



Public Consultation on the Future of Secondary Education in Bicester

11 June 2007 to 20 July 2007



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



**OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL**

www.oxfordshire.gov.uk

THE CONSULTATION

Oxfordshire County Council is consulting with you as there will be a shortfall in secondary school places at the local schools due to future new housing in the area over the coming years. Currently Bicester has two secondary schools; The Cooper School and Bicester Community College which also has a 6th form.

This document provides an opportunity to inform the local community in Bicester about the growth of Bicester and to consult those who live in and around the town about the educational provision required as the need for secondary places in Bicester increases.

It is important that young people, who live in and around Bicester, have access to good quality education up to the age of 19, including a wide range of opportunities, available within the town. The need to increase the number of secondary school places in Bicester presents an opportunity to look afresh at the existing arrangements in the town and provide for the future needs of learners in Bicester, in the most appropriate way.

Forecast figures indicate that during the next ten years the population of Bicester will rise and there may be a need for up to 3000 secondary places overall, further information is available in Appendix 1.

The Government is now placing emphasis on providing greater opportunities for 14-19 year olds, particularly to provide for new opportunities with the introduction of diplomas. It is County Council policy to extend the range of vocational options for students.

The Government is also encouraging greater diversity and innovation and will encourage creative options and collaborative models. While schools are being encouraged to take advantage of greater delegation of powers, local authorities are expected to take a strategic role over school organisation but must take into account parental views.

There is some limited capacity in the accommodation at the two existing secondary schools in the town to take all the increase in pupil numbers, until a new facility is available. There is limited scope to extend the existing schools, particularly The Cooper School. Appendix 2 outlines the arrangements for the availability of additional land.

In towns of a similar size to Bicester, (Abingdon, Witney, Didcot) there is joint or shared Sixth Form provision which works well and all schools are designated 11-18. The two secondary schools have worked towards this for some time, with some teachers from The Cooper School teaching A Level courses at Bicester Community College and joint Senior Leadership meetings are held twice a term. In considering options for the future, the County Council would wish to build and improve on this current arrangement if at all possible. Any future plans will also need to take into account and be clear on how the existing school buildings will also be modernised.

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) is responsible for the provision of post 16 education and this is therefore a joint consultation between the County Council and the LSC. Early discussions have taken place between Oxfordshire County Council, the Learning and Skills Council, both existing secondary schools and Oxford and Cherwell Valley College to see how the needs of Bicester learners can be met in the future.

This consultation is not a referendum but an opportunity for you to express your views and enable them to be considered by the decision making body, which in this instance is Oxfordshire County Council's Cabinet. A summary report will be presented to the County Council's Cabinet in Autumn 2007.

A MORE FLEXIBLE AND PERSONALISED APPROACH TO EDUCATION

Students need to be prepared to engage with the economic, social and cultural changes which will dominate life in the early 21st Century with new work and leisure patterns and with the rapid expansion of communication technologies. In 15 years time, most people will have at least 5 or 6 jobs/careers in their working lifetime. This will require a curriculum flexible enough to be tailored to need, with an emphasis on the development of inter-personal skills and vocational relevance to the world of work.

The Government is encouraging greater diversity and placing increased emphasis on collaboration between schools and colleges to provide a wider range of learning pathways and personalised learning for 14 -19 year olds with the introduction of 15 new diplomas, over a five year period from 2008. There is a greater role for the Learning & Skills Council who not only have a strategic role in respect of planning for post 16 education but also have capital funds for post 16 expansion.

Bicester has had only very limited Further Education (FE) provision for many years. Students have to travel to Banbury or Oxford in order to participate in post-16 education and there have been no opportunities for adults to pursue such courses in Bicester. The Oxford and Cherwell Valley College's Engineering facility in Telford Road is the only FE facility run by the College in the town and is currently used by a few 14-16 year old students from the Cooper School and the Community College.

The two secondary schools have therefore taken the lead in providing personalised education for 14-16 year olds and in the case of Bicester Community College have provided some courses for 16-19 year olds. Bicester Community College has been the lead institution for an Increased Flexibility programme for 14-16 year olds, working in collaboration with the Cooper School and with Gosford Hill School, providing courses in Catering, Hairdressing, Rural Science and Skills for Working Life.

