

From: Tom Procter, Service Manager Contacts and School Organisation, Children Schools and Families Department

I am responding to the above document, and specifically in relation to the statutory requirement for the council to provide sufficient school places, either delivered by the council or other providers.

I welcome the confirmation that "Development proposals for new schools and/or improved education facilities for children (≥ 5) and young people will be supported, particularly where new facilities are required to provide additional school places in an area to meet an identified shortfall in supply" though suggest you amend " ≥ 5 " to " ≥ 4 " as school reception year is for children who are 4 years on 31 August.

Section DM C2 Paragraph 3.14 states that "The projected growth in demand for school places is set out in paragraphs 19.11 - 19.15 of Merton's Core Planning Strategy". While this is a simple reference and it is recognised demographics may change over the lifetime of the document it should be acknowledged somehow that Merton's Core Planning Strategy document was agreed nearly 2 years ago and based on evidence that is approximately 3 years out of date. Since then GLA population forecasts, including those now coming out based on the 2011 census shows an even greater increase in demand. 3 years later, the substantial need for secondary school places, and the land required for this is also much clearer.

Given the substantial need for additional school places - over 4,000 age 11 to 16 secondary school places alone over the next 10 years - it appears that your development plan would not allow the council to deliver its statutory requirement to provide sufficient school places.

Only a small number of large sites are identified for development, which means that the council will need to also utilise existing school sites for development to provide sufficient school places. However, the draft policies maps document has the following inclusions for open space where there is a presumption not to develop "Large soft landscaped open spaces within school grounds (e.g. playing fields) and (hard) demarcated playing pitches (e.g. netball courts), including ancillary school buildings or hard standing (e.g. car parks) not in the immediate vicinity of the main school building"

With this very tight definition of open space on school sites we will be left in the position where in the vast majority of cases where the council seeks to meet its statutory requirement to expand a school in keeping with DM C2 it will clash with the open space policy.

While, of course, the council would wish to retain open space as much as possible on school sites for school pupils and the community to enjoy, there has to be some acknowledgement of the dilemma and therefore greater flexibility. One means could be to acknowledge this by stating in the above school grounds definition "except where it is required to provide statutory school places to meet an identified shortfall in line with policy DM C2 and

there is a plan to provide sufficient sport and play space for the school pupils and general community."

I wish to propose that the area within the school grounds of Abbotsbury Primary School is no longer designated a SINC.

The area was previously a school playing field and at some point become designated as a SINC.

As the need for school sport has again increased the school has found it increasingly difficult to deliver the PE curriculum due to the restricted external space at the school when the SINC is not taken into account. While the field area should provide plenty of space for the children to enjoy, the restriction of the SINC means that no area of the field can be cut appropriately for the school to provide PE, games, and even lunchtime play in the summer as long grass stays wet for a prolonged period after any rain. There are also budget issues in that the school do not feel able to pay for maintenance of the facility for a SINC within their grounds when the school pupils get little benefit from it.

It is therefore felt that removal of the SINC designation will better meet open space and education planning policies by providing an open space which children will be able to benefit from for sport and play.