

Appendix 3 – Hertfordshire County Council’s response to ‘A report for North Hertfordshire District Council’ document undertaken by PSE Consulting Ltd, July – September 2017.

This paper reiterates HCC’s position in relation to size of secondary schools considered viable in response to the PSE report.

HCC has previously responded to NHDC advising that the two 4fe secondary school sites proposed within the Local Plan at GA2 and KB4 do not provide an acceptable solution to the demand arising from the new housing proposed around Stevenage. The reasons have been laid out in the County Council’s response and the objection to the Local Plan and in our Matters statement in response to ‘Deliverability’ (Matter 6).

The County Council has a preference for secondary schools of at least 6fe to 8fe to ensure they are of sufficient size to support financial sustainability and long term viability. It is not disputed that small secondary schools do exist and can achieve good standards of education. However, the National Audit Office (December 2016) has reported that schools are facing significant financial pressure, with an 8% cut in real terms pupil funding between 2014/15 and 2019/20 and the additional financial demands placed on schools as a result of recent policy changes around pay rises, higher NI employment contributions and teacher pension schemes. This is without taking into account the impact on budgets of the introduction of the National Funding Formula.

A key pillar of the success of Hertfordshire’s secondary schools is that they are of a scale to be financially viable and offer strong 6th form provision, offering stimulating environments to teach and learn.

A number of Hertfordshire’s small secondary schools are small by default rather than by design, with financial support being provided through Hertfordshire’s Growth Fund assistance for small secondary schools in areas of demographic growth.

There is only one maintained 11-16 secondary school within Hertfordshire which recently reorganised to alter its age range and no longer offer 6th form provision. Since this change, the school has now joined a MAT. All other secondary schools are 11-18.

In its role as commissioner of school places with a statutory duty to ensure sufficient, quality school places as well as its role as a responsible Local Authority ensuring value for money, Hertfordshire is clear that larger secondary schools offer greater long term sustainability and financial viability, minimising the impact on the public purse.

Kate Ma, Hertfordshire County Council
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