More recently the Cooper School and Bicester Community College have been involved in a wider partnership of schools, accessing government funding and developing the range of courses available. The 14-19 partnership has been successful in securing early Government funding to provide engineering, one of the first of the new diplomas.

The local housing growth in and around Bicester presents a unique opportunity to extend the education and training facilities for Bicester focused on meeting the future demands of an evolving curriculum.

THE OPTIONS

Your views are sought on a range of options based on the above facts and context. The three options that are being considered for public consultation at this stage are:

OPTION A - New Secondary School

This could be a purpose-built comprehensive school of about 850 places and would be a phased development initially to meet the demand for pupil places by 2013.

OPTION B – Expand Existing Schools

To enable growth only within the existing school sites by 850 pupil places.

OPTION C – New 14+ Learning Centre

This would provide a new educational learning centre which would be purpose built to meet the demands of the future curriculum for learners from age 14. It would accommodate pupils from year 10 upwards who would be 'based' at either of the existing schools and attend the new learning centre for part of the week. A levels and other post 16 courses would be taught at both schools and the new 14+ learning centre.

The points to consider for each option are as follows:

<p>OPTION A New Secondary School ACCOMODATION</p>	<p>OPTION B Expand Existing Schools ACCOMODATION</p>	<p>OPTION C New 14+ Learning Centre ACCOMODATION</p>
<p>This would provide a new school with modern facilities.</p> <p>There would be little immediate investment at the other schools and it would be necessary to duplicate some of the facilities which are currently in the other two schools i.e. sports, science and other specialist facilities without being able to offer anything new to the community.</p> <p>It would be necessary to have a phased introduction to the build which would mean it would take a number of years before the school was completely finished.</p>	<p>There is limited scope for expansion at the Cooper School.</p> <p>There are site access issues at Bicester Community College.</p> <p>This option may be of lower cost overall as much of the infrastructure already exists.</p>	<p>This option would provide a range of purpose built facilities which could be used both by the schools and the local community.</p> <p>It would provide specialist facilities for students from 14-19 who would attend for two or three days per week to take specific GCSE, Diploma or Advanced courses.</p> <p>This option allows the existing schools to develop their 14-19 pathways for learning in purpose built accommodation.</p> <p>The option would be supported by LSC funding.</p>
<p>ORGANISATION</p> <p>This option would be subject to the Government's competition requirements for new schools and would provide further choice and diversity of provision for pupils living in the area.</p> <p>Initially the school would be much smaller than the existing schools, probably in the region of 500-600 pupils as a first phase.</p> <p>The school would be separate from the other schools. However, there is greater emphasis on collaboration between schools and a greater requirement for pupils to access a wider choice of subjects and courses, and with the proposed national changes for 14-19 provision, it may be more difficult for the 'traditional' school to adapt to future demands, particularly in the area of its premises.</p>	<p>ORGANISATION</p> <p>This would maintain and support the current provision.</p> <p>Opportunity for further expansion would be limited if pupil numbers increase further.</p>	<p>ORGANISATION</p> <p>Issues over management, control and student movement would need to be resolved.</p> <p>It could be jointly managed and governed by the two schools and Oxford and Cherwell Valley College.</p> <p>It can develop gradually and it responds to government expectation of collaboration.</p>

