad approach the county council intends to take in the future. It concentrates in particular on primary place planning, where the time available to respond to changes in demand is most limited. Sections are also included on the longer-term challenges in the secondary sector.

2. FUTURE DEMAND FOR SCHOOL PLACES

How our primary sector forecasts are prepared

Local forecasts of demand for school places – as opposed to population as a whole – are prepared using a software system, to anticipate shortfall or surplus of places by area. Pupil numbers are forecast taking into account:

- historic pupil numbers in each school year group
- 0-5 year olds registered with general practitioners for primary
- primary pupils moving on to secondary schools
- mobility trends, including migration to and from other authorities and the independent sector; and
- any new housing developments.

Primary forecasts are based largely on the actual numbers of children aged 0-5 registered with GPs. We have recently been able to obtain this data from the Primary Care Trust (PCT) twice-yearly in order to be more sensitive to any changes, whereas previously it was only available annually.

The data which the PCT is able to make available to us includes date of birth and postcode, but offers no insight into other factors (such as age of mother, immigration etc.). The information is used, together with the projected number of children from new housing developments, to forecast the number of primary school places likely to be required. Secondary-age forecasts use actual and forecast numbers of pupils in primary schools.

The council's school rolls projections are verified in a number of ways, one of the most important being comparison with our overall population forecasts which are based on 2001 census data and a range of other demographic information.

How accurate are our forecasts?

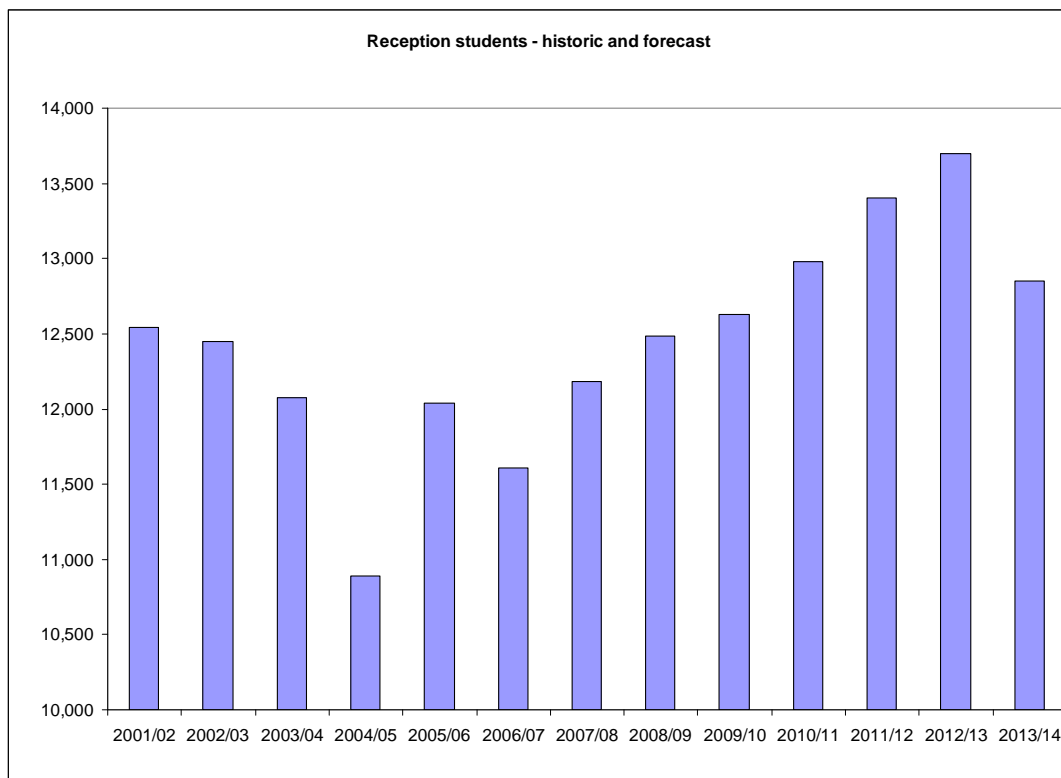
However good the forecasting methodology, it is inevitable that forecasts in some areas will change over time. The smaller the forecasting area, the greater the random changes over time in fertility and numbers of births. At a local level, the composition of communities can change rapidly with in and out migration or as stable communities age and then new generations of young people move in. Conversely, very low levels of turnover in the housing market to some degree freeze existing patterns of population. In recent years there has been a very marked reduction in mobility due to reduced numbers of house sales.

