

**Wrexham Road Development
PROPOSED NEW PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**INFORMAL CONSULTATION ON LAUNCH OF
A FREE SCHOOL PRESUMPTION
COMPETITION**

6 November 2023 to 17 December 2023



INFORMAL CONSULTATION ON LAUNCH OF A FREE SCHOOL PRESUMPTION COMPETITION

LOCAL AUTHORITY CONSULTATION REGARDING A NEW PRIMARY SCHOOL FOR WREXHAM ROAD DEVELOPMENT

This consultation is non-statutory and is an informal means of gathering local views on the proposal outlined below.

Introduction

Under section 14 of the Education Act 1996 the Local Authority has a statutory duty to ensure that there are sufficient and suitable primary and secondary school places for children resident in its area.

The Wrexham Road development in the Chester South Planning Area comprises of up to 1,400 new dwellings. This development has been identified in the Cheshire West & Chester Local Plan, which was adopted in 2015 and leads additional development up to 2030. The strategic development site at Wrexham Road includes provision of a new Primary School.

There is a Section 106 Agreement* associated with the planning application, which identifies the developer's commitments to deliver infrastructure for the area. As part of the Section 106 agreement, Cheshire West and Chester Council have secured the land required to build the school and a financial contribution towards the build costs, as well as additional costs for temporary accommodation.

*A Section 106 agreement is a legal obligation entered into by a housing developer and a local authority, through which a developer contributes financially to reduce the impact of a development proposal by providing local services, in this case, a new school.

What is the Free School Presumption?

The Free School Presumption process is the main route by which councils establish new schools in order to meet the need for additional places, both in terms of basic need and the need for diverse provision within their areas.

All new schools established through the presumption process are classified as free schools. This reflects the fact that 'free school' is the Department for Education's term for any new provision academy. Academies are state-funded schools that are independent of council control and receive their funding directly from the government.

By law, all new schools in England must be opened as free schools, set up and run by a Trust. The process by which councils establish a new free school, and the Secretary of State appoints a Trust to run it, is known as the Free School Presumption.

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Before embarking on the launch of a Free School Presumption competition, the council is encouraged by the Department for Education to conduct local, informal consultation. The aims of this are twofold:

- i. to publicise the need for a new school among the local stakeholder community and potential sponsors
- ii. feedback gathered through consultation will be valuable and contribute to formulate and finalise the council's specification for a new school before its publication.

The council is therefore conducting a local, informal consultation with neighbouring schools, parents, and key stakeholders prior to the initiation of a Free School Presumption. This consultation is in accordance with the Department for Education guidance.

The Council is responsible for the specification of the new free school. Local good or outstanding schools that are interested in submitting a proposal to run a new school will need to have or acquire academy status and be an approved sponsor.

Further details on the Free School Presumption process can be found: [Establishing a new academy: free school presumption - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/establishing-a-new-academy-free-school-presumption)

The Free School Competition is expected to be open early Spring Term 2024.

Please note that this is not the formal statutory consultation which the Trust will be required to undertake at a later date.

Why do we need a new primary school?

Cheshire West & Chester Council consistently monitors school places to ensure there are sufficient places for all school age children. An analysis of the latest pupil forecasts has identified the need to provide additional primary school places in Chester South Planning Area in response to the additional pupils from the new housing development.

It is projected that the 1,400 dwellings proposed for the development site are likely to yield approximately 294 children aged 4-11 who will require school places in the local area. The Councils planning department has provided the housing trajectory for the development. The building trajectory for the next five years is shown below, along with the anticipated pupil yield:



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	Cumulative to date	Year of completion					Cumulative 2028 onwards
		2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	
Projected no. houses completed	470	132	131	110	110	111	336
Projected primary school places required per year	99	28	28	23	23	23	71
Projected primary school places required - cumulative	99	127	155	178	201	224	295

Based on forecast need and the timeline to deliver a new School, it is anticipated that the new school will be required to open at the earliest, September 2026.

Initially the school will open as a 210 place (1 Form Entry) mainstream primary school, with the intention to have a further 105 places (0.5 Form Entry) expansion as the housing development progresses and the pupil place need arises. The school will accommodate mixed genders. The school will have pre-school provision and will be expected to accommodate children aged 3-11 years.