OPTION A CURRICULUM	OPTION B CURRICULUM	OPTION C CURRICULUM
<p>The school might be restricted in its ability to develop as broad and balanced a curriculum offer as the existing schools.</p> <p>It would rely on negotiation among separate leadership teams and governors to reach agreement over the development of innovative curriculum arrangements and learning models to meet requirements of the 14 -19 curriculum, with potential to restrict number of pathways to higher education.</p>	<p>This would provide very little flexibility to cater for long term growth or the academic and vocational needs for the future. There would be no opportunity for extension of provision for adults.</p> <p>The schools would be able to develop further their existing good practice – with economy of scale enabling greater provision.</p>	<p>It would make innovative provision for areas which are currently poorly provided for or non-existent in the Bicester area and where students have to travel elsewhere to take, for example: engineering, hospitality and catering, hair and beauty, dance, graphics, ICT, Business Studies courses.</p> <p>This is an innovative approach which will respond to the future demands on students schools and the community. An illustrative approach to the delivery of the future pathways to learning is shown in Appendix 3.</p> <p>The facility could provide significant adult education, further education and higher education courses through collaboration, thus promoting locally based life long learning.</p>
<p>POST 16 EDUCATION</p> <p>Initially the school may be too small to offer its own 6th form provision and it would be necessary to join the current arrangement at Bicester Community College, requiring it to expand its 6th form facilities to cater for extra numbers.</p>	<p>POST 16 EDUCATION</p> <p>This would maintain and support the current provision.</p> <p>It will respond to the perceived skills shortages in Bicester industry/business.</p>	<p>POST 16 EDUCATION</p> <p>Will ensure post-16 education and training rates increase and enable adults to pursue extended vocational courses in the daytime and in the evenings.</p> <p>The post-16 collaborative arrangements will enhance the range of A-level opportunities and promote accelerated, academic learning at the schools and the centre.</p> <p>Will enable the schools to enhance the post 16 curriculum and assist the Cooper School in recruitment of teachers wanting to teach A Level students.</p> <p>Oxford and Cherwell Valley College is keen to support this approach and sees this as an opportunity to expand and enhance its provision in the town. It is recognised that the Local Authority funding is limited to statutory provision and any additional funds for expansion of further education provision will be sought from elsewhere.</p> <p>It will respond to the perceived skills shortages in Bicester industry/business.</p>

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The governance and management arrangements for each of the options will be different and the Council is currently considering the implications of recent changes in legislation. Clarification will be provided at the public meetings and on the web-site in due course.

COST OF OPTIONS

It is important at this stage to ensure that the selected option will provide the most appropriate solution to support pupil achievement in the area.

There are some financial considerations which include the availability and cost of new sites. Clarification would be required to the level of any developer contributions through planning gain and the value and availability of funds from the County Council and/or the Learning & Skills Council.

The work in this area to date has been limited. The following estimates are based on indicative and historical building cost information. Following work undertaken on the future viability of a 14-19 curriculum arrangement and required accommodation, it is estimated that the overall cost of Options A and C are similar at approximately £22M. Option B would be less expensive. It is however likely that the cost to the Council will be considerably less with all options after any developer contributions are taken into consideration.

The above costs are still subject to a high degree of uncertainty at this stage; this approach supports an informed decision-making process but has not incurred high abortive costs developing scheme(s) that may not proceed beyond this public consultation. However either option A or B is required to provide for 500 - 600 pupils by 2013 and this can be seen as a first phase of the development, with a further phase provided in the period leading up to 2020.

Oxfordshire County Council will join the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme (<http://www.bsf.gov.uk/>) in around 2015 and whilst the programme arrangements are not known at this stage, the aim of BSF is to ensure that secondary education in every part of England has facilities of 21st Century standard by 2020. It is likely that funding for the latter phases of the development will come from this source.

YOUR VIEWS

This is an important decision and we hope that you will be able to contribute and make your comments known. The purpose of this stage of the consultation is to find out your preferred option for the provision of additional secondary pupil places in Bicester and we will aim to bring a firm proposal for further discussion later in 2007

We would like you to consider the needs of children in Bicester for a 21st Century education and opportunities for life-long learning, looking to future local needs, providing a well qualified, skilled and flexible workforce.

WHO IS BEING CONSULTED?

This phase of the consultation process will be carried out with:

- a) Governors and staff of the schools in Bicester.
- b) Pupils from the schools in Bicester.
- c) Parents/guardians of pupils attending the primary schools in the area.
- d) The Dioceses of Birmingham, Oxford and Portsmouth.
- e) The Member of Parliament.
- f) Oxford and Cherwell Valley College.
- g) Oxfordshire County Council Elected Members.
- h) Local District, Town and Parish Councils.
- i) The Local Business Community.
- j) Other local people with an interest in the local schools.

HOW IS THE INFORMATION BEING PROVIDED?