Forecasts one year ahead are generally accurate. But inevitably, the further into the future the forecasts look, the less their accuracy especially at a very local level. For these reasons it is essential to continually review

proposals for additional or reduced places to make sure they are best-tailored to meet the changing forecast of demand.

What our forecasts show for the Primary Sector

At a county-wide level, 2009/10 is the third year of growth in reception class numbers. This increase is expected to continue to 2012/13, as set out in the graph below. However, our most recent forecasts suggest that this trend is likely to come to an end in 2013/14 county-wide, though continue in some local areas.



This implies that reception numbers will fall in 2013/14 after seven years of continuous growth. However, it is impossible to tell with any degree of certainty yet whether or not numbers will rebound the following year (as happened in 2005/06) or whether this will be the start of a period of decline. This depends on how many children are born in the current year (2009/2010) and what the patterns of in and outward migration are over the next 5 years. Neither of these factors is stable and precisely predictable. Actual numbers depend on the sum of a large number of individuals' decisions about when to have families and where to live, and consequently are inherently unpredictable.

At a local level our forecasts still show continuing growth in 2013/14 in a number of areas, and further on in this strategy document specific proposals are identified for local areas.

The policy implications of the inevitability of year-to-year fluctuations in numbers of births are that we need to ensure that proposals for permanent expansions of schools are robust in the face of different outcomes for future births, and that temporary expansions are used to manage transitional problems or in areas where the future trend in demand for places is unclear. It is also essential that proposals are kept under continual review as they are developed, to ensure that events do not change in such a way as to make them inappropriate. A methodology for achieving this is set out in Section 3.

Housing growth and increasing population

The growth in pupil numbers which is forecast over the next few years, and especially at primary age, is based on children already born as well as an additional pupil yield from known new housing developments. In the medium term the county council will continue to plan very carefully with district councils where new school provision should be located, to meet the needs generated by further new housing developments. The scale of this will be determined by the future evolution of housing growth targets within each district.

Close working relationships exist between the county and districts and extensive work has gone into contributing to Local Development Frameworks.

Some capital funding for school expansions has been received through town planning agreements with housing developers and will be used to contribute to the cost of necessary expansions. An important challenge for the future is to try to ensure that new housing developments adequately contribute towards the costs of the consequent additional school places.

The national picture

What is happening in Hertfordshire is similar to the picture nationally where there has been a substantial increase in demand for school places, largely resulting from increasing numbers of births. Live births in England and Wales increased for the sixth successive year in 2007. There were 690,013 live births in 2007 compared with 669,601 in 2006, an increase of 3 per cent. The number of live births has been increasing since 2001 and has now reached the highest level since 1991.

This growth is not uniform and some areas are seeing changes in demographic and other factors which have resulted in a sharp increase in reception age pupil numbers in 2008. The



government also projects further increases for at least the next few years based on the historic growth in births.

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (Now the Department for Education) has acknowledged recently that the rate of growth in demand for primary school places was not reasonably predictable in 2007 as “the birth rate in England reversed a long period of decline in 2001 and has shown growth in every year since.” Even projecting total population growth at national level is difficult. A recent Parliamentary Select Committee concluded that the “Government Actuary’s Department’s projections of net immigration, natural change and population growth involve a high degree of uncertainty”.



3. HERTFORDSHIRE'S STRATEGY TO MEET THE RISING DEMAND FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL PLACES

The county council has adopted a strategy of primary school expansions in response to these new and emerging needs in the ways set out below. A critically important aspect of this is the need to respond as rapidly and flexibly as possible to changes, but not to seek to add permanent additional capacity unless there are good grounds for believing it will be required in the medium to long term.

Our current plans include:

- **Provision of temporary places:** in the short term to cater for known or forecast increased demand. This allows for an assessment of the unfolding situation. If it is determined that more permanent provision will be required appropriate arrangements can be made.

So far seven forms of entry (f.e) – a total of 210 places have been created in this way:

- 3 f.e. in St. Albans
 - 3 f.e. in Watford
 - 1 f.e. in Borehamwood
- **Permanent expansion:** either following temporary provision or where it can be planned to be completed in time to meet demand. This would only be on existing school sites where a solution for a specific area has been agreed and where there is some certainty of longer term need.

