

Cranbrook Placemaking Group - 4th August 2025

Education Briefing Note

Purpose of Paper

The paper will provides an update on primary, secondary and special school provision in Cranbrook.

Current position

- **High Pupil Numbers and Catchment Adjustments:** Cranbrook's cohort of children that could seek a place at the local schools remains high. In response, the catchment area for St Martin's has been reduced to ease pressure and aid forward planning for Cranbrook. As a result, pupils in 'Tithebarn' are now within the Monkerton Primary School catchment area, parental preference in this area has previously been towards the City
- **Tithebarn Primary School Development:** Devon County Council has secured Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding from EDDC toward its delivery, and feasibility work is currently underway.
- **Cranbrook Education Infrastructure:** DCC has expanded secondary facilities at the all through Cranbrook Education Campus in advance of need. This additional space also means the campus can support bulge primary classes and this has been agreed for September 2025. There are however operational challenges for the school in offering bulge years, in particular the uncertainty of admitting a full class and the knock on financial implication. There is physical capacity for a bulge class in September 2026 and discussions are ongoing.
- **Rockbeare C of E Primary School Expansion:** A feasibility study is in progress for expanding Rockbeare C of E Primary School which is a popular choice among Cranbrook families, this would see an extra 5 places per year group, providing 35 places in total.
- **Early Years and Childcare Provision:** There is a challenge in respect of all year-round early years and childcare places for 0–4 year olds. Currently, both existing primary schools offer places for 2-4 year olds term time only. The new nursery is still not operational. The position is under review.

Cranbrook Plan

- **630 place primary school (3 form entry):** Due to be delivered at the Cobdens expansion area. Site appraisal and design work is underway with a notional opening date of September 2027 for the first phase of the build. The delivery of phase two will be triggered by increased admissions to the school of two bulge years. The school sponsor is yet to be determined and no funding has been secured to deliver the school.
- **420 place primary school (2 form entry):** Planned for either the Treasbeare or Bluehayes expansion areas, Treasbeare being the preference as the more accessible and better integrated option. This school will also include provision for early years.

Section 106 Triggers: Commencement of development in relation to any dwelling within the expansion areas must not take place until the first primary school land is transferred to DCC. Development is restricted to 750 homes throughout the expansion areas until the second primary school land is transferred to DCC. These triggers align to the adopted [Cranbrook Plan \(2013-2031\)](#) and are included in two signed Section 106 agreements to date (Cobdens and Treasbeare.)

Phased secondary expansion: Phased expansion of the all-through Cranbrook Education Campus (CEC) will increase capacity for secondary age pupils to at least 1,200 places. Initial phases of the expansion project recently increased the schools secondary capacity from 600 to a maximum of 850 places at a total cost of circa £1.8m. The design work for future phases is being progressed by DCC.

Challenges

- **Pupil Yields:** Typically in larger developments, pupil yields are higher than settled communities. Managing this whilst not over providing provision longer term is a challenge but can be mitigated by early delivery of new education infrastructure.
- **Forward Funding:** In order to achieve early delivery, infrastructure needs to be delivered in advance of Section 106 receipts. Capital project costs are also outstripping DfE funding rates and phased delivery has a cost implication. The feasibility of the first school will need to consider the financial challenges, but having the scheme 'shovel ready' is a priority.
- **Schools Revenue challenges:** Schools are facing significant challenges due to increased operational costs and this impacts on securing bulge years in Cranbrook.

- **Department for Education (DfE) decision making (SEND):** The new 70 place special school is due to be funded by the DfE's Free School programme. The DfE is reviewing the current programme and DCC awaits the outcome. Initial feasibility design work has been completed.

Next Steps

- **Early Years:** The new primary schools will be designed and be required to offer places for 0-4 year olds for at least 48 weeks of the year to address the identified need within the town. DCC will continue to review options in the short term.
- **Cobdens Primary:** Funding has been secured to take the new school, project through to planning. The current programme indicates that planning will be submitted for consultation in November 2025.
- **Secondary:** Design fees have been secured to proceed through planning and into detailed design for the proposed expansion. This phase will increase the capacity of the secondary offer from 850 to 1,300 places. The build, which is expected to last one year, is likely to begin in the medium term . There are also plans to expand the school kitchen as a standalone project potentially in the next academic year to provide improved facilities and overcome existing operational challenges reported by the school.