

WALSALL SITE ALLOCATION DOCUMENT

EDUCATION AND HEALTH BACKGROUND PAPER – APRIL 2017

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper is an updated version of one published in November 2016. It takes account of a decision of the Council's Cabinet in February 2017 and a Government announcement about Free Schools in April 2017.

Ensuring provision is made for education and health facilities is an important function of the planning system. There are several references in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Paragraphs 6 and 7 of the NPPF state that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. There are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. These dimensions give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles, including:

Economic – identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure

Social – supporting strong and healthy communities, with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being

Paragraph 17 sets out 12 core planning principles. One of these is that planning should take account of and support local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all, and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs.

Paragraphs 37 and 38 state that planning policies should aim for a balance of land uses within their area so that people can be encouraged to minimise journey lengths for employment, shopping, leisure, education and other activities. Where practical, particularly within large-scale developments, key facilities such as primary schools and local shops should be located within walking distance of most properties.

Paragraph 72 states that the Government attaches great importance to ensuring that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. They should:

- give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools; and
- work with schools promoters to identify and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted.

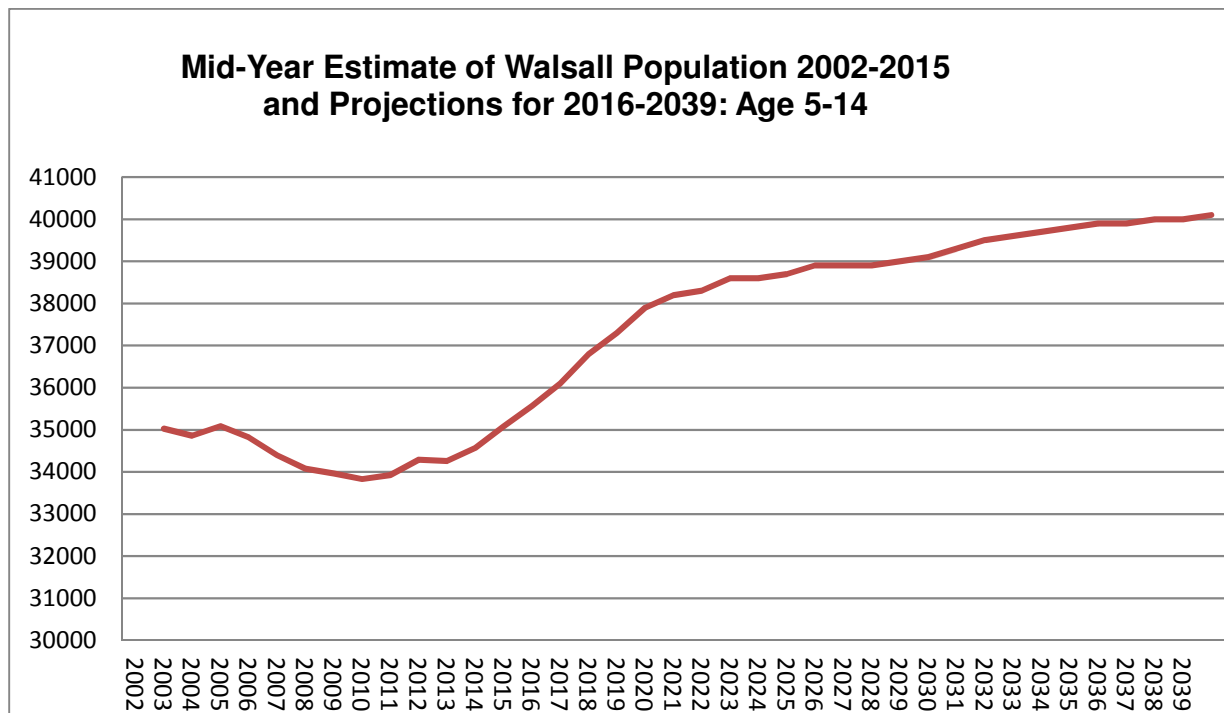
Paragraph 162 states that local planning authorities should work with other authorities and providers to assess the quality and capacity of infrastructure for... health, social care, education..., and its ability to meet forecast demands.

2. CURRENT SITUATION IN WALSALL

Responsibility for the planning and provision of education and health services has undergone considerable change in recent years, largely as a result of national legislative change. More change is expected in the near future, including the need to take account of further funding cuts. Demand for services has also evolved, and is expected to continue to vary in future, because of change in the profile of the population.