The information necessary for an informed response is contained in this consultation document which is also available online at:

www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/consultation

Meetings have also been arranged so that County Council Officers can explain the options and receive your views.

Who are meetings for?

The meetings are for parents and other members of the Bicester community and are as follows:

Venue	Date & Time
The Cooper School	Wednesday 20 June at 7.30pm
Bicester Community College	Tuesday 3 July at 7.30pm

HOW DO I RESPOND TO THE CONSULTATION?

You can respond in one of four ways:

- Complete the response form at the back of this document and send it to the address shown on the response form.
- Write a letter and send it to the address shown on the response form.
- Email your response to the address shown on the response form.
- Use the electronic response form at the end of the online version of this consultation document.

Parents are asked to complete one form only, irrespective of how many children they might have attending the schools. Forms must be returned as soon as possible but by **20 July 2007** at the very latest.

A report outlining the views of all consulted is to be presented to Oxfordshire County Council's Cabinet in Autumn 2007; all responses received will be made available to the members of the Cabinet at that time.

APPENDIX 1

CURRENT DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS AND CURRENT PROVISION

There is to be additional significant new housing growth within the catchment areas for Bicester Community College and The Cooper School with developments at Upper Heyford and south west Bicester, among others, bringing about an additional 3400 houses by 2016. After 2016, at the moment, a further 2000 houses are proposed in and around Bicester.

If the current patterns of transfer from primary schools continue then around 3000 secondary school places will be required to 2016. The current capacity of the two schools is about 2,700 pupils although some changes to more specialist accommodation e.g. Science laboratories would be required if the schools were to admit up to their capacity.

It is necessary to consider the long-term implication of new housing, although this will come on stream in a gradual manner as the pace of the housing development is beyond the control of the County Council. Consequently it is difficult to accurately predict the timing of the need for pupil places. However, it is our view that the current structure and capacity could not cope with the projected pupil numbers beyond 2013

There is some very limited room for further expansion at the Cooper School and a possibility that Bicester Community College could accommodate to around 1800 which is probably the maximum that could be accommodated on this site given site and access restrictions. There are currently around 500 surplus places in the two schools with the underlying numbers in primary schools relatively stable.

There are a number of other important issues to think about in relation to the schools. Only 25% of sixteen year olds transfer into the Bicester Community College (BCC) Sixth Form from BCC and the Cooper School (11 -16). Between 50% and 60% of Bicester Community College students transfer to the Bicester Sixth Form. Others who wish to take more advanced personalised learning courses have to leave the town for Banbury or Oxford. Students from the Cooper School do not have the option to stay there; some attend the Community College but most move outside Bicester to continue their education.