The county council is currently planning to increase provision for school places by 5 forms of entry in the next two years, and has allocated funding for:

- Bernards Heath Infants School, St Albans – expand by 1 f.e.
 - Mandeville Primary School, St Albans - expand by 1 f.e
 - Wheatcroft Primary School, Hertford – expand by 0.5 f.e.
 - Green Lanes School, Hatfield – expand by 0.5 f.e.
 - Roselands School, North Hoddesdon – expand by 0.5 f.e.
 - Holywell Primary School, Watford – expand by 0.5 f.e.
 - Greenway, Berkhamstead – expand by 0.5 f.e
 - Cowley Hill, Borehamwood -- expand by 0.5 f.e
- **Strategic planning:** strategies are being developed in areas where sustained growth or demand is not clear or there are real constraints on school sites in the most appropriate areas. These strategies involve schools and parents. In some cases the district council is engaged where town planning policies may either restrict or enable development.

- **Capital cost of expansions**

The county council has invested heavily in school expansions over the last few years. Delivery of the programme described in this document will require further and higher levels of investment.

This expansion will need to cover a large part of the county, and around 25 forms of entry of additional provision are likely to be required by 2013/14, together with various temporary expansions. In total this will mean 5000 or



so additional school places, exclusive of nursery provision. Consideration of the financial issues raised by this forms part of the Council's Integrated Planning Process (IPP).

Currently, some limited sums of money are

provided by Government in the form of capital grant, but there is no certainty of this after the end of 2010/11. Some housing developers' contributions are also available. However, paying for the necessary investment programme will be demanding. Where possible, the council will continue to identify and sell surplus assets to release capital receipts for re-investment. Other investment proposals will continue to be closely scrutinised. But if it was assumed that a programme of this size cost in the region of £95m and was met solely from the Council Tax, then the consequences would be in the order of a 19 percent increase in the Council Tax for one year only, or one and a half percent annually if met by borrowing. The money would need to come from the Council Tax and/or reductions in budgets elsewhere and not from the schools budget (the Dedicated Schools Grant - DSG) as the DSG cannot be used for this purpose.

The cost of the likely expansion of secondary school provision is currently being assessed.

How decisions are made

Each year decisions have to be taken about whether, where and when additional school places need to be made available.

The national framework for planning school places, and the arrangements for admitting children to them, means that decisions need to be taken more than a year in advance. The county council is the admitting authority for all community and voluntary controlled schools. It consults on proposed

admission numbers (PANs) in January of each year and makes its final decisions in March taking into account the response it receives.

Decisions on the number of places available for the academic years 2009/10 and 2010/11 have already been made. PANs for 2011/12 are currently being proposed for consultation in January 2010 and those for 2012/13 will go through the same process a year later.



In some circumstances, the national legal framework also requires further consultation for individual schools (for instance on the enlargement of premises, which almost every permanent expansion and some temporary expansions would require). This consultation process is more local and more intensive than that for PAN setting. The various steps are prescribed by Government, and it is not easy to complete in less than 8 months. Beyond that, if it is proposed to establish a new school, then generally a “school competition” is also required by Government to determine who will operate the school. This has its own requirements and timescale, meaning that the process of agreeing to create a