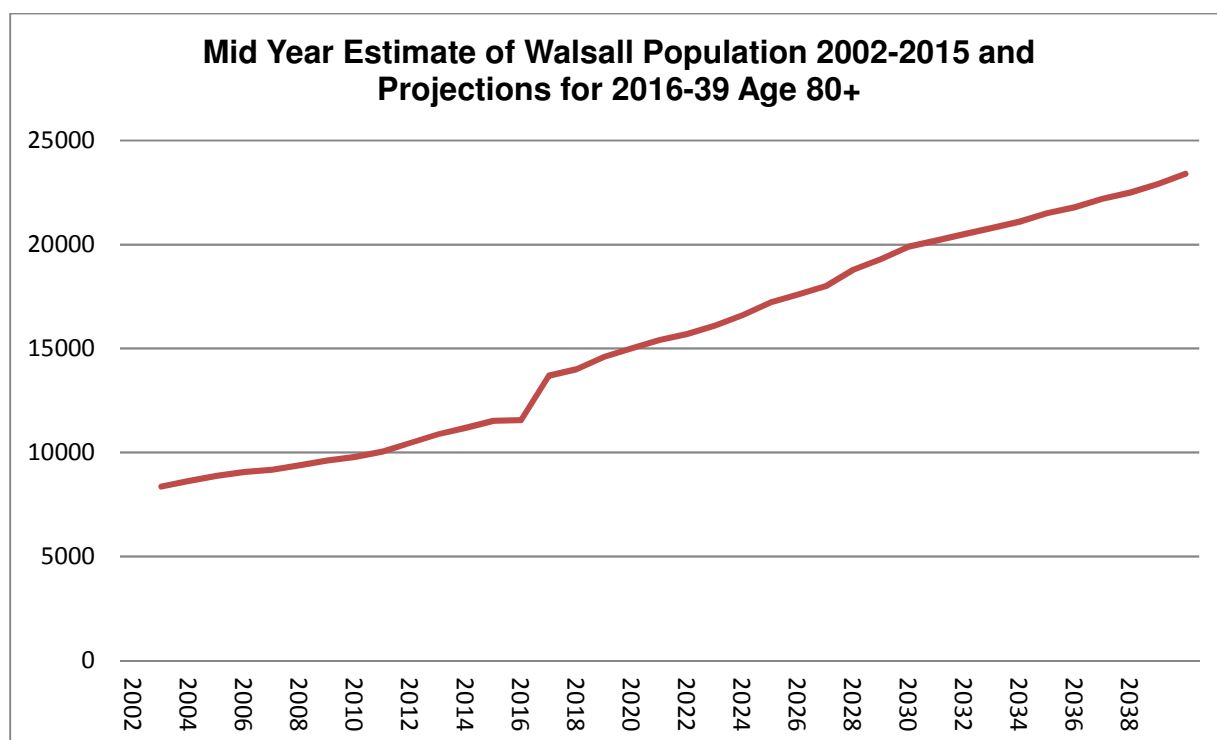
For many years, the population of Walsall was ageing. The birth rate was declining nationally, but in addition many younger people moved out of the borough to areas that were perceived as more pleasant before starting families. As a result, several schools became surplus to requirements and were closed, being either converted to other uses or demolished and redeveloped for housing.

However, for the last few years, in common with many parts of the country, the school age population has increased rapidly. Several reasons have been suggested for this, including an increase in the birth rate, especially amongst ethnic minority groups who have culturally tended to have larger families, and recent migrants from Eastern Europe, but there is also the issue that house prices, which have risen much faster than incomes, combined with the lasting effects of the 2008 recession, mean that it is no longer easy for many people to move away to more expensive housing areas as they start to have children. The increase in the school age population and the demand for school places is expected to continue for some years to come.



Source: ONS

The numbers of very old people have also continued to rise steadily. In part this is a reflection of improving lifestyles and health care, but many older people have complex health and care requirements.



3. EDUCATION

Walsall Children's Services, part of the council, is the local education authority and is responsible for co-ordinating school admissions. It completes and submits the annual school capacity survey (SCAP) to the Department for Education and the Education Funding Agency (EFA). Local authorities must submit data about:

- school capacity (the number of places and pupils in a school)
- pupil forecasts (an estimation of how many pupils there will be in future)
- capital spend (the money schools and local authorities spend on their buildings and facilities)

The survey collects information about:

- primary and secondary schools maintained by their local authority
- academies
- free schools (including university technical colleges (UTCs) and studio schools)
- city technology colleges

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/school-capacity-survey>

The annual schools census provides aggregated data about pupil numbers down to the local authority level. It covers all types of school in England including:

- local-authority-maintained schools
- academies
- free schools
- studio schools
- university technical colleges
- independent schools

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-school-and-pupil-numbers>

Schools planning is undertaken on a relatively short term scale, at least compared to that for development plans. The likely future demand for places is not estimated until children are born. This means that planning for primary school places takes place no earlier than 5 years in advance. Planning for secondary school places could, in theory take place up to 11 years in advance. However, the regulations relating to maximum travel distances allow secondary school children to be offered places further away from home than primary school pupils, so there is more scope for the latter to take up existing vacancies in other schools which can avoid the need for schools closer to home to be expanded.

