

4th August 2021

**Have your say on proposals to provide land
for a new secondary free school near you**

Dear Resident

We are writing to you to let you know that West Northamptonshire Council is proposing to provide land in your area to the Department of Education for a new secondary free school to serve Northampton – and we would like to hear your views on this.

The land we are proposing to provide to the DfE is located to the west of Thorpeville, Moulton, known as 'Wantage Farm' – please see the location pictured right and the proposed site outlined in red.



The Council has a legal obligation to ensure there are enough school places for children across West Northants, and supplying land to the DfE is an opportunity to help meet the increasing demand for places in your area via a new school, at no cost to the Council.

It's really important that we hear your views on this proposal so that we can ensure they are considered before any decision is made on this proposal.

Please find enclosed more information about the proposal, including further details on the current and future demands and capacity for school places in Northampton and surrounding areas which we hope will provide you with further background when considering your feedback.

We would encourage you to have your say by completing our questionnaire online at <https://westnorthants.citizenspace.com> or alternatively emailing or writing to us (see Page 8 for contact details).

The deadline for receiving feedback is midnight on Friday, 3 September 2021 and the proposal will be considered at the Council's Cabinet meeting on 14 September.

Thank you in advance for your feedback and we look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully

Cllr Malcolm Longley

Cabinet Member, Finance
West Northamptonshire Council

Proposal to provide land to the west of Thorpeville, Moulton, known as 'Wantage Farm', to the Department for Education for a new secondary free school to serve Northampton

Why is a new secondary school required for Northampton?

West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) has a legal obligation to provide enough school places in all areas of West Northants. The demand for secondary school places in Northampton town and the surrounding areas represents the biggest threat to WNC's ability to deliver this and the aim of this proposal is towards addressing that.

In September 2016, two new free schools opened within Northampton town (Northampton International Academy and Wootton Park Free School), providing an additional 420 places to those available in the year of entry (Year 7) and 2,100 new secondary places in total.

The extra capacity provided by these new schools meant the combined Published Admission Number (PAN) – the number of students that schools will take per year group – of all schools in Northampton equated to 2,550 per year group.

What is the current capacity of school places in the area?

By this 2019/20 academic year, the demand for secondary school places in the area had risen by such an extent that all new and existing capacity had been consumed – this meant the previous local education authority (Northamptonshire County Council, since replaced by WNC) needed to provide temporary extra capacity at existing schools to meet the demand from this academic year onwards, in the amounts shown below;

- 2019/20 academic year: 260 extra places across 7 existing schools within the town;
- 2020/21 academic year: 271 extra places across 9 existing schools within the town and surrounding areas;
- 2021/22 academic year: 271 extra places across 9 existing schools within the town and surrounding areas;

Total: 802 additional secondary school places in three academic years. As illustrated above, NCC and WNC have been required to add the equivalent of a large secondary school's worth of additional extra capacity across existing schools in the area, in the forthcoming and previous two academic years to meet demand in the wider Northampton area.

Why can't we keep this additional capacity at the existing schools instead of having a new one?

This additional capacity has been delivered at a capital cost of around £4m and this model is not sustainable due to the following considerations:

- a) **The physical space available within existing schools:** Due to the large amounts of extra capacity that has been provided previously, the majority of schools in the area have reached or are approaching the maximum number of students that can physically and safely be accommodated on site, without the requirement for large-scale and permanent extensions i.e. a new 8 classroom teaching block at an approximate cost of £4m per school.
- b) **Schools' ability to effectively deliver the curriculum to students:** The large amounts of extra capacity previously provided will prohibit schools taking further extra capacity, as the increased number of students attending them place an increased pressure on curriculum specific areas of individual schools i.e. a school would be unable to timetable a sufficient number of science lessons for students attending the school as the existing Science facilities

at that school were not built to accommodate the increased number of students now attending. At this point, a school's ability to effectively deliver the Science curriculum to students is compromised. At this point, the Local Authority would not request that school to provide any further extra capacity.