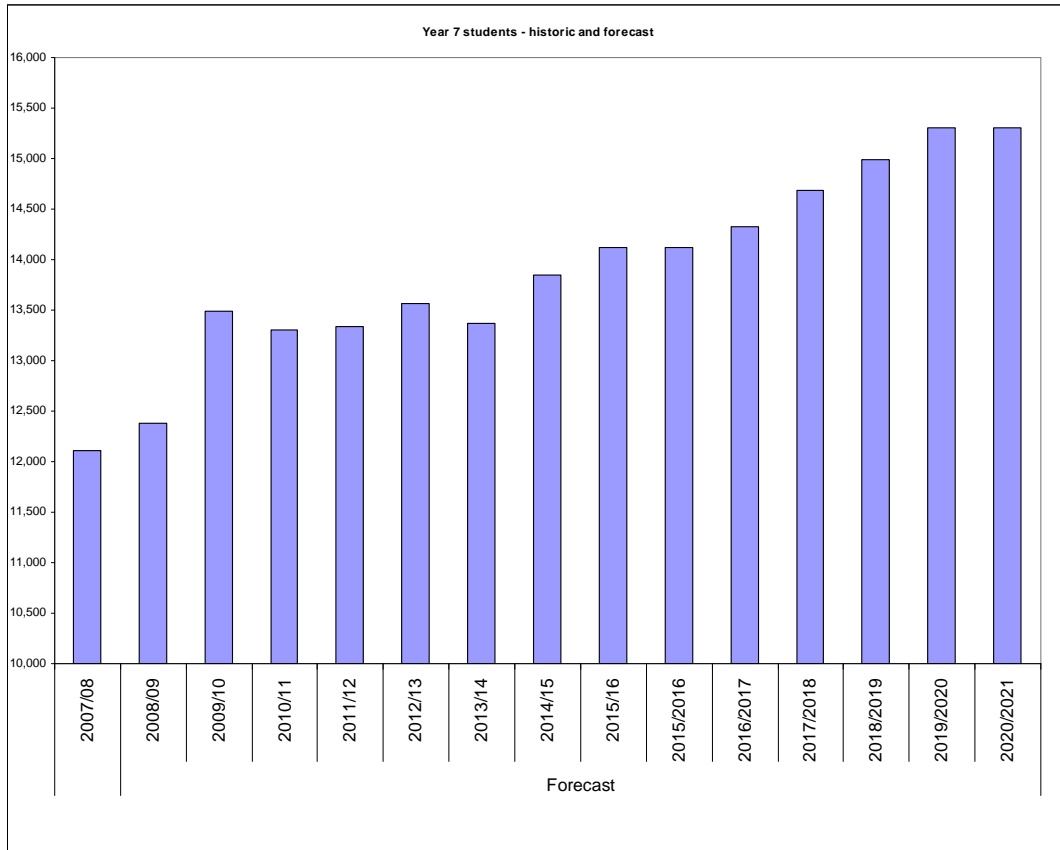
new school to meet growing demand is very lengthy, even setting aside the process of finding a site and design and construction.

Delivery of the programme

A project board will be set up consisting of a wide range of stakeholders. Their remit will be to oversee development and delivery of the planned expansion strategy and report back appropriately.

4. *RISING ROLLS IN THE SECONDARY SECTOR*

Inevitably, after a time-lag rising rolls in primary schools translate to rising rolls in secondary. Set out below is a graph presenting most recent projections, showing 2014/15 as the start of a likely long period of sustained growth.



These projections run up to 2020/21 – the last year where forecast Year 7 pupil numbers include children already born. The pattern of growth over time is more consistent than in the primary sector, because over the longer time period the effects of growing dwelling numbers have a proportionately greater effect. Because of the greater degree of predictability of secondary age pupil numbers five or more years in advance, the planning of expansions to meet demand is a more certain process.

5. WIDER OBJECTIVES OF SCHOOL EXPANSIONS

When making proposals for new and expanded schools, the main aim that must be achieved is to provide a sufficient number of places. However, new building programmes offer the opportunity to make improvements in the range, quality and value for money of our school provision in a variety of ways. They can also contribute to the council's other wider policy objectives as set out in the Corporate Plan

Set out below are the objectives or principles which will guide the Council's expansion proposals so as to maximise their benefit.

Diversity, choice and responsiveness to parents

Expansions provide an opportunity for making the school system more responsive to what parents want. Within Hertfordshire there is a wide range of different schools at primary and secondary level, including faith schools, trust schools and partially selective schools. The independent sector also forms an important part of this provision. All secondary schools are encouraged to develop specialisms. In autumn 2009, the Council established two new Academies.

Where new schools are being set up, the Government generally requires the use of "school competitions" to establish who might be the best provider, although there are some limited exceptions to this.



Provision of reasonable surplus of places to allow choice and guard against unexpected changes

In ideal circumstances, the county council works to the Audit Commission's recommendation that where possible the surplus of school places should be no more than 10% in a local area. Where there is surplus capacity expected over a long time period, we look to reduce it.

