
To: Education and Children's Services Policy Board

On: 18 January 2024

Report by: Director of Children's Services

Heading: Dargavel Non Denomination Primary School Demand:
Assessment of Options for Additional Future Capacity

1. Summary

- 1.1 Given both the scale of the masterplan development at Dargavel Village, coupled with the expectation of around a decade of development still to be delivered, there remains ongoing risk and uncertainty in respect to the actual level of educational demand that will arise from the development – both in terms of the scale and timing of an anticipated peak in demand as well as the stabilised longer-term position. The work completed to date in conjunction with Edge Analytics has identified upper projection scenarios in addition to the core projection estimate to inform longer term planning and management of risk.
 - 1.2 In this context it was agreed that work would be progressed to consider the range of options that would be available to the Council in future years should additional capacity be required as the development progresses towards completion over an estimated 10+ period. This report provides an overview of the assessment process which confirms that the Council is able to deploy a range of options either individually or combined to respond appropriately to any confirmed trend that would indicate a longer-term position in excess of the currently planned primary provision capacity.
 - 1.3 Officers will continue to monitor all relevant live data and updated projections and provide appropriate updates to future boards to support timely decision making in future years.
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2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members of the Education and Children's Services Policy Board are asked to:
 - Note that the Edge Analytics tried and tested core model indicates a peak of demand 1,131 for planning purposes which is within the current planned operational primary capacity of 1,230;

- Note that current projection data also presents a number of potential upper scenarios that would require further intervention from the Council if these materialise;
- Note that as outlined in the paper the Council will be able to consider a number of options which can be deployed either in isolation or combined and has significant flexibility to respond appropriately at a future point in time should additional demand emerge. This includes a temporary peak in demand and or longer term stabilised demand;
- Note that the roll projections are being continually monitored and updated and that regular updates will be provided to the Board to enable timeous decisions to be made in future years as and when required.

3. Background

- 3.1 As outlined in the report Roll Projection Update on this agenda, long term pupil projection work (15 years), completed by officers in conjunction with Edge Analytics for the Dargavel Village catchment, has identified that primary school demand will reach a natural peak, estimated to occur in 2033/34, as the development progresses towards completion. This is similar to other comparable large scale developments across the UK. After this point the demand levels are projected to drop year on year towards the end of the 2030 decade, transitioning to a mature stabilised level of demand.
- 3.2 The decisions the Council has taken to date to expand primary school provision within Dargavel, by planning an additional 800 capacity primary school, has been framed based on the core model arising from Edge Analytics. The Edge Analytics core modelling, which is based on tried and tested formula used across the UK, indicates a projected peak roll of 1,134 by 2033/34. Additional projection models were run by Edge Analytics at the request of the Council, to also include limited live registration data. These additional scenarios suggested the potential for a higher peak of up to circa 1,400 - 1,500 pupils could be possible if the current registration trend continued and was sustained over the long term.
- 3.3 Given both the scale of the masterplan, coupled with there being an expectation of around a decade of development still to be delivered, there remains ongoing risk and uncertainty in respect to the eventual educational demand that will arise from the development – both in terms of the scale, pace of growth, timing of the anticipated peak as well as the stabilised longer-term demand. In these circumstances it is prudent to consider now what options the Council could deploy to respond to potential upper end scenarios, recognising there are a very wide range of potential outcomes and ensuring the Council retains flexibility to deliver a response aligned to the specific circumstances that emerge.
- 3.4 In this context it was agreed by Board that work would be progressed to consider the range of options that would be available to the Council in future years should additional capacity be required to address upper demand scenarios above the core modelling position. This report provides an overview and outcomes from that assessment process.

4. Scenarios and Option Assessment

4.1 As live data is confirmed over the coming years, it will provide increasing confidence and eventual certainty over the longer-term trend. In the meantime, in considering options to manage this uncertainty and risk, there are three broad outcome scenarios which the Council is required to consider and plan for: -

- **Scenario 1** – the current planned provision provides sufficient capacity to support the actual level of demand that will emerge, both in terms of the expected peak and the mature stabilised demand. In such circumstances no additional intervention will be required by the Council.
- **Scenario 2** – the current planned provision provides sufficient capacity to support the actual level of mature stabilised demand – however for a relatively short period leading up to and after the temporary peak, demand will exceed this capacity. In such circumstances, the Council would be required to identify additional capacity, but only for a temporary period. This would not require investment in a permanent extension to school capacity given the temporary nature of the demand. Permanent additional capacity would not represent value for money and would result in surplus capacity once the short term peak had subsided.
- **Scenario 3** – the current planned provision is insufficient to meet the stabilised demand when the development fully reaches maturity. In such circumstances, the Council would be required to resolve two issues. Firstly, provide additional permanent capacity to meet the long-term stabilised demand and identify and provide temporary capacity to manage the period of additional demand arising from the temporary peak.