- c) **Financial:** WNC does not have sufficient capital funding to continue providing small extensions and other works to make it possible for existing schools to take extra capacity. The greater the amount of extra capacity already added dictates that further and more extensive projects are required to allow existing schools to continue to take an increased number of students and these projects become more expensive to deliver. WNC will be required to pay a premium for any future projects to add extra capacity within the area moving forward.

Each of these considerations demonstrate the clear need for a new secondary school to serve the wider Northampton area.

What is the current and projected demand for secondary school places in Northampton?

The table below details the number of students that have been allocated a place at a wider Northampton area secondary school for a Year 7 place starting in September 2021:

School	Y7 PAN 2021/22	Allocated places - Sept 21	Total surplus Y7 places
Abbeyfield School	240	3896	64* places or 1.6%
Kingsthorpe College	270		
Malcolm Arnold Academy	240		
Northampton Academy	330		
Northampton International Academy	300		
Northampton School for Boys	215		
Northampton School for Girls	290		
The Duston School	270		
Thomas Becket Catholic School	180		
Weston Favell Academy	270		
Wootton Park School	180		
Campion School	240		
Caroline Chisholm School	279		
Elizabeth Woodville School (North Campus)	150		
Guilsborough Academy	238		
Moulton School & Science College	240		
	3932		

*The number of surplus places is greater than a PAN vs Allocated comparison as some area schools have been required to take over their individual PAN as a result of successful appeals for school places.

The Department for Education (DfE) recommend that between 5-10% of the total amount of capacity within a given area is retained as surplus, to allow for the 'in year' movement of students. In the 21/22 academic year the level of Year 7 capacity within the wider Northampton area is forecast to equate to 1.6% and will provide a challenge in terms of the allocation of school places to any student moving into the area from September 21 onwards.

Where do pupils live?

NN1	7.6%	NN5	16.8%
NN2	12.1%	NN6	7.9%
NN3	28.5%	NN7	6.3%
NN4	18.3%	Other	2.5%

**Average figures for the entire Year 7 intake for wider Northampton area schools for 19/20, 20/21 and 21/22 academic years.*

The proposed new school site at Wantage Farm, Moulton is located within the NN3 postcode area, the area in which almost 30% of students that have (or will) start secondary school in the last 3 years reside.

In addition to this, the Wantage Farm site is also located within an acceptable travelling distance of large parts of both the NN2 and NN6 postcode areas. When considered together, these postcode areas have accounted for nearly for nearly half the total demand for Year 7 places over the last three academic years.

Whilst it could also be argued that a new secondary school is required to serve the NN4 and NN5 areas, it is clear that the largest proportion of current demand is located in close proximity to the site of the proposed new school at Wantage Farm, Moulton.

In which year groups are we forecast to have a future shortage of secondary school places?

The table below indicates the number of students that are forecast to attend a 'Wider Northampton area' secondary school in forthcoming academic years. Areas highlighted show where there is a forecast deficit of secondary school places in the area.

Area	School Year	PAN*	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12	Year 13	Total Roll 11-16	Total Secondary Roll
Wider N'pton	2020/21	3771	3672	3675	3473	3287	3187	1500	1364	17294	20158
	2021/22	3782	3710	3672	3672	3430	3260	1449	1301	17744	20494
	2022/23	3577	3656	3710	3669	3629	3403	1459	1313	18067	20841
	2023/24	3577	3702	3656	3707	3626	3602	1493	1320	18293	21108
	2024/25	3577	3691	3702	3653	3664	3599	1549	1350	18309	21210
	2025/26	3577	3646	3691	3699	3610	3637	1551	1397	18283	21233
	2026/27	3577	3604	3646	3688	3656	3583	1585	1400	18177	21164

* PAN (Published Admission Number) - the number of students that schools will take per year group

**Please note, the projections for Elizabeth Woodville (North Campus) do not feature in the projections above. The school is located over two campuses, the second of which is located in Deanshanger. It is not possible to split the pupil projection forecasts of each campus and therefore the projections have not been included above. This has resulted in a disparity of 150 places in the PAN figures featured in the 'Demand' tables in this document.

