

## Proposed future primary and secondary school provision on the Simonside site

# FAQs

November 2017



### 1. **What is Newcastle City Council's vision for future school provision in the Outer West/North West area of the city?**

There has been a significant and higher than projected growth in the pupil population in Newcastle in recent years, particularly in the primary school population. This is a result of increasing birth rates, inward migration to the city and the increased success and popularity of Newcastle schools.

Local authorities have a statutory duty to ensure sufficient school places to meet the needs across their area. The number of secondary age pupils across the city is growing, as larger cohorts of primary pupils move through the system. This means that additional secondary places are required.

The challenges of delivering secondary places are more complex than in the primary sector with more specialist provision and differing travel to school patterns across the city and beyond. Although there is a small amount of capacity to expand in some of our existing secondary schools, given that many of these are already extremely large, new secondary schools will still be required.

It is therefore proposed to establish a new secondary school in order to meet the increased demand in this part of the city.

### 2. **Why is there a need for a new secondary school here?**

The number of secondary age pupils is growing significantly across the city as a whole, and also as a result of significant planned housing developments in the Outer West and North West - in particular around Lower, Upper and Middle Callerton, Newbiggin Hall and Kenton Bank Foot. More than 4,000 new houses are proposed in these developments, leading to an estimated needs for around 1,000 new secondary school places.

#### **Secondary School Proposals:**

### 3. **What ages will be catered for?**

The proposed new secondary school would be for children in Years 7 to 11 (age 11 to 16 years).

**4. Will there be Post-16 provision?**

There is a wide range of existing post-16 provision in Newcastle and neighbouring areas already, with extensive sixth forms at a number of schools, as well as Newcastle College. Given this, and the good transport links within Newcastle, the current proposals do not include post-16 provision within the new secondary school.

**5. Will the new secondary school be a free school?**

Current legislation for new schools means that all newly established schools must be Free Schools and become an academy on opening. There is no option to build new local authority maintained schools. The delivery of a new free school can be done either via a local authority led and funded competition or via an existing Multi-Academy Trust bidding directly to the Department for Education (DfE) Free Schools Programme for approval and funding.

In line with Newcastle City Council's School Organisation Principles to "*Work collaboratively with Newcastle schools, Trusts and partner organisations to develop the right, creative solutions for the city and local communities now and in the future*", the Council has been exploring options with local schools and academy trusts, as well as the Regional Schools Commissioner, for an existing successful education provider to bid to establish a new secondary school in the Outer West area.

As a result of this, Gosforth Federated Academies Trust has agreed to submit a bid to the DfE for a new secondary school in the Outer West area, and is currently seeking expressions of interest and preparing a bid for the next wave of free school applications.

**6. How will places be allocated?**

Proposed admissions criteria for the new secondary school would form part of the free school bid and subsequently published by the academy trust of the new school, as they will be the relevant admissions authority. The admissions policy must meet the requirements of the statutory Admissions Code, including over-subscriptions criteria that would be applied if there are more applications than places available. It is expected that the admissions policy of the new school would be similar to those of other local schools which are not faith schools and would be non-selective (that is, not a grammar school).

**7. What will be the feeder school arrangements?**

Although two of the closest secondary schools, Kenton and Walbottle Campus, have feeder primary schools, admissions and school transfer patterns are complex and changing in this part of the city. Studio West does not have designated feeder schools, having begun as a school for pupils aged 13-19 years. In addition, there is significant cross-border movement with some pupils transferring to schools in Northumberland at the end of Year 4 and others choosing to travel across the city to different secondary schools in Year 7. Planned changes in Ponteland schools, which currently have on roll around 1,100 pupils who are resident in Newcastle, are likely to further affect school admissions and transfer patterns in the future.

For these reasons, careful analysis of current admissions data / feeder school / travel patterns will need to be undertaken, alongside gathering expressions of interest for the proposed new school places to model the potential impact for other schools.