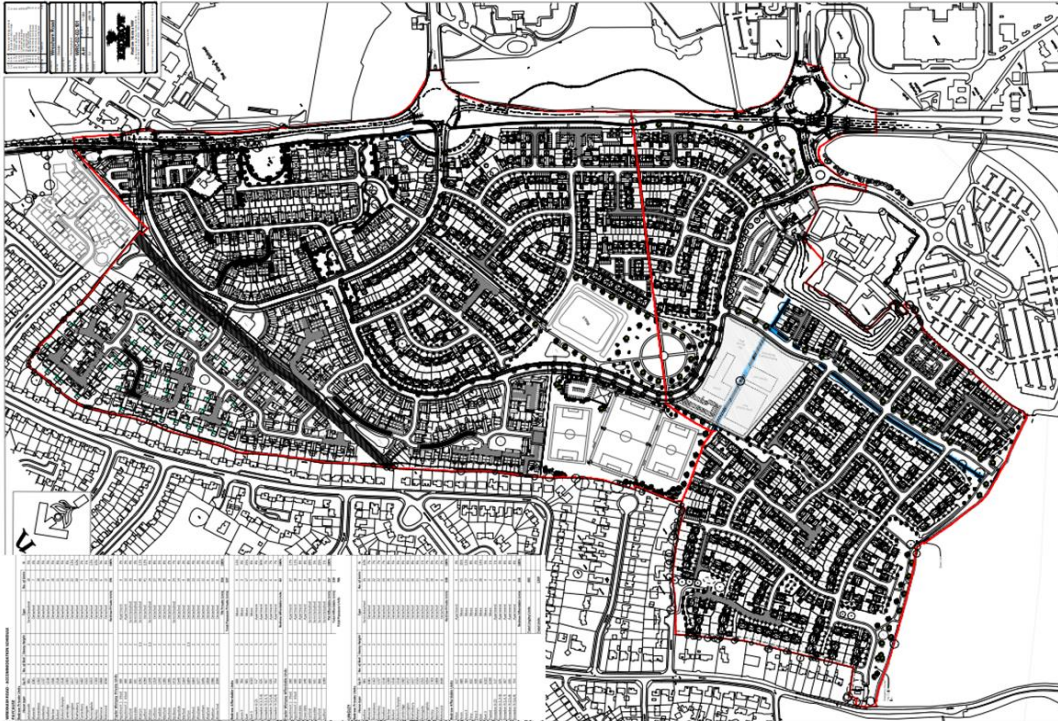
As part of the Section 106 agreement for the development of the Wrexham Road site, developers are committed to deliver supporting infrastructure to the area. The developers have agreed to the allocation of a site of for the building of a new primary school.

The new school would be built in accordance with the specifications described by the Department for Education (Building Bulletin) and under consultation with Cheshire West and Chester County Council.

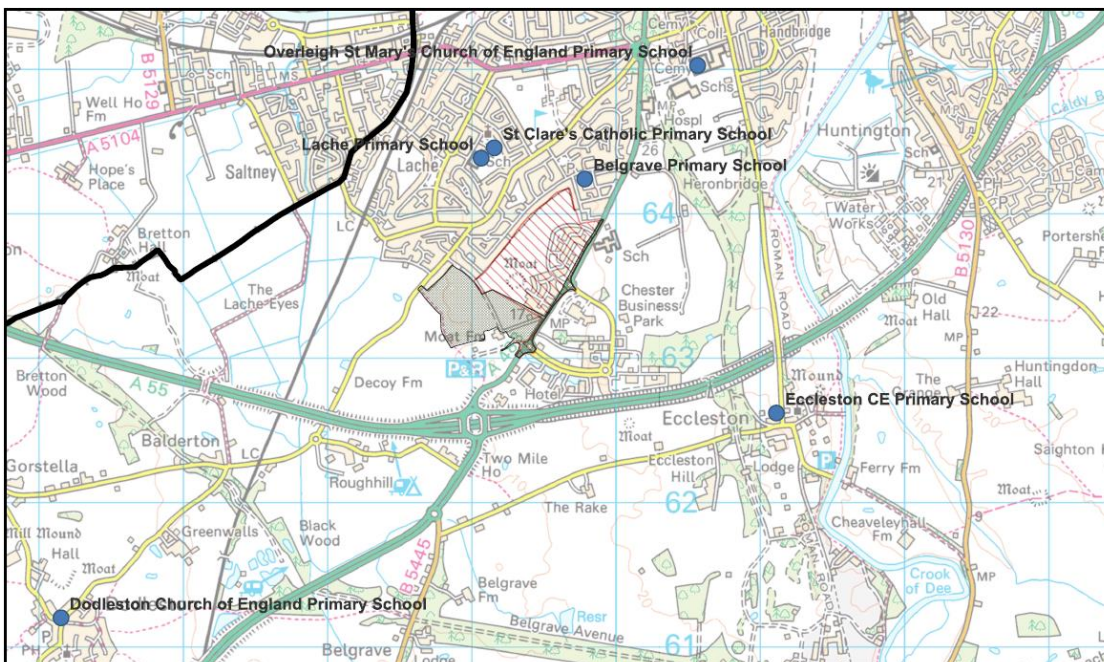


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The location of the new school is central in the development and can be seen below:



The map below shows the position of the existing primary schools in the Chester South Planning Area and the location of the Wrexham Road housing developments:



