

George Reid  
Lead Contact, Free Schools  
Delivery Team  
West Midlands Regional Delivery  
Directorate  
Early Years and Schools Group

**Children and Families**  
Westfields  
Middlewich Road  
SANDBACH  
Cheshire  
CW11 1HZ

Tel: 01606 271564

Date: 9<sup>th</sup> January 2020

**RE: Wave 14 Free Schools Pre-Registration: Cheshire East Local Authority Response**

| Trust/Proposer              | School Name       | Age Range | Capacity | Type of school | Faith | Postcode |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|-----------|----------|----------------|-------|----------|
| Frank Field Education Trust | Handforth College | 11-16     | 750      | Secondary      | N/A   | SK9 3HA  |

Thank you for your letter regarding the above Wave 14 application as submitted by The Frank Field Education Trust. The following information is provided as a response from the Local Authority as requested based around the specific questions as asked.

Prior to providing the detailed information, I feel it is important to reinforce the importance of your statement of wanting to 'work collaboratively with us to determine school places' across Cheshire East. In early December, Mark Bayley as Head of Service responsible for Pupil Place Planning was in regular communication with Paul Mullen, Regional Property Manager North West & Midlands regarding the site options relating to this application. In these communications, it was made clear that it was essential that an open and transparent process was needed as Paul was liaising with us as a Local Authority and with local representatives of the Frank Field Trust (via the Headteacher at Handforth Grange Primary School). The specific information as shared with Paul is included below but the point being made here is that any decision relating to this matter is complex involving a wide range of factors and stakeholders and it is strongly felt that a face to face meeting would be essential in progressing this important decision, rather than undertaking just a 'paper based assessment'.

**This decision therefore is far too important and potentially too costly to have a series of fragmented stages which potentially makes a decision in isolation and the outcome could have a significant impact on both CEC and neighbouring authorities delivery of secondary places in the future. We strongly encourage a direct meeting and are willing to travel to attend such a meeting to ensure this matter is progressed through open and direct dialogue.**

Based upon your letter, the following summary information is provided.

'For each response could you indicate whether any of the information given is different to the information you provided as part of your School Capacity Survey 2019.'

***Does the local authority consider there to be a basic need for the schools outlined above, including figures to support your position? Where you expect this need to arise from a planning house development, could you indicate the expected pupil yield from that development, the build-up, the construction timeline and whether planning permission has been granted.***

LA Response:

The Wilmslow planning area for Secondary places has one school (Wilmslow High School) currently and this school is regularly oversubscribed. Based upon basic need forecasts and proposed housing (see table), the Local Authority is at an advanced stage of decision making to increase the PAN of this school from the current 300 to 360 to meet local need. Therefore, over time this PAN increase will provide an additional capacity of 300 pupils (Year 7-11) Significant investment has already been committed (close to £900,000 to date) on interim works ahead of an estimated £12 Million investment across the school campus to reflect the significant increase in numbers and provide a high quality curriculum, which is fit for purpose.

Governors and local members have been briefed and involved in decision making to this point and formal consultation will commence in January to reflect the proposed changes as outlined.

The work to date on expanding to 360 pupils per intake is to meet the basic need and the local housing yields WITHOUT considering the major development of the Handforth Garden Village. Once this sizeable development is included, the potential increase if all pupils attended this school could see an increase to up to 400+ pupils per intake. Build options therefore have been considered to potentially include this in further future increases/expansions.

The latest position in relation to timescales of the Handforth Garden Village development is that a planning application for 1500 houses has been submitted but no decision has yet been made. Based on the formula used by Cheshire East of 15 secondary pupils per 100 houses, 1500 houses are anticipated to yield an additional 225 secondary aged pupils.

The table below shows the actual forecasted figures, which to date, do not include any anticipated additional pupils from the Handforth Garden Village as the development is not yet approved. This table does show that the needs for the local area are likely to require more capacity above the 300 places we will be accommodating with the proposed expansion. The challenge for forecasting is that this area does see a proportion of pupils attend education provision in the private sector so this has to be factored into the estimates of need going forward.

| Wilmslow High School                              | Current Capacity for year groups 7-11 | Number on Roll in Oct 2019 | Forecast numbers on Roll for years 7-11 |       |       |       |       |       |       |
|---|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
|   |                                       |                            | 2019                                    | 2020  | 2021  | 2022  | 2023  | 2024  | 2025  |
| Forecast Number on roll                           | 1500                                  | 1610                       | 1,632                                   | 1,741 | 1,808 | 1,855 | 1,911 | 1,941 | 1,925 |
| Forecast shortfall based against current capacity |                                       |                            | -132                                    | -241  | -308  | -355  | -411  | -441  | -425  |

The work to date in this planning area has seen intakes in the last two years at Wilmslow High School exceeding 340 which illustrates our commitment to a phased approach to meeting an increasing demand for places above the current 300 PAN.

The proposal currently being looked at proposes to increase the PAN to 360 and provide accommodation for up to 1800 pupils for years 7 to 11. As previously noted this expansion is subject to formal consultation (commencing 16<sup>th</sup> January), detailed design, planning approval and an affordability assessment.