The Council will work closely with the academy trust and other schools, trusts and partners to agree a joined up approach to future admissions arrangements, which individual Admissions Authorities would need to consult upon in line with the statutory School Admissions Code.

#### **8. When will the secondary school be built and open?**

The larger pupil cohorts progressing through primary schools will exceed places available in Newcastle secondary schools unless additional places are created.

It is difficult to state exact timescales for when a new secondary school could open, which would be dependent on the free schools programme as well as the planning process. However, it is realistic to expect the process to begin in 2018, with the earliest completion of the secondary school to help address the increasing demand for secondary school places.

The preferred option would be for the Council to deliver new or upgraded primary school facilities as a first phase followed by the secondary school building delivered by the Education and Skills Funding Agency under the Free Schools Programme (subject to a successful bid).

The exact timing of the school's opening is affected by:

- any announcements by the Department for Education on the future of the free schools programme and its associated funding
- further monitoring and analysis of projected school place needs resulting from planned housing developments
- analysis of associated school admissions and transfer data, including the impact of the lowered age range at Studio West (from September 2018) and changes in admissions and age ranges in Ponteland schools
- the rate of housing development
- timing of agreed financial contributions to deliver the school

#### **9. Who will fund and build the new secondary school?**

Some funding has already been secured from education contributions from planned housing developments, and further contributions will be agreed as planning applications are approved, either from S106 or Community Infrastructure Levy.

Where a new secondary school is established via an existing Academy Trust successfully bidding to the Department for Education (DfE), this attracts capital funding directly from the Government's Free Schools Programme, with the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) delivering the building of the school and providing pre-opening and start-up costs. However, the DfE would expect to recover any relevant developer contributions to offset their costs.

If the new school wasn't delivered via a successful free school bid, it would still have to be provided as a free school but funded directly by the local authority, including pre-opening and start-up costs. It would need to be funded from developer contributions with any shortfall being met from the Council using its Basic Need grant funding, which supports the local authority in its duty to provide sufficient good school places, or from other sources of capital.

Before the construction of a new school could start on site the Council would need to approve a full business case of how the proposed developments would be funded.

#### **10. How can I express an interest in places in the proposed new secondary school for my child(ren)?**

You can complete the consultation feedback form and include this information or send an expression of interest via email to [admin@ga.newcastle.sch.uk](mailto:admin@ga.newcastle.sch.uk)

Title your email **OUTER WEST NEW SCHOOL** and state the following:

- Your name and relationship to the child/children (e.g. Mother)
- Post code
- Telephone number
- Email address
- Number of children
- Date/s of birth of child/children

#### **Primary School Proposals:**

#### **11. What are the proposals for Simonside Primary School?**

As well as the increasing demand for secondary school places in the North and Outer West of the city, there will be increasing demand for primary school places resulting from the planned housing (with an estimated increase in requirements of more than 1,000 primary places over the next 15 years). Newcastle City Council has been working closely with the Governing Body of Simonside Primary School, which is part of the Outer West Learning (OWL) Trust, to explore proposals for new or upgraded facilities for the school and an increase in capacity from 315 to 420 places for pupils aged 4-11 years. Simonside Primary School will continue to be part of OWL Trust.

There will also be a need to expand other existing schools and build new primary schools in the North and Outer West of the city as housing developments progress.

#### **Site & Planning Information:**

#### **12. Why was this site chosen?**

New schools should be built to Government approved standards and area guidelines for maintained schools (known as BB 103), which means that the minimum site area required for a 7FE secondary school (1050 pupils) ideally should be 6.15ha.

In the area where the new secondary school is required, eleven potential sites were identified and assessed. From this assessment, only the Simonside site was suitable for the location of a new secondary school.