WNC's pupil projection forecasts are based upon the number of pupils currently attending primary school within the area and three-year trend data only. They do not take into account the anticipated pupil yield that will be generated by new housing development, as such the forecasts detailed above can be considered to be conservative.

The pupil projection forecasts shown above clearly demonstrate that the trend of a deficit of Year 7 places will continue and although Year 7 numbers appear to peak in the 2024/25 academic year and decrease thereafter, it is anticipated that this decreasing number of students starting at Northampton secondary school will be offset by new students that move into the area as a result of new housing development and that the only method of meeting the forecast demand for secondary school places is via the provision of a new secondary school to serve the area.

How are new housing developments having an impact on school places?

Housing trajectory figures provided by WNC's Growth Team, which monitors housing development in all areas of West Northamptonshire indicate that 21,784 new homes either have approval for or are planned for delivery in the wider Northampton area in the future. Of these planned, 779 have already been delivered and it is forecast that a further 7,704 homes will be built in the period ending 2026/27.

The anticipated pupil yield from this level of new housing development is in excess of 1,500 new secondary aged students during this period.

Whilst there is no accurate manner to quantify and determine exactly when these new secondary students will impact upon these pupil projection forecasts, within the next five years it is anticipated that approximately 300 additional students per year group will be residing in the town and can be added to the figures provided above.

When considered with the existing forecast deficit of secondary school capacity within the wider Northampton area, the impact of new housing clearly indicates that there will be a need for not one additional secondary school to serve the town (to meet existing basic need demand), but that a further secondary school will also be required to ensure that WNC will continue to be able to provide a sufficiency of secondary school places in the area, towards the end of the period ending 2026/27.

3,500 of the planned new homes will be located upon the Overstone Leys Sustainable Urban Extension (SUE), 200 houses have already been delivered in this location with a further 850 completions expected in the period ending 26/27. The proposed new free school at Wantage Farm would be ideally located to help meet the demand arising for secondary school places from this housing development in particular.

What alternative sites have been considered for the new school?

Extensive and exhaustive site searches have been completed on a regular basis by WNC and NCC in recent years to identify viable secondary school sites. The Wantage Farm site, is the only location that has been identified that meets the following considerations and is the only viable site at which a new secondary school could be delivered at the current time.

- The topography and layout of the site does not significantly increase construction costs and mean value for money considerations cannot be achieved;
- The site allows for construction of a school and outdoor space that will meet Building Bulletin 103 area guidelines;
- It is located close to areas of demand with viable walking routes and other transport links.

The table below shows the others sites that have been explored for the new school and whether these are viable:

Site	Details	Viable
Manor Farm, Moulton	Site levels meant that constructing a school on this site would not have been financially viable	No
Houghton Gate, Land adjacent to the A428 at The Lakes, Northampton	Partially located on a flood plain, significant ecological issues (would have been on the flight path of migrating birds) means planning approval would have been unlikely	No
The former site of Great Houghton Preparatory School	Site too small and not village location not close enough to area of demand	No
Land adjacent to A4500, Upton, Northampton	Site offered by Homes England. Too small and bisected by A4500. Site would of represented huge health and safety and safeguarding risks	No
Former Coca Cola Factory, Brackmills, Northampton	No walking route from areas of demand and Highways issues relating to traffic would have been a possible planning issue. Asking price for site did not represent value for money.	No
Dallington Grange SUE, Northampton	Site to be provided as part of S106 contribution to WNC for secondary education. Requires infrastructure to be delivered before site can be accessed and unlikely to be ready to until 2025/26. Site not available to meet current demand. Proposed site for secondary school required 2026.	Not at current time
John Dryden House, Northampton	Sold to provide funding for construction of One Angel Square. Provision of outdoor space would have been problematic and location not ideal in terms of access.	No
Land adjacent to Bedford Road, Northampton	Land provided to University of Northampton as new UoN site.	No
Former Radio Northampton Building, Abington Street, Northampton	Site considered as possible annex site to existing school to provide additional capacity. No outdoor space and conversion costs would not have represented value for money.	No
Albion House, Victoria Promenade, Northampton	Site considered as possible annex site to existing school to provide additional capacity. No outdoor space and Highways issues would have likely prevented planning approval	No
Land located opposite County Crematorium, Hunsbury, Northampton	Site too small for new school and western boundary comprised of train track. Site not appropriate for education use.	No
Former Factory Unit, Moulton Park, Northampton	Refurbishment of former warehouse was not financially viable. Highways issues may have precluded planning approval being granted on busy Industrial Estate. No outdoor space.	No