***Are there any planned expansions of existing schools which would change the basic need picture?***

LA Response

The demand for school places within this local area has to take into consideration Poynton High School. Whilst this school is outside the formal planning area, the location of the Handforth Garden Village housing development means that some of the planned housing will be within a 3 mile distance to Poynton School thus making it a viable option for consideration by parents. This school is a successful school and has capacity in terms of places – see table below. Whilst transport issues would have to be carefully considered here for parents who live outside the 3 mile radius, this is a clear option for consideration and any proposal for a new school in Handforth would put Poynton in a very vulnerable position in terms of a loss of school places if the new school filled to its projected 750 capacity.

| Poynton High School                             | Current Capacity for year groups 7-11 | Number on Roll in Oct 2019 | Forecast numbers on Roll for years 7-11 |       |       |       |       |       |       |
|---|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
|   |                                       |                            | 2019                                    | 2020  | 2021  | 2022  | 2023  | 2024  | 2025  |
| Forecast Number on roll                         | 1230                                  | 1096                       | 1,097                                   | 1,096 | 1,107 | 1,128 | 1,166 | 1,217 | 1,205 |
| Forecast surplus based against current capacity |                                       |                            | 133                                     | 134   | 123   | 102   | 64    | 13    | 25    |

The location of the Handforth area close to the Stockport border has also meant that significant discussions have taken place to consider the secondary needs on both sides of the county border. The recent information from Stockport Authority in terms of their future housing demands has strengthened the case for increased secondary provision from 2022 onwards but again, there are several local Stockport schools which are close to Handforth and therefore will provide a clear option for parents.

***Are there any planned presumption competitions in your authority? If so, please advise when they will be launched and where the new school(s) will be located?***

LA Response

The Handforth Garden Village development provides a site and option for a new primary school which will involve a presumption competition. There are no set timescales for this new primary provision.

There are other major housing developments across the borough which have options for new primary school provision but these would not directly impact on local provision other than the option referred to above.

***Is there anything further you would like to comment on in relation to the proposals?***

LA Response

Information as sent to Paul Mullen on 9/12/19: regarding the proposed site as included within the Wave 14 bid as submitted.

Based upon the information below, I ask that your report tries to emphasise the importance of a transparent process and the School and LA would welcome a face to face meeting with officials to move forward. We as an LA are holding conversations with Stockport and therefore we have to ALL work together for the benefit of a mutually agreeable solution. This may mean that certain options cannot be progressed but at least we are all part to the debate.

I hope this is helpful to you in terms of you undertaking your task:

*We have run a building bulletin calculation for the site area for a 315 place primary school and a 600 place secondary school which suggested a minimum site area of just under 50,000sqmm. The current Handforth Grange site plus the whole of the Meriton Road playing fields is 53,000sqm. Just this basic analysis identified significant concerns regarding this site for a dual school regardless as to whether it is part/all of the playing field area. Clearly, the Authority would, in line with all its school organisation work, need to work within the parameters of Sport England in terms of the requirements under Section 77 regulations*

*There will be challenges to overcome if we progressed to a more detailed options appraisal of this area in that it is unlikely that the school would be allowed exclusive use of these playing fields and an even slimmer chance that they would be allowed to build on them. This would lead to safeguarding pressures as fencing would not be permitted.*

*Any proposal (even if supported by the council) would likely face significant local pressures (as well as some support) and organisations such as the open space society and English heritage would be obvious groups offering concerns. Highways would also have significant local concerns in terms of*

*access to a site where a lot more pupils will be attending – the obvious pick up and drop off times would be highlighted.*

## **Summary Position**

We believe that this application is highly complex involving multiple Authorities and Schools. The information provided shows that Cheshire East is already committed to a significant capital investment into Wilmslow High School and this work is well underway in terms of planning and feasibility. The significant risks therefore are summarised below and strengthen our case for holding face to face meetings ahead of any decision regarding this Wave 14 application.

The Local Authority recognises that the Handforth garden Village development will add a significant number of additional places in the local area which need to be catered for. However, the estimated yield of 225 secondary places plus the position of additional need above the revised 360 PAN would still only produce around 400 places. This is well below the proposed capacity of 750 of the new school. Therefore any solution needs to seriously consider the secondary needs in Stockport in that this increases the viability of a new school option.

The key risks include:

- Agreeing to a new 750 place school could result in pupils from Wilmslow High School moving to the new school which is in the process of being expanded to the estimated value of £12 Million. This would be a serious waste of use of public funding.
- Progressing with a new school for 750 places, poses risk at another Cheshire East School – Poynton High.
- Agreeing a new school, which does not fully take into consideration the needs of secondary provision in Stockport is a real problem considering how close the Handforth area is to the county border.
- The proposed site as per the application is not fit for purpose based upon the current land use and size required. Alternatives would need to be considered.

I hope this detailed information provides you with our clear position on this application and look forward to hearing from you further.

Yours sincerely



Jacky Forster

Director of Education & Skills