APPENDIX 2

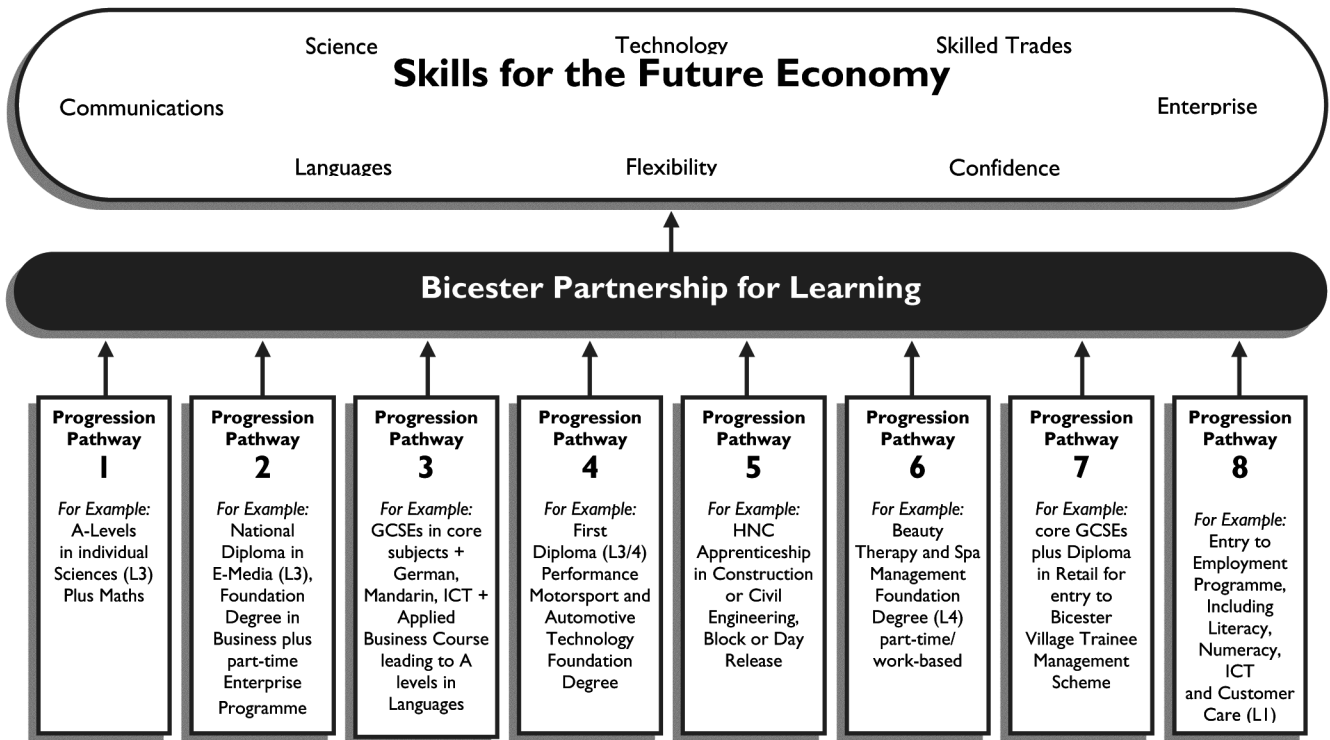
ACQUISITION OF REQUIRED LAND:

Most of the new houses will be built at Upper Heyford, south-west Bicester and Gavray Drive where planning approval is likely to be granted for in the region of 3,600 new houses in total with other smaller developments around Bicester; a further 2000 houses are planned beyond 2016. A site for the new facility has been identified in the south-west of Bicester.

Although it may be some time before any new provision needs to be provided it is important that decisions are made to enable plans to be developed for south west Bicester so that the right amount of roads and other supporting infrastructure can be provided and the size and nature of any education provision has a big impact on this. Also we need to be able to plan any new education buildings and collect all the funding necessary. It is important to agree the most appropriate way forward as quickly as possible.

APPENDIX 3

A Learning Community for the Bicester of Tomorrow



Promoting accelerated academic learning and supported practical learning pathways

Key to Qualifications Levels:

Entry: recognise the building of basic knowledge, skills and the ability to apply learning under supervision, but not geared to specific occupations.

Level 1: recognise basic knowledge and skills and the ability to apply learning under supervision relating mostly to everyday situations and may be linked to job competence. (The equivalent of GCSEs Grades D-G.).

Level 2: recognise the ability to gain a good knowledge and understanding of a subject area of work and to perform varied tasks with some supervision, appropriate for many job roles. (The equivalent of GCSEs at Grades A*-C.).

Level 3: recognise the ability to gain and apply a range of knowledge, skills and understanding and is appropriate for University entrance, working independently and supervising and training others in their field of work. (The equivalent of A-levels.).

Level 4: recognise specialist learning and involve detailed analysis of a high level of information and knowledge in an area of work, appropriate for professional and technical job roles or managing and developing others. (The equivalent of Certificates of Higher Education.).

**PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON THE FUTURE OF
SECONDARY EDUCATION IN BICESTER**

RESPONSE FORM (to be detached)

Please indicate your preference by placing a tick in the appropriate box below, and comment if you wish, in support of your preference, overleaf.

OPTION	DESCRIPTION	TICK
A	A New Secondary School	
B	Expand Existing Schools	
C	A New 14+ Learning Centre	

Please also provide the following details:

Please ✓ as appropriate	
	Parent or Guardian
	Governor/Headteacher
	Member of Staff
	Resident Bicester
	Parent partnership school
	Other (please specify

Response from
(e.g. Name of School, Diocese or Organisation)

Signed.....

Name

Address.....

.....