A significant difficulty is that the legislation does not allow local authorities to require schools that are outside their control to expand. The Government also expects all new schools to be free schools or academies. It was announced in the 2016 Budget that all existing schools will be converted to academies (although this proposal has since been dropped). However, in response to the recent and expected imminent future increase in pupil numbers, the council's Cabinet agreed, in January 2016, proposals to expand four primary schools that currently remain under local authority control.

The Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee issued a report in April 2017 about capital funding for schools that described the system for funding new schools and new places in existing schools as increasingly incoherent and too often poor value for money.

<https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmpublic/961/96102.htm>

Children's Services have confirmed, as stated in the SAD (see section 6.6), that the identified need for additional school places can be met by adding classrooms and reconfiguring existing buildings. This means that there is no requirement for the SAD to allocate any sites for new schools, and it will not be necessary to build on school playing fields that are safeguarded as open space in the SAD.

Work is continuing on detailed planning for school planning. In February 2017, the council's Cabinet approved and adopted a Five-Year Sufficiency Strategy Plan as a working document detailing the approach to Pupil Place Planning in Walsall. The Cabinet report, and the Plan itself, can be viewed as Item 16 on the agenda for the meeting at

<https://cmispublic.walsall.gov.uk/cmis/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/2342/Committee/328/Default.aspx>.

In April 2017, the Government announced a national programme of free schools, of which three are to be in Walsall (one secondary and two primary). However, there has been no confirmation of the exact location of these proposals.

4. HEALTH

Planning for health service provision at the local level was previously the responsibility of the Primary Care Trust (PCT). Discussions between the council's planning officers and the PCT took place during preparation of the Black Country Core Strategy to raise awareness of the expected increase in household numbers and the potential impact on service provision.

The Health and Social Care Act 2012 has divided many of the responsibilities of the PCT between Public Health, which is now part of the council's functions, and the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). The latter is a Duty to Cooperate Body under the Localism Act.

There remains some confusion over how responsibilities for health, as well as social care, are or should be split. This is highlighted in a recent (November 2016) report from pwc. The report includes diagrams showing the structure of health and social care organisations at the local and national level.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-37846112>

http://pwc.blogs.com/press_room/2016/11/nhs-staff-and-public-want-reforms-to-end-confusion-in-current-national-health-and-social-care-system.html

<http://www.pwc.co.uk/healtharchitecture>

At the Issues and Options stage for the SAD, The CCG supported the option of placing new housing on previously developed land in preference to Green Belt as the latter would have higher infrastructure costs, but advised that without some assessment of the number of households that might arise from developments, it is difficult to make any kind of prediction what the likely impact would be and how the health infrastructure in any particular area would be affected. However, they noted that the CCG does have quite new facilities in both the west and the central corridors of the Borough – Darlaston, Willenhall, Harden, Blakenall and Pinfold to name but a few wards, where facilities are very modern.

The CCG and public health officers are represented on the Health and Wellbeing Board. The Board received a presentation on the Preferred Options draft of the SAD at its meeting on 7th September 2015. The presentation and minutes of this meeting can be viewed at <https://cmispublic.walsall.gov.uk/cmis/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/2223/Committee/302/Default.aspx>

Following this meeting, CCG officers referred to the market position statements that identify the possible need for care and similar facilities. These can be viewed on the council's web site at http://cms.walsall.gov.uk/index/health_and_social_care/social_care-2/social_care_and_health_commissioning.htm

CCG officers have also confirmed that, in line with national policy, Walsall CCG submitted an Interim Estates Strategy to the Department of Health in December 2015, required to underpin the case for future investment in the primary care estate. As part of this piece of

work, Walsall CCG commissioned a stock take review of all its primary care sites, which included a dialogue with all GP practices about current and future issues affecting their service provision.

The premises stock take identified a number of locality areas where more significant premises investment needs to be considered: these are Central Walsall, Palfrey and Aldridge. Options appraisal work was undertaken in these three localities in March 2016, to inform an investment bid from the Primary Care Transformation Fund (PCTF) , 2016 – 2018. Funding has since been agreed for a new facility in Walsall Town Centre in 2016-17.

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/commissioning/primary-care-comm/infrastructure-fund/2016-17-schemes/mids-east-schemes/#newbuild>