### **13. What about the open space?**

The site is allocated as Open Space in the draft Development and Allocations Plan (DAP). The draft DAP is Part 2 of Newcastle's adopted Local Plan which will guide the future development of Newcastle to 2030. The draft DAP provides detailed policies to support our growth ambitions for Newcastle, including:

- Policies which will be used to make planning decisions on planning applications
- Allocations of housing and employment sites
- Designations (boundaries) of areas such as retail centres and wildlife sites

The draft DAP is supported by evidence reports, including an Open Space Study which reviewed open spaces across the City. The Simonside site is identified as having potential to be improved. If a new secondary school is built the open space would accommodate good quality playing pitches, drained and improved in accordance with Sport England's design guidance 'Natural Turf for Sport'; the pitches would be made available for public use through a Community Use Agreement.

Although the Council thinks that the site is suitable for a new secondary school, any development on the site would require planning permission, and the Local Planning Authority would consult statutory bodies, including Sport England, as well as local residents. Any loss of public open space at Simonside would be carefully considered during the statutory planning application process. Sport England may require improvements to other open spaces or possibly the creation of new areas of public open space in the area which would be determined as part of the planning process.

### **14. If Newcastle City Council decides to go ahead with a new secondary school at Simonside, when would a planning application be submitted and who would be consulted?**

If the Council decides to proceed with plans to build a new secondary school at Simonside, it will need to commission the detailed design work required for a planning application and this will take some time. At this stage it is difficult to say exactly when a planning application would be submitted, possibly later in 2018. However, when draft detailed design work and a layout have been produced, and before a planning application is submitted, the Council would organise further public consultations on those specific proposals.

### **15. When would a decision on the planning application be taken?**

The development of a new secondary school would be classed as a major planning application and the Local Planning Authority should determine major applications within 13 weeks of being submitted.

### **Access to the Site / Logistics:**

**16. What will the access and parking/drop off arrangements for the new school be?**

The full detailed plans for the site are not yet developed, although our indicative site options show some examples of possible layouts for the site, including on-site parking and drop-off.

At this stage we want to know whether there is support for the development of the site for secondary education. Following this, we would appoint a design team to produce detailed design and layout. The detailed design work would include proposed access and parking/drop off arrangements and there would be a chance for local residents and others to see and give their views on the detailed design and layout before a planning application is submitted.

The Council knows from experience that parking/drop off arrangements are important to get right when new schools are being planned. Parking/drop off arrangements must be safe and should not result in unacceptable effects on residents living in nearby streets.

**17. Where will scholars' buses park for drop off/pick up?**

As with car parking/drop off arrangements, this would be dealt with at the detailed design stage.

### **Community Impact:**

**18. Where will the school buildings be located - will there be an impact on existing houses?**

The full detailed plans for the site are not yet developed, although our indicative site options show some examples of possible layouts for the site which we would welcome your feedback on as well as any other suggestions that you might have.

**19. How will the proposals affect the Community Centre?**

The Community Centre is an important facility serving Newbiggin Hall and the Council wants to see a continuation of the services currently provided at the Centre.

The Community Centre building was originally part of the former Middle School that stood on the site and is now not in good condition. In 2015, management of the Community Centre was taken over by the Newcastle Community Asset Trust (NCAT) which has improved the services on offer.

A number of options for the relocation of the Community Centre are being explored with NCAT and the option that is currently favoured is that NCAT moves into the building at Gala Field that houses the Children's Centre and also the vacant former housing office on Trevelyan Drive. This would allow NCAT to continue to deliver the community activities for Newbiggin Hall, but from locations which are more

accessible to local residents. The existing Children's Centre and the Co-Op Nursery would stay in their current locations.

**20. Will Bedeburn Short Breaks Service be affected?**

No, Bedeburn will remain in its current location and will be unaffected by any development of the Simonside site. We would work closely with the centre's managers to minimise any disruption to service users during the construction period.

**21. What access will the local community have to the sports provision?**

If planning permission is granted, it will require a Community Use Agreement (CUA) that sets out the times that the school's sports facilities must be made available for public use.

Normally, CUAs specify that there should be public access to the facilities in evenings and at weekends at specified times. As part of a planning permission, CUAs are legally binding and cannot be altered by the school without Newcastle City Council and Sport England approval.