Over many years the council has sought to avoid having substantial excess school capacity in any area. This has sometimes involved the closure of schools which are relatively unpopular and where the capacity in them is not required. Such closures are appropriate partly because of the costs entailed in maintaining high levels of surplus places but more importantly

because of the adverse educational consequences for children in operating schools which are relatively unpopular and have too few pupils for the buildings they occupy. Because demand does change quite substantially over a long period of time in individual areas, there are occasions where schools are closed due to surplus capacity, but after an elapse of time additional new capacity is required and new schools open (and sometimes in the same buildings).

One purpose of aiming for some surplus is to provide greater parental choice, although of course some schools will always be more popular than others and consequently are over-subscribed. Surpluses generally collect in a small number of schools while most others are full. Another benefit lies in guarding against the inevitable volatility of numbers of places demanded from year to year. However, the guidance is not rigid and needs to vary to reflect both what is expected over several years, and also what is practicable and affordable.

Improving attainment and improving buildings

New and enlarged school buildings provide the opportunity to improve the environment within which teaching and learning takes place, both for primary and secondary aged pupils. Through our expansions we aim, where possible, to introduce new and improved ICT (as described elsewhere) and update and upgrade common facilities such as halls, dining areas and kitchens, if additional numbers mean that existing facilities are inadequate.

We also plan to explore what primary schools of the future might look like, and whether they could or should include more of the specialist facilities universal in secondary schools. In ideal circumstances, primary schools would all have site sizes meeting current government standards. However, we recognise that this will not always be practicable and we will need to consider whether sites should be more compact and buildings constructed on more than one storey, particularly in more-densely populated urban environments

In the short term, it is inevitable that some additional provision will come in the form of temporary accommodation. This is an appropriate solution to short-lived peaks in demand. However, where we believe growth in demand will be sustained we aim to make permanent provision.

Generally, we will also seek where possible to expand successful, high-attaining schools

Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Hertfordshire's strategy for SEN and inclusion and the associated review and development work aim to build on existing good practice and to educate more children locally. We want to widen the choices available to parents who would like the chance for their children to attend properly

resourced and equipped mainstream schools, without any compromise to the position of the existing valuable network of special schools.

Provision for the wider community, inside and outside school

Children's centres and extended schools will have important roles within communities, providing links to adult and family learning and supporting the development of the local economy through work with partners such as Job Centre Plus. They will also be part of the provision of 'things to do and places to go' for young people, as well as providing leisure, cultural and other amenities for the wider community

Expanding schools and building new ones provides an opportunity to build in this type of provision from the start. At secondary level, making sports and leisure provision easily accessible to the wider community will be an important theme in all new school buildings, in partnership with district councils.

Schools are becoming increasingly important as a base for specialist services, provided in an integrated way from a range of professional backgrounds. Integrated services have a contribution to make to achieving better outcomes for children in the provision of a range of targeted services, easily accessible locally, and providing swift and easy referral to more specialist services when required.

Early years provision

Nursery classes and foundation stage provision are usually a core part of any new and extended school. But we will need to explore what is required in new schools to support and facilitate the provision of wrap-around child care, before and after school, in holidays and for three and four year olds. This does not necessarily mean expensive building work, but does require careful thought and good design.

Cost effectiveness and value for money

The county council believes secondary schools of at least six forms of entry offer the best educational provision for secondary-aged pupils, as well as being large enough to be reasonably cost-effective.

For primary schools, the ideal size is two forms of entry – 60 pupils in each year group – where this is possible. Schools of this size work well educationally and also provide better value for money than smaller schools. Of course, larger and smaller schools also work well with appropriate management. The money available to the county council for schools' budgets is fixed in total each year and we have an obligation to seek to use it efficiently, bearing in mind that more spent in one school means less in another.

Sometimes there are reasons why smaller schools are necessary in terms of the size of local communities to be served, and the council is committed to the retention of a network of rural primary schools. Schools play a particularly important role in the lives of small rural communities. But in urban areas where possible in expanding provision we will seek to move towards two-form entry schools.

Environment and sustainability

New provision creates an opportunity to make radical improvements in energy efficiency and carbon reduction. Wholly new-built schools will be built to score at least 'Very Good' on the Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment methodology (BREEM) for assessing environmental performance. These new schools will also generally be 'Low Carbon' as defined by the DCSF (now the Department for Education).

However, if accommodation is not required in the longer term, the most sustainable approach may well be to use temporary buildings, because of the level of embedded carbon entailed in new permanent constructions.

