

## A new School on the Brewery Site?

### Background

The Council has suggested that a new secondary school is required in the eastern part of the borough. The owners and developers of the Mortlake Brewery Site have been asked by the Council to make provision for a new secondary school in their plans.

We agree that there will be an increase in the demand for secondary places, but a new school in this location is not necessarily the best or only answer. We have been lobbying the Council to re-examine the data on actual demand for school places and to consider how this could be met by investing in the existing secondary schools, through expansion of their facilities and student numbers. This is an option that makes financial as well as educational sense. We have also asked the Council how it proposes to ensure adequate primary school provision for new and existing residents, as the developer's application does not propose a solution.

### Increase in demand for secondary school places is not as high as the Council believes

- Using up-to-date census data for the primary schools, we estimate that there will be an increase in demand of up to 90 secondary school places in the east of the borough, peaking in 2021, staying roughly constant until 2024, and declining thereafter.
- The Council estimates an increase of 101 by 2020 rising to 152 by 2023; this estimate uses inaccurate census data, exaggerates the influence of Catholic primary schools and, we believe, includes an inflated estimate of out-borough uptake.
- The public case for a new school in Mortlake has always rested on the children in the north-east who will be unable to obtain a local secondary place and not on the demand from the whole of the east of the borough. Predicted extra demand in other parts of the east of the borough, much of it out-borough, should be provided for in the appropriate catchment area.
- Additional capacity will be required in the north-east within the next two years (RPA has already admitted a bulge class in 2018). A new school cannot be delivered on the brewery site within the timeframe. The cumulative number of extra classes needed by 2021 could reach 7. Expansion of the existing schools will be required before 2021.
- RPA & Christ's have the capacity to admit 330 children per year between them. The incremental demand in the north-east can be met through expansion of these two existing schools. Our estimates allow for additional out-borough intake arising from such expansion.
- It is the Council's responsibility to protect the existing schools from the danger of local over-provision by putting places where they are needed. More generally, the Council's response to the limited need for additional places should be a resilient one. Building a new school is not resilient. It will lead to permanent over-provision when the bubble has passed (in 2025).

### Local schools need to expand to secure their sixth-forms

- Both RPA and Christ's have recently established sixth forms; for a sixth form to be viable financially and educationally (an adequate range of subjects offered to groups of suitable size) at least 100 pupils are required in each year. Both the Government and the Council's own scrutiny committee (including experienced local head teachers) agree on this number. Expanding these schools will help to achieve this as it will increase the numbers feeding into the sixth form.
- A new school could undermine the viability of the existing sixth forms because there is not the demand to support three sixth forms of a viable size.

- Before the Livingstone Academy proposal was moved from Tower Hamlets to Mortlake, its plans showed the intention to achieve a large sixth form of 250 despite being only 6 forms of entry at age 11, but this was to be achieved by recruiting additional pupils into its sixth form from other schools. This would further impact the viability of the existing sixth forms.

#### Expansion of local schools is an option

- Richmond Park Academy have stated clearly to the Council that with the right investment on the site they would be happy to expand permanently to eight-form entry.
- Christ's School are admitting a bulge year in 2019. They have not made any commitment beyond this, but they are open to considering permanent expansion at some point in the future. Any such decision would only be made by the school's governing body after close consultation with parents, staff, the Local Authority, Southwark Diocese and other key stakeholders.
- The MBCG has provided outline plans to show how both RPA and Christ's could be expanded, subject to planning permission.

#### Expansion costs less and can be funded from the Government

- In addition to significant construction costs, the cost of the new school may include the purchase of 1.89 ha. from the developer or be part of s106 discussions. Expansion of the two existing schools is not dependent on the acquisition of additional land and would only require 25% of the construction costs.
- The government can provide funding to Local Authorities for the expansion of existing schools to meet increased demand.

#### The Brewery site is sub-optimal and has a significant impact on congestion

- The proposed site for the school is sub-optimal in terms of space: it has been allocated just 1.89ha. which includes one playing field. In comparison Christ's has 4.8 ha. and RPA has 3.47 ha., placing the proposed new school at an immediate disadvantage.
- A new school on the brewery site has a significant impact on traffic: it is estimated to account for 50% of the increased congestion at peak hours. A development without a large secondary school would diminish a drive to alter Chalker's Corner junction. The subsequent savings would alter the development's financial viability and have a positive impact on provision of affordable housing.

#### No provision for additional primary school places

- The adopted planning brief included a primary school. The Thomson House school is over-subscribed and has a relatively small intake; while there is a fall overall in the primary school intake, this new site will increase demand locally. Relocating Thomson House to the brewery site would allow it to expand and would remove some of the current logistical and safety challenges in its current split locations as well as the constant and serious risk of the level crossing and high level of vehicular emissions at the Sheen Lane site.
- Moreover, an enlarged primary school would permit the grass playing fields to be retained in full and consequently would not require the loss of 'OOLTI' protected green space.