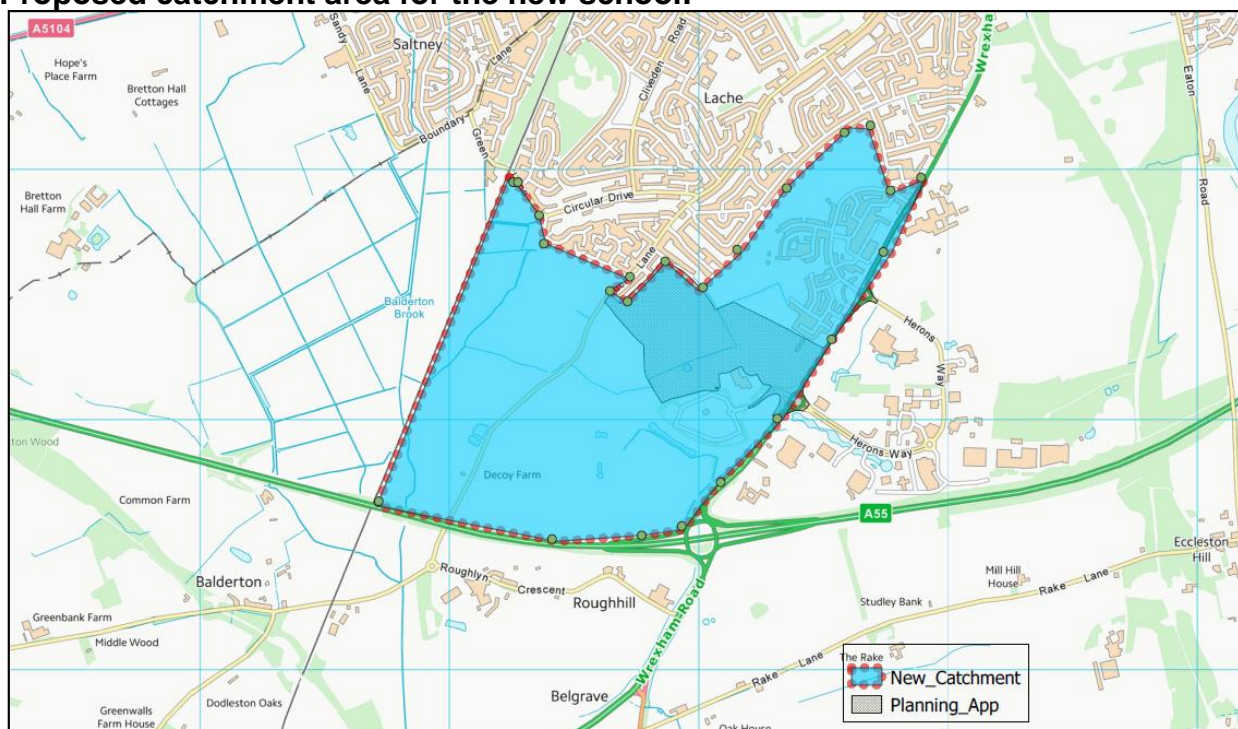
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Proposed catchment area and admission arrangements for the new school

Admission arrangements, which may include a catchment area for the new primary free school, would ultimately be decided by the sponsoring Trust. The Council will however strongly expect a collaborative approach when determining these arrangements in order to ensure cohesion and sustainability of the local primary school economy and that any proposed arrangements reflect local needs.

A school's catchment area is a defined area which has been determined for the school to serve. The Council is proposing to establish a new catchment area for the new school. The proposed catchment area for the new school, within the development at Wrexham Road, would overlap existing school catchment areas for Dodleston Church of England Primary and Lache Primary. The proposed new catchment area for the new school at Wrexham Road will be to serve the new development only, however the existing school catchment areas for Dodleston Church of England Primary and Lache Primary will remain unchanged and will therefore become shared catchment areas for the new school.

Proposed catchment area for the new school:



The consultation process and indicative timeline for opening a new primary free school

As per the timeline published below, this consultation will run for 6 weeks from 6 November 2023 to 17 December 2023.

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We very much hope that you will let us know your views on this proposal as your feedback will help us formulate and finalise the specification for the new school.

Ways in which you can provide your feedback:

- Attend a face-to-face drop-in session on 16 November 2023 – 9am – 4:30pm at Lache Community Centre, Hawthorn Road, Chester CH4 8HX
- Join our virtual drop-in session on 22 November 2023 5pm – 6:30pm (contact schoolorganisationandconsultations@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk to register your interest)
- Complete the electronic survey at: <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/WrexhamRd/>

All feedback will need to be completed and returned to us no later than 23:59hrs on 17 December 2023.

All feedback received during the informal consultation period will be considered and used to formalise the specification for the new primary school. Once the specification has been agreed we can then progress publishing the specification inviting Trusts, Free Schools or Academy Providers to submit proposals to run the school. It is anticipated this will be early Spring term 2024.

Once proposals are received and have been evaluated, the Council will provide its assessments of each proposer to the Secretary of State, including the Councils recommended sponsor and all scoring for each proposal. The Department for Education Regional Director, on behalf of the Secretary of State, will then make the final decision on the most suitable proposer to take forward the new free school. The Council will work with the successful proposer, the Department for Education and the housing developer to open the new school at the earliest September 2026.

The table below shows the indicative dates for the free school presumption process and associated activities: -

Action	Date
Informal consultation closes	17 December 2023
Council gathers feedback and formalises the school specification	December 2023
Council publish Free School specification and launch Free School Competition (12 weeks)	Early Spring 2024
Preferred sponsor appointed	Summer 2024
New School open (at the earliest)	September 2026