What are the Government's guidelines for locating a new school?

Building Bulletin 103, the DfE guidance document that provides the area guidelines for new school buildings, dictates that an 8 form of entry (240 places per year group/1200 places in total) school (the proposed size when full of the Northampton School) should be between 8 and 10 hectares in size.

This size of site provides sufficient space for all teaching and ancillary areas to meet minimum space requirements as well as providing sufficient playing field space for this number of students.

Sites are required to be as level as possible and be free of contamination or any other land issue that may impact upon construction of a new school or its future operation.

Sites are also required to be located within a reasonable distance of the area which it will serve with good transport links and walking routes available where possible.

These requirements make it increasingly difficult to identify sites that are suitable for use as a secondary school site, particularly in more densely populated areas. This has been evidenced previously in Northampton by the conversion of former Post Office Sorting Office on the Barrack Road into what is now, Northampton International Academy.

How has the bid for the free school in Northampton been submitted and what role does the Council and Government play in this?

All local authorities are effectively a third party to the Department for Education (DfE) delivered free school programme, in which Academy Trusts submit bids to open new schools directly to the DfE. Local authorities can influence the process via the provision of demographic information relating to the demand for new schools and by stimulating bids for areas in which new schools are required.

All free school bids are submitted in (usually annual) 'waves' and all bids are then assessed by the DfE on their own merits. Successful bids are those that demonstrate the Trust in question will deliver an outstanding education to students that attend the school, there is an existing basic need demand in the area in which the school is proposed to open, there is a site available for the proposed new school (Wave 14 criterion only).

The Northampton School bid submitted by the Northampton School for Boys Trust met each of these criteria and was therefore declared successful and progressed to the 'pre-opening' stage of the process.

How would the free school be funded?

As part of the free school programme, the DfE will fund all new schools that are delivered via this mechanism. Whilst there is an expectation that any local authority will pass-port any Section 106 developer contributions to assist in this purpose the DfE will provide any further funding required.

WNC is due to receive £5.9m from the developer of the Overstone Leys SUE and the DfE will provide the rest of funding for the new school which will cost in the region of £25m.

For the avoidance of doubt, there are no funding streams available to WNC, or previously via the former county council, that could have been utilised for the delivery of the proposed new school and to meet a funding deficit of approximately £19m.

Providing the site at Wantage Farm as a location for the proposed new school is not only a key factor in securing £25m worth of investment into education in West Northamptonshire, but also to help ensure that WNC can continue to meet its statutory duties in respect of providing a sufficiency of school places.

How can I have my say on the proposals?

West Northamptonshire Council is seeking your views on the proposal to provide land at Wantage Farm, Moulton, to the DfE to provide a new, secondary free school to meet the demand for secondary school places in Northampton.

Public consultation is taking place between 4 August 2021 and midnight on 3 September 2021.

All views submitted during this period of consultation will be given full consideration as part of the decision making process by WNC, ahead of a decision being made at WNC's Cabinet meeting scheduled for 14th September 2021.

You can give your views by completing our online questionnaire at <https://westnorthants.citizenspace.com>

Alternatively, you can submit your comments:

By email: SchoolAdmissionsConsultation.NCC@northnorthants.gov.uk

By post:

c/o Chris Wickens
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