ICT

New buildings and extensions will allow the opportunity to ensure that ICT infrastructure and provision will support what children and young people need in the future. Work is being undertaken to assess those needs so that schools' provision can be checked and enhanced to ensure it meets those requirements.



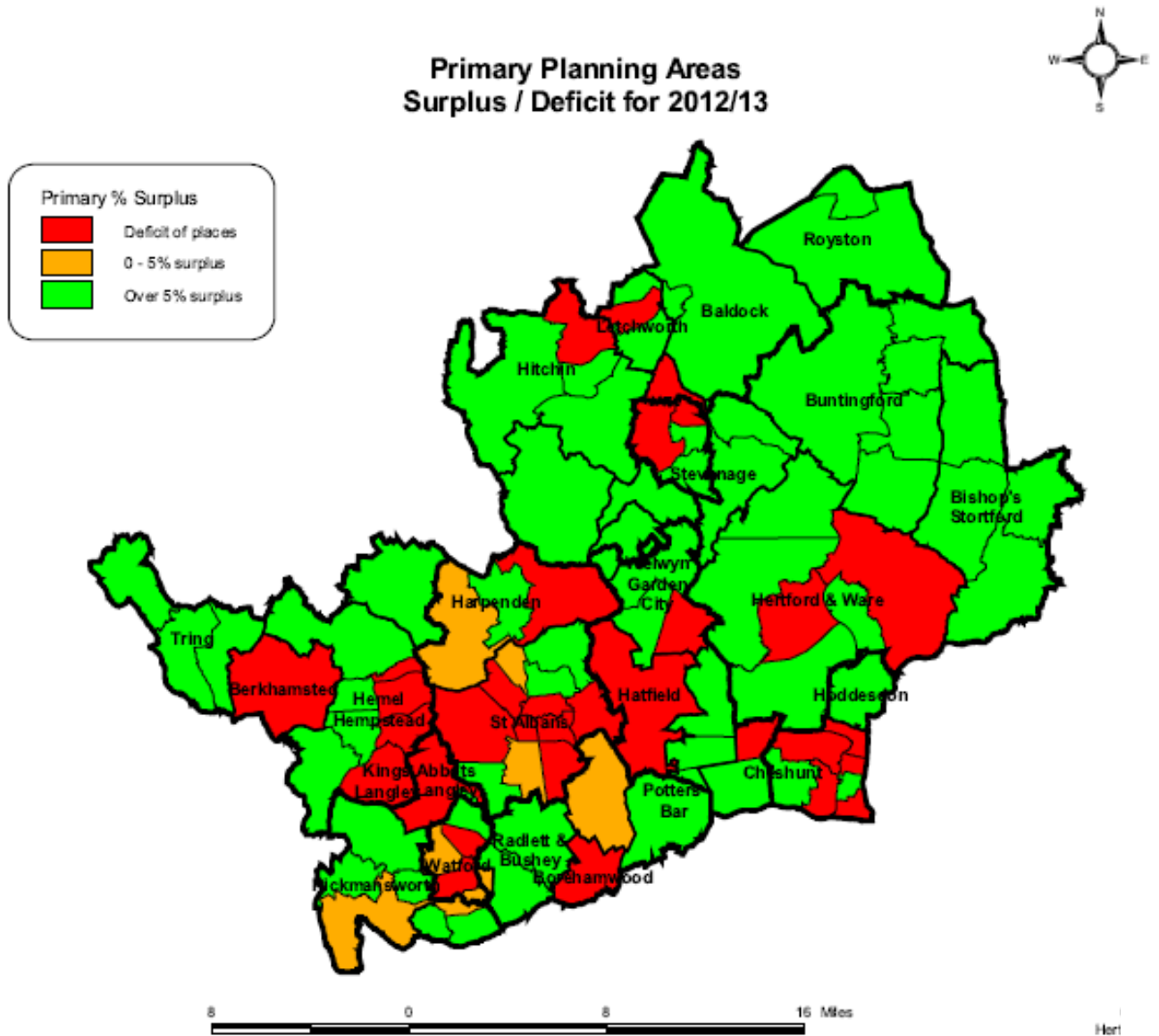
6. TIMETABLE

Date	Proposed activity
December 2009	Published Admission Numbers (PANs) for 2011 proposed by Cabinet
January 2010	Admissions consultation on 2011 PANs with schools and wider stakeholders
March 2010	PANs for 2011 determined by Council
March 2011	PANs for 2012 determined by Council
March 2011	Building contracts for 2012 projects let
September 2012	New permanent school accommodation opened. Mobiles removed.
September 2013	New permanent school accommodation opened. Mobiles removed.