4.2 The options available to the Council to be deployed in isolation or combination to meet the specific needs that may be presented in the future are outlined below: -

- Additional Permanent Capacity

Should additional permanent capacity be required there is significant flexibility offered through the existing Primary School site as well as the potential long-term use of capacity at Bishopton Primary School.

Extension at the existing Dargavel Primary School site

As part of the agreement with BAE Systems the Council has secured ownership of additional land adjacent to the existing Dargavel Primary School site. This additional land provides significant flexibility for the Council to extend the existing school capacity through a range of potential options.

Utilising the now available adjacent land provides flexibility to permanently extend the existing school if this was deemed a requirement. Any permanent extension would require to be scaled appropriately to the identified need, however the additional land now secured would

comfortably accommodate an extension that could increase operational capacity by up to 268 pupils. This flexibility provides comfort that the Council could secure access to more than sufficient additional permanent capacity to address the projected upper scenario of stabilised demand should this ever materialise. Based on the layout of the additional land holding and design of a potential extension this could be delivered without disrupting the existing school operations.

It is estimated that it would take approximately three years to deliver a permanent extension and therefore this would require to be factored into any relevant future decision in this regard.

Utilisation of surplus capacity at Bishopton Primary School

Bishopton Primary has a maximum capacity of 519 pupils and is currently operating at 70% capacity. Edge Analytics supported roll modelling indicates that the roll at the school will gradually decrease, reducing to in the region of 50% capacity by 2033/34.

It would be a feasible option to utilise the spare capacity at Bishopton Primary School on a permanent basis by matching demand to the available capacity across the three schools in Dargavel and Bishopton. This would require a future redrawing of catchment boundaries. This would merit consideration given some neighbourhoods within Dargavel Village are as close to Bishopton Primary as they are to either the existing or proposed primary school sites.

This option offers a practical solution that requires no physical intervention and is cost-effective short-term, avoiding the need to invest in a permanent extension and making maximum and efficient use of the existing available school estate.

However, it is acknowledged that Bishopton Primary School is predominantly an early 1960's construction and will inevitably have a limited future lifespan. In addition, in considering future investment needs linked to achieving the Council's net zero ambitions, the age of Bishopton Primary may, on value for money grounds, direct the Council to a future replacement strategy rather than a net zero retrofit. In such circumstances and based on its existing catchment area a replacement project would deliver a much smaller school aligned to the existing and projected school roll at that time.

In this context therefore any cost benefit of permanently utilising capacity at Bishopton Primary rather than investing in an extension at Dargavel Primary School may be marginal and limited to merely achieving a relatively short delay in timing of investment in new build capacity. Such cost benefit perspectives would require to be considered amongst other factors as part of the assessment carried out at the appropriate future point in time.

- **Additional Temporary Capacity**

Should additional short-term capacity be required to manage a peak in demand, the Council will continue to have a number of alternative options

to consider and assess at a future point in time and which can be framed to meet the specific demand in terms of scale and length of time the additional capacity demand is expected to last.

Modular Units at Dargavel Primary School

The existing temporary arrangements at Dargavel Primary, which are to date working successfully and effectively from an educational perspective and have been well received by the school community, have clearly demonstrated that additional modular capacity can be introduced if required. This option would therefore be available to be reintroduced at a future point in time if necessary. This option could also be introduced whilst any extension was being delivered to the existing school.

Use of surplus capacity at Bishopton Primary

Similar to current arrangements, Bishopton Primary school could be used to provide relief capacity for a short period if demand exceeded available in-take capacity.

Use of flexible capacity at existing schools

Should relatively limited temporary additional demand emerge that is expected to occur for only a short period of time, there would remain the option to consider the use of flexible capacity at the existing Dargavel Primary School and second primary school.

The existing Dargavel Primary, has an operational design capacity of 430 pupils, with the ability to expand to 530 for shorter periods through the flexible use of space. In addition, the planned second primary school to be delivered is planned to have an operational capacity of 800. Equally, the second primary school will have flexibility as a core design principle and is expected to have a similar ability to flexibly accommodate above its planned operational capacity to meet short term demand.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Officers will continue to monitor all available data and report back regularly to this board. This will provide opportunities to review the longer term projection as live data and trends become increasingly available and support timely decision making should any increase in provision, be that temporary or permanent, be identified as a future requirement.

Implications of this report

- 1. Financial**
None
- 2. HR and Organisational Development**
None.
- 3. Community/Council Planning**
None.

4. **Legal**
None.
5. **Property/Assets**
None.
6. **Information Technology**
None.
7. **Equality and Human Rights**
The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report because it is for noting only.
8. **Health and Safety**
None.
9. **Procurement**
None.
10. **Risk**
None.
11. **Privacy Impact**
None.
12. **Cosla Policy Position**
None.
13. **Climate Risk**
None.

List of Background Papers

None.

Children's Services

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