

WD3 School Action Group Update September 2011



Herts County Council (HCC) Community School

Over the summer, HCC has undertaken detailed technical investigations into the suitability of 4 local sites for a new secondary school. Three Rivers District Council (TRDC) require notification of preferred sites by 28th September 2011. A further period of public consultation is planned for November.

The consultation will be titled "Site Allocations Development Plan" and will be distributed to local households via Three Rivers Times, available on the TRDC website and in the library.

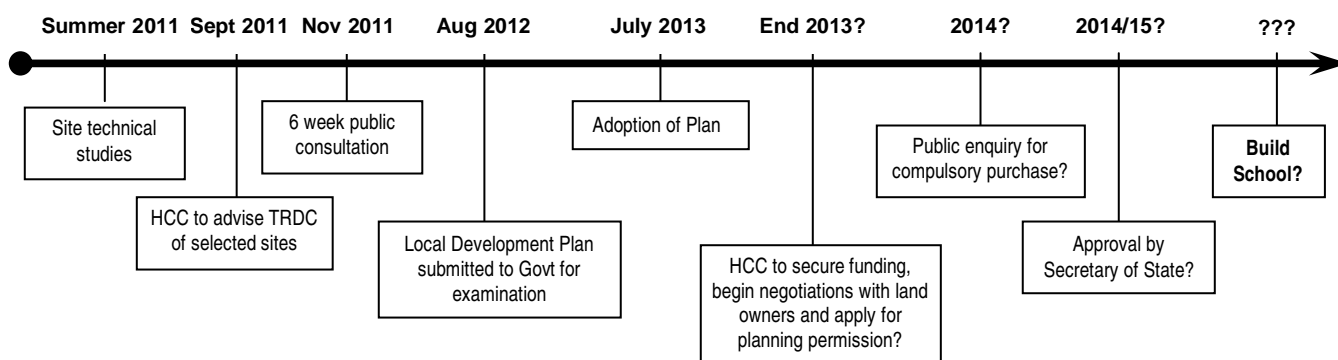
You will have responded already but... **Please take time to read the documentation and respond to the consultation.** It is a different and more in depth consultation, and is a legal requirement for TRDC to complete.

Frustratingly we appear to be no closer to finding the pros and cons to each site than 12 months ago. However, HCC are due to recommend two sites are allocated for secondary school provision as a result of the feasibility studies.

A final selection will be made for inclusion in the Site Allocations Development Plan. This document must be submitted to the government in August 2012 for examination, and all being well, will be adopted in July 2013.

Alongside TRDC's work on the Local Development Framework, HCC must submit planning applications and ready themselves for purchase, possibly compulsory, of the sites. This will require a public enquiry, and if it is in greenbelt it will need approval from the Secretary of State.

Possible Timeline for HCC Community School



In November 2010, HCC envisaged the opening of a new school by September 2016. Due to the level of progress this now seems a difficult target.

Reach Learning Free School

In June 2011, a group of local teachers known as Reach Learning applied to establish a non-selective "Free School" in the WD3 area. Free schools are set up in response to parental demand and are governed by the same legal requirements that cover Academies eg. Harefield, the Watford Grammar Schools, and Francis Combe. Government policy is actively encouraging the establishment of Free Schools.

Parents of over 450 local children signed up in principle to the Reach Learning Free School. The Department for Education undertook due diligence investigations on the team involved and site visits were made. Unfortunately Reach Learning was not successful in reaching interview stage.

It is a competitive process. We were up against Independent schools wishing to secure Free School status and groups with extensive professional support through private education companies.

The Department for Education's feedback highlighted two areas for development.

1. (a) to provide more details of extra-curricular activities that would be provided and (b) what additional, supported learning would be given to any pupil in need of it (e.g. one-to-one mentoring, etc.).
2. "...evidence of demand section did not clearly demonstrate how [Reach Learning] have reached out to families with children from a range of backgrounds and abilities (including deprived or disadvantaged families) or how [Reach Learning] would target them in future."

Point 2 is very frustrating. It is very difficult to "spread the word" to all our local parents or access information about the local school population. Please sign up to our Facebook group. We are a small group who want to give information to primary school parents. We are parents ourselves, so with the time constraints we all know and love, we are unable to talk to or hand out leaflets to everyone!

Reach Learning are committed to opening a secondary school in the Rickmansworth area. This can only be done with community support. Reach Learning can apply again next year, ensuring their application covers the above points. Local parents need to sign up for the Reach Free School so that Department for Education will consider our application.

What Next?

A new Local Authority school is **NOT** a certainty. The local planning process is long. Hertfordshire has other communities who are also campaigning for a new secondary school.

- No site or money has been secured.
- Local parents need to demonstrate demand for a new secondary school to keep the attention of HCC.

Worried about your child's secondary education choices...? Please

- Join the WD3 School Action Group on Facebook to receive updates.
- Volunteer as a class representative to help us distribute updates and requests.
- Join the Group's committee and help with lobbying our local politicians and the Free School application.
- Respond to TRDC's school site consultation.
- Sign up to show your interest in the Reach Free School at www.reachlearning.co.uk

We are a non-political group committed to improving the choices for secondary education in the WD3 area. We need the support of our local residents to help us all succeed.

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