The next two sections identify in map format the forecast position of the demand for primary and secondary school places across the county for 2012/13, using a traffic light system which is explained in the key to the maps.

7. PRIMARY PLANNING AREAS

The map shows the county-wide picture for primary school place surplus and deficits.

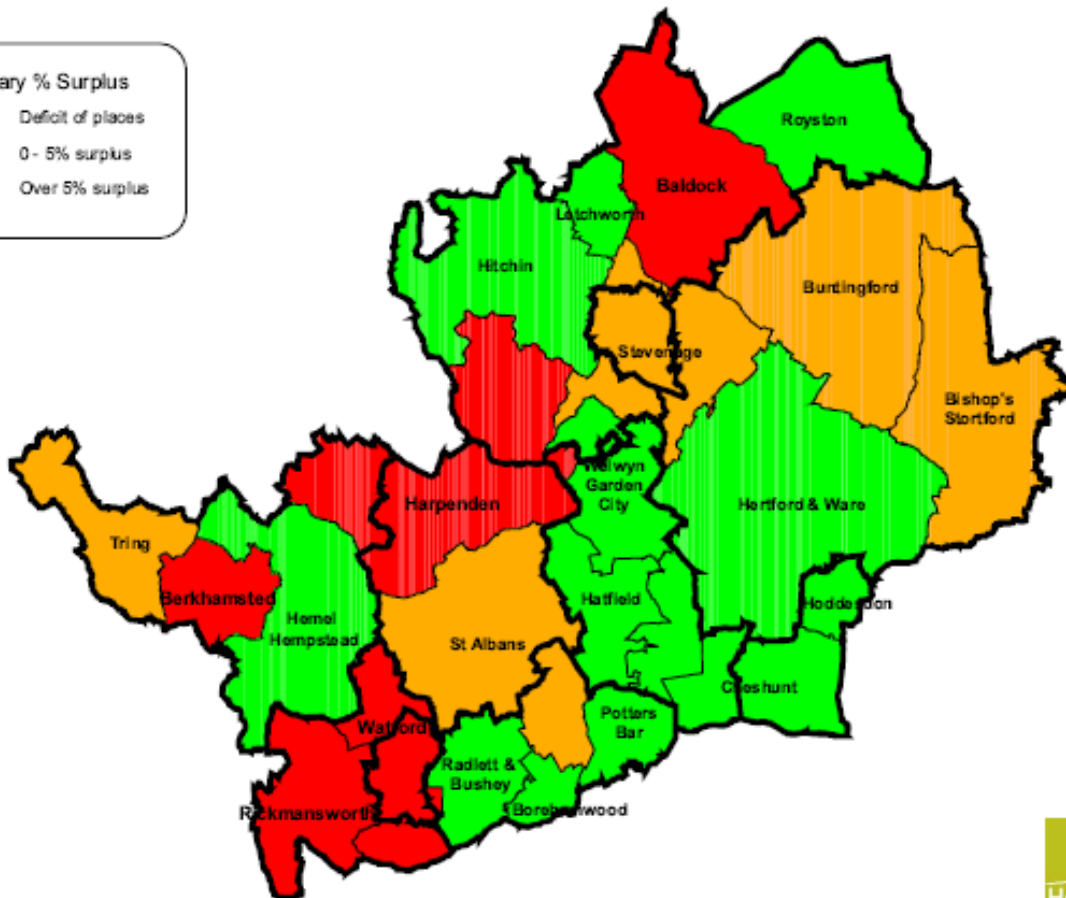
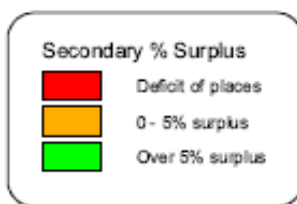


8. SECONDARY PLANNING AREAS

The map shows the county-wide picture for secondary school place surplus and deficits.



**Secondary Planning Areas
Surplus / Deficit for 2012/13**



Produced using ArcView by
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